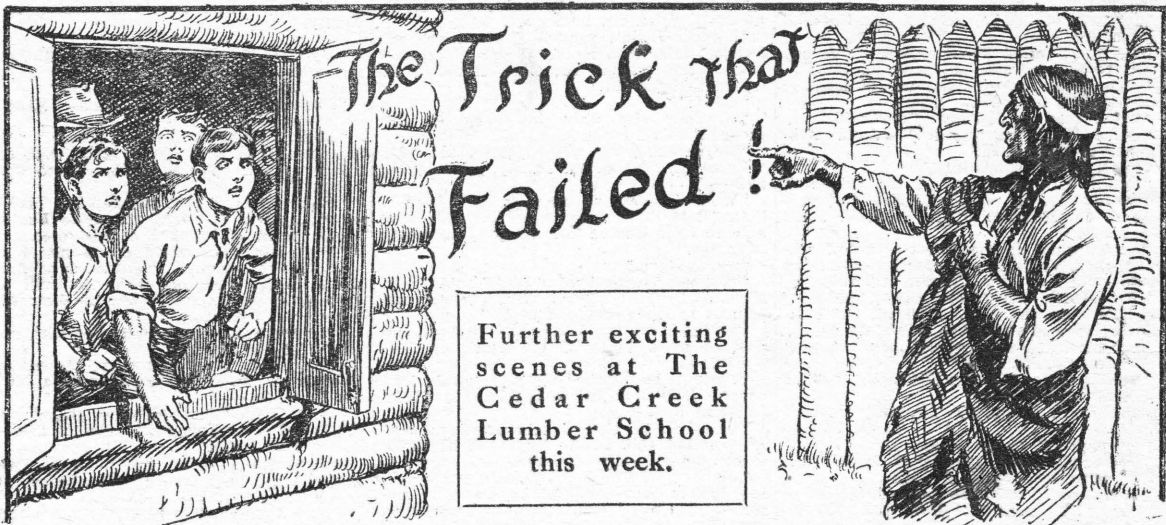


There has been a GRIM STRUGGLE at the Backwoods School between the CEDAR CREEK CHUMS and the tyrannical MR. GUNTEN for many weeks, and still Frank Richards & Co. are holding out! OLD MAN GUN- TEN makes another DESPERATE MOVE to bring about a surrender—but—!



THE FIRST CHAPTER.
No Grub for Yen Chin!

"POOL lill' Chinee velly hungly, oh, yes!"

Thus Yen Chin, the Chow of Cedar Creek, in piteous tones.

The Chinee was sprawled on the floor of the lumber schoolhouse.

Frank Richards & Co. were in deep conversation by the window, and did not hear Yen Chin's remark.

There were serious expressions on the faces of the three chums.

The present state of affairs at the school in the backwoods gave them plenty of food for thought.

The lumber school had gone "on strike" against the dismissal of Miss Meadows.

Mr. Gunten and Mr. Peckover—the master who was to take the place of the school-mistress—had endeavoured to force the juniors into surrender, without success.

Frank Richards & Co. had held the fort against all comers, and were prepared to do so in future, providing they could obtain sufficient food to satisfy their appetites.

Had Chunky Todgers been there the situation would have been far more serious, for Chunky always ate enough for four or five.

It was Chunky who had created the food shortage.

The fat junior had succeeded in spending a short time alone in the kitchen.

But, however short the time had been, it had been sufficient for Chunky to "polish off" pretty nearly all the remaining stock of food.

With wrathful indignation some of the juniors had suggested lynching Chunky Todgers.

Yen Chin proposed killing him, and, for the sake of a little humour, the other juniors had backed him up.

Needless to say, Chunky had become terror-stricken at such a suggestion.

In fear of his life, he dashed away from the school, and streaked for home as fast as his fat legs could carry him.

He had left the juniors roaring with laughter, but the smiles soon disappeared from their faces as they discussed the present food situation.

If they were to carry on with the siege, said force Old Man Gunten to accede to their demands, then food must be obtained—and quickly, too.

During the previous night Frank Richards & Co. had made an effort to get away from the school for the purpose of replenishing the larder.

They had had the misfortune, however, to fall foul of two rascals named Four Kings and Dave Dunn, and had been forced to return.

Now day had dawned once again, and the fear of being captured by Old Man Gunten made it risky to make another attempt to get away before nightfall.

Meanwhile, there were aching pains in the juniors' stomachs, and not enough food to pacify them.

Small wonder, therefore, that Frank Richards and his chums were looking very serious.

Suddenly Frank Richards felt a clutch at his arm, and turned round, to find Yen Chin standing beside him.

"Chinee hungly," said Yen Chin meekly.

"Well, you're not the only one!" replied Frank Richards shortly.

"Poor lill' Chinee velly, velly hungly!" said Yen Chin. "Wantee foodee velly badee! Bob gettee me some, oh, yes?"

"Look here, kid," said Bob Lawless firmly, "it can't be did! We've got just about enough for one meal. We shall have to hold on to that till we get some more."

"I guess that's hoss sense!" said Eben Hacke.

"If we eat up all our grub, how the merry dickens are we going to hold out?" said Bob Lawless grimly. "We shall have to chuck in our checks to Old Man Gunten then."

"We're going to do nothing of the kind, Lawless!" said Eben Hacke. "If you suggest—"

"I don't," broke in Bob Lawless. "I'm merely telling the Chink what will happen if he starts scoffing the grub."

"Pool lill' Chinee fallee ill if no eatee!" whined Yen Chin. "Gittee velly badee—perhaps die!"

"We shall have to risk that!" "Poor lill' Chinee helpee himself to glub, then!" said Yen Chin. "Lill' Chinee know where glub keppee, Chinee goe and—"

Bob Lawless made a grab at the Chow's shoulder and dragged him back.

"I guess you'll do nothing of the kind!" he said emphatically.

"Lettee me go!"

"You're staying with us!"

Yen Chin turned a pleading look in Frank Richards' direction.

"Handsome Flankee gettee me glub?" he asked.

"Sorry, kid; grub's too short!"

"Handsome Beau," said the Chinee, smiling affably at Vere Beauclere, "you gettee pool lill' Chinee glub?"

Vere Beauclere grinned and shook his head.

"Better ask Bob," he replied.

"Ugly Bob velly obstinate," said Yen Chin. "No gettee—"

"There's somebody coming along the trail!" exclaimed Frank Richards suddenly.

"It looks like—"

"Jerusalem crickets!" said Eben Hacke, in surprise. "It's an Indian!"

"It is, by gum!" ejaculated Bob Lawless.

"It's Injun Dick! What the merry dickens does he want?"

"I wonder," said Vere Beauclere.

The juniors waited eagerly by the window, whilst Injun Dick jumped off his horse and strolled towards the schoolhouse.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
A Fateful Message!

"GREAT Jophers!" exclaimed Eben Hacke, as the Indian, drawing his tattered blanket round him, neared the window. "He's got a note."

Injun Dick waved a letter in his hand.

"Perhaps Old Man Gunter's given in, and sent us a note to say so," suggested Vere Beauclere.

"Cheer-ho, Injun Dick!" sang out Frank Richards. "What's the game?"

"Injun thirsty," said the Redskin, moistening his dry lips with his tongue.

"Oh, rats!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "You're never otherwise. What's that note you've got in your hand?"

"Letter for young white chief," said Injun Dick, pointing a grubby forefinger at Bob Lawless.

"For me?" exclaimed Bob.

"Co-rect!"

"Hand it over, then."

Injun Dick made no attempt to do so.

"Injun thirsty," he said.

"Plenty of water in the creek," said Bob Lawless shortly. "If that note is for me, you'd better hand it over."

"Give Injun twenty-five cents," said the Redskin. "Injun bully boy with glass eye. Ride like the wind to bring note to young white chief."

"I don't think!" said Bob Lawless disbelievingly.

"Injun hire horse in Purville," went on the Redskin, still holding the note firmly in his hand.

"What the dickens were you doing in Purville?" demanded Frank Richards. "That's twenty miles away, isn't it, Bob?"

"Nearly," said Bob. "I guess Injun Dick's pulling our legs. He doesn't usually get much farther than the Red Dog, at Thompson."

"Injun work," said the Redskin. "Injun meet white chief's father."

"You met my father?" demanded Bob incredulously.

"Co-rect," said the Redskin. "Great white chief's father meet with accident. Bully boy with glass eye try save him. Injun too late."

"What?" ejaculated Bob Lawless, his face turning pale.

"Injun too late to save great white chief," went on the Redskin. "Pell off horse. Horse kick great white chief in stomach. White chief bad—write note for Injun."

"By gum!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "You're dreaming—you're—"

"Injun tell frozen truth," said the Redskin. "Young white chief read note. See Injun speak truth."

Bob Lawless' face was deathly pale now. "Well, hand the note over," he said impatiently.

"Injun thirsty," said the Redskin.

The Cedar Creek Chums Are Still Holding Out!

"Hang your blessed thirst!" exclaimed Bob Lawless irritably. "If you don't give me that note I'll jolly well come out and take it from you."

"Injun want drink," insisted the Redskin. "Injun dry."

"By gum!" cried Bob Lawless. "I'm not going to put up with any more of this!"

Bob slid his leg over the window-ledge. Injun Dick backed away.

"Injun take twenty cents," he said. "Come here, you coyote!" roared Bob, slipping to the ground.

"Injun take fifteen cents." "You'll take a thump on the cabeza if you're not careful!" exclaimed Bob, making a grab at the Redskin. "Give me that note! D'you hear?"

"Young white chief welcome to note," said Injun Dick, realising that further argument would avail him little. "Injun still thirsty!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Bob Lawless, snatching the note from the Redskin's hand, and commencing to read the words it contained.

Next moment he staggered back, dropping the note from his hand.

"Bob!" muttered Frank Richards. "What—what's the matter?"

Bob Lawless pulled himself together quickly.

"My popper!" he muttered. "It's true, then, Bob, what Injun Dick said?" murmured Frank Richards.

"Every word," said Bob Lawless, in broken tones. "He's been kicked in the stomach by his horse at Purville. He's not expected to live, and—"

"Bob!"

"I—I must go to him at once," said Bob Lawless quickly. "My mother!" he added, turning to Injun Dick. "Have you told her? Have—"

"Injun tell young white chief's mother," said the Redskin solemnly. "She go see great white chief."

"Oh dear!" moaned Bob Lawless. "I shall have to go home for my horse, and—"

"Injun lend young white chief horse," said the Redskin, with unusual willingness.

Bob Lawless brightened up at once.

"Good!" he said. "Where is it?"

"Injun want ten dollars," said the Redskin craftily. "Injun poor man. Lose work if no horse."

"Ten dollars," said Bob Lawless, feeling in his pockets. "I—I've only got five. Will you take those?"

"No take less," said the Redskin, shaking his head. "Injun poor, but Injun generous."

"Oh dear!" groaned Bob Lawless. "How the dickens—"

"Here you are, Bob!" sang out Frank Richards, holding out a handful of money to his chum. "Take this, old son."

Bob Lawless took the money eagerly, and gave his cousin a grateful look as he did so.

"I—I don't know when I shall get back, you fellows," he said, in broken tones. "But whatever you do, stick it out. Don't give in to that galoot Gunten."

"No fear!" sang out the juniors.

Frank Richards reached out of the window and gripped his chum's hand.

"Good luck, Bob, old son!" he said as cheerfully as possible. "I—I hope you won't find uncle so bad as Injun Dick says."

"I hope not," said Bob Lawless.

But as he followed Injun Dick to the gate there was no doubt that Bob's hopes were feeble ones.

All thoughts of the barring-out were dismissed from Bob Lawless' mind.

His one aim was to get to his father as soon as possible, and very soon he was cantering down the trail at a quick speed, hoping against hope that he would find his father still alive when he reached Purville.

Meanwhile, there were anxious faces in the lumber schoolhouse at Cedar Creek.

Bob Lawless' trouble was shared by all the juniors.

Rancher Lawless was a favourite with them all, and the thought that Bob's father was ill—might even die—weighed heavily on their minds.

"Oh Jerusalem!" said Eben Hacke. "I guess I didn't expect this!"

"It's rotten—jolly rotten!" said Frank Richards dismally. "I do hope Bob's popper will pull through."

"So do I," said Vere Beauclerc.

"It ain't much good going on with the strike," said Eben Hacke miserably. "There ain't many of us left, and—"

"We're going on with it," said Frank Richards determinedly. "D'you think we're

going to knuckle under to that rotter Gunten just because we've lost old Bob?"

"No; but—"

"If you've had enough, Hacke," said Frank Richards, "you can buzz off!"

"I guess I ain't vamoosing the ranch yet awhile," said Eben Hacke at once. "If you galoots are hanging on, Eben Hacke don't intend to light out."

"Good!"

"Anybody else want to throw up the sponge?" asked Frank Richards.

"Me wantee glub," whined Yen Chin. "Me velly hungry. Handsome Flanky, get me glub, and—"

"Well, I think we may as well have a little," said Frank Richards. "We sha'n't be able to fight Gunten and his gang on empty stomachs."

"That's true."

"It won't be much of a feed," said Frank Richards. "It'll fill a corner, though, and help us to carry on for a while."

The juniors trooped into the kitchen, and partook of a little of the stock of food remaining.

It could hardly be called a meal, but, nevertheless, it helped to appease the rebels' pangs of hunger.

The spirits of the schoolboy strikers were at very low ebb, but under Frank Richards' cheery influence they improved wonderfully.

And when at length the "meal" concluded, the juniors were resolved to carry on the strike until their demands were acceded to and Miss Meadows was reinstated as schoolmistress at Cedar Creek.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Surrender!

"JERUSALEM crickets! Here's that Injun again!"

Eben Hacke made the remark as the juniors arrived at the window of the schoolhouse once again.

Injun Dick was not walking as straight as before.

There was a decided lurch in his gait, which told the juniors too plainly that he had been imbibing in firewater with the money he had received from Bob Lawless.

He pulled up before the window, and gave the juniors a sickly grin.

"Injun come again," he said.

"Well, what the dickens do you want this time?" asked Frank Richards sharply.

"Injun walk 'long trail," said the Redskin, swaying unsteadily on his feet. "Injun meet beautiful missy. Beautiful missy call Injun."

"Oh, stop that rot!" growled Frank Richards. "Come to the point!"

"Injun coming," said the Redskin. "Injun tell frozen truth. Beautiful missy give Injun note. Injun take note—"

"Who the merry dickens are you referring to?" demanded Frank Richards.

"Missy Meadows," said Injun Dick. "She wait for buggy take her to Thompson. She in great hurry—going long journey. Wah! I have spoken!"

"You've spoken a lot of rot, if that's anything!" said Frank Richards.

"Injun speak words of wisdom. Injun bring note for young white chiefs."

"A note from Miss Meadows?"

Injun Dick nodded his head in assent.

"Well, hand it over, then," said Frank Richards firmly.

"Injun thirsty—Injun want twenty-five cents," said Injun Dick determinedly.

"Missy Meadows say young white chiefs give Injun twenty-five cents. Injun wait. Injun Dick bully rook!"

"Oh, rats!" said Frank Richards disdainfully. "Miss Meadows wouldn't ask us to give you money."

"I guess not," said Eben Hacke.

"Beautiful missy write down on paper," said the Redman. "All O. K. Injun tell truth, you bet!"

"Well, show us the note, then," said Frank Richards. "If Miss Meadows says you're to have the money, we'll give it you. If not—"

Frank Richards paused as Injun Dick drew a piece of paper from the folds of his blanket, and proceeded to double it in half.

Then he held the folded note in front of the juniors.

Frank Richards read the words on the paper, words which had been scrawled in pencil, and which were hardly legible.

A serious frown came over his face as he

at length deciphered the last word in the note, for this is how the message ran:

"Give Injun Dick twenty-five cents. Injun thirsty."

"My hat!" exclaimed Frank Richards, giving the Redskin a hard look. "Miss Meadows didn't write those words."

"Missy write," said Injun Dick. "Missy in hurry—write quickly."

"Bosh!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "Miss Meadows could write better than that with her eyes shut. You've written those words yourself."

"Injun no can," said the Redskin, backing away slightly. He did not quite like the angry gleam in Frank Richards' eyes.

"Well, you won't get a penny out of us," said Frank Richards. "You're a scheming rascal, Injun Dick, and I guess you'll find yourself in the calaboose one of these days if you aren't careful!"

"Injun honest. Injun bully boy with glass eye," said the Redskin.

"Don't talk such utter rot!" snapped Frank Richards. "Give me that note you've got there, or—"

"Injun wait for twenty-five cents," said the Redskin. "Young white chief give—

Yow! Yooooooop!"

Before Injun Dick could move Frank Richards had shot through the window, and hurled himself at the Redskin.

With a thud the two landed on the ground, Frank Richards uppermost.

Frank made a snatch at the note in Injun Dick's hand, and, rising to his feet, commenced to read the message it contained.

Next instant his face changed colour, and he uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"What's the matter, Frank?" asked Vere Beauclerc.

"My hat!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "This note's from Miss Meadows, and she says—"

"Miss Meadows," said Eben Hacke. "Then that thar Injun was tellin' the truth, after all."

"Well, about the first part of the letter," said Frank Richards slowly. "That's in Miss Meadows' handwriting. The bit about the money Injun Dick wrote himself."

"Injun Dick no write," said the red man. "Injun no can."

"I guess you'd better vamoose the ranch, Injun Dick," said Eben Hacke. "You ain't exactly welcome hyer. Read out the note, Richards!"

"Right-ho!" said Frank. "This is how it runs:

"My dear boys,—Whilst I very much appreciate your loyalty to me, I must say how much I resent the means you are adopting to get me reinstated as schoolmistress at Cedar Creek. In fact, were you successful in your efforts, I could not think of returning to the school after the way you have behaved. I have accepted a post at Montreal, and, therefore, am leaving Cedar Creek for good. I should advise you to cease your disgraceful behaviour, and accept Mr. Peckover as your headmaster. Otherwise, your actions may have most unpleasant results.—Yours sincerely,

"E. MEADOWS."

For a few moments none of the juniors spoke, so thunderstruck were they at the tone of the letter Frank Richards read out.

"Surely Miss Meadows didn't write that?" asked Vere Beauclerc, at length.

"Can't be much doubt about that," said Frank Richards dolorously. "Have a look at it. It's her writing, right enough."

The juniors at the window took charge of the note and inspected it closely.

They shook their heads sadly, for there was no doubt in their minds that the note had been written by Miss Meadows.

"Young white chiefs no like letter," remarked Injun Dick.

"Jerusalem crickets!" exclaimed Eben Hacke, looking up. "Why ain't you vamoosed to the ranch, Injun Dick?"

"Injun stony," said the Redskin. "Injun wait for twenty-five cents."

Eben Hacke grabbed at a broom which rested against the wall, and held it in front of the red man in a threatening manner.

"Now, are you going to absquatulate?" he demanded.

"Injun absquatulate if young white chiefs give Injun twenty-five cents. Injun—

Ow! Yow! Yooooooop!

The broom caught the red man full in the chest, bowling him over.

Injun Dick did not stop to press his claims any further. He drew his tattered blanket round him, and darted towards the gate.

"Now that gopher's gone, we'll discuss things," said Eben Hacke. "Hev you decided what to do, Richards?"

"Don't see what we can do," said Frank Richards dismally. "If Miss Meadows refuses to come back, it ain't much good carrying on the strike."

"I guess that's so," said Eben Hacke. "We shall have to put up with that rotter, Peckover!" said Frank Richards. "I suggest that we give him a trial, and if he comes it too much we might chuck him out, and strike for a new master."

"Not a bad notion," agreed Eben Hacke. "I guess—Jerusalem! If I ain't blind that's Kern Gunten coming in at the gate!"

The juniors looked in the direction of the gate, and observed a boy of their own age crossing the quadrangle.

"It is Gunten," said Frank Richards. "I wonder what he wants? Perhaps he thinks he's coming back to school."

"We won't have him!"

"No fear!"

Gunten, the fellow Miss Meadows had expelled from the school for blackguardism, came striding towards the rebels, quite unperturbed by the angry expressions on the juniors' faces.

"I've come back, you see!" he said, with a confident air.

"You can jolly well buzz off!" said Frank Richards firmly. "We've done with you, you cad, and we refuse to have you here!"

"I guess you haven't much choice in the matter," said Gunten triumphantly. "Mr. Peckover is coming along now to take charge. He— Here he comes!"

At that moment there was a clatter of a horse's feet outside, and an instant later Mr. Peckover and his horse entered the playground.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Peckover Surprises the Juniors.

GOOD-MORNING, boys!"

Mr. Peckover jumped off his horse and greeted the juniors in a most affable manner.

On the previous occasion on which he had spoken to the juniors he had addressed them most abruptly. The change in his manner, therefore, came as a great surprise to Frank Richards & Co.

"I understand that Miss Meadows has departed from the district," said Mr. Peckover, in kindly tones.

"We knew that already!" said Frank Richards brusquely.

"Quite so—quite so!" said Mr. Peckover.

"No doubt you boys are very disappointed."

"We are!" said the juniors.

"I quite appreciate your disappointment," said Mr. Peckover, in his polite manner. "At first I was inclined to blame you for taking the course you did, but now I understand how annoyed you must have been at the dismissal of your school-mistress."

"We were!"

"I must say I disapproved of the way in which you treated me," said the new master, smiling genially. "But I will forgive all that, under the circumstances, and I hope you will accept me as your new head-master."

"Oh, Jerusalem!" muttered Eben Hacke, astounded by Mr. Peckover's affability.

"I trust that you will not bear me any malice," said the new master, "and that we shall always remain on the best of terms. If one of you boys will open the door we will prepare the school for afternoon lessons."

Frank Richards hesitated.

"There's one thing we've got to settle first," he said. "Is that cad there going to return to the school?"

Frank Richards pointed to Kern Gunten, whose face still bore a cynical smile.

"Don't you wish him to return?" asked Mr. Peckover.

"I guess not!" said Eben Hacke. "He ain't the sort of galoot we want here! The calaboose is the place for him, and—"

"Very well, my boys," said Mr. Peckover condescendingly. "I will grant your wishes. Gunten shall leave the school at once, and not be allowed to return."

"I say——" began Gunten, giving the new master a savage look.

"That is sufficient, Gunten," said Mr. Peckover, turning to the cad of Cedar Creek. "I must uphold these boys in this matter. If they do not want you here I cannot allow you to remain."

"But my father——"

"Your father has nothing to do with this matter!" said Mr. Peckover sharply. "Take your departure at once, my boy!"

Mr. Peckover pointed towards the gate, and at the same time he gave Gunten a meaning glance.

The juniors did not observe the look. Had they done so their suspicions might possibly have been aroused.

The look was sufficient for Gunten, however. He understood what it meant, and,

"you have no need to be concerned on that score. I do not think Mr. Gunten will give the matter further thought."

"He will when he learns that you won't have his son in the school," said Frank.

"You must not worry about that, my boy!" said the new master.

"We're not worrying about it," said Frank Richards grimly. "We're quite capable of dealing with Mr. Gunten if he starts browbeating us again. All the same, we don't want to give him an advantage."

"An advantage?" said Mr. Peckover slowly. "I don't understand what——"

"I mean that if we shift away the things from the door we sha'n't be able to defend ourselves against Mr. Gunten," explained Frank Richards.

"My dear boy, you have no need to feel



THE NEW HEAD IS NOT WANTED! Out of the door of the schoolhouse shot Mr. Peckover, closely followed by the excited juniors, who armed themselves with brooms and sticks and any other weapon they could lay their hands on. "Hurry up, you swindling galoot!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "And don't you show your nose in here again!" (See Chapter 5.)

after giving the juniors a savage glare, he turned on his heels and strolled disconsolately towards the gates.

Mr. Peckover beamed on the juniors.

"Bad boy, that!" he said. "It isn't right that he should mix with boys like you. He sha'n't come here whilst I'm master!"

"But—supposing his father kicks up a row?" remarked Frank Richards.

"My dear boy, I'm quite capable of dealing with Mr. Gunten!" said the new master firmly. "He is a braggart and a bully, and I shall certainly not allow myself to be dictated to by him. Would one of you boys mind opening the door so that I may enter the school?"

The juniors did not move.

Mr. Peckover gave Frank Richards a beaming smile.

"Why do you hesitate, my boy?" he asked.

"I'm wondering what will happen, supposing Old Man Gunten comes along, and—"

Frank Richards paused.

"You're afraid that Mr. Gunten will want his revenge for the manner in which you have handled him?"

"Y-y-y-yes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Mr. Peckover broke into a hearty laugh. "My dear boy," he said,

anxious about that," said the new master, patting the junior on the shoulder. "We can soon barricade the door again if Mr. Gunten makes an attempt to attack."

"We!" ejaculated Frank Richards.

"Yes, we!" said Mr. Peckover promptly. "I shall be only too pleased to assist you in dealing with Mr. Gunten. I am standing by you, boys, no matter what happens!"

"Jerusalem crickets!" exclaimed Eben Hacke. "I guess that's straight talk. Open the door, Richards!"

"Right-ho!" said Frank Richards, moving towards the window. "Will you lend me a hand, Beau?"

"Certainly!" said Vere Beauclere. And he and Frank Richards climbed through the window of the lumber schoolhouse.

The rest of the juniors remained in the playground conversing with Mr. Peckover.

Frank Richards and Vere Beauclere did not find it an easy job to remove the barricade in front of the door.

That barricade had been built to withstand any form of attack.

Forms and desks and chairs were piled one on top of the other, but Frank Richards and Vere Beauclere set about clearing a path to the door in an earnest manner.

"This is a nice finish to our barring out!"

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remarked Frank Richards regretfully. "Can't be helped!" said Vere Beauclerc. "I had no idea Miss Meadows would give in like that!"

"Neither had I," said Frank Richards. "Neither did I think that old Peckover was such a decent sort."

"You think he's decent, Frank?" "Well, he seems all right," said Frank Richards. "Far different from when he came up with Old Man Gunten. We must have been mistaken, Beau."

"I don't know," said Vere Beauclerc thoughtfully.

Frank Richards looked at his chum in surprise.

"Surely you don't think that Peckover's taken us in?" he said.

"I shouldn't like to say," said Vere slowly. "He seems all right, but—but I can't forget what a brute he seemed when we wouldn't let him and Old Man Gunten enter the school."

"Well, the chap might have been a bit wild, you know," said Frank Richards. "We weren't exactly kind to him, and we—"

"Are you ready, boys?" The two chums looked up, and observed Mr. Peckover looking at them through a broken panel in the door.

"Shan't be a minute, sir!" said Frank Richards; and he proceeded to clear away the remaining articles of furniture.

At length the door was opened and Mr. Peckover and the rest of the juniors entered.

The new master was looking as affable and cheerful as he possibly could.

"Lend a hand boys!" he said. "If you have no objection we will tidy up the class-room and place the forms in position for afternoon school. I understand that most of the boys and girls will be returning then."

The juniors lent their assistance and very soon the schoolhouse was perfectly tidy.

This task finished the juniors partook of the remaining stock of food in the kitchen, and at Mr. Peckover's suggestion they went out into the playground to wait for their schoolfellows to arrive for afternoon school.

Although they were disappointed at the result of the barring-out, the juniors were considerably comforted by Mr. Peckover's affable manner.

The new master was by no means the tyrant they had thought him to be.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

No Luck for Mr. Peckover.

"HERE!" Vere Beauclerc looked round as he heard his name called to find Frank Richards strolling towards him.

Vere was standing at the gate, a thoughtful look upon his brow.

"I wondered where you'd got to, old son!" said Frank Richards cheerfully. "What the dickens—"

Frank Richards paused as he heard the sound of a horse's feet on the trail.

He looked out of the gate, and next instant he uttered an exclamation.

"My hat!" he cried. "It's Bob Lawless! I wonder—"

Frank Richards did not have time to say anything more, for Bob Lawless came tearing up, and jumped off his horse in front of his chums.

There was a set and anxious expression on Bob's usually sunny face.

"What the dickens are you galoots doing here?" he said breathlessly.

"How's your father, Bob?" asked Vere Beauclerc, feeling that this matter was far more important than their being outside the school.

"Popper's right as rain!" said Bob Lawless quickly. "It was all a put-up job. I'll lynch that galoot of an Injun when I see him again!"

"A—A put-up job!" stammered Frank Richards in perplexity.

"I guess so," said Bob Lawless. "I shouldn't be surprised if that galoot Gunten wrote that note, and paid Injun Dick to bring it here, so as to get me away. Has Gunten made an attack?"

Frank Richards shook his head.

"No," he said. "The barring-out is over, old son."

"Over?" gasped Bob incredulously.

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"We had a note from Miss Meadows, saying that she had gone to take a job at Montreal," explained Frank Richards. "She advised us to give in, and we thought it best to do so. Old Peckover's arrived, and— What's the matter, Bob?"

Bob Lawless' face was a study. "You dunderheaded galoots!" he roared. "Who's in there?"

Bob Lawless pointed towards the school-house.

"Mr. Peckover," said Frank. "The school's ready for afternoon lessons, and we—"

"Great gophers!" broke in Bob Lawless. "I never met such a lot of simple galoots in my life! You've been taken in, and now—"

"Taken in?" gasped Frank Richards. "Yes, taken in!" said Bob Lawless. "Miss Meadows hasn't gone away. I met her on the trail, and she said that she hoped to be back at the school soon."

"But—but we had a note from her saying—"

"Great pip!" roared Bob. "That must have been a forgery, like the one I received! It's Gunten's work, and—"

"Bob!" "Old Man Gunten's done this, I'll bet!" said Bob Lawless. "I saw a lot of those Red Dog scoundrels in Thompson talking to Gunten. I'll bet you anything you like that they're coming here to take charge of the school, and force us to give in!"

Frank Richards was flabbergasted by Bob's statements.

"But Bob," he said. "Peckover's a pretty decent chap, really. He says that if we have any trouble with Old Man Gunten he'll take our part!"

"What!" roared Bob. "Peckover—that chap who behaved like a blessed tyrant when he came here with Gunten?"

"Yes; but—"

"You simple jay!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "That galoot has taken you in! He's put on his best manners in order to get into the school. I suppose you've moved all the desks and forms?"

"Yes." "Well, we've jolly well got to put them back again!"

"But—but what about Mr. Peckover?" "You leave that galoot to me!" said Bob Lawless. "I'm going to put a few questions to him. You get all the fellows together, and come in after me. There may be a bit of a dust-up."

Next instant Bob Lawless darted towards the lumber schoolhouse, leaving Frank Richards bewildered and thoughtful.

Meanwhile, Bob had entered the school. He walked in quietly, and found Mr. Peckover, a grim, set expression on his face, standing by the window.

Bob coughed as the master did not hear him approach.

Mr. Peckover turned round at once, and gave Bob a savage glare.

"Well, what do you want?" he exclaimed sharply.

"I want to have a chat with you," said Bob Lawless. "I understand you're the new headmaster."

"I am!" snapped Mr. Peckover, angrily. "I'll trouble you to speak to me a little more politely, boy!"

"Who told you to come here as headmaster?" asked Bob coolly.

"Boy!" thundered Mr. Peckover. "How dare you—"

"And who told you that Miss Meadows had gone to Montreal?"

"You disgraceful young hooligan!" cried the new master, "Miss Meadows told me so herself, and—"

"Great gophers!" exclaimed Bob, darting towards Mr. Peckover. "That's enough! Come on, you galoots!"

Next instant Frank Richards and the other juniors came rushing into the schoolhouse.

Mr. Peckover had bowed himself out by stating that Miss Meadows had acquainted him with her intention to take up a post in Montreal.

This was a deliberate untruth, and the juniors realised now that Mr. Peckover had tricked them.

"Stand back!" roared the new master, as the juniors dashed at him. "I—Ow! Yow! Yoooooop!"

With a thud Mr. Peckover landed on the floor, with half a dozen juniors on top of him.

"A rope—quick!" cried Bob.

"Let me go, you young scoundrels!" roared Mr. Peckover fiercely. "I'll—I'll—"

"Turn him over!" cried Bob. And Mr. Peckover was promptly turned over.

It was the work of an instant to tie the new master's hands behind him.

"Now, give me that dunce's hat," said Bob Lawless.

Eben Hacke procured the hat and handed it to Bob.

"Don't you dare to put that thing on my head!" thundered Mr. Peckover.

"Kim up!" exclaimed Bob cheerfully. "You haven't got any choice in this. Hold your cabeza still! That's O.K. Now lift him up, you galoots!"

The new master was promptly raised.

"Now run him out to the trail!" shouted Bob, giving Mr. Peckover a kick to start him on his way.

Out of the door shot the new master, closely followed by the excited juniors, who armed themselves with brooms and rulers and sticks, and any other weapons that they could lay their hands on.

"Hurry up, you swindling galoot!" exclaimed Bob. "And don't you show your chivvy here again, Savvy?"

Mr. Peckover made no reply, except to shriek and roar.

But he understood, and when he reached the gate he tore down the trail as fast as his legs could carry him.

Suddenly Bob Lawless uttered a warning cry. To their ears came the sound of horses' feet on the trail.

"That's Old Man Gunten and his gang for a cert!" said Bob Lawless. "Back to the schoolhouse, you galoots, and get those barricades up again!"

"What-ho!"

The juniors tore back to the lumber school, and were soon busily engaged in getting the barricades into place once more.

They had just finished their task when a number of horsemen dashed into the playground.

Thump! Somebody was banging on the barred window of the schoolhouse.

"Open this window, d'you hear!" roared Old Man Gunten furiously.

"No fear!" chortled Frank Richards. "We've done you brown this time, Gunten! Your forged letters haven't exactly worked out all right for you. Better try some other dodge!"

"I—I—I—"

Mr. Gunten faltered and spluttered. He was too overcome by the failure of his cunning scheme to make a coherent remark. He had been beaten all along the line, and when at length, thoroughly discomfited at not being able to gain entrance to the schoolhouse, he moved away from the barred window, it was with the knowledge that the rebels of Cedar Creek were still holding out.

(A Full-of-Dash Tale of Frank Richards and Co. next week, chaps! Keep a watch out for it!)

THE "MAGNET" LIMERICK COMPETITION!

Full particulars of this Topping Competition will be found in this week's issue of The "Magnet": Buy a Copy and Enter To-day!

THE "MAGNET" LIMERICK COUPON, No. 5.

Down the banister-rail Cherry sped.
"Short cut to the bottom," he said.
Then he gave a wild yell
As he toppled and fell!

THIS EXAMPLE WILL HELP YOU.

To alight at the "feet" of the "Head"!