

STORMY TIMES AT CEDAR CREEK!

Frank Richards & Co., all agree that Mr. Peckover, the headmaster of the new backwoods school, is an out and out "outsider," when he causes the chums to be unjustly punished. That is why they visit Hillcrest after school hours to get their revenge!

MR. PECKOVER'S REVENGE!



CATCHING IT HOT!

The Adventures of Frank Richards and Co., of Cedar Creek School.

**THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Black Ingratitude!**

"PECKOVER, by gum!"

There had been a heavy fall of snow in the Thompson Valley, and the Cedar Creek trail was thick with the white flakes.

Frank Richards and Bob Lawless were trudging through the snow towards Cedar Creek School, when Bob suddenly halted.

Ahead of the two schoolboys on the trail a fur-clad figure had come in sight.

It was Mr. Peckover, the headmaster of Hillcrest School, with his fur-coat turned up round his chin, the flaps of his cap drawn down over his ears, and little more of his face showing than his long, thin, red nose.

But the chums of Cedar Creek knew that nose.

Mr. Peckover's head was bent against the keen wind that blew from the snowy slopes of the Rocky Mountains in the far distance.

He was coming towards the Cedar Creek fellows, but he had not seen them.

"Dear old Peckover!" said Bob Lawless, with a grin. "And there's plenty of snow handy, Franky."

Frank Richards laughed and shook his head.

"Not good enough, Bob," he answered. "He will come along to Cedar Creek and complain if we snowball him."

"But it's too good a chance to be lost!" urged Bob. "The old bird hasn't seen us, and we can take cover, and snowball him as he moseys by."

"But—"

"He can't come yarning to Miss Meadows if he doesn't see us," urged Bob. "And he's asked for it, hasn't he? Isn't he down on us, nice as we are?"

"Yes; but—"

"Don't be, old chap; get into cover, and get some snowballs ready."

Bob Lawless was evidently determined.

The chums of Cedar Creek had had many rubs with Mr. Peckover, and they had no love for the headmaster of Hillcrest.

And really it did seem too good a chance to be lost.

"Oh, all right!" said Frank. "But—"

"Hallo!" ejaculated Bob suddenly.

Mr. Peckover was about a dozen yards away now, but with his head still bent and his eyes on the trail he had not seen the chums of Cedar Creek, so far.

But all of a sudden, as he came abreast of a thick patch of spruce beside the trail, Mr. Peckover gave a wild jump.

From the spruce thicket a snowball had whizzed with deadly aim, and it landed fairly on the sharp red nose of the schoolmaster.

There was a sudden howl from Mr. Peckover as he jumped.

"My hat!" exclaimed Frank Richards in astonishment. "Who was that? There's somebody in the timber!"

Whiz, whiz!

Crash!

From the spruce whizzing snowballs came thick and fast.

It was evident that there was an ambush beside the trail, and Mr. Peckover had walked into it.

Frank Richards and Bob Lawless stared on at the scene.

Their snowballs were not wanted.

Mr. Peckover was fairly dancing as the shower of missiles came pelting from the thicket, smiting him hip and thigh.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob.

"Yarooooh!"

Whiz, whiz, whiz!

The snowballers were still invisible; the thick spruce hid them from sight.

But their aim was deadly.

Snowballs smashed all over Mr. Peckover as he yelled and jumped and dodged.

He lost his footing suddenly in the snow and rolled over.

Then there was a sound of crashing in the thicket as the unseen snowballers fled through the timber—still unseen.

"Who the dickens are they?" exclaimed Frank Richards. "Not Cedar Creek chaps, I think."

"I guess not!" chuckled Bob Lawless. "Look there!"

He pointed through an opening in the timber.

From where they stood the chums could see three figures darting among the leafless trees in full flight.

"Dicky Bird!" exclaimed Frank.

"And Blumpy and Fisher!" grinned Bob.

"Hillcrest chaps—pelting their own werry headmaster, too! Peckover doesn't seem popular with his pupils."

In a moment or two Dicky Bird and his comrades vanished into the forest.

On the trail, Mr. Peckover was still rolling in the snow, gasping and snorting.

"Let's give the old bird a hand up!" said Bob Lawless good-naturedly.

Mr. Peckover was really in need of assistance.

He had rolled into a drift beside the trail, and nearly disappeared from sight.

Frank Richards and Bob Lawless ran towards him.

From the snowdrift a capped head and a red nose emerged.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" came from the half-buried schoolmaster.

Bob Lawless grasped Mr. Peckover by the shoulder, and Frank Richards seized his arm.

They dragged together, and the angular gentleman was pulled out of the drift.

He landed gasping in the trail.

"Ow! Oooooop!"

"All right now, sir!" said Bob Lawless, suppressing his merriment. "Set him on his tootsies, Franky!"

"Up with you, sir!" said Frank Richards cheerily.

The chums of Cedar Creek had quite forgotten their original intention of snowballing Mr. Peckover themselves.

Certainly he looked as if he was not in need of any more snowballing.

He was smothered with snow from head

to foot, and looked a good deal like Father Christmas as the chums set him on his feet.

He gasped and spluttered breathlessly.

"You young scoundrels!"

"What!" ejaculated Frank.

"You young rascals!"

"Well, I like that!" said Bob Lawless. "Is that what you call thanks for helping you out of the drift, Mr. Peckover?"

"I—I—I— You young villains!"

Mr. Peckover glared round wildly for his stick, which he had dropped when he rolled over.

Frank Richards picked it up and handed it to him.

The moment the angular gentleman grasped it he brought it across Frank's shoulders with a sounding whack.

Frank gave a yell.

"Why—what—you—"

"You young rascals!" shouted Mr. Peckover furiously. "I will thrash you within an inch of your lives! You—you dare to snowball me!"

The two schoolboys dodged.

"But we didn't!" yelled Bob. "We ran up to help you! It was somebody in the timber who snowballed you."

"Don't tell me falsehoods!"

Slash!

"You silly old duffer!" shouted Frank. "Keep off, you fathead! I tell you it was— Oh, my hat!"

Instead of keeping off, Mr. Peckover rushed on, with his stick flourishing in the air.

He was under the impression that it was the Cedar Creek chums who had snowballed him, and their denials were of no use. Mr. Ephraim Peckover was not of a trustful disposition.

Frank and Bob dodged the stick with some difficulty, but Mr. Peckover was not to be denied.

He pressed on, the stick lashing out, and he would certainly have done some damage with it had not Bob rushed in and butted.

Bob's head smote the schoolmaster on the centre of his fur-coat, and fairly bowled him over.

He staggered back, and sat down in the snowdrift from which the chums had rescued him a few minutes before.

"Yooooop!"

Mr. Peckover's head and feet showed above the drift; the rest of him was out of sight.

"My hat! I've a jolly good mind to give him some of his own stick!" exclaimed Frank Richards wrathfully. "Leave him there, anyway!"

"You bet!"

"Yow-ow-ow! Help!" yelled Mr. Peckover.

But the chums were not disposed to render further help.

They tramped on down the trail, leaving Mr. Peckover to sort himself out at his leisure.

A Screamingly Funny Tale of the Far West Next Week—Don't Miss It!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Called Over the Coals!

MISS MEADOWS frowned. Cedar Creek was at afternoon lessons, when there came a loud knock at the door of the big school-room.

The door was flung open, and Mr. Peckover strode in. Frank Richards and Bob Lawless exchanged a quick look.

"After us, you bet!" murmured Bob. "You fellows been ragging Peckover?" asked Beauclerc in a whisper. "No; but he thinks we have."

"By gum! He looks wrathly!" murmured Chunky Todgers. Mr. Peckover looked exceedingly wrathly as he strode down the school-room towards Miss Meadows.

"Miss Meadows——" spluttered the unexpected visitor.

"Really, Mr. Peckover——" "I have come to lay a complaint before you, madam!" snorted Mr. Peckover.

"This is neither the time nor the place, sir! You are interrupting my work!" said Miss Meadows coldly.

"Two boys in this class, madam, have assaulted me!" shouted Mr. Peckover. He stared round the class, and pointed a bony forefinger at Frank Richards and Bob Lawless.

"Those two young rascals, Richards and Lawless!" he exclaimed. Miss Meadows set her lips.

"Pray calm yourself, sir! Richards and Lawless, step out before the class!" Frank Richards and his Canadian cousin stepped out obediently.

The eyes of all Cedar Creek were upon them.

"The two schoolboys were quite cool. Mr. Peckover was very far from cool."

"Richards! Lawless! You have——" began the schoolmistress.

"Not at all, Miss Meadows!" said Frank quietly.

"You do not deny Mr. Peckover's statement?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"The boy is lying!" thundered Mr. Peckover. "These two young rascals threw snowballs at me on the trail between this school and Hillcrest, and caused me to fall into a drift!"

"This is very serious, Richards!" said Miss Meadows, frowning. "If you have done this——"

"But we haven't, Miss Meadows," said Frank Richards earnestly.

"Did you meet Mr. Peckover on the trail?"

"Yes; but——" "Kindly tell me what happened, then."

"I have told you what happened Miss Meadows!" thundered Mr. Peckover. "And I demand the instant and severe punishment of these two young rascals!"

"If they are guilty of assailing you, sir, they will be punished; but, naturally, I shall hear their account first," said Miss Meadows tartly.

"They will utter falsehoods——" "We shall do nothing of the kind!" exclaimed Frank Richards indignantly. "And only a cad would say so."

"Wha-a-at!" spluttered Mr. Peckover. "You hear him, madam?"

"Silence, Richards!" "He has no right to call us liars, ma'am," said Frank.

"Tell me what occurred," said Miss Meadows, with a worried look.

"I repeat that I have told you, madam, that——"

"Allow Richards to speak, please, Mr. Peckover."

Frank Peckover snorted, but he gave Frank a chance to speak.

Frank explained what had taken place on the trail, Mr. Peckover punctuating his remarks with a series of scornful sniffs.

Miss Meadows' brow cleared as she listened. "Did you see the persons who snowballed Mr. Peckover, Richards?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Who were they?" "I—I'd rather not mention their names, ma'am," stammered Frank. "Mr. Peckover has no right to come here for information."

"The boy is lying!" thundered Mr. Peckover. "It was he and his companion who threw the snowballs at me!"

"I do not believe Richards is capable of lying," said Miss Meadows quietly. "It appears that you did not see who threw the snowballs."

"I saw these boys throw them!" shouted Mr. Peckover.

"Oh! You are sure?" "I am positive, madam."

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Frank. If Mr. Peckover had seen who threw the snowballs, he would certainly have been aware that Dicky Bird & Co. were the culprits, and he would not have come to Cedar Creek to look for them.

Mr. Peckover was, in fact, not speaking the truth.

Miss Meadows looked very troubled. Mr. Peckover's statement was positive on one side, and that of Frank Richards and Bob equally positive on the other.

The class looked on breathlessly, wondering what the schoolmistress' decision would be.

"You—you are sure that you actually saw these boys throw the snowballs, Mr. Peckover?" asked Miss Meadows slowly.

"I have said so, madam," answered the master of Hillcrest.

"And you, Richards and Lawless——" "We deny it, ma'am," said Frank Richards steadily. "Mr. Peckover is not telling the truth."

"He is telling lies!" said Bob Lawless bluntly.

The Hillcrest master trembled with rage. "You hear them, madam?" he stuttered. "This is the language your boys use towards me!"

Miss Meadows made a gesture. "Allow me to speak, Mr. Peckover. Richards, I should be very sorry to doubt your word, but Mr. Peckover says positively——"

"He is not speaking the truth, ma'am."

"You say that you saw who threw the snowballs?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then you must give me their names, Richards."

Frank and Bob exchanged a troubled look. It did not occur to Miss Meadows that the Hillcrest master had been snowballed by his own pupils, upon whom terrific punishment was certain to fall if Mr. Peckover learned the facts.

The chums of Cedar Creek did not intend to betray Dicky Bird & Co. That was impossible.

But it was impossible, too, to explain their motive for withholding the names.

Miss Meadows' brow grew sterner as they hesitated to speak.

"I am waiting, Richards!" said Miss Meadows ominously.

"I—I——" stammered Frank.

"I infer, Richards, from what you say, that Mr. Peckover was snowballed by some of the town boys," said Miss Meadows.

"There is no reason whatever why you should not give their names and clear yourself."

"There is a reason——" "What is it?"

"I—I——" "Well?" exclaimed Miss Meadows impatiently.

"I can't give the names," said Frank desperately. "There is a reason, but I can't explain it."

"That's so!" said Bob Lawless. "But you know that we are not liars, Miss Meadows."

"I certainly thought so, Lawless," said the schoolmistress sternly. "But if you refuse to take a perfectly easy method of clearing yourselves, I must alter my opinion. For the last time, will you answer my question?"

Silence.

"Are you satisfied now?" asked Mr. Peckover, with a sneer.

"I am satisfied," said Miss Meadows, frowning. "Richards and Lawless, as you have nothing to say, I assume that Mr. Peckover's statement is correct, and I shall punish you severely."

Frank and Bob did not speak. They did not blame Miss Meadows, who could scarcely take any other view; but their feelings towards Mr. Peckover were almost homicidal.

"I will witness the punishment, Miss Meadows," said the Hillcrest master, his thin lips setting hard.

"There is no objection to that, sir."

Miss Meadows took the pointer from her desk.

The next few minutes were very painful to the two chums. But they bore the infliction without a sound.

Miss Meadows felt that it was a time to be severe; and though such punishment was seldom administered at Cedar Creek, the schoolmistress could be severe when she thought it necessary.

Frank and Bob squeezed their hands hard as they went back to their places.

Mr. Peckover, with a glimmer of satisfaction in his eyes, left the school-room, and lessons proceeded at Cedar Creek.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Yen Chin Chips In!

"YOU galoots are a pair of jays, and no mistake!"

That was Eben Hacke's opinion, delivered in the playground, when Cedar Creek was dismissed after lessons.

"Awful duffers!" remarked Chunky Todgers. "You ought to have spun a better yarn than that!"

"What do you mean, you fat idiot?" growled Bob Lawless.

Bob's temper was not at its best just then. "Well," said Chunky sagely, "I guess you ought to have told the truth; but if you were going to spin a yarn, you should have spun a likely one."

"I calculate so!" said Hacke. "You silly chumps!" exclaimed Frank Richards angrily. "It wasn't a yarn; it was the frozen truth."

"Then why couldn't you give the names?" asked Chunky Todgers incredulously.

"Because they were Hillcrest chaps, you fat duffer!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Chunky. "I guessed that," said Molly Lawrence. "I guessed it at once, Frank."

"You've got some sense, Molly!" said Frank. "I was afraid old Peckover would guess it. But he's an old chump!"

"My hat!" said Beauclerc, with a whistle. "Who were they, then, Frank?"

"Dicky Bird and Fisher and Blumpy."

"Phew!" said Eben Hacke. "Old Peckover would have skinned them alive if he'd known!"

"That's why we didn't tell him, ass!" "You took a licking instead," said Tom Lawrence.

"Well, what could we do?" grunted Bob. "Ugly ole Peckover tellee lies!" remarked Yen Chin, the Chinese.

"Yes."

"Vellee badee man!" said Yen Chin. "Vellee wicked tellee lies!"

"Well, you ought to know all about it, Yen Chin," said Bob Lawless. "You never tell anything else."

"Yen Chin good Chinese," said the Celestial. "Me vellee solly Missce Meadee tinkee Flanky tellee whoppee. Me makee all light."

"How can you make it all right, you silly heathen?" growled Frank.

Yen Chin grinned. "Me clevee Chinese—oh, yes! Me makee all light!"

"Rats!" grunted Frank. The chums of Cedar Creek sat in the porch to fasten on their snowshoes for the run home.

Yen Chin disappeared into the house. Frank and Bob were in a glum humour, and Vere Beauclerc was sympathetic.

The caning had been severe, but the effects of that were wearing off.

But to be condemned by Miss Meadows for having spoken falsely was harder.

They valued the good opinion of the Canadian schoolmistress.

"It's rotten!" growled Frank. "We can't explain; and Miss Meadows will think badly of us. I'm going to scalp Peckover somehow!"

"I guess we'll make him sit up!" growled Bob vengefully. "I reckon he ought to be lynched! I suppose he believes it was us; but that's no excuse for telling thumping lies!"

Yen Chin came gliding out of the house with a grin on his yellow face.

"Ole Flanky——" he began. "Oh, don't worry!"

"Miss Meadee wantee speakee to Flanky and ugly ole Bob."

"Is that a message, you blessed heathen?" exclaimed Bob.

"Oh, yes! Missce Meadee tellee me tellee you."

A Startling Surprise for Mr. Peckover Next Week!

Frank! We're up against it to-day, and no mistake!"

The chums kicked off their snowshoes, and went into the house.

The door of Miss Meadows' sitting-room was open, and they presented themselves there with glum faces.

Miss Meadows, somewhat to their surprise, gave them a kindly glance as she beckoned them to enter.

"I have just been told something," the schoolmistress began.

"Oh!" ejaculated Bob.

"It appears," said Miss Meadows gravely, "that, contrary to my belief, you were speaking the truth this afternoon when Mr. Peckover called here."

"We were, Miss Meadows," said Frank.

"It did not occur to me then that you might have some boyish chivalrous motive for concealing the names of the persons concerned in attacking Mr. Peckover. Is it the case, Lawless, that the persons referred to belonged to Mr. Peckover's school?"

Silence.

"You need not hesitate to speak frankly," said Miss Meadows. "Mr. Peckover is not here now, and I have no intention of acquainting him with what you tell me."

"Oh!" said Bob. "In that case, Miss Meadows, we'll give you the facts fast enough. It was some Hillcrest chaps who snowballed him. We couldn't give 'em away to their headmaster, ma'am."

"Their names?" said Miss Meadows. "In confidence, of course," she added quickly.

"Bird, Fisher, and Blumpy," said Bob, without hesitation.

Miss Meadows pursed her lips.

"I understand now," she said.

"I hope you believe us now, Miss Meadows," said Frank Richards. "I know it looked suspicious our not giving their names; but now you know the reason—"

"I fully believe you, Richards, and I am sorry you have been punished; but at the time you left me no alternative."

"Oh, that doesn't matter, ma'am!" said Bob. "We're not made of putty—I mean, we don't mind a bit. But we didn't want you to think we were liars."

"I do not think so, Lawless, and I am very glad that you have been set right in my eyes. Mr. Peckover was—ahem!—mistaken. No doubt, in the excitement of the moment, he fancied that he had seen you throw the snowballs."

The schoolboys had their own opinion about that, but they did not utter it.

They had a suspicion, too, that Miss Meadows shared their opinion.

"You may go," said Miss Meadows. "Good-bye, my boys!"

"Good-bye, Miss Meadows!"

The chums walked out in great spirits.

"But how the dickens did Miss Meadows know?" exclaimed Bob, as he sat down in the porch to put on his snowshoes once more.

Frank shook his head.

"Blessed if I know, Bob! She said she had been told something."

"Allee light, oh yes?" Yen Chin grinned into the porch.

"Yes, it's all right, heathen," grinned Bob Lawless, laughing.

"What me tellee you?" grinned Yen Chin.

"Me makee all light, what you tinkee? Yen Chin good ole lascal—oh, yes!"

Frank Richards uttered an exclamation.

"You told Miss Meadows, Yen Chin?"

The Chinese nodded.

"Me tellee," he answered. "Settee ole Flanky light, you bet! Chinee velly good boy."

"You young ass!" exclaimed Bob. "As it happens, Miss Meadows isn't going to tell Peckover; but she might have—"

"Nevee mindee; allee samee."

"You blessed heathen, you might have got Dicky Bird lagged by old Peckover! I've a jolly good mind—"

"All's well that ends well," interposed Vere Beauclerc, with a laugh. "It's turned out all right, Bob."

"Well, that's so," admitted Bob. "All the same—"

"Bob Lawless ugly ole lascal!" exclaimed Yen Chin indignantly. "Velly unglateful. Go and choppee-chippee!"

"Well, I guess I'm obliged to you, as it turns out," said Bob. "But if it had led to Dicky Bird being lagged I'd have roped you, heathen, and that's a cert!"

"Bob Lawless velly ugly!" was Yen Chin's reply as he walked away.

Bob laughed.



A LICKING FOR TWO!—"I am satisfied," said Miss Meadows, frowning. "Richards and Lawless, as you have nothing to say, I assume that Mr. Peckover's statement is correct, and I shall punish you severely." The next few minutes were very painful to the two chums. (See Chapter 2.)

"I guess I'm glad we're all O.K. with Miss Meadows again," he said. "But all the same, we're going to make Peckover sorry for telling lies and getting us into hot water."

"We are!" said Frank Richards emphatically.

And Vere Beauclerc nodded assent.

The three chums were of one opinion in that matter, and as they glided homeward through the dusk and the snow they were thinking of ways and means for making Mr. Peckover, of Hillcrest, duly sorry.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Looking for Trouble!

FRANK RICHARDS & CO. did some thinking on the following day, and their thinking was by no means on the subject of their lessons.

They were thinking of Mr. Peckover.

Their rivalry with Dicky Bird and the other fellows at Hillcrest was quite of a good-natured kind, but they did not feel good-natured towards the Hillcrest headmaster.

But how to "go for" Ephraim Peckover was rather a perplexing problem.

They decided that it had to be done, but the "how" remained a problem, and it was not quite settled when lessons were over for the day.

The snow was still thick on the trails, and the chums had come to school on their snowshoes.

After lessons the trio glided out at the gates together, cheerily enough in the keen, frosty air.

"This way!" called out Bob, as they started.

He slid off into the Thompson trail, which led in the direction of Hillcrest School for some distance.

His chums followed him.

"Not going to Thompson?" asked Frank.

"Nope; Hillcrest!" answered Bob briefly.

"The Hillcrest fellows will be gone home."

"All the better; the coast will be clear," said Bob. "I guess it's Peckover we're going to see."

"But—" began Frank.

"We're going to make the rotter sit up for telling lies about us!" said Bob. "It's got to be did."

"But how?"

"We sha'n't find out how by going home. Let's get to Hillcrest, and then we'll see."

"Oh, all right!"

The three chums moved rapidly along the thickly-snowed trail, and turned off into the path to Hillcrest.

They were not long in coming in sight of the new school.

The snow was falling in light flakes, and the high fence of the school enclosure was tipped with white, as well as the roofs of the buildings.

Dusk was deepening over the woods.

From the roofs of Hillcrest a column of smoke rose from a chimney, and was lost in the dusk of the evening.

The gates were closed and locked.

Frank and Beauclerc looked rather humorously at their determined chum. So far as they could see, there was "nothing doing."

"We're going in," said Bob.

"But—"

"Peckover lives there in the schoolhouse, and there's only the man-of-all-work, and his wife as well," said Bob. "Nothing to be afraid of."

"Yes; but—"

"Chuck off your snowshoes and follow your leader, old scout, and not so much chin-wag!" said Bob, who had evidently made up his mind.

"Oh, all right!"

The boys took off their snowshoes outside the fence, and, with Bob, leading the way, they climbed the high fence and dropped down inside.

It was easy enough to approach the house unseen in the gathering dusk, and with the thick snow deadening the sound of their boots.

As they moved on towards the house they were unaware of the fact that four faces rose over the fence from the outside and looked after them.

Dicky Bird, Fisher, Blumpy, and Watson,

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Who Played the Trick on Mr. Peckover? See Next Week!

the chums of Hillcrest, were the four, and they were grinning.

"Dear little innocent kids," murmured Dicky Bird. "They don't know they've been spotted! They've a lot to learn at Cedar Creek!"

His comrades chuckled. "But what the thunder are they doing here?" asked Watson.

Dicky shook his head. "I give that one up," he said. "I guess they're after us, but they ought to know that school's closed before this time. Come after me, and keep quiet."

Dicky Bird dropped down inside the fence. His companions followed him, falling silently into the thick snow.

Meanwhile, Frank Richards & Co. had reached the log schoolhouse, utterly oblivious of Dicky Bird's proximity.

The three chums had raced along the trails on their snowshoes, and they had not observed the Hillcrest fellows in the dusk of the woods, but they had been observed themselves.

For the present they were blissfully unaware of that fact.

"Well, now we're here, Bob," said Frank Richards, "what's the game?"

Bob Lawless pointed to a lighted window. "That's Peckover's sitting-room," he said. "Use your peepers, and you'll see his rascally old cabeza."

Frank looked towards the window. The blinds were not yet drawn, and in the lamp-light within Mr. Peckover was to be seen.

He was warming his hands at a log-fire, and occasionally taking up and sipping from a glass that stood on a table near him.

"That's the rotter!" agreed Frank.

"Get some snow together," said Bob in a whisper. "I'll sling a pebble at the window, and you can bet Peckover will open it and look out. Then you fellows can—"

A chuckle interrupted him.

"Good egg!" said Frank.

"Keep in cover, though; we don't want to be spotted, and another visit made to Miss Meadows."

"You bet!"

Keeping in the shadow of the wall, Bob Lawless crept towards the lighted windows, with several small pebbles in his hand.

Clink, clink, clink!

The pebbles rattled on the window. Mr. Peckover, within, gave a sudden jump, strode to the window, and threw it wide open.

He put out his head and peered round in the dusk.

"Who is there?" he shouted. "How dare you! Who—what— Yarooooop!"

Whiz!

Two big snowballs flew together from Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc.

In the deep dusk they were invisible to Mr. Peckover; but the latter was a good target against the lighted room.

Crash! Smash!

One of the snowballs burst on Mr. Peckover's nose and the other on his chin.

He spun back into the room as if he had been smitten by cannon-balls instead of snowballs.

Bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a yell from the shadows, as the schoolmaster was heard to fall on the floor within.

There was a wild yell from Mr. Peckover. He staggered dazedly to his feet.

As his head showed above the level of the window-sill, three snowballs whizzed in, and smashed upon his head and shoulders.

"Oh! Ah! Gooooop!"

Nearly blinded by snow and erlmsn with rage, Mr. Peckover rushed to the open window.

Whiz, whiz! Crash!

Snowballs fairly rained on him, and he staggered back from the window.

He did not show himself there again, but caught up a heavy stick, and rushed for the door.

"I guess this is where we vamoose!" chuckled Bob Lawless.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was evidently time to be gone.

The three avengers rushed for the distant fence, to get back to the outer world and their snowshoes.

And there were three gasps of surprise and dismay as they ran into a group of shadowy forms, and were seized on all sides.

"Look out!"

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"Down 'em!" chortled Dicky Bird. "Sit on their necks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And in a second Frank Richards & Co. were on their backs in the snow, with Dicky Bird and his comrades pinning them down.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
Awful Luck!

"OOW!"

"Oh!"

"Gruurg!"

"I guess we've got you!" chuckled Dicky Bird, as he planted his knee on Frank Richards' chest, driving him deeper into the snow.

"I guess so!" grinned Fisher.

"Let up!" panted Bob Lawless. "How the thump did you come here, you galoots? I reckoned you were gone home."

"We were going, when we spotted you on the trail," grinned Dicky Bird; "and we came back to see what your game was."

"You jays!" panted Bob Lawless. "Let up! The old jay will be after us in two ticks!"

Dicky Bird looked round in the gloom.

There was a sound of hurried footsteps tramping in the snow.

"By gum! We'd better bunk!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

It was too late to "bunk."

Mr. Peckover, in a towering rage, was rushing on the scene. He had heard the sound of voices, and it guided him in the dusk.

Even as the Hillcrest fellows jumped up from their prisoners the master was upon them.

Mr. Peckover rushed at top speed into the group, laying about him with his stick.

Frank Richards & Co. were still gasping breathlessly in the snow; but Dicky Bird and his friends had jumped up, and they came in for the furious lashes of the stick.

In the deep gloom Mr. Peckover could not see who the boys were; but he could see them well enough to lay on with the stick.

There were wild yells on all sides.

Dicky Bird & Co., yelling wildly, scattered, and ran for the fence.

"You young rascals!" panted Mr. Peckover. "You—you—"

He broke off, with a howl, as his ankle was seized, and he was jerked over.

The Hillcrest master plumped into the snow.

"Hook it!" panted Bob.

Frank Richards & Co. scrambled away, and fled for the fence.

But Mr. Peckover was up in a second, and, stick in hand, rushing in hot pursuit.

Dicky Bird & Co. had reached the fence, and scrambled over hurriedly, falling on hands and knees in the snow without.

They did not stop there, but leaped up and vanished into the gloom.

The chums of Cedar Creek were not so lucky.

They reached the fence, with the Hillcrest master raging only a few yards behind them.

They jumped desperately, and caught the top of the fence, and dragged themselves up.

Before they could reach the top, however, Mr. Peckover was below them, and his stick came into active service.

Whack, whack, whack!

The unfortunate chums were remarkably well placed for punishment as they hung on the fence; and Mr. Peckover did not spare the rod.

Whack, whack, whack!

Frank Richards & Co. struggled desperately to pull themselves over the fence.

They succeeded at last, and the final lash of the schoolmaster's stick landed on the palms.

Frank and Bob and the Cherub rolled over, and landed in the snow outside, gasping and groaning.

They had been through it with a vengeance.

They rolled in the snow, and groaned, too breathless and smarting to do anything else for a minute or two.

But the sound of bars being removed from the gate aroused them. Mr. Peckover, apparently, was not satisfied yet.

He was coming out to get to close-quarters again, stick in hand.

Frank Richards staggered to his feet.

"Bolt!" he gasped. "The beast is coming out! Oh, dear!"

The three schoolboys snatched up their snowshoes, and, without staying to put them on, fled for the trail.

They put on a good burst of speed, and Hillcrest and its master were soon a good distance behind. Then they slacked down, breathlessly.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Frank. "You ass, Bob—"

"Yow-ow-ow!" groaned Bob. "It would have been all O.K. but for those Hillcrest rotters turning up! Ow, ow!"

"Hallo, here they are!"

Four grinning faces loomed up for a moment in the gloom.

"Enjoyed your visit?" chuckled Dicky Bird.

Then the Hillcrest fellows vanished, chuckling. Frank Richards & Co. were not feeling inclined for pursuit.

They put on their snowshoes, and travelled. They had had enough for one evening.

"Bob, you ass—" groaned Frank.

"Bob, you duffer—" mumbled the Cherub.

To which Bob Lawless' only reply was:

"Ow, ow, ow, ow!"

THE END.

(Another real good yarn of Frank Richards & Co., the merry chums of Cedar Creek School, entitled "Mr. Peckover's Guests" in next week's bumper issue.)

Result of "WEST HAM" Competition.

In this competition no competitor sent in a correct solution of the picture. The first prize of £5 has therefore been divided between the following two competitors whose solutions contained one error each:

JOHN HOGBEN,
35, Bournemouth Road,
Folkestone.

MISS M. G. REDDING,
Butler Street,
Astwood Bank,
Nr. Redditch.

So many competitors qualified for the third grade of prizes that division among them of the prizes offered was impracticable. The second prize of £2 10s., and the ten prizes of 5s. each, have therefore been added together and divided among the following twenty-three competitors whose solutions contained two errors each:

W. Sidwell, 15, Broadmead Road, Folkestone; C. H. Harrison, 86, Walsingham Street, Walsall, Staffs; N. Willis, "Whelford," Leckhampton, Cheltenham Spa; James King, 29, Fore Street, Westbury, Wilts; Frances Ashworth, 131, Burnley Road, Padiham, Lancs; G. A. Withers, Station Road, Harby, Lincoln; J. Hooper, 27, Morgan

Street, Barry Dock, Glam; Bernard Wallis, 14, Egerton Road, Bishopston, Bristol; J. de Gruchy, Market Street, Woodstock, Oxon; Alice Taylor, 53, Flaxby Road, Darnall, Sheffield; T. Topping, 62, Ivor Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham; L. Bachelor, 19, Kettering Road, Levenshulme, Manchester; Cyril Danny, 11, Mildenhall Road, Clapton, E. 5; Alfred Carr, 70, Bargate, Clapton; J. W. Chapman, 50, Pembrey Road, Llanelly, S. Wales; H. E. Oxenham, 3, Colwath Road, Hammersmith, W. 6; N. D. Snaith, 51, Park Street, Kendal; C. Ayres, 9, The Walk, Birdwell, Nr. Barnsley; A. Lawton, 78, Rose Street, Hanley, Staffs; May Gunn, 15, Waverley Park, Edinburgh; W. S. Village, 41, Empress Road, Derby; Harry Morgan, 27, Victoria Road, Folkestone; J. Ellis, 197, Easton Road, Bristol.

SOLUTION.

The history of West Ham is like that of various other famous football clubs. A steady rise from a humble start. Progress is their motto. They have put up a remarkable fight for the English Cup this season, and outlasted some far better clubs, including the well-known Spurs.