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The BOYS' FRIEND 2d

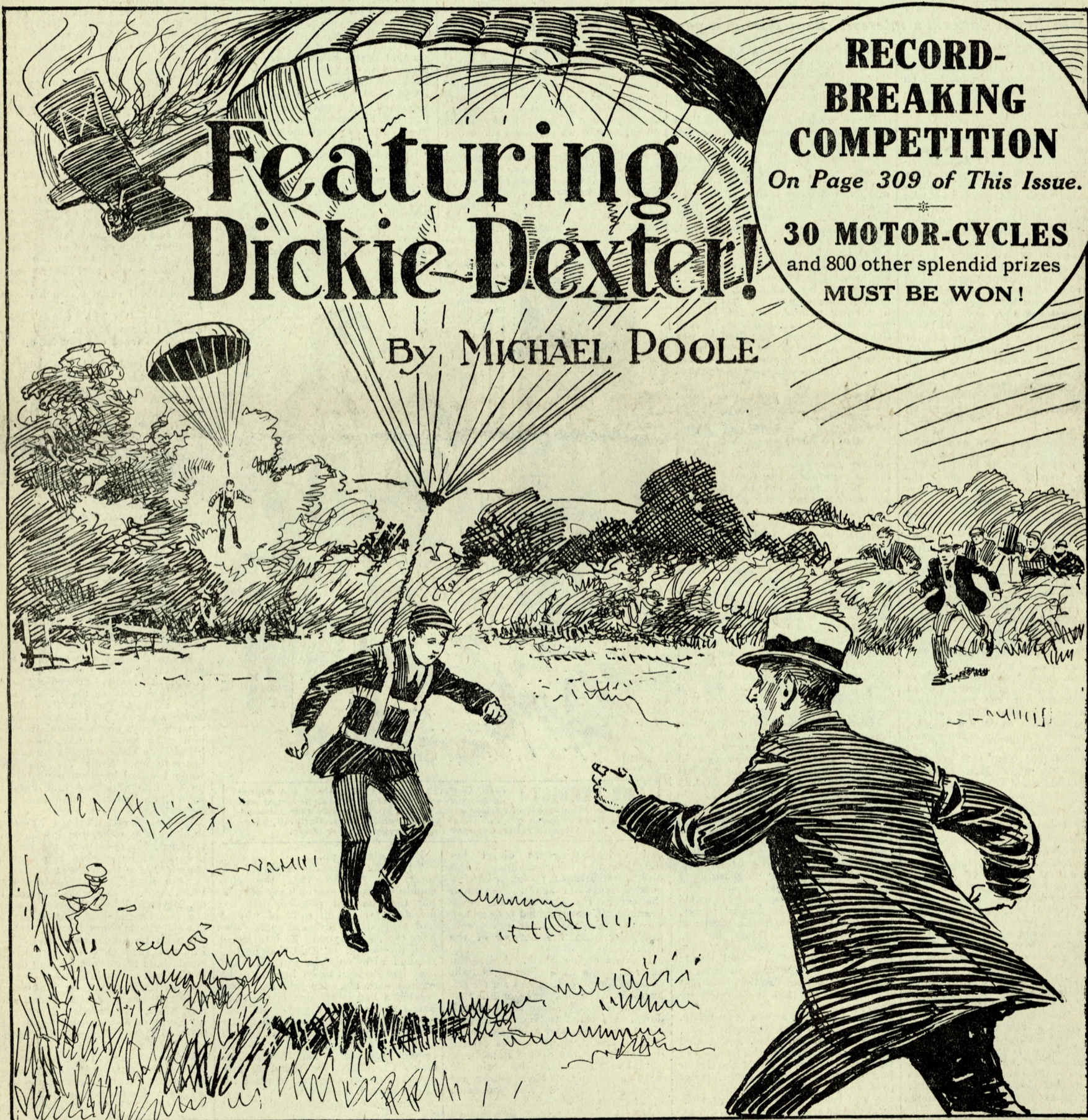
EVERY MONDAY.

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No. 1,171. Vol. XXIV.—New Series.]

THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

[Week Ending November 17th, 1923.]



Featuring Dickie Dexter!

By MICHAEL POOLE

**RECORD-
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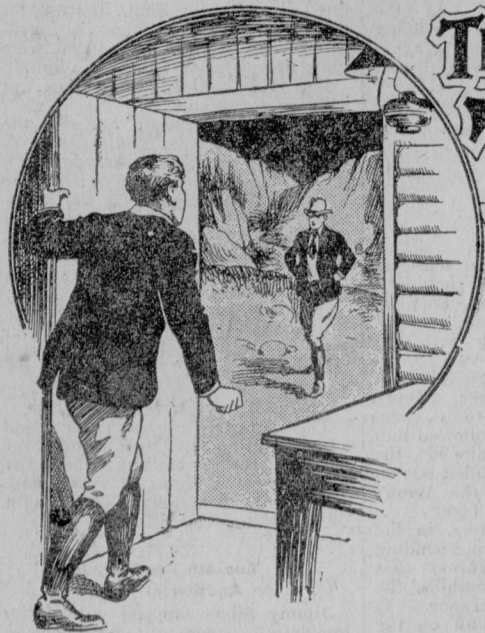
On Page 309 of This Issue.

30 MOTOR-CYCLES
and 800 other splendid prizes
MUST BE WON!

Dickie Dexter Descends to Earth—Almost into the Arms of “Jolly Roger”!

(A thrilling incident from our great St. Katie's School Story in this issue.)

ANOTHER FINE STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO. OUT WEST!



The Tenderfoot's Double!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

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

The letter he receives causes Monty Smith much uneasiness!

The 1st Chapter.

Baldy Wants to Know!

"Letters!" sang out Jimmy Silver. Jimmy rode in from the Mosquito trail and drew rein outside the bunkhouse at the Windy River Ranch. There was a rush at once.

Letters came up to the Windy River section twice a week on the post-wagon from Kicking Mule, and twice a week a horseman rode over to Mosquito from the ranch to fetch in the mail. That duty often fell to Jimmy Silver or one of his chums, Lovell or Raby or Newcome. It was always an event on the ranch when the letters came. Jimmy Silver was surrounded at once by the cowpunchers, and Baldy, the cook, put a fat, inquiring face out of the doorway of the cookhouse.

"Quite a bag this time," said Jimmy Silver. "One each for you chaps from the Old Country." He sorted the letters from the leather "grip" in which they were packed, and tossed one each to Lovell and Raby and Newcome.

"Any for me?" called out Baldy, the cook.

"Not this time, Baldy. One for you, Skitter," Jimmy sorted out letter after letter. "One for Pete Peters. Where's Pete?"

"Out on the range," said Monty Smith.

"One for Pike Potter; one for Thompson—here you are! One for little me—but I've read that already. One for Alfred Dawson, Esquire. Anybody ever heard of Alfred Dawson, Esquire? It's addressed to the ranch."

"I guess that's me," said Red Alf, with a grin.

"Here you are. Seven for Mr. Smedley," said Jimmy Silver. "And here's one for Montague de Courcy."

"What?"

Monty Smith, the tenderfoot of Windy River, uttered that exclamation in startled tones.

Monty had gathered round with the rest of the outfit who happened to be at hand, but certainly he had not been in expectation of receiving a letter.

"Are you pulling my leg?" he asked.

"Not at all," said Jimmy, with a smile. "Here it is. 'Montague de Courcy, Windy River Ranch.' You're Montague de Courcy, I think."

There was a laugh from some of the cowpunchers. The tenderfoot had come to Windy River under the homely name of Smith; but it was known now that his real name was De Courcy—a magnificent name that was the cause of many little jokes among the cowpunchers.

"But—but it's queer!" said Monty Smith. "Nobody knows I'm in Alberta, excepting perhaps—"

He broke off abruptly.

"Well, whoever it is, doesn't know that you've adopted the jolly old name of Smith," said Jimmy. "Here you are!"

He tossed the letter to Monty, who caught it, and then rode on to the ranch-house.

Monty Smith stood with the letter in his hand, staring at it.

Baldy, the cook, who never saw any reason for restraining his inquisitiveness, stared at it over his arm.

"That letter ain't come far," said

Baldy. "That's Mr. Lesage's post-mark on it, so it was posted in Mosquito."

Monty Smith flushed and thrust the letter into his pocket and walked away. Baldy, the cook, bestowed a fat grin on the cowpunchers.

"Who's writing to Monty Smith from Mosquito?" he said.

"Perhaps he'll tell you if you ask him," suggested Skitter Dick.

"Well, the galoot don't know anybody in the section," said Baldy. "He's a stranger here. And he goes around calling himself Smith, not De Courcy. He said it was queer himself. So it is."

"I guess it's queer, too, that you should worry about what doesn't concern you," remarked Spike Thompson.

"It may be something from the Mounted Police," said Baldy.

"Something about that cousin of his—the bank-robber, Larry Lagden. That fire-eater is supposed to have lit out for Alberta, and the Mounted haven't run him down yet. Why?"

—Baldy's little, round eyes danced with excitement—"it might be a letter from Lagden himself—"

"Oh, can it!" said Skitter Dick.

"You keep that fat nose of yours in the cookhouse, Baldy, and don't poke it into other galoots' affairs!"

Evidently the cowpunchers did not share Baldy's curiosity with regard to the letter from Mosquito for Monty Smith.

Baldy, the cook, grunted and walked away. He did not return to the cookhouse. He followed Monty Smith, who had gone into the bunkhouse with his letter.

Baldy was curious—and when Baldy was curious he wanted to know. And Baldy never hesitated to ask questions when he wanted to know.

Monty Smith was sitting on the edge of his bunk in the room, with the open letter in his hand.

He was reading it, with a fixed gaze, and Baldy noted with keen interest that his handsome face was almost white. Baldy did not need telling that the letter had come as a shock to the tenderfoot of Windy River.

Monty Smith was so deeply immersed in his letter that he did not notice Baldy's fat form framed in the doorway.

He read the letter through, and without looking up he proceeded to read it through a second time. All the colour had faded from his face.

"Good heavens!" he muttered aloud. "He has come here!"

Then he looked up and saw Baldy, and crushed the letter in his hand.

Baldy rolled into the bunkhouse, almost on tenterhooks of inquisitiveness by this time.

"Bad news, pard?" he asked.

"Eh? Yes! No!" said Monty confusedly.

"Some sort of trouble—what?"

"It's nothing!"

"Something from the police?" asked Baldy sympathetically. "Are them guys worrying you about that cousin of yours what's so like you?"

Monty Smith did not answer.

"It's rough on a galoot," went on Baldy. "They've been here once and arrested you in mistake for Larry Lagden, ain't they? Now what do they want?"

"You're mistaken," said Monty Smith haltingly. "This letter is not from the police."

"Ain't it?" said Baldy cheerfully.

"Then who's it from?"

Monty Smith did not reply to that question. He thrust the letter into his pocket.

"You can tell a pard all about it," said Baldy encouragingly.

Instead of telling the cook all about it, Monty Smith pushed past him to the door.

Baldy caught hold of his arm.

"Look here, pard—"

"Let go, you fat fool!"

"What?" gasped Baldy.

"Mind your own business!"

"Waal, search me!" exclaimed Baldy, greatly offended. "I guess that— Oh! Ow! Whoop!"

"It's I—Smith!"

"You, Monty! Come up!" said Jimmy Silver.

"You come down, will you?"

"Yes, if you like," said Jimmy Silver, rather puzzled.

He descended the wooden steps of the veranda, and joined the tenderfoot. Even in the shadows he could see that Monty Smith's face was strangely white.

"Anything the matter?" Jimmy asked.

"No—yes! Well, yes! I—I've got an appointment to keep," said Monty Smith in a low voice.

"Have you?" said Jimmy, still more puzzled. He could not understand the tenderfoot's suppressed excitement, neither could he see what appointment Monty Smith could possibly have for that evening.

"Going over to Mosquito?"

"Oh, no! A man wants to see me," said Monty. "That's all. But—" He broke off and hesitated.

"Pile in," said Jimmy good-humouredly.

"That letter you brought me today—"

"Oh, I see," assented Jimmy.

"I'm going to keep the appointment," said Monty Smith. "But—but—" He hesitated again.

"Anything I can do?" asked the perplexed Rookwood junior. It was clear that Monty Smith wanted to ask him something, and Jimmy Silver was growing mystified.

"Yes—if you will."

"Give it a name," said Jimmy.

"I can't tell you who it is I'm going to meet. There are reasons. It's a man—a man I know," Monty Smith stammered a little. "I want to keep the whole thing dark, Jimmy."

"Right-ho! Keep it dark, then."

"Will you come with me?"

"Certainly, if you like. Where's the place?"

"Down to the river—it's not far. You've got a revolver, Jimmy?"

Jimmy started.

"Yes, in my room. But what—"

"No, I don't, quite!" agreed Jimmy.

"I can't explain. But if you'd rather not come it's all right." Monty Smith made a movement to go, and Jimmy caught him by the arm.

"Hold on," he said. "I'll come, of course. You seem to be jolly mysterious all of a sudden, but you can rely on me. Wait a tick while I bag the shooter."

"I'll wait."

Jimmy Silver went back into the ranch-house. Arthur Edward Lovell's voice hailed him.

"Jimmy!"

Jimmy Silver turned a deaf ear. He went quietly to his room, and slipped the revolver into his pocket. A minute later he had rejoined Monty Smith in the shadows under the veranda.

"Lead on, Macduff!" said Jimmy cheerfully.

"Come on, then," said Monty Smith. And he led the puzzled and rather uneasy Rookwood junior away into the gloom.

Avoiding the ranch buildings, Monty Smith struck into the well-worn trail down to the banks of the Windy River. In a short time they were under the trees by the water's side. The Windy River, low in the summer months, was now swollen by the autumn rains, and it rolled on, deep and murmuring, between brimming banks.

Overhead, branches dripped with late rain. But the night now was calm and clear.

At the landing-place Monty Smith halted, and stood looking up and down the shadowy bank of the river.

Jimmy Silver waited.

They were out of sight and sound of the ranch buildings, and the spot was silent and lonely. Jimmy Silver held his hand on the butt of the revolver in his pocket. He was perplexed and growing very anxious. He started violently as there was a footstep in the darkness under the trees. A voice came from the shadows.

"Monty! Is it you?"

"Yes," answered Monty Smith.

A dim shadow loomed up. Jimmy Silver had a glimpse in the darkness of a black beard and two keen, gleaming eyes. The shadow seemed to start back suddenly.

"You're not alone!" rasped the voice.

"No."

"I told you—"

"I'm not at your orders."

Jimmy heard a muttered exclamation.

"You fool! Who is it with you?"

"A friend."

"His name?"

"What does that matter?"

"There's no secret about that," put in the Rookwood junior. "My name's Jimmy Silver."

"A boy?" said the unknown, peering at him.

"Just that!" said Jimmy.

"Monty, you fool! Why did you bring this boy with you?"

"The boy is armed, and is a dead shot," said Monty Smith coolly. "As a stranger in this section, you may not know that he has handled a road-agent, and helped in his capture. You may as well know it—it may prevent you from trying on any trickery."

"What trickery do you fear?"

"I fear nothing," answered Monty Smith. "But if anything should happen to me Jimmy Silver will let all the ranch know it, and you will take the consequences."

The half-seen man muttered again under his breath.

"I've left your letter, too, in my locker at the bunkhouse," went on Monty Smith. "That letter will be taken to Hudson Smedley by Jimmy Silver, if I do not return to the ranch to-night. Keep that in mind if you are thinking of treachery. Now—"

"I am thinking of nothing of the kind, Monty." The man's voice was quieter, calmer. "Neither have I come here to trouble you. I told you in my letter that there was news—news that I think has not reached you yet."

"What is it?"

"We cannot talk here. What I say is for your ears alone. This boy is not concerned."

"I will think of that. But if you have news, tell me what it is. If you are not here for any villainy, prove your good faith."

"Lord Erdingford is dead."

Monty Smith started.

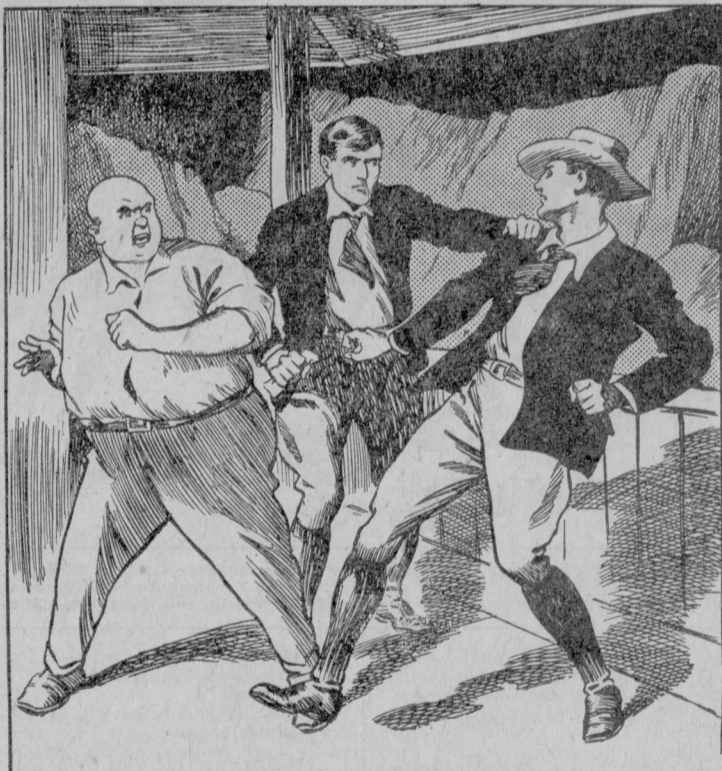
"Dead?"

"Yes."

"Is that true?"

"I have an English paper with the news in it, if you doubt my word."

(Continued overleaf.)



HUDSON SMEDLEY INTERFERES! "Keep him off, boss!" yelled Baldy in alarm. Hudson Smedley, for a second, stared at the supposed Monty Smith in blank amazement. Then he grasped him by the shoulder, and wrenched him away from the cook and pushed him angrily back. Lagden reeled against the veranda rail, panting. "I guess this isn't a place for your rows, Smith," said Hudson Smedley sternly. "Keep your temper, my man!"

Bump! Apparently out of patience, Monty Smith gave the fat cook a violent shove on his chest, and Baldy sat down quite suddenly. Monty Smith left him sitting, and walked out of the bunkhouse.

The 2nd Chapter.

A Mysterious Meeting!

"Jimmy!"

"Hallo?"

It was after supper, and the stars were gleaming in the sky. Jimmy Silver had come out on to the veranda of the ranch-house, and he was leaning on the pine rail, looking out over the starlit prairie, when a low voice spoke to him from below.

Jimmy looked down over the rail.

"You can get it without being noticed?"

"Of course. But—"

"Get it, then, and come along."

Jimmy Silver paused. He was on the best of terms with the Windy River tenderfoot, and he liked Monty very much. But he was puzzled now, and a little disquieted.

"I'd rather understand a little more, Monty," he said. "If you've got to go armed to this giddy appointment, that means that it's an enemy you're going to meet."

"I don't know—friend or enemy—I can't tell, yet," said Monty Smith. "But I want to be on my guard."

"I see," said Jimmy, though he did not quite see. "But wouldn't it be better to see the man, whoever he is, by daylight—"

"You don't understand—"



The Tenderfoot's Double!

(Continued from previous page.)

But he was watching him intently, on his guard.

"And now—" said the other.

"What do you want, Lagden?"

"You had sense enough not to speak that name, while the boy was here!" sneered the bank robber.

"I do not want to give you away, if you do not mean mischief. You ought to be in prison, but it is not my duty to send you there," said Monty Smith.

"Why have you hunted me out here? How did you know I was at Windy River?"

The bank robber laughed.

"I owe that to the police. It seems that your likeness to me caused you to be arrested in my place."

"That's true; I should have been sent back to Saskatchewan, but the news of your arrest came through by telegram to Kicking Mule, in time to stop it."

Lagden laughed softly.

"The police were satisfied that you were me, on the printed description and photograph," he said.

"Naturally. We were often taken for one another when we both lived

"Only a few thousand dollars left, Monty."

"While you have a single dollar that was stolen, you need not expect help from me."

"That is your last word?"

"My last word!"

"I expected that," said Lagden coolly. "But don't you see that the situation has changed, now that Lord Erdingford is dead? You are the next heir."

"I know that!"

"And after you, I," said Lagden. "I could not inherit the title, but the Erdingford fortune would come to me, with you out of the way, Monty."

"Is that your game?" asked Monty Smith; and his grasp closed on the butt of the revolver.

"Think again!" said Lagden banteringly. "It might have been my game, if Lord Erdingford had died before I robbed the bank at Prince Albert. But he did not—and I have known the news only a few days. A bank robber, hunted by the Canadian police, cannot turn up in England to claim the Erdingford fortune—instead of a fortune, I should get ten years in the penitentiary after being extradited."

"That is true! Even were I out of the way, you would be helpless."

"So that is why I am here as your friend, Monty, instead of as your enemy—asking your help."

"You will have no help from me!" said Monty Smith steadily. "I've helped you before, trying to keep you straight. Now you have become a

gleamed out on the still, unconscious face of Monty Smith. He was stunned and insensible. In the glimmer of light the face bending over him showed dark and savage—the face of Red Henri, the half-breed. The light was shut off at once.

The half-breed gave a low whistle. From the river, Lagden came running softly up the path.

"You've got him?"

"Yes."

"Safe?"

"For an hour at least."

"Good!"

Lagden bent over the senseless man. He lifted him by the shoulders. Red Henri took up his feet. Between them the two rascals carried the insensible tenderfoot away into the darkness.

Down the bank of the river a canoe was moored to a tree. Monty Smith was dropped into it, and Lagden and Red Henri followed him in. The half-breed dipped the paddles, and the canoe glided out on the swollen surface of the Windy River.

Across the swollen waters, in the pale gleam of the stars, winding among masses of driftwood that floated down from the foothills, the half-breed guided the canoe. It stopped under a steep bluff on the northern bank of the river.

Monty Smith knew nothing of what was passing. An hour had passed, when his eyes opened with a wild stare.

He lay on damp earth in a glimmer

"Sure."

"I—I never thought—I never guessed"—Monty Smith gritted his teeth as he realised how the bank-robber had tricked him—"you were lying in wait while I talked to him."

Red Henri nodded and grinned.

"Where is he now?"

"Can't you guess?" jeered the half-breed. He pointed to a thick black beard that lay on a rude bench in the cave. Monty recognised the beard that had disguised the bank-robber. "That is finished with. Cannot you guess? Monty Smith will not be missed from the Windy River Ranch, because he is already there!"

"What? I am here!"

"The Mounted Police took you for Larry Lagden. The Windy River Ranch will take Larry Lagden for you!"

"What!" panted Monty.

The half-breed laughed again and resumed his pipe. Monty Smith sat dazedly staring at him while the meaning of the ruffian's words sank slowly into his mind and brought despair to his heart.

The 4th Chapter. In Another's Name!

Jimmy Silver stepped out of the bunkhouse, where the cowpunchers were yarning round the iron stove, and strolled up and down outside in the light from the windows.

The hour had almost elapsed, and Jimmy's uneasiness was growing.

He was anxious for Monty Smith to return. And if Monty did not reappear in the stipulated time Jimmy intended to carry out his instructions without the loss of a moment. The tell-tale letter was to be taken from Monty's locker in the bunkhouse and placed in Hudson Smedley's hands, with a description of the evening's strange events—and the rancher would take steps at once. Jimmy Silver looked at his watch. Ten minutes yet remained. He waited anxiously for them to pass.

Light was gleaming from the windows of the cookhouse, and Jimmy strolled across to give Baldy, the cook, a passing word, to pass a few of the minutes. Baldy was seated on a bench by his cooking-stove, his task of washing-up neglected. He was deep in a letter, reading it with avidity.

Jimmy looked at him curiously.

There had been no letter for Baldy in the mail that day, and it was odd that the fat cook should be so intensely engrossed in an old letter.

"Hallo, Baldy!"

The cook, startled, jumped up suddenly.

"I—I ain't got it!" he stuttered.

"Eh! You haven't got what?"

"N-n-nothing!" stammered Baldy.

Guilt was written in every line of Baldy's fat, startled face, and the letter was clutched in his fat hand nervously. An envelope lay at his feet, and Jimmy's eyes fell on it. It was the envelope of the letter he had brought from Mosquito that day, addressed to Monty de Courcy at the Windy River Ranch.

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows. He understood now. Baldy, the cook, unable to restrain his inquisitiveness, had purloined the letter from Monty's locker in the bunkhouse.

"You fat rascal!" exclaimed Jimmy indignantly.

"Look hyer—"

"That's Monty Smith's letter you've got there!"

Baldy put his hand behind him.

"Look hyer, young Silver—" he stammered.

"Give it to me at once!"

"This hyer letter ought to be seen, I guess," said Baldy, the cook, defensively.

"The police want that fire-eater Larry Lagden, and I guess Monty Smith ain't no right to hide him around this hyer ranch!"

"You've read his letter!"

"You can read it," said Baldy.

"I'm going to take this letter to Boss Smedley. He will want to rope in that fire-eater!"

"It's Smith's letter! I'm going to put it back—in his locker!" said Jimmy Silver angrily.

"You ain't!" said Baldy.

"That tenderfoot has gone to meet the bank-robber, and I guess Hudson Smedley will want to know."

Jimmy Silver breathed hard.

Baldy's words verified his suspicions. The letter from Mosquito had come from the bank robber. It was Larry Lagden whom Monty had met in the shadows by the river. There was no further doubt upon that point.

"Give me the letter!" snapped Jimmy.

"You've no right to read it, anyhow!"

"I'm going to take it to Hudson Smedley," answered Baldy very



A LETTER FOR MONTY! "Here's a letter for you, Monty," said Jimmy Silver with a smile. "For me?" exclaimed the Windy River tenderfoot in surprise. "Yes," Jimmy Silver tossed the letter to Monty Smith, who caught it, and then rode on to the ranch-house.

at Prince Albert," said Monty.

"There's nothing surprising in that, though it was pretty rotten for me."

"Why did you leave Prince Albert?"

Monty's lip curled.

"Could I stay in a place where my cousin, and double, had been gaoled for a bank robbery?" he said.

"You were always sensitive," said the bank robber, in a tone of mockery.

"Our resemblance has given you a lot of trouble. Were you glad to hear that I had escaped?"

"No!"

"You are very candid," Lagden laughed.

"Well, I did escape, Monty, and one of the first things I read in a newspaper afterwards was the story of your arrest in Alberta, at the very time I was in gaol. That is what made me head for Windy River."

"And why?" demanded Monty Smith.

"I'm in need of help. It's known that I am in Alberta, and I may be roped in any day. I want a safe refuge."

"And you have come here for it?" exclaimed Monty, his voice trembling with anger.

"The call of the blood," said Lagden.

"Are you not going to help your cousin? You must know this country pretty well by this time—you can help me—"

"I could, but I shall not! You—a thief—with your plunder still in your pockets!" said Monty Smith fiercely.

thief, almost a murderer, and I'm done with you! Is that all?"

"That is all."

"Then you had better go. I will say nothing of your visit here—that much I will concede, on the score of our relationship. But that is all. Go, while you are safe. There is a reward on your head."

"Then good-bye, Monty—"

"Good-bye, for ever!"

Monty Smith moved away. He did not turn his back on the bank robber—and his hand still rested on the revolver in his pocket. But Lagden made no move. He stood quite still by the river bank, watching his cousin as he moved up the shadowy path under the trees towards the ranch.

Twice Monty Smith looked back at him, and saw him standing motionless there, a black shadow against the pale gleam of the river. Then he fairly turned his back on the bank robber, and released his hold of the revolver in his pocket. Lagden evidently meant no hostility—and Monty Smith felt that he had been over-suspicious.

He strode on, and a gleam of light from the distant ranch buildings caught his eyes.

There was a rustle under the trees. Crash!

A stunning blow fell upon Monty Smith's head, and he dropped like a log in the wet grass.

A dark figure bent over him, breathing hard. For a second a light

of light, with earthen walls round him, and for some minutes he lay half-dazed, wondering dizzily whether this was some fearful dream.

His brain cleared at last, and he rose on one elbow and looked about him.

He was lying in a cave under the bluff, and the water of the river washed into the mouth of the cave with a dull murmur amid a mass of tangled thickets. A lantern burned dimly. On a heap of skins a man sat smoking, a stranger to Monty Smith. But as he looked at him Monty realised that he had seen the man once before. It was Red Henri, the half-breed, from whose murderous attack he had rescued Jimmy Silver on the day he had come to Windy River.

Monty Smith pressed his hands to his aching head. Red Henri removed the pipe from his mouth and looked round.

"What does this mean?" said Monty Smith faintly. "What am I doing here?"

The half-breed grinned.

"This cave is your prison," he said.

"Where is Lagden?"

Red Henri shrugged his shoulders.

"I shall be missed at the ranch. I must have been missed already. You will pay for this!"

The half-breed laughed.

"You will not be missed," he answered.

"You are a confederate of Lagden's?"

The 3rd Chapter.

Struck Down!

"He's gone! And now—" said Monty Smith.

He stood with his hand in his pocket, resting on the butt of the revolver. In the darkness he could see little of the mysterious man, save his thick black beard and gleaming eyes.

obstinately, "and you ain't going to stop me!"

Jimmy Silver paused. In a few more minutes it would be time for the letter to be taken to the rancher—if Monty Smith did not appear. He looked out of the doorway of the cookhouse, and his glance fell upon a well-known figure sauntering up from the direction of the river.

"Monty!"

Jimmy ran out of the cookhouse, for a moment forgetting Baldy and the purloined letter in his relief at seeing Monty Smith again safe and sound.

The newcomer stopped, breathing rather quickly.

Any man at Windy River would have said, without a shadow of doubt, that this was Monty Smith. Not a doubt crossed Jimmy Silver's mind at the moment.

The same handsome face and dark eyes, the same clothes, the same rather shabby Stetson hat. Not for a moment did Jimmy Silver suppose that this was the black-bearded man he had seen in the shadows on the river bank.

But Lagden's heart was beating fast.

He was playing a sure game—success was in his hands if he played his cards carefully. But he knew that he was taking risks in supplanting Monty Smith at the ranch.

On his looks he was Monty Smith, without question, but of the Windy River Ranch he knew little or nothing—he had to feel his way, as it were, and learn from moment to moment what it was necessary for him to know. That was a task to test the nerve even of the hardened adventurer and thief. Yet, severe as the test was, it was the safest game for the rascal to play. It was known to the Alberta police that a man exactly resembling the hunted bank robber lived at the Windy River Ranch, and so long as he could satisfy the outfit he was safe there, even if the troopers came.

Of Jimmy Silver he had had only a glimpse in the shadows, but he remembered his voice, and Monty had mentioned the junior's name. So far he was on safe ground.

He gave the Rookwood junior a nod and a smile.

"I'm glad you're back safe, Monty," exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Time was nearly up, you know."

"That's all right, Jimmy," said Lagden easily. His voice, as well as his looks, resembled Monty's, but there was a slight difference of tone that made Jimmy glance at him for a moment.

"Here's your shooter," he went on, and handed Jimmy the revolver he had left in Monty's hands.

Jimmy slipped it into his pocket.

"Then it's all right?" asked Jimmy.

"Oh, yes!"

"I'm glad!"

Jimmy Silver looked round at the sound of a scurrying footstep. Baldy, the cook, had scuttled out of the cookhouse, and was heading for the ranch-house at a run.

"Stop!" shouted Jimmy.

Baldy scuttled on.

"He's got your letter, Monty!" exclaimed the junior.

"What?"

"The letter you left in your locker. That fat rotter has bagged it to read!"

Lagden snapped his teeth together.

"What! My letter—the letter—"

"You told me to take it to Hudson Smedley if you didn't turn up in an hour," said Jimmy Silver. "Baldy's bagged it. You know what an inquisitive animal he is."

Lagden did not listen to more. He dashed away in pursuit of Baldy Bubbin.

But the fat cook had a good start. With the bank robber racing behind him he pounded up the wooden steps of the veranda, where Hudson Smedley was smoking his evening cigar in the light of the stars. Jimmy Silver followed fast.

"Boss!" gasped Baldy, panting on to the veranda.

"Eh! What? What's the row?" exclaimed the rancher, rising to his feet in astonishment.

"This hyer letter—"

Hudson Smedley mechanically took the letter Baldy held out to him. A moment later Lagden was on the veranda, clutching the fat cook by the shoulder.

"You hound! Give me—"

"Keep him off, boss!" yelled Baldy.

Hudson Smedley, for a second, stared at the supposed Monty Smith in blank amazement. Then he grasped him by the shoulder and wrenched him away from the cook and pushed him angrily back.

Lagden reeled against the veranda rail, panting.

"I guess this isn't a place for your rows, Smith," said Hudson Smedley. "Keep your temper, my man."

"I—I—"

Jimmy ran up the steps.

"It's his letter, cousin Smedley," he exclaimed. "Baldy's taken a letter from his locker."

"Has he?" said Hudson Smedley. "Then what the thunder, Baldy, do you mean by stealing a man's letter and bringing it to me?"

"It's from Larry Lagden!" panted Baldy.

"What?"

"That fire-eater has come to Windy River, and Monty Smith knows it!" howled Baldy. "It's in the letter—it's there, boss. And Monty Smith's been to meet him by the river. He's helping that fire-eater to get away from the Mounted!" Baldy gasped for breath.

"That's my letter, sir!"

Hudson Smedley's fingers closed tightly on the letter.

The 5th Chapter.
A Desperate Game!

Jimmy Silver stood at the top of the veranda steps, looking on in silence. Hudson Smedley did not heed him. His eyes were fixed on the man before him, and his hand gripped the letter. Baldy stood panting for breath, keeping the rancher's stalwart form between him and the tenderfoot.

"That's my letter, sir!" repeated Monty Smith's double, setting his lips hard.

"You've heard what Baldy says?"

"Yes."

"You can take the fat galoot along and rope him hard for stealing your letter, if you like," said Hudson Smedley. "I guess a quirting would do him good, so far as that goes."

"Oh, I say, boss!" exclaimed Baldy indignantly.

"Hold your tongue, you prying jay!" snapped the rancher. "That much for Baldy. But I guess if what he says is true this letter must be handed over to the authorities, Smith."

"But—"

"As that rascal Lagden is your blood relation, I don't know that I blame you for not handing him over if you had the chance. But you can't expect to be allowed to screen him. The man's a thief, and very nearly a murderer. There's a bank watchman at Prince Albert in a pretty serious state from being knocked out by him. If Larry Lagden, the bank robber, is in this locality, he's going to be roped in."

It did not even cross the rancher's mind that the man he was addressing was Larry Lagden himself. He, as well as Jimmy Silver, was completely deceived by the likeness between the cousins.

The adventurer breathed hard.

"Now, are you willing to have this letter handed over to Sergeant Kerr at Kicking Mule?" asked the rancher.

"No."

"You admit it is from Larry Lagden?"

Jimmy Silver would rather have liked a further talk with his friend, but Monty Smith bade him good-night, so the Rookwood junior walked back to the ranch.

The impostor stopped at the door of the bunkhouse.

Some of the cowpunchers hailed him or nodded to him. All evidently accepted him as Monty Smith, the tenderfoot of Windy River.

So far as that went, the impostor had achieved a complete success. There was only one weakness in his scheme—the fact that Baldy, the cook, had purloined the letter, and that it was now known for certain that Larry Lagden was in the vicinity. That was sure to lead to an interview between the impostor and Sergeant Kerr, of Kicking Mule, who would want to glean whatever information he could regarding the movements of the bank robber.

And a keen, clear-headed sergeant of the Canadian Mounted Police would not be so easy to deceive as the unsuspecting ranch outfit; Lagden knew that.

But the die was cast now. It was too late to retreat, even if he had desired to do so. And he did not think of retreat?

Once established beyond question as Montague de Courcy, or Monty Smith, of Windy River, he was safe from pursuit for his crimes, and safe to claim the title of Erdingford in Monty's place. That double triumph was within his grasp if he played his cards well. And the hardened adventurer had nerve enough for that desperate game.

Read it yourself and see," said the young man.

"You ask me to do, that?"

"Yes," muttered the adventurer.

"Very good."

Hudson Smedley glanced at the letter in the light from the windows. It ran:

"Dear Monty,—I am here and must see you. I have news that concerns you closely. I come as a friend, and you have nothing to fear. I will wait for you by the Windy River at nine o'clock this evening, at the end of the path from the ranch.

"Your cousin,
"L. LAGDEN."

Hudson Smedley handed the letter back to the man before him.

"That's enough," he said. "You ought to have had the rascal laid by the heels. But I suppose that couldn't be expected of you, as you're his relation, and he trusted to you."

"Thank you, sir!"

"I shall send a messenger to Kicking Mule at once," went on the rancher. "You believe that Lagden has headed for the Rockies?"

"I am sure of it."

"Then they should have a good chance of catching him. You can go. As for you, Baldy, I advise you to let other galoots' letters alone in the future. Get out!"

"I say, boss—"

"Get out!"

Baldy, the cook, got out, with an apprehensive eye on the tenderfoot. But Monty Smith took no heed of him.

He left the veranda, and Jimmy Silver joined him as he walked away.

"No harm done, after all, Monty," said Jimmy.

"I guess not."

"The sooner that brute Lagden is laid by the heels the better," said Jimmy. "His resemblance to you will always be giving you trouble, so long as he is at large."

The adventurer grinned.

"That's true."

"By the way, Monty—"

"Well?"

"I'm not inquisitive, like Baldy," said Jimmy Silver, smiling. "But what did the man mean by talking about Lord Erdingford? Don't tell me if you'd rather not, but—"

"It's no secret, or will not be in a few days," said Monty Smith the Second. "Lord Erdingford was a relation of mine, and I am next heir to the title and estates of Erdingford. My cowpuncher days will be over soon. I am going back to England as Lord Erdingford."

"Great Scott!"

"Rather a surprise—what?"

"It will be no end of a surprise for the boys here," said Jimmy, laughing. "They don't know that they've had a real live lord in the outfit. It's odd that Lagden should have taken the trouble to tell you."

"Yes. I suppose he saw it in the papers. No doubt the lawyers are advertising for Montague de Courcy now. We don't get many papers up here in the North-West, or we might have seen it, too. Well, good-night, Jimmy!"

"Good-night!"

Jimmy Silver would rather have liked a further talk with his friend, but Monty Smith bade him good-night, so the Rookwood junior walked back to the ranch.

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He strolled carelessly into the bunkhouse, and took a seat on the bench by the stove.

The outfit were turning into the bunks, but Lagden sat by the stove and lighted a cigarette, to remain till the last.

He did not know yet which was Monty Smith's bunk, and he could not afford to show his ignorance.

Skitter Dick gave him a cheery nod as he sat down.

"How's the bump?" he asked.

Lagden almost caught his breath.

He had not the remotest knowledge of the meaning of that sudden question, which, of course, Skitter Dick supposed that he was addressing to Monty Smith.

"Still bad?" asked the Skitter.

"Oh, no—not very," said Lagden, wondering desperately what the cowpuncher was driving at.

"I guess you want to look after it," said Skitter Dick. "A kick from a boss is no joke."

"I guess it isn't," agreed Lagden, realising that Monty Smith must have had a bump caused by a kick from a horse.

"Leg stiff?" asked the Skitter.

"N-n-nearly all right now."

"Waal, search me!" said Skitter Dick in surprise. "I guess that was a pretty bad bump when you showed it to me this mornin'. I reckoned you wouldn't get rid of that under a week."

"Oh, it's nothing to make a fuss about!" said Lagden easily, anathematising the good-natured cowpuncher in his heart. "I say, I'm getting sleepy. Turning in yet?"

"Say, you're losing your memory,"

said Skitter Dick. "Didn't you know I was on duty to-night?"

"Oh! I—I guess I'd forgotten."

Dick Lee rose, and knocked out his pipe and quitted the bunkhouse. Lagden rose also.

The rest of the outfit had turned in, and several bunks remained empty. It was seldom that the whole outfit were quartered at once in the bunkhouse. Lagden looked at the unoccupied bunks, and wondered savagely which was Monty Smith's.

Pike Potter called out to him.

"Put out that there lamp when you turn in, Monty."

"Right-ho!"

"Ain't you turning in yet?"

"I guess so."

There was no help for it. The impostor had to turn in, or else draw the general attention of the bunkhouse upon himself. But he knew that he could not venture to make a false step. If Monty Smith made a mistake about his bunk it would cause great surprise, at the least.

But the adventurer's quick wit came to his aid. As he moved towards the bunks he staggered, and gave a sudden sharp cry.

"Hallo! What's the trouble with you, Monty?" asked Pike Potter, sitting up.

"I guess it's my leg—that kick I got from the boss," said Lagden, turning to account what he had heard a few minutes ago from Skitter Dick. "I guess it hurts some. Say, will one of you galoots give me a hand? I guess my leg's bad, and no mistake."

There was a laugh from the cowpunchers.

(Continued overleaf.)

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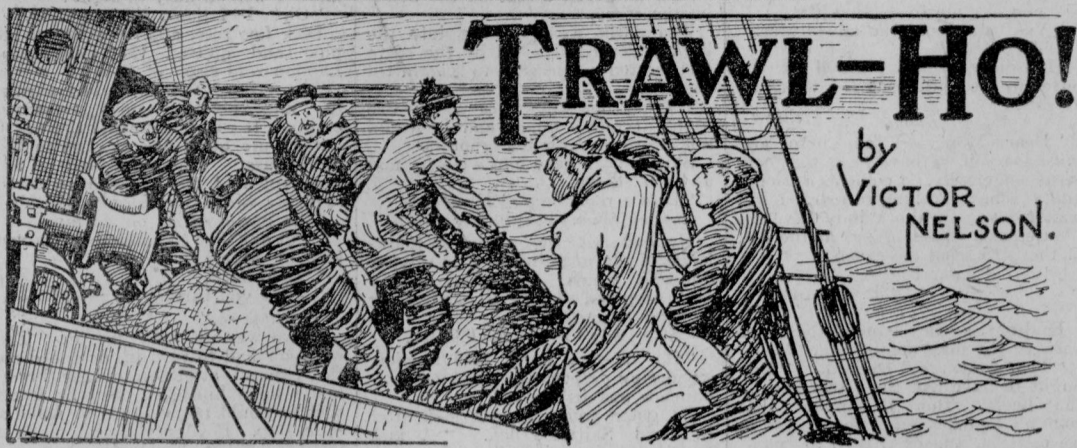
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YOU'LL ENJOY THIS GREAT "DON DARREL" STORY!



Don Darrel makes good a promise!

The 1st Chapter.

Don Darrel Makes a Promise.

"Oh, what are the giddy wild waves saying now? Oh, what are the— Shut up, Jimmy! There's sure nothing to laugh at in beautiful singing like mine!"

"Ha, ha, ha! It wasn't exactly the singing I was laughing at, you silly owl—it was the air! You were warbling that touching ballad to the tune of 'Trumpeter, what are you sounding now?' Besides, the waves aren't wild, my lad. It's one of the finest, calmest autumn nights I ever clapped eyes upon!"

"My yes! I guess you are right for once in your life, Jimmy! Hallo, hallo! What's the game right yonder, I wonder?"

Don Darrel, the richest lad in the world, and known as the Boy with Fifty Millions, was standing on the sea-wall at Whitsea, that small coastal town in Yorkshire, which is noted for its fishing industry.

With him was his powerful, stalwart tutor, Jimmy Vasey, and his Redskin friend and servant, Chuta, who had raised his head and seemed on the point of howling as his young master had tested his vocal powers.

"What's the game—where?" Jimmy asked, though he realised that Don was gazing towards a large steam trawler which lay moored against the long stone jetty.

It was a fine, calm night, as the tutor had remarked, and in the moonlight the objects on the vessel's deck were plainly visible. To Jimmy, however, the trawler seemed empty of human presence.

"Nowhere, James," returned Don, who sometimes liked to be mysterious.

But in reality he was still a little puzzled at what he had seen—or thought he had seen—as he had chanced to glance towards the fishing-boat.

Her deck had not been unoccupied a moment before, unless his eyes had played him a trick.

Don sauntered towards an old longshoreman, who sat a few yards distant on the sea-wall, stolidly sucking at his pipe.

"Good-evening, grandpa!" said Don, slipping a Treasury-note into the man's gnarled hand. "Have a smoke with me the next time the baccy runs short. Not much sign of Whitsea's fishing to-night!"

"Thank 'ee kindly, young gen'l-man! No; there baint. All the trawlers an' the few sailin' smacks that still goes out fra here took advantage o' the good weather, an' left an hour or so ago."

"All except that one," Don remarked, pointing to the solitary trawler.

"Oh, ay, zur! But she baint a Whitsea boat," the old man returned. "She be the Loch Blair,

a Scottish boat fra Aberdeen. She's bin lyin' here for repairs, but she'll be leavin', so 'tis said, some time to-night. She'll do her fishin' on t' way an' take her catch to Aberdeen for sale."

Don nodded, made some trivial reply, and walked away, with Jimmy, Chuta, and Snap following. Jimmy was regarding his chum curiously. He felt that, for some reason or other, Don was deeply interested in the Loch Blair, and wondered what it was.

The three friends had come to Yorkshire this Saturday with the Red Crusaders F. C., for which Don played at inside-right and Jimmy at left-back. Terry Hilton, the team's lightning-like centre-forward, had been with them, and they had suffered one of their few defeats this season in playing Halifax Town. Then, after the match, they had travelled on here with Terry, to visit his mother.

It will be remembered that Don Darrel had started her in business, and it was up here at Whitsea that she had settled, buying a general shop and grocery store, in which she was now steadily prospering. The friends had arranged to rejoin Terry on the morrow, so that they could travel back to Wigan together.

Up into the town, which seemed to hold a constant smell of the industry that was its mainstay, and which was connected with the sea-front by a

number of narrow, winding, cobblestoned streets, strode Don Darrel. He was making for the hotel where he had booked rooms earlier that evening for his friends and himself. But, as luck would have it, the trio were not destined to reach the hotel that night.

As they drew abreast of the local police-station a closed car suddenly dashed up and halted outside. The door of the conveyance was opened, and an inspector of police alighted. He was followed by a scowling man in sombre black clothes, who, somehow, had the air of a manservant.

A constable, who followed the man from the car, was grasping his shoulder, and it was plain he was under arrest. On the pavement, he resisted the efforts of the policeman made to thrust him towards the steps of the station, and he turned appealingly to a tall, austere-looking man, with iron-grey hair and moustache, who had now emerged from the car after the others.

"Give me a chance, sir!" he said, in a whining tone. "Don't charge me an' get me sent to gaol! You've got your money back, and—"

"I will show you no mercy, you scoundrel!" the other, who looked as though he might be the fellow's master, said sternly. "Your silence when another stood accused is what I cannot forgive, and the law shall take its course!"

"Shucks! I know that grey-moustached old bird!" Don Darrel exclaimed, as, throwing off all signs of respect, the arrested man roundly abused the other civilian, and was hustled unceremoniously into the station by the police. "He's the father of an old school pard of mine. You've heard me speak of Bob Wesley—'Hot-head Bob,' as we used to call him?"

Jimmy nodded.

"Wasn't that the new Fifth-Former who fought you because you laughed at his red hair, Don?" he asked.

"It was Jimmy!" Chuta, who had been at Eglehurst School with Don, chuckled. "When hims come there as a new chap—it was the last term we spent at the school—and him heard Donnie speak, him say: 'Another guy! Then Donnie warms his hands over his red hair an' him hit Donnie—biffs!—on the nose. He, he, he! You ought to have seen them fight after that! Them was both groggy when Dr. Harding came along an' stopped them."

Don Darrel grinned at the recollection.

"It was the dinkiest scrap I ever had, I guess," he said. "Dear old Bob Wesley could fight like a giddy turkey-cock when he got his monkey up. We were both in such a terrible mess when the Head parted us that we had to grin at one another. Then we shook hands and became the very best of pals, as often happens when two guys start their acquaintance with a scrap. But I was going to say—the stern-looking old top who has gone into the station to charge the other guy, is Sir Charles Wesley, Baronet, Bob's dad. I know him, as he came to the school for the prize-giving and breaking-up festivities at the end of my last term. Now I come to think of it, the Wesleys have a fine old mansion somewhere this way, I guess!"

Don lingered outside the police-station. When, after some quarter of an hour had elapsed, the grey-haired gentleman reappeared, the millionaire stepped forward with outstretched hand.

"Pleased to meet you again, Sir Charles!" he said. "I expect you remember me as a friend of your son's. How is Bob?"

For a moment Sir Charles Wesley stared in puzzlement at the smiling, clean-limbed lad who faced him. Then a light of recognition dawned in his keen eyes.

"Why, it's young Darrel, of course!" he exclaimed, as he shook hands.

"Where is Bob now, Sir Charles—not still at the old school, I suppose?" Don inquired; and he was surprised at the look of pain that crossed the baronet's grave face.

"No, no, Darrel! He's been home for a spell, prior to going to Eton," was his reply, made after a curious pause. "Whether he will ever reach there now, I cannot say, and—well, I would give much to be able to tell you where my son is at the moment."

There was a strained silence for a second or two. Don and his friends saw that the baronet's face was twitching, and that his eyes were filled with a keen anxiety. Suddenly Don laid a hand upon his sleeve.

"Say, I guess there's something wrong, Sir Charles," he said quietly. "Won't you confide in me, as your son's old friend? Perhaps my comrades and I can help."

Sir Charles hesitated. Then:

(Continued on next page.)

THE TENDERFOOT'S DOUBLE!

(Continued from previous page.)

"I guess you're a soft tenderfoot," said Pike Potter; but he turned out of his bunk to give Monty Smith a hand.

The adventurer leaned on him, and Pike helped him to Monty Smith's vacant bunk. Lagden limped painfully. He was duly landed at Monty's bunk.

"Now you squat down, and let's have a look at it," said Pike Potter. Lagden's heart almost ceased to beat for a moment.

There was, of course, no bruise on his leg from a horse's kick. He did not even know which of Monty's limbs was bruised.

"It's all right," he said. "Don't you worry."

"Oh, you're a durned silly tenderfoot, you are!" said Pike Potter, staring at him. "I tell you you may get a bad leg and be laid up. You ain't used to the ranches, Monty, and you've got to be careful. Now then, let's see that bump!"

One glance at Lagden's perfectly sound limbs would have revealed the fact that he was not—could not be—Monty Smith.

"Oh, don't bother!" he said.

It was against his policy to quarrel with any of the Windy River outfit, but there was no help for it now. Pike's good-natured attentions had to be choked off somehow.

"Waal, you're an ornery galoot, you are," said the cowpuncher in disgust. "I guess I've a good mind to punch your head, instead of looking arter your gol-darned leg for you, you jay!"

And Pike tramped back to his bunk, greatly offended.

Lagden did not answer him.

He was only too glad to get the light out and turn in, and escape observation for a time.

It was long before he slept.

His thoughts were busy. In the cave under the bluff by the Windy

River Monty Smith was hidden, a prisoner in the hands of the half-breed, Red Henri, safely hidden from discovery. That Lagden had been in the vicinity would be known, but the search for him would be carried on in the direction of the mountains—a direction opposite from that of the cave.

All was safe, if he could play his part successfully, and keep up the deception. He had only to wait—wait at Windy River, in the name of Monty Smith—wait till he was claimed from England as the heir of Lord Erdingford. His resemblance to Monty would carry him through, and Larry Lagden would disappear for ever. And the real Monty—

If he lived, he could not always be kept a prisoner. Exposure and punishment would haunt the successful impostor, to fall upon him some day. Safety could only be bought by a crime—a crime from which even the hardened adventurer shrank. When

he left the Windy River Ranch as Lord Erdingford, Monty Smith could not be left in the hands of Red Henri, a prisoner. He must be in a grimmer, safer keeping—silent for ever beneath the waters of the Windy River. It was a terrible and troubling thought, even to the unscrupulous impostor, but he knew that it was the price that must be paid for success.

But that thought he strove to drive from his mind. All depended upon the success of the imposture, and that remained still to be put to the test. So far, he had succeeded, but the morrow was certain to bring fresh difficulties and dangers. If he failed to carry through the daring game, his only resource was swift flight. If he succeeded, Monty Smith would never be seen again by mortal eyes.

It was no wonder that sleep was late in coming to the desperate adventurer who lay in the midst of enemies under another's name.

THE END.

"Run Down on the Prairie!" is the title of next Monday's great story of the further adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co. out West. Don't miss it. Order your copy of the BOYS' FRIEND in advance and avoid disappointment!

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 St., London, E.C. 4.

THAT COMPETITION!

Excitement is increasing over the great "Footballers' Names" Competition. No wonder at that! This great feature is full of good points. It is a treat for a winter evening. Then it brings all one's knowledge of the game, and its foremost players into action, while the magnificent prize list is the lengthiest, and the most generous, ever put forward. So just remember what a win may mean, and wire into your best and brainiest solutions.

"BATEY'S BLACK SHADOW!"

Mr. Bates is master of the Transitus at St. Katie's, and you hear about him in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND in the course of another sparkling yarn by Michael Poole. This author always manages to give the right nail a mighty biff with the hammer. His new yarn shows you Batey's difficulty. It is Batey's bete noire, in fact, and there is a lot of cross-play and plenty of undercurrent.

"RUN DOWN ON THE PRAIRIE!"

When the Rookwood chums come back to the old headquarters in Hants they will have yet another tale to tell of their adventures out West, and that delectable bank robber, Larry Lagden, will figure in it, to a surety. There is a particularly strong plot in next week's tale. You will be more interested than ever in Monty Smith. And through it all Jimmy Silver keeps his end up in fine style.

"FED-UP WITH FOOTBALL!"

As I ventured to prognosticate, John Wheway's serial has swooped into a notable success. It is a story right out of the ordinary. Instantaneous sympathy goes out to Bryan Cotterill in his many troubles.

Next week the yarn is bound to go up even higher in everybody's estimation.

"THE BULLIES OF THE BOMBAY CASTLE!"

Duncan Storm has a rum sort of team to drive, so to speak, but he manages to handle things with rare dexterity. Storm's humour, always unflinching, lights up many a dark place, and this sense of wit makes the narrative go with a bang.

A COMPREHENSIVE BILL.

We always get the best in the BOYS' FRIEND, and this being the case it really is not necessary for me to take up any more of your time by referring to what's coming. But I should like to point out that good old Don Darrel will figure next Monday, also that Football and Health and Sport will be as usual on the tapis, and be dealt with in masterly fashion.

A TREAT AHEAD!

This is the striking story I have in view, called "The Jungle Men!" It will create a sensation, or I am much mistaken.

EMIGRATING TO AUSTRALIA.

"Boys' Friendite" writes asking for particulars of the Government scheme for persons wishing to go out to Australia. I think his best course is to write to Captain Malcolm Arnold, c/o Ridgeways, 156, Strand, London, W.C. Will this correspondent please note that it is always best to forward name and address? Had he done so in this case I would have forwarded him full details at once.

Your Editor.

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Look out for "The Jungle Men!" An amazing new story of Mystery and Adventure appearing shortly in the BOYS' FRIEND!