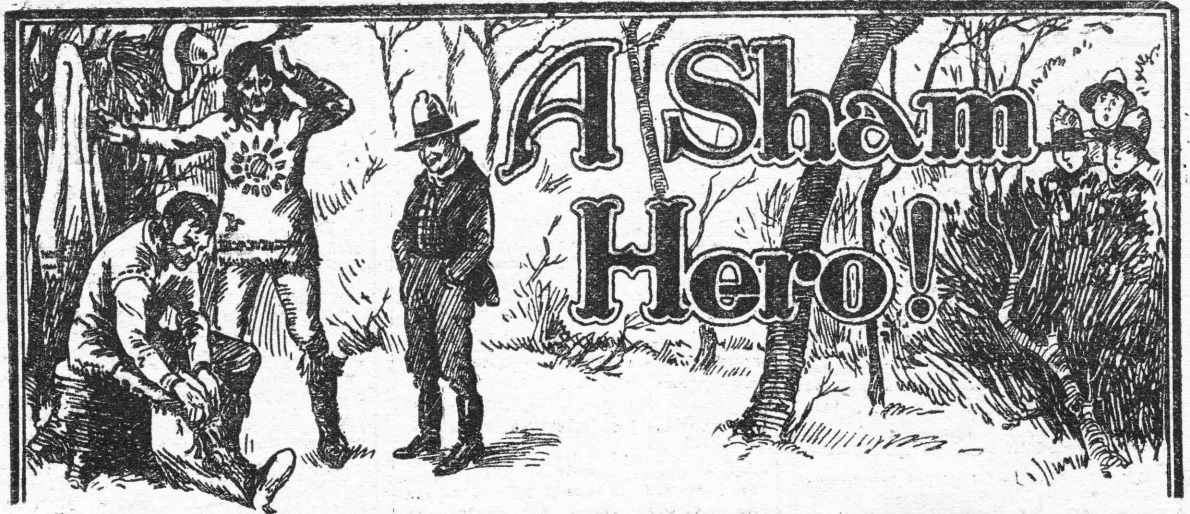


TELLING OF THE AMAZING SCHEME ADOPTED BY KERN GUNTEN TO WIN THE GRATITUDE OF MISS MEADOWS, AND THUS GET HIMSELF RETURNED TO THE SCHOOL.



A Splendid Long Complete Tale, dealing with the Schooldays in the Backwoods of Canada of
FRANK RICHARDS

(Author of the Famous School Tales of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Mysterious!

"HOLD ON a minute, you fellows!" Frank Richards and Bob Lawless had jumped down from their ponies, at the fork in the trail where they met Vere Beauclerc on the way to school.

Beauclerc was waiting for them on the edge of the timber, and instead of joining them in the trail, he called to them in a subdued voice.

"Anything up?" asked Bob.

"Yes, something rather queer."

Beauclerc's face was grave in expression, and perplexed.

Frank and Bob hitched their ponies to a tree, and joined him.

"What is it?" asked Frank.

"I don't know that it's our business," said Beauclerc. "But it's jolly queer. Come and see, and keep quiet."

He led the way into the timber, and his chums followed him, in considerable astonishment.

There was not too much time to waste if they were to get to Cedar Creek School in good time for morning lessons.

But they followed Beauclerc without demur, taking care to move quietly in the snow that lay among the trees.

Beauclerc led the way, without speaking again, a distance of a hundred yards or so into the wood.

There he halted, on the edge of an open glade, making his chums a sign to be silent, and to look.

Frank and Bob looked, with surprise dawning in their faces.

There were three individuals in the clearing, at some distance from the schoolboys, but in plain sight.

Two were men, both recognisable as tough characters who "loafed" about the saloons in Thompson Town, and the third was Kern Gunten, the Swiss schoolboy of Cedar Creek.

The chums had not seen Gunten for some days.

The Swiss had been turned out of the school for his rascally conduct, and in spite of the wrath of his father, the rich store-keeper of Thompson, Miss Meadows had held firmly to her decision.

All Frank Richards & Co. knew of Gunten since that was that the Swiss was staying away from home, having had enough—or too much—of the parental cowhide.

But it was not the sight of Gunten in the timber that astonished the chums of Cedar Creek.

It was the occupation of his two companions, Black Rube and Dave Dunn.

The two roughs were engaged in painting their faces with Kootenay war-paint, evidently with the intention of making themselves up as Indians.

They wore Indian leggings and moccasins, and other articles of Redskin garb hung on the thicket near them, ready to put on.

Gunten was looking on at the peculiar transformation of his two associates, and grinning.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Frank Richards.

"This beats the Dutch!" said Bob. "What is Gunten doing with those two hoss-thieves, anyway? And what in thunder—"

"I spotted them as I came along through the timber," said Beauclerc. "They've been at this some time. They've got their horses in the wood, too. What on earth does it mean, you fellows?"

Frank Richards shook his head.

"There's some gum-game on," said Bob Lawless sagely. "I'm certain that Dunn was one of the rustlers that tried to rob us the night we were going to Fraser. They are a precious pair, those two, anyway. I guess they're going to rob somebody, and that's to keep them from being known."

"Gunten wouldn't have a hand in that!" muttered Frank. "He's an awful rotter, but not quite rotten enough for that."

"Oh, that foreign trash is rotten enough for anything!" said Bob Lawless, with a sniff. "Look here, let's speak to them, as we're here. If it's a gum-game, we may as well let them know they're spotted."

Vere Beauclerc nodded.

"I was thinking of that," he said. "I waited till you fellows came. It looks to me as if it means a raid of some sort—horse-stealing, most likely, and that trick is to make out that it was the Kootenays did the trick."

"I guess so. Come on!" said Bob.

And the rancher's son strode out into the glade, followed by his comrades.

There was a sudden exclamation from Kern Gunten as he saw them, and Dave Dunn and Black Rube ceased their peculiar occupation all of a sudden.

The Swiss scowled angrily at the three chums.

"What are you doing here?" he exclaimed. "I guess we want to know what you are doing!" retorted Bob Lawless.

"Mind your own business!"

"If it's a horse-raid, to be put down to the Kootenays, you may as well know that the game's up before its begun," said Bob disdainfully. "We shan't keep this dark—you can bet your boots on that!"

"It's nothing of the kind!" snapped Gunten

angrily. "Do you think I'm a horse-thief, you silly idiot?"

"Well, I know your friends are," said Bob; "and you're none too good for it, either, Gunten!"

"It's a lark," said Gunten sullenly.

"Jest a leetle joke, sonny," grinned Dave Dunn. "Don't you be skeered. It's a leetle joke!"

"Yes, you look like taking all that trouble for a joke," said Bob. "Look here, what are you up to?"

"Jest as Dave says," replied Black Rube. "A leetle joke to please Gunten."

"Oh, rot!"

"That's all it is," said Gunten. "You can mind your own business, Bob Lawless. And— and, look here, don't jaw about this!"

"Why not, if it's only a little joke on somebody?" asked Bob sarcastically.

Gunten bit his lip.

"You'll spoil the joke," he said. "Look here, you've no business to come spying on me!"

"Do you want your nose flattened, you foreign worm?" asked Bob politely. "You've only got to say that again, if you do."

"I—I didn't mean exactly that. But, anyway, you've no right to tattle about what you've seen by accident. You—you'll spoil the joke, too."

"If it's only a joke, we don't want to spoil it," said Frank Richards. "But it looks to me more like some piece of rascality, and that's flat!"

"I give you my word—"

"What's that worth?"

Kern Gunten gritted his teeth.

"You silly duffer! If you hear of anything being done by a couple of Kootenays, you can jaw them. I tell you it's only a joke!"

"Done!" said Bob, at once. "Mind, if there's any yarn in the section of Kootenays running off horses or sleighs, we shall know what kind of Injuns they were, and we shall go to Sheriff Henderson at once about it."

"Done!" said Gunten, in his turn.

"Well, that's all right," admitted Frank. And the three chums left the spot, leaving the two rustlers still engaged in getting themselves up as Redskins.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Waylaid on the Trail!

MISS MEADOWS was very grave that morning.

The schoolmistress of Cedar Creek had been considerably troubled about the Gunten affair.

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A GRAND STORY OF THE JUNIORS OF GREYFRIARS. :: By FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT TUESDAY!

"THE BOUNDER ON THE TRAIL!"

Gunten had played a disrespectful trick that could not be forgiven, and he had been dismissed from the school, and Miss Meadows did not regret it.

But the news that the boy was staying away from his father's home in Thompson troubled her somewhat.

The storekeeper's attempt to bully her into taking his son back into the school had failed.

For the arrogant wrath of Gompers Gunten she cared nothing.

But she was somewhat concerned for the boy himself.

The angry storekeeper had "cowed" him with great severity, and there was more cowering for Kern Gunten when he came home—if he ever did.

He deserved it, certainly. Still, there was a limit. And Miss Meadows cared probably more than Mr. Gunten did what might happen to the perverse young rascal.

Indeed, the schoolmistress was turning it over in her mind whether, after all, it would be possible to allow the Swiss to return to the school.

If he had shown a sign of real repentance for his wrongdoing she would not have hesitated.

Morning school was dismissed at last, and when the school was dismissed, Black Sam brought round Miss Meadows' horse from the stable.

Miss Meadows had business in Thompson that day, and Mr. Slimmey, the assistant master, was to preside at the dining-table, where the pupils, whose homes were at a distance, took their midday meals.

Frank Richards & Co. were talking in the gateway when Miss Meadows rode out on the trail, and they lifted their hats very respectfully to the schoolmistress as she passed.

Miss Meadows gave them a kind smile. She rode on down the trail through the timber—a lonely trail that ran for miles, without a habitation in sight, to the town on the Thompson River.

Cedar Creek School vanished behind, and the Canadian girl rode at a leisurely pace along the trail, upon which still lay patches of snow.

Suddenly, from the frost-blackened larches ahead, two horsemen pushed out into sight.

Miss Meadows glanced at them carelessly as she rode on towards them.

They were Redskins, in leggings and moccasins and blankets, and their copper-coloured faces were adorned with daubs of paint.

The schoolmistress started a little as she noted it.

Kootenay Indians were plentiful enough in the district, but the days of warpaint were long over.

Occasionally, in the more unsettled districts, an excitable young "buck" would daub his face with warpaint and go on the trail—generally to be "run in," to meditate upon his folly in the log gaol.

But warpaint along the banks of the Thompson was a thing unknown.

The Canadian girl was surprised, but she felt no sense of alarm as she rode nearer to the two bucks.

But alarm mingled with surprise as the two horsemen suddenly closed in upon her, and a coppers hand caught at her rein.

Her horse was dragged to a halt, and she sat the steed between the two painted braves.

Her eyes flashed.

"Release my horse at once!" she exclaimed sharply. "How dare you!"

The Redskins grinned.

"You come wit' Injun!"

"What?"

"Injun on warpath!" continued the brave. "Look for squaw—pretty white squaw! Wah! I have spoken!"

The Canadian girl's face flushed with anger.

"Let my horse go at once!" she commanded. "Are you mad?"

"You come!" said the other brave gutturally. "You come wit' Kootenay. Me Black Bear, great warrior!"

Miss Meadows drew a sharp breath.

She was miles from help, and completely at the mercy of the Redskins, though their audacity was simply amazing.

But the Canadian girl was accustomed to taking care of herself.

With a sudden movement she raised her riding-whip, and struck Black Bear full across the face.

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Lash, lash!

The whip struck and struck again, but it was grasped and torn away, and tossed into the thickets.

Strong and savage hands grasped the schoolmistress, and she was held a helpless prisoner.

Black Bear, with a furious look, whipped out a knife.

Miss Meadows' heart turned almost sick within her for a moment.

But the painted brave contented himself with flourishing the knife.

"Now you come—you my squaw!" he snarled.

"Help!" shrieked Miss Meadows, in the faint hope that some white man might be abroad in the timber.

"No cry—you come!" hissed Black Bear.

A length of buffalo hide was whipped round the girl, and fastened her to the saddle.

Then her horse was led from the trail and into the timber.

"Help!"

Her cry rang out again, piercing the sombre shadows of the forest, and echoing among the trees.

There was a sudden shout from the timber in response, and a figure leaped into view, directly in the path of the kidnappers.

"Halt!"

A rifle came up to a level, bearing upon the coppery braves, and behind the levelled barrel gleamed the eyes of Kern Gunten, the outcast of Cedar Creek.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Gunten the Hero!

MISS MEADOWS panted for breath.

Her captors had dragged in their horses at once at the sharp voice of the Swiss.

Black Bear was gripping his knife, but he did not draw it.

The rifle, in the hands of Kern Gunten, bore full upon the two riders, and his finger was on the trigger.

"Gunten!" panted Miss Meadows.

"All O.K., ma'am!" said Gunten coolly.

"I've got them covered! You scoundrels, let that lady go at once!"

"No go!" grunted Black Bear. "Kootenay young man want squaw."

"Let her go, or I'll drop you off your horse! Now then!"

Miss Meadows gazed at the Swiss in astonishment.

Kern Gunten at the lumber school had never given her an impression of being a fellow of great courage. Yet he was facing the two Kootenays without a tremor.

Such an action would not have surprised her in Frank Richards or Bob Lawless. But it surprised her in the Swiss.

But she was glad to see Gunten there.

Unheard-of as such an outrage was in the Thompson Valley, she had been in the hands of the Redskins a helpless prisoner, and she shivered to think of what her fate might have been if the two bucks had succeeded in carrying her off to their lodges in the remote north.

The two Redskins hesitated, growling in an undertone.

But they yielded, and Miss Meadows' horse was released.

"Now vamoose!" said Gunten, watching them across the rifle. "I give you one minute to get out of sight."

Again hesitation, but the braves apparently decided that it was "not good enough."

With guttural mutterings, they wheeled their horses and rode away, crashing among the larches.

Not till the sound of their horses had died away did Kern Gunten lower his rifle.

Then he dropped it under his arm, and came towards Miss Meadows. He whipped out a knife, and cut through the buffalo strip that bound her to the saddle.

"All right, ma'am," he said.

"I owe my safety to you, Gunten," said Miss Meadows, in a deeply-moved voice.

"I guess I'm glad I heard you, Miss Meadows. I was looking for game in the wood, so I happened to have my rifle with me. It was lucky, I reckon."

"It was very brave of you to face them as you did."

"I guess I'm not a coward, ma'am!"

"You certainly are not!" exclaimed Miss Meadows. "Come, we must leave this spot; there may still be danger. I shall not go to Thompson to-day."

"I'd better see you back to Cedar Creek, ma'am," said Gunten. "There may be some more of the rascals hanging about."

"Come with me," said Miss Meadows.

In a few minutes they were on the trail again, and Miss Meadows rode back towards Cedar Creek, Gunten running by her side.

The Canadian girl was glad when the school came in sight again at last.

She halted at the gate.

"You will come in with me, Gunten," she said.

"I—I don't belong to Cedar Creek now, ma'am!" muttered Gunten, with a sidelong look at the schoolmistress.

"My dear boy, after what you have done, I should be very ungrateful if I did not pardon you," said Miss Meadows. "If you choose, you may return to the school. I shall be glad to see you at Cedar Creek again."

"Thank you, Miss Meadows!"

"You have been away from home some days, I think, Gunten?"

"I—I dared not go home, ma'am. Popper was too hefty with the cowhide!"

"You will go home, now that I have received you back into the school?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am! I guess it's not pleasant camping-out in this weather!"

"You will come in to dinner now."

"Certainly, ma'am!"

Gunten followed the schoolmistress into the dining-room, where most of the Cedar Creek fellows had sat down to dinner.

Mr. Slimmey rose, with a look of surprise. The Cedar Creek fellows looked at Gunten in astonishment.

"By gum! Here's Guntie again!" muttered Chunky Todgers.

"Come back, by thunder!" muttered Eben Hacke. "What does this mean?"

Frank Richards & Co. simply stared.

Gunten gave them a vaunting look.

"You have not been to Thompson, Miss Meadows?" asked Mr. Slimmey.

"No; the trail is not safe now," said Miss Meadows. "Word must be sent to the sheriff at once. Some of the Kootenays are on the warpath."

"What!" exclaimed the assistant-master.

"It is true, Mr. Slimmey. I was seized in the wood by two Kootenays, and forced away with them, but, fortunately, Gunten came up, and frightened them off with his rifle. He faced them very bravely," said Miss Meadows.

"I desire all the school to know that I owe my safety to Kern Gunten. He is to return to Cedar Creek."

"My hat!" ejaculated Frank Richards involuntarily.

"Gunten faced two Kootenays on the warpath?" almost shouted Tom Lawrence.

"Yes; he was very brave."

"Brave!" stuttered Bob Lawless. "Gunten brave!"

A look of comprehension dawned in Vere Beauclere's face.

"Miss Meadows, you were attacked by two Kootenays!" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"And—and Gunten came up?"

"Yes, very bravely. I have forgiven him, and I hope the whole school will receive him kindly, and with the admiration he merits for his courage," said Miss Meadows.

The schoolmistress left the dining-room, and Kern Gunten coolly took a seat at the table.

Mr. Slimmey blinked at him over his gold-rimmed glasses.

"I congratulate you, Gunten," he said mildly. "You seem to have acted in a very courageous manner."

"Thank you, sir!" said Gunten.

"Courageous!" murmured Bob Lawless. "Two Kootenays! I savvy!"

The three chums looked at Gunten expressively.

Miss Meadows had been attacked by two Kootenay Indians, and they had not forgotten the masquerade of Black Rube and Dave Dunn in the timber that morning.

They knew that the whole affair was a cunning trick of Gunten's to regain his place at Cedar Creek.

He had succeeded, that was clear.

Gunten caught their eyes fixed upon him, and grinned.

He knew that Frank Richards & Co. guessed the truth, but he did not fear that they would betray him.

And when the boys and girls trooped out of the dining-room after dinner, Kern Gunten was surrounded by a curious crowd, all

demanding the details of his gallant rescue of Miss Meadows.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Not Out of Danger!

GUNTEN, you swindler!" exclaimed Bob Lawless wrathfully, as he joined the group in the school ground, with his chums. "You spoofer!" exclaimed Frank Richards. Vere Beauclerc did not speak, but his lip curled.

The other fellows looked at Frank and Bob in surprise.

"What's that?" exclaimed Dawson. "Are you going to tell tales?" sneered Gunten. "You made me a promise this morning in the timber, Bob Lawless."

"I guess it wasn't a promise," said Bob. "I knew you were up to some gum-game. Is this trick what you call a joke?"

"Yes," said Gunten coolly, "and you're bound not to chew the rag on the subject. Telling tales is barred at Cedar Creek."

"We're not thinking of telling Miss Meadows," said Frank contemptuously. "But it's a bit too thick for you to be swanking as an heroic rescuer when we know—"

He broke off. "What do you know?" exclaimed Chunky Todgers curiously. "Out with it, Richards!"

"Yep, out with it," said Hacke. "What's it all about?"

But Frank was silent. He felt that he had no right to give the Swiss away, though Gunten's duplicity disgusted him.

"All serene," said Bob. "Gunten can tell you, if he likes. We're not saying anything." "Look here, can't you fellows explain what you're driving at?"

In his opinion, the English schoolboy was jealous; that was all he could say. "There was a good deal of swank in the manner of the Swiss, as he strolled through the schoolground."

Frank Richards & Co. knew the truth, but they did not feel that they could betray him.

In the eyes of the rest he had distinguished himself.

How Gunten came to play the part of a hero was a great mystery to them, but Miss Meadows' words could not be gainsaid. They had to take it as true.

Keller joined his fellow-countryman, grinning.

"All O.K.?" he remarked. "Well, I'm back again," said Gunten. "Popper will come round when I tell him. It's all serene."

"Where did you dig up those Redskins?"

"Oh, they happened along! Some of the Kootenays kick over the traces at times, you know," remarked Gunten carelessly. Keller chuckled.

"Come off, old scout," he said. "Don't give that to me. You fixed it up with them, of course, and Frank Richards knows it, though he won't say."

"And you won't say, either, unless you want to quarrel with me, Keller!" growled Gunten. "I'm giving you straight goods. They were real Redskins, and I chipped in with a rifle."

"Ha, ha!" "Look here, Keller, if you want your nose pulled—"

"Easy does it!" grinned Keller. "I've come to give you a tip, I guess. There's two galoots outside."

Gunten started.

"Eh? What—who—"

"Two bulldozers from Thompson," said Keller coolly. "They want to see you. They asked me—"

Gunten did not wait for him to finish. With a startled face, and his eyes gleaming under knitted brows, he hurried to the gates.

Keller looked after him with a grin.

Outside the school fence Dave Dunn and Black Rube were standing, evidently waiting. Gunten hurried up to them.

"You fools, get out of my sight!" he muttered savagely. "Haven't you sense enough to keep away from here after—"

"Keep a civil tongue in your head, Kern Gunten!" said Rube surlily. "We've come hyer to see you."

"If we're seen together it may give away the whole stunt!" hissed Gunten. "Haven't you any sense?"

"I guess we're bound to see you," said Dunn coolly. "Come into the timber if you don't want to be seen."

"I've nothing to say to you! I've paid you—"

"Then we'll talk here!"

"Hold on! I'll come!" Gunten panted, as Frank Richards & Co. came out of the gateway. "Come—quick!"

He hurried the two ruffians into the shelter of the timber.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Way of the Transgressor!

KERN GUNTEN'S hard face was pale as he followed the two rustlers into the timber. He breathed a little more freely when they were out of sight of the school.

Dunn and Black Rube were grinning. The unconcealed fear and uneasiness of the Swiss seemed to amuse them.

Gunten fixed his eyes upon them fiercely. "Now, what do you want here?" he said, between his teeth.

"I guess that's soon said!" drawled Rube. "We want payin' for our trouble. I tell you, I was a good hour washin' that muck off in the creek!"

"I've paid you!" said Gunten shrilly. "Ten dollars each for the stunt, and I ponied up in advance."

The two ruffians chuckled hoarsely.

"Ten dollars!" grinned Dunn. "What's that? An' you the son of the richest man in Thompson! A hundred dollars would be nearer the mark!"

"Or two hundred!" grinned the other rascal.

"You—you agreed—"

"Course we did!" said Rube. "We're agreeable galoots, we are! You paid us ten dollars on account. You're goin' to pay us ten more now."

"That'll do for the present," remarked Dunn, with a nod.

"Ten more on Monday," said Rube.

"And ten more the next week!" chuckled Dunn.

"I can't—I won't—I—"

"I guess you will," said Dave Dunn coolly. "You've fooled your schoolmistress into taking you back into the school you was turned out of. It was a good game, and we helped you. That's worth something. Waal, you can't get all that for ten dollars!"

"Not much!" chimed in his companion.

"S'pose we was to call on Miss Meadows, and tell her that them two Kootenay Injuns was us!" chuckled Dunn. "S'pose we let on that it was got-up from the start to make her take you back in the school? You've took her in, Mister Swiss, but how long would it last if we blowed the gaff?"

"Oh, you villain!" almost groaned Gunten.

"That's enough! Come on, Rube! We're goin' to see the schoolmarn!"

"Stop!" shouted Gunten desperately, as the



GUNTEN, THE HERO!—There was a sudden shout from the timber in response to Miss Meadows' cries, and a figure leaped into view, directly in the path of the kidnappers. "Halt!" A rifle came up to a level, and behind the gleaming barrel flashed the eyes of Kern Gunten, the outcast of Cedar Creek. (See Chapter 2.)

NEXT TUESDAY!

"THE CEDAR CREEK CHINEE!"

A MAGNIFICENT LONG COMPLETE STORY OF FRANK RICHARDS. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

THE POPULAR.—No. 181.

10 Wonderful Coloured Plate of a Famous Canadian Pacific Railway Engine—

two ruffians made a movement towards the school. "You—you dare not—" "I guess we'll soon see about that!" "Stop, I tell you!" panted Gunten. "Well, are you paying up, or ain't you?" demanded Dunn roughly. "We ain't got no time to waste hyer chewing the rag!" "I—I can't," muttered Gunten. "Where am I to get the money from?" "I guess your old popper's got plenty," said Dunn. "He's the hardest case in the Thompson Valley, and there ain't a galoot 'tween hyer and Kamloops that he ain't done brown, one time or another. You've got the sponulicks, you young cub! I've seen you swanking with ten-dollar bills, and your popper's got more. And we're going to have a finger in that pie, I reckon!" "You thief! You—" "Come on, Rube!" "Stop!" panted Gunten. "I—I can stand ten dollars, perhaps—" "I reckoned you could!" grinned Dunn. "Hand over the durocks, and not so much chainwag with it!"

The Swiss fumbled in his pockets. His hands trembled with rage as he handed out two ten-dollar bills, one to each of the grinning blackmailers. "I guess that lets us out," said Dave Dunn. "We'll drop in an' see you agin on Monday, Gunten."

And the two rascals went tramping away towards Thompson, where their ill-gotten gains were to be spent in "painting the town red."

With faltering steps, Gunten stumbled away towards the creek. He wanted to be quiet, to think it out.

But as he came out of the timber on the bank of the creek he almost ran into Frank Richards and his comrades.

"Hallo, Guntey! Are the cheery Kootenays gone?" chortled Bob Lawless. "You don't look as if you'd enjoyed a visit from your Indians!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gunten gave him a look of hatred.

But he stopped.

The chums knew the truth, and, in his desperation, he was willing to turn to them for help.

"I say, I'm in a horrible scrape!" he muttered.

"I thought so," said Frank Richards dryly.

"Those—those rotters have turned on me!" muttered Gunten huskily. "They're bleeding me for money, and—and—" "What did you expect?" said Beauclerc.

"They're the kind of men to do it."

"I—I never guessed—"

"You're too jolly clever, Gunty," grinned Bob. "You overreach yourself. You might have foreseen that."

"Well, I—I didn't! I say, what am I to do?" muttered Gunten wretchedly. "I—I can't let them go to Miss Meadows!"

"My word, you'd be fired out fast enough if she knew!"

"Can't you advise a chap?" muttered Gunten. "I—I've got back to school now. My popper will come round when I tell him that. Only—only those scoundrels are going to spoil it all! Can't you advise me, Richards?"

Frank gave him a look in which compassion was mingled with contempt.

His scorn for the wretched schemer was deep enough, but he could not help feeling sorry for a fellow who was utterly down.

"I could advise you," he said. "But I don't suppose you'd take my advice."

"Give it me, anyway."

"Well, go to Miss Meadows and make a clean breast of it."

"Why, you fool, then she'd know—same as if those bulldozers told her! You want me to give myself away!"

"I don't want you to do anything. You ask my advice, and there it is."

Gunten paused. Suspicious as he was, he could see that Frank Richards was giving him the best advice possible, under the circumstances.

Frank was advising him to make a clean breast of the whole business.

But it came into Gunten's mind at once that he could improve on that.

"I guess you're right!" he said.

And he hurried back to the lumber school, his mind made up.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Gunten Pulls Through!

MISS MEADOWS was in her study, writing a letter to the sheriff of Thompson, when Gunten tapped at the door.

The Swiss came in with hanging head, and Miss Meadows gave him a kind smile.

His service that day had wiped out all past offences, in the schoolmistress's eyes.

"Well, Gunten, what is it?" she asked kindly.

"I—I've got a confession to make, ma'am," stammered Gunten.

Miss Meadows' brows contracted a little.

"I hope you have been doing nothing wrong again, Gunten?"

"I—I'm sorry, ma'am. I—I—I can't let it go on like this," murmured Gunten. "I hope you'll forgive me, ma'am. The—the fellows are all talking about how brave it was of me to face those Redskins, and—and I can't let it go on."

Miss Meadows looked at him in wonder.

"I don't understand you, Gunten. It was brave of you; your schoolfellows are quite right."

"It—it wasn't, ma'am."

"What!"

"I've come here to confess," said Gunten, his eyes on the floor. "I—I wanted to come back to the school, Miss Meadows, and—and it was a trick."

"A trick?" exclaimed Miss Meadows.

"Yes, ma'am," said Gunten humbly. "I—I fixed it up with two fellows to do it. They weren't real Redskins, ma'am—"

Miss Meadows caught her breath.

"Gunten!"

"They were got up as Kootenays, ma'am," stammered Gunten. "I—I reckoned you'd let me come back to school if you thought I'd rescued you, so—so I did it, ma'am."

There was a deep silence for a minute or more.

The Swiss hardly dared to look at Miss Meadows.

Her face had become stern and set.

The schoolmistress spoke at last.

"Then what happened to-day was all a trick, Gunten?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You planned to deceive me in order to be admitted to the school again?" Miss Meadows exclaimed.

"I'm sorry, ma'am."

"And why, Gunten, when your contemptible scheme had succeeded perfectly, have you come to confess to me?"

"I—I couldn't let it go on, ma'am," murmured Gunten. "The—the fellows are all calling me a hero, and—and praising me, and—and it made me feel a hypocrite. I couldn't stand it. I—I never thought there was much harm in it at first, but now—now I can see it, and—and I—I came to own up, ma'am."

Miss Meadows' stern face softened. The Swiss was playing his part well, and, so far as Miss Meadows could see, there was no other reason why he should have confessed.

"That shows, at least, that there is an honest strain in your nature, Gunten," said Miss Meadows, after a pause. "At least, you did not wish to obtain credit under false pretences."

"I felt rotten, ma'am," said Gunten glibly. "I—I simply had to own up! I—I hope you won't send me away now, Miss Meadows. I could have kept it secret if I'd liked, only—"

"I shall not send you away, Gunten. You have acted very badly, very wickedly, but, at least, you have shown that you are not all bad. After your confession of your own free will, I cannot punish you. You may go."

"And—and I'm to stay at Cedar Creek, ma'am?" asked Gunten eagerly.

"Yes; at least, so long as you are careful in your conduct."

Gunten left the study, still looking very humble and meek. But outside, when the door was closed, he grinned.

Once more his cunning had saved him.

It was the next day that Miss Meadows knew the real reason for Gunten's precious confession.

Dave Dunn and Black Rube, having "painted the town red" overnight, dropped in at the lumber school to see Gunten, who snapped his fingers in their faces and turned his back on them.

Much enraged, the two rascals proceeded at once to Miss Meadows with their angry tale.

The precious pair were pretty hard cases, but Miss Meadows' words, when she heard their story, penetrated even their thick skins, and they were looking decidedly shamefaced as they slunk away.

To Gunten, Miss Meadows said nothing.

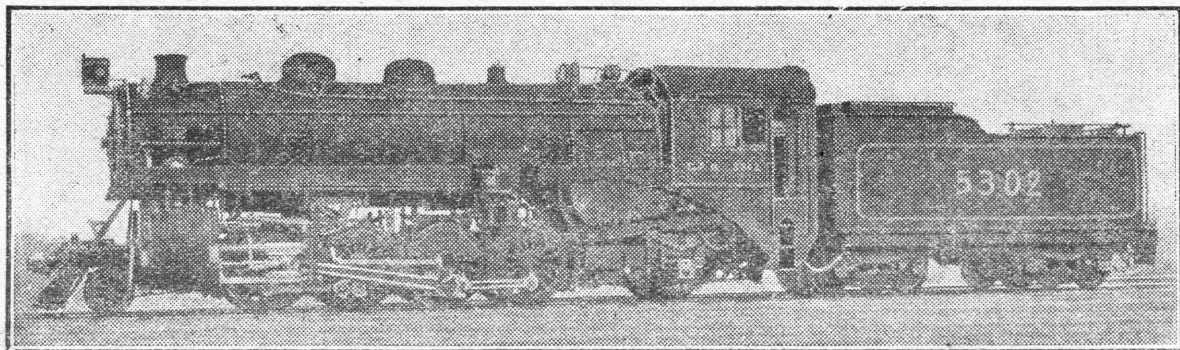
She understood how the Swiss had tricked her, because he knew that his secret was to be betrayed; but her word was given now, and she did not retract it.

Kern Gunten remained at the lumber school, but from that day there was a very sharp eye upon him, and the rogue of the school had to tread very warily.

THE END.

(Don't miss next week's splendid long complete tale of the chums of the Cedar Creek School.)

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