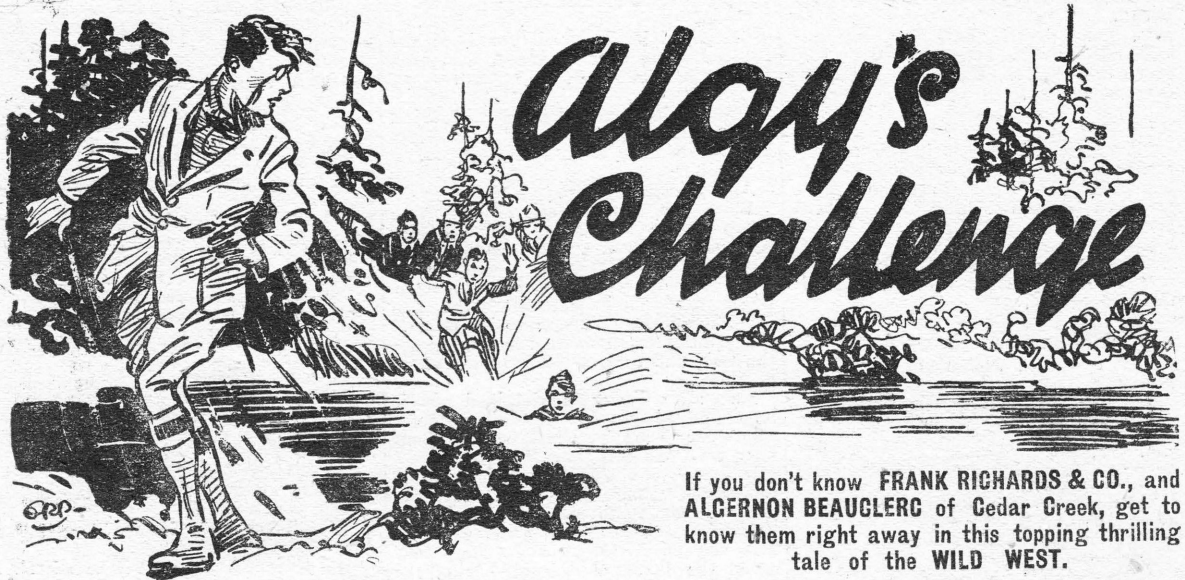


ANOTHER ROARING BACKWOODS SCHOOL TALE!
Algy Beauclerc, the dandy of the Lumber School, plays another prominent part—not as a nut, but as a daring, reckless schoolboy. Cedar Creek are getting used to Algy's surprises—there's been a long series of them. But this week he tops the lot—and leaves his chums gasping!



Algy's Challenge

If you don't know **FRANK RICHARDS & CO.,** and **ALGERNON BEAUCLERC** of Cedar Creek, get to know them right away in this topping thrilling tale of the **WILD WEST.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Algy Does Not Follow!

FOLLOW your leader!"
 "Come on, Algy!"
 But Algernon of Cedar Creek halted.

The playground at Cedar Creek School was crowded after morning lessons were over. It was a sharp, frosty day, and Bob Lawless had started the game of "Follow-your-leader" to keep warm. Eben Hacke was leading. He had clambered on the high stake fence that surrounded the playground, and jumped from it to the roof of Mr. Slimmey's cabin. And after him went a stream of shouting schoolboys, Frank Richards & Co. well to the fore. But Algernon Beauclerc stopped.

Jumping from the high fence to the cabin roof was a rather risky proceeding in more ways than one. The roof was sloping, and any jumper who did not keep a careful footing was liable to roll off it to the ground, with painful results. And it was likely that Mr. Slimmey, hearing a succession of crashes on his roof, might come out in a state of wrath and excitement.

But it was not the risk that deterred Algernon. It was the fact that Mr. Slimmey's cabin had been newly tarred. The dandy of Cedar Creek did not mind the risk, but he minded his clothes very much. So he stopped and gazed after his comrades placidly through his eyeglasses.

"I'm not comin', thanks!" he called back.

"Oh, come on!" exclaimed Vere Beauclerc. "Follow your leader, you know."
 "Buck up!" shouted Frank Richards.

Algernon shook his head.

"I'm not goin' to get my clobber tarred," he answered. "I'll watch you. Go ahead!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Yah! Funk!" chirruped Chunky Todgers.

Algernon shrugged his shoulders. He did not like being called a funk, perhaps; but that was better than getting his natty riding-breeches daubed with tar—at least, Algy thought so. From the

roof of Mr. Slimmey's cabin Eben Hacke gave him a yell.

"Funk!"

Then he jumped from the cabin to the roof of a low shed adjoining, and thence to the ground, and ran on. Jump after jump came on the cabin roof as the Cedar Creek fellows followed Hacke. There was a sound of a stir within the cabin, and Mr. Slimmey came running out, his eyes wide open and startled behind his gold-rimmed glasses.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Slimmey. "What—what—what is this? What ever is happening?"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Goodness gracious!"

Chunky Todgers, who had more weight to carry than his schoolfellows, was the last of the line. The other fellows fled, but Chunky was slower. He sprawled on the sloping roof, clutching at it and gasping.

"Todgers!" exclaimed Mr. Slimmey.

"Ow! Oh!" gasped Chunky. "Oh dear!"

He scrambled up, and jumped down to the shed, Mr. Slimmey whisking round the cabin at the same time to intercept him. As Chunky jumped to the ground, Paul Slimmey gripped him by the collar.

"Boy, how dare you jump on my roof?" he ejaculated.

"Ow!" stuttered Chunky. "Only a game, sir—follow your leader, you know. Ow!"

"You young rascal!" exclaimed Mr. Slimmey. "You might have broken a limb; you might have burst in the roof! You will be punished for this—you, and all the others!"
 "Oh dear!"

"I am glad to see, Beauclerc that you were not joining in this reckless folly," said Mr. Slimmey.

"Oh yaas, sir!" said Algy.

Chunky Todgers gave the dandy of Cedar Creek a far from cordial look. Algernon would certainly have been caught if he had ventured upon Mr. Slimmey's roof, and he was to escape because, as Chunky supposed, he had funked the danger.

"Yah, you rotter!" grunted Chunky. "Silence, Todgers! I shall report this to Miss Meadows," said Mr. Slimmey angrily. "Go after the others, and tell them to assemble in the school-room at once!"

"Oh dear!" mumbled Chunky.

The fat Chunky rolled dismally away. Mr. Slimmey, with a frowning brow, started for the lumber schoolhouse.

"Shall I come with the others, sir?" asked Algernon.

"You need not."

"I was playin' the game, too, sir," said Algernon.

"You did not jump on my roof."

"Only because it was tarry, sir," said Algernon cheerfully.

"Nonsense! You may go!"

"Oh, all right, sir!"

And Algernon strolled away. Meanwhile, the Cedar Creek crowd had received Chunky's message, and they were heading for the schoolhouse in rather a disconsolate mood.

"After all, I guess it was rather thick," remarked Bob Lawless. "That silly jay Hacke oughtn't to have led over Slimmey's roof."

Eben Hacke gave a snort.

"Well, after the feast comes the reckoning," said Frank Richards, laughing. "We can stand it."

"Slimmey looks waxy!" said Chunky Todgers.

"No wonder!" said Vere Beauclerc. "It was really too bad. Hacke ought to have had more sense!"

"There's one galoot had too much sense to follow, anyhow," said Eben Hacke, with a sneer. "Your precious dude cousin! He was afraid to follow!"
 Beauclerc coloured angrily.

"Don't talk rot!" he answered. "He was not afraid."

"Why didn't he follow on, then?"

"Too much sense, perhaps."

"That kind of sense ain't good enough for Cedar Creek!" growled Hacke. "I'll jolly well tell him what I think of him when Miss Meadows is through with us!"

Beauclerc bit his lip, and was silent.
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The disconsolate crowd made their way into the school-room, where Miss Meadows soon appeared with Mr. Slimmey.

The Canadian schoolmistress was looking very severe.

"Mr. Slimmey tells me—" she began.

"I guess it was only fun, ma'am," said Bob Lawless meekly. "We really forgot about Mr. Slimmey being in his cabbage, ma'am."

"That is no excuse, Lawless."

"N-n-no, ma'am; but—"

"Every boy concerned in this reckless escapade will come in to lessons half an hour before the usual time, and will be given a detention task," said Miss Meadows.

"Oh!"

"You may go now."

And Miss Meadows frowned and left the school-room.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Not Popular!

THE Honourable Algernon Beauclerc was sauntering peacefully in the playground when the Cedar Creek fellows came out again. He turned his eyeglass upon them with a cheery smile.

"Called over the coals, dear boys?" he inquired.

Eben Hacke shook a big fist under Algy's nose.

"You skunk!" he roared.

"Oh gad!"

"Funk!" hooted Chunky Todgers.

"My only hat! What's the row?"

"We've all got half an hour's detention!" growled Dick Dawson.

"Well, that isn't my fault, is it?"

"You would have been in it, too, if you hadn't been afraid to follow your leader!" growled Hacke.

"But I wasn't afraid," said Algernon calmly. "I didn't want to get the tar on my bags, that was all."

"Rot!"

"Rats!"

"Funk!"

Hacke shook his big fist at the Honourable Algernon and stalked away. The other fellows followed him, leaving Algy alone with Frank Richards & Co. The dandy of Cedar Creek looked at them.

"This is rather surprisin'," he remarked. "I don't see why the fellows have got their rag out. A fellow isn't called upon to make his bags tarry if he doesn't want to, I suppose?"

"Oh, rot!" grumbled Bob Lawless.

"Bother your silly bags! You ought to have followed!"

"So you think I was funk'n', too?"

"Well, you ought to have followed."

"You were an ass, Algy!" said Vere Beauclerc, with a frown. "You seem to go out of your way to make the fellows think badly of you!"

"But I'm not a funk really," explained Algernon, with perfect calmness.

"Oh, we know that!" snapped Beauclerc. "Hacke himself doesn't really think so, after the way you got him out of the ice the other day. But you make the fellows think so. Who's going to believe that you were only afraid of soiling your idiotic bags?"

Algernon nodded thoughtfully.

"I see!" he assented. "Next time we play follow-your-leader I'll have some old clothes handy."

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Frank Richards.

"Besides, I believe Hacke only led over that tarry roof as a joke on me!" said Algy, shaking his head.

"That's very likely; but you ought to have followed."

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"What rot!" said Algy cheerfully.

"Don't you care what the other fellows think and say about you?" exclaimed Vere Beauclerc.

"Oh, yaas! But I'm not really a funk," urged Algernon. "To-morrow I'll bring some old clobber—"

"Ass!"

"And I'll be leader, if you like; and I'll lead where dear old Hacke will think twice about followin'!"

"Rot!"

"And where you fellows will think twice about followin', too!" said Algy, his eye gleaming behind his eyeglass.

"Bosh!"

Algernon gave it up.

When the Cedar Creek fellows came in to dinner the cheery and smiling Algernon received a good many grim looks.

Whether he was "funky" or not, it was certain that he had refused to take the risk of the game, and had escaped the punishment that had fallen on all the rest, and that caused resentment on all sides.

Soon after dinner the detained school-boys had to go into the school-room, where they were set a task to keep them busy till the usual time for lessons.

It was at two o'clock that the rest of the school came in, the Honourable Algernon among them.

Eben Hacke gave him a savage look.

It was only a week since Algy had saved the bully of the lumber school from the broken ice on the creek, but the effect of it had evidently worn off.

For a few days Hacke had refrained from his usual surly manners towards the dandy of the school, but he was quite his old self again now. Indeed, the fact that he was under so deep an obligation to the Honourable Algy seemed to make him more bitter.

He was palpably glad of this chance of being "down" on the elegant youth from the Old Country, and was determined to make the most of it.

Algernon, however, did not seem affected in any way by the looks and murmurs of the other fellows in Miss Meadows' class. They were feeling sore over their punishment, and Algy graciously made allowances for them.

But probably he was glad when lessons were over, and he rode away from the school homeward with Frank Richards & Co. The atmosphere of Cedar Creek was not a happy one for him that afternoon.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. The Challenge!

"HALLO!"

"What's the matter with the dude?"

A good many glances were turned upon the Honourable Algernon when he arrived at Cedar Creek the next morning.

His appearance presented a rather surprising change.

The Honourable Algernon had started at Cedar Creek in a silk topper and Etons; but, though he had been persuaded at last to give up that extremely distinctive garb, he had not given up his natty elegance by any means. His clothes were expensive and elegantly cut, and contrasted considerably with the rough homespun worn by most of the Canadian schoolboys.

But on this particular morning the Honourable Algernon looked anything but elegant or dandified.

He was dressed, in fact, more roughly than any other fellow in the school, in well-worn homspan, which looked as if it had been bought second-hand at a very low price.

Only the eyeglass gleamed in his eye as usual. Without his celebrated monocle

the Honourable Algernon would have felt quite lost.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Chunky Todgers.

"Have you pawed 'em, Algy?"

"Eh?"

"Where's your clothes?"

"My dear man, I have changed my clobber for a particular purpose," said Algernon gently. "We are goin' to play follow-your-leader to-day, and I'm not goin' to spoil my clobber."

"Who's goin' to play it with you, you funk?" sneered Eben Hacke. "Nobody here, I reckon."

"You, dear boy!" answered Algy.

"I guess not. You'd be afraid to follow!"

"But I'm not goin' to follow—I'm goin' to lead!" explained Algernon cheerily. "You're goin' to follow, old scout, unless you're afraid, of course!"

"What?" roared Hacke.

"Gettin' deaf, dear boy? You're goin' to follow, unless you're afraid," Algy repeated calmly.

"I guess I'll—"

Hacke clenched his hands.

"Hold on!" interposed Bob Lawless. "If Algy means business we'll give him a chance. That's only fair."

"He's only chewin' the rag!" said Hacke savagely. "Shootin' off his silly mouth, that's all!"

"You'll see after lessons!" answered Algy.

And Cedar Creek went in to school.

After morning school Algernon strolled elegantly in the playground, apparently not ready yet.

"After dinner," he said, when Frank Richards questioned him.

"Not much time between dinner and afternoon lessons."

"Lots of time! Who cares for afternoon lessons?"

"What?"

"Suppose we're a couple of miles away when the bell goes, for instance?" remarked Algernon.

Frank Richards stared at him.

"We jolly well, sha'n't be!" he exclaimed warmly.

"You won't have any choice in the matter, unless you own up that you're afraid to follow your leader!" chuckled Algernon.

"Oh, my hat!"

After dinner Algernon announced that he was ready. Eben Hacke answered the announcement with a loud and contemptuous snort.

"I'm not takin' a hand!" he grunted.

"Afraid, old scout?" asked Algy.

Hacke clenched his fists.

"I'm not afraid to follow where you lead, you pesky jay! But you're only chewing the rag!"

"You'll see! Gentlemen," said Algernon, glancing round at the grinning crowd of Cedar Creek fellows. "I only ask for fair play! You've called me a funk for not followin' Hacke's lead yesterday. Now I've got some old clobber on, I'm ready! I challenge every fellow here to follow my lead, and the fellows who refuse will have to own up that they're funks—like our friend Hacke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stow the chinwag!" growled Hacke. "I guess I'll follow you fast enough! Let's see you jump on Slimmey's roof!"

"Not at all! We're goin' outside. Are you ready?"

"Oh, we're ready!" said Bob Lawless.

"Come on, then!"

Algernon started for the gateway at a gentle trot. Frank Richards & Co., laughing, followed him, and the rest of the crowd came on behind. Fifteen or sixteen fellows streamed out of the gates after the Honourable Algernon.

Algernon started towards the creek.

There had been a thaw, and the ice on the creek was broken. Here and there a sheet of ice clung to the bank, but the middle of the stream was open, with fragments of ice floating on it, on the way to the Thompson River. Algernon, without even a pause, plunged into the ice water, and swam.

There was a yell from his followers.

"Stop!"

"Come back!"

"You silly chump!"

Algernon swam on regardless. The Cedar Creek fellows stared at one another. Algernon was leading the way, and, under the circumstances, it was difficult to refuse to follow. Bob Lawless laughed, and plunged in, and Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc followed. Then came Dawson and Lawrence, Hopkins and Chunky Todgers, and several more. And then Eben Hacke, gritting his teeth, plunged into the icy stream. But there were fellows there who could not swim, and they remained on the bank, with sheepish looks, as the swimming crowd followed their leader.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Follow On!

THE Honourable Algernon Beauclerc scrambled out of the water on the further side of the Cedar Creek, and shook himself. He glanced back at the heads that dotted the creek, and grinned.

"Come on, dear boys!" he called out.

The weather was cold and sharp, and the contact of the water freezing. But Algernon paused to take out a handkerchief and wipe his eyeglass before he started again. With his monocle gleaming in his eye, the dandy of Cedar Creek started at a trot down the bank.

Bob Lawless was the first to drag himself out of the water, and Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc came next. Then the whole draggled crowd came out.

"Run for it, you galoots!" exclaimed Bob. "I guess you'll freeze stiff if you stand still!"

"What-ho!" gasped Frank Richards through his chattering teeth.

The Cedar Creek crowd ran along the bank on the track of Algernon at a good rate.

There were nearly a dozen fellows following still, and they were determined that Algy should not be able to say that that they were "quitters."

"I guess the tenderfoot won't keep this up long," growled Eben Hacke. "Half a mile is about the limit, I reckon."

But the American schoolboy was out in his reckoning.

Algernon had shown the Cedar Creek fellows how he could ride, but they had not seen him display any special powers as a sprinter before. They saw it now.

Algy kept on at an easy trot.

The running crowd followed the bank of Cedar Creek as far as the rapids, and close by the rapids Algy paused and looked at the stream. It looked as if he was thinking of plunging in again, and Bob Lawless yelled an excited warning.

"Stop, you silly gopher!"

The rapids ran hard and fast, carrying down chunks and wedges of ice to the lower level, as well as driftwood in heavy masses. It was little better than suicide to plunge in, even for a fellow who knew the rapids well, and could "shoot" them in a canoe.

If Algy had gone in it was very doubtful whether the followers would have followed. Fortunately, Algy was only gently pulling the leg of the followers. After a long look at the rapids he turned away from the stream and struck off through the timber.



ALGY'S PERIL!—Algernon Beauclerc reached the trees about three yards ahead of the steer and plunged in among them, catching himself up in a low bough. The steer trampled below, snorting. (See Chapter 4.)

"Thank goodness!" murmured Vere Beauclerc.

"Look hyer, it's about time we got back to Cedar Creek!" exclaimed Eben Hacke restively. "We shall be late for lessons!"

"Can't be helped!" grinned Bob Lawless. "Haven't we undertaken to follow our leader?"

"I guess we shall get into a row with Miss Meadows!"

"Very likely."

"There'll be trouble!" hooted Eben Hacke. "I say, you tenderfoot, you can let up on it. I'm going back!"

Algernon looked round.

"Going back?" he called out.

"Yep!"

"Afraid?"

"Nope!" roared Eben Hacke. "It's nearly time for lessons."

"Funk!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Every fellow who doesn't follow is a funk," said Algy, with calm cheerfulness. "If you're afraid to miss lessons, own up you're a funk, and sneak off!"

"I'm not afraid!" yelled Hacke.

"Follow on, then!"

And Algy ran lightly on, increasing his speed. Eben Hacke snorted with wrath, but he kept on. After his many and personal remarks to the dandy of Cedar Creek he could scarcely give in. But he was thinking very seriously of what Miss Meadows would say when the escapade was over. Still, if Algernon risked that, there was no reason why the other fellows shouldn't—especially as they had accused him of funk.

It was pretty clear that Algy meant to make his comrades pay dearly for having expressed that opinion of him.

He put on speed, displaying running powers that astonished his followers. Harold Hopkins tailed off breathlessly, and a couple of other fellows did the

same. But the rest ran on with grim determination.

Even Frank Richards & Co. were in a grim mood.

The tenderfoot from the Old Country was not to be allowed to say that he led where Cedar Creek did not dare to follow.

Beyond the timber lay the open grasslands of the Thompson Ranch, the biggest ranch in the valley. A number of steers were grazing in sight, and Algernon headed directly for the herd.

Bob Lawless shouted to him, and quickened his pace to overtake the leader.

"Sheer off, Algy!" he shouted. "It's not safe to get too near those steers!"

"Rats!"

"Look here, this isn't good enough!" gasped Chunky Todgers. "I'm going back!"

And back Chunky Todgers went. Chunky had no taste for bearding half-wild steers on their native heath.

Another and another fellow dropped behind, and started back towards Cedar Creek. They were getting winded with the long run.

But Frank Richards, Bob, and Beauclerc kept on, and Eben Hacke plodded on doggedly. For very shame's sake Hacke could not give in. Lawrence and Dawson were still in the running. But the remainder of the crowd had tailed off now and disappeared in the rear.

"Oh, the thumping ass!" panted Beauclerc. "If the steers cut up rusty they—"

"I guess they will if that jay goes too near them—on foot!"

Heedless of danger, Algernon trotted cheerfully on.

Two or three of the steers raised their

heads and looked at him, as he came close by the herd. And one savage-tempered animal came loping out of the herd and headed for him with a rush.

"Look out!" shouted Beauclerc.

Algernon was looking out.

He did not turn back even then. He ran on, keeping clear of the angry animal, and raced on, with the steer thundering on his track.

Beauclerc panted.

It looked as if the reckless tenderfoot would be overtaken, and the heavy steer would thunder over him, trampling him into the plain.

Algy glanced back over his shoulder, his eyeglass still gleaming in his eye. His face showed no sign of fear.

He changed his direction a little, heading for a clump of timber on the plain—a "prairie island," as it was called in the West.

He reached the trees about three yards ahead of the steer, and plunged in among them, catching himself up into a low bough.

The steer trampled below, snorting.

Frank Richards & Co. halted. By the terms of the contest they had to follow Algy, but passing the angry steer at close quarters was no joke.

And the animal, disappointed of its prey, turned towards them, and came thundering back, evidently with the intention of attacking.

"Scatter!" exclaimed Bob Lawless.

"Are we going on?" gasped Frank.

"I guess I am. Cedar Creek isn't going to get left by a durned tenderfoot!" growled Bob.

"Same here, then!"

The schoolboys scattered before the rush of the steer, who paused, glaring at them in turn, as if uncertain which to follow. Dick Dawson and another were speeding back towards Cedar Creek. They had had enough of the chase. Eben Hacke made a movement to follow them—but he paused. By that time the bully of the lumber school probably repented that he had provoked the challenge, but he would not give in now. He was savagely determined to keep up as long as Algernon did.

"Oh, I swow!" he gasped. "I'm going on, and I'll hammer that goldarned tenderfoot when I get hold of him! I'll hammer him till he can't crawl!"

Keeping at a distance from the steer, the four schoolboys circled round, and ran for the timber island. The steer broke into a rush in pursuit, but they reached the trees ahead of him, and swung themselves into the branches.

There was a call from Algernon.

"Come on!"

Algy was leaving the timber clump on the other side.

"Wait till that brute's cleared off, you dummy!" shouted Bob Lawless.

"Rats!"

"Wait, I tell you!"

"Funk!" retorted Algy.

"What!" yelled Bob furiously.

"Funk!"

"Why, I—I—I guess I'll——"

Words failed Bob Lawless. He dropped from the tree and went plunging on through the tangled larches in pursuit of Algy. Frank Richards and Beauclerc and Hacke followed him. There was a bellow behind from the steer; but, fortunately, it was stopped in the tangled underwoods, and, after savagely bellowing, it emerged from the timber and trotted back to the herd. And Algernon, keeping easily ahead, ran lightly across the plain, swerving round in a wide circle towards Cedar Creek again.

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THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Finish!

"OH!"

Frank Richards uttered that exclamation suddenly as he fell with a crash into the rough

grass.

"Oh! Ah! Ow!"

Bob and Beauclerc halted at once.

"What's up, Franky?"

"Ow! My ankle!"

"Oh, you greenhorn!" exclaimed

Bob. "You've put your foot in a

gopher-hole! Let's look at it!"

"Ow—ow!" mumbled Frank.

"Oh, come on!" growled Eben Hacke.

"We've got to stand by Franky

and——"

"I guess that tenderfoot isn't going to beat me, anyhow!" snorted Hacke.

And he ran on.

Bob and Beauclerc stopped with Frank Richards. Bob examined his ankle. Fortunately, it was not so bad as a sprain; but it had been painfully twisted, and running was at an end for Frank Richards. His chums helped him to his feet, and he stood on one leg, breathing hard.

"You can't go on, I guess?" said Bob.

Frank suppressed a cry of pain as his ankle gave a twinge.

"I—I wonder whether I can get back to Cedar Creek?" he gasped.

"I guess we shall have to help you."

"You can keep on, Bob. I'll manage somehow."

"Rot!" grunted Bob.

The rancher's son was bitterly chagrined at having to give up the chase. But there was no help for it; he could not abandon his chum. Frank could not go on, and he could not get back without help.

"Take his other fin, Cherub!" grunted

Bob.

"Right-ho!"

With Bob assisting him on one side and Beauclerc on the other, Frank Richards limped back homewards—with three or four long miles to limp before he could arrive at Cedar Creek.

Meanwhile, Eben Hacke was putting on speed. He was the only follower left now, though the leader was still going strong. Hacke's teeth were set, and his eyes were glittering. He intended to put an end to the run by overtaking Algy, and hammering him black and blue.

But again he was a little out in his reckoning. For, as fast as he increased his speed, the Honourable Algernon did the same, and he kept his distance ahead with ease.

"Stop!" shouted Eben Hacke.

Algy glanced back.

"Giving in?" he asked.

"Nope!" hooted Eben. "I'm going

to smash you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you wait till I get my paws on you!" gasped Hacke. "I guess I'll give you something to cackle over!"

And he ran on.

Frank Richards & Co. were out of sight now. Making a wide sweep to the east, Algernon was circling back towards Cedar Creek, below the rapids. Hacke struggled and panted on his track. His breath was giving out, and Algy could easily have left him standing; but, as Hacke began to fail the dandy of Cedar Creek slackened his pace. Every now and then Hacke put on a spurt, in the hope of clutching hold of him, but he did not succeed in getting within clutching distance.

Cedar Creek was in sight again now, shining in the wintry sun a good distance ahead.

The Honourable Algernon seemed

almost as fresh as paint. The long run across rough country had hardly told upon him. Cedar Creek drew nearer and nearer till Algy trotted out on the bank at last.

"Stop!" howled Hacke.

Algy paused then, and looked round.

"Ready for a swim?" he called round.

"Hang you!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Funk!"

Hacke made a desperate rush to get to close quarters, and Algy plunged into the water. Hacke stopped on the bank.

Algy, swimming easily, looked back at him from the shining surface of the stream, and grinned.

"Funk!"

Hacke gritted his teeth, and plunged in. His rage was so great that it seemed to give him new strength, and he swam furiously after Algy. But in the middle of the stream his strength failed him.

Algy swam on cheerfully. But he paused suddenly as a choking cry came from behind.

"Help—help!"

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Algy.

He whirled round in the water. The laughing expression left his face as he saw that Hacke was in difficulties. Even as he turned, Hacke's head went under.

"I'm coming!" shouted Algy.

He swam back swiftly, and caught at Hacke's collar as Eben's head came up.

"Hold on to me!" he gasped.

Hacke's face was white, but he gave Algy a furious look. It was the bitterest pill of all to swallow; but life itself was at stake now, for he could never have reached the bank unaided. He held on to Algy, and the tenderfoot of Cedar Creek piloted him on.

"Goldarn you! I'll smash you for this!" spluttered Hacke.

Algy chuckled, and swam on. He reached the bank at last, and dragged his burden ashore. Hacke sank down in the frosty grass, streaming with water and gasping for breath.

Algy looked down at him.

"Better get up!" he remarked.

"Hang you!"

"Look here, if you don't keep in motion, you'll freeze!" said Algy. "Don't you know it may mean your death?"

"I—I guess I can't help it! I'm done! All your fault!" muttered Hacke, between his chattering teeth.

"Rats!"

Algernon bent over the bully of the lumber school, and dragged him to his feet. Hacke stood unsteadily, holding on to Algy with both hands.

"That's right—lean on me!" said Algernon encouragingly. "If you can't trot, we'll walk."

"Hang you!"

"Hang away; but come on!"

Eben Hacke staggered on, with Algy supporting him. There was nearly two miles between them and the school. They tramped on in silence, Hacke leaning more and more heavily upon his companion. He gave a groan at last, and sank upon his knees.

"I—I can't keep on!" he gasped.

"Then there's only one thing to do,"

said Algy. "I shall have to carry you!"

"You fool! You couldn't!"

"I'm going to try."

It was no light task to carry Eben Hacke. He was a burly and heavy fellow, and Algy was slim and lightly built. But there was plenty of sturdy strength in Algy's elegant form, as he proved now. With a powerful effort he pulled Hacke upon his shoulders, and started with him.

How he covered the distance to Cedar

(Continued on page 27.)

and Carthew opened his eyes when he saw them.

The sportsman of the Sixth was in a state of hard-up, owing to the unreliable conduct of a certain "gee-gee," which had been expected to come in first, but had come in seventh; and Carthew cast a greedy eye on Tubby's currency-notes.

The Sixth-Former, naturally, had not heard of the talk of the lower Forms on the subject of Tubby's notes. He supposed that the fat junior had received an unusually liberal remittance from somewhere. He spoke to Tubby very kindly outside the school shop.

"Hallo, Muffin, my dear kid!" said Carthew. "I've been going to ask you to tea for a long time; but you always seem so busy."

Tubby purred. "When a fellow has a lot of engagements—" he murmured.

"Exactly! Come to tea with me this evening, will you, old fellow?" "Old fellow"—from a Sixth-Former! Tubby Muffin wished that Jimmy Silver & Co. could have heard that!

"Certainly, dear boy!" he answered. "I shall expect you!" said Carthew, and he walked away.

Tubby Muffin was a duffer, but he was not duffer enough to fail to guess that Carthew had another object in view beside the enjoyment of his society. He had a shrewd suspicion of the card games and smoking that went on in Carthew's study—strictly under the rose.

If he went to tea with the Sixth Form sportsman, he had to pay his footing. But Reginald Muffin was prepared to pay his footing. Carthew, at all events, was not likely to skin him more mercilessly than *Pease & Co.*

After tea that day, Tubby put on a collar, and tied his tie a little more than usual, and started out for the Form passage. Jimmy Silver & Co. were on the way, and Jimmy called to

"Old fellow—"

Muffin elevated his fat little nose in scorn.

"Much of your 'old fellow,' young fellow," he retorted.

"I want any of your familiarity! I'm going to tea with a friend of mine, in the Sixth Form!" said Muffin crushingly.

"You can keep your distance!"

And Tubby Muffin rolled on his way, leaving the Fistical Four staring.

"Fags!" stuttered Lovell. "Why, I'll—I'll scalp him!"

Jimmy shook his head. "Never mind scalping him," he said. "There's plenty of trouble in store for the young ass—when the owner comes after those currency-notes! I—I wonder whether I ought to speak to Mr. Bootles about it? I suppose I can't! But there will be trouble!"

Unconscious of the dark prognostications of the captain of the Fourth, Tubby Muffin rolled cheerily along the Sixth Form passage towards Mark Carthew's study. He passed the door of Bulkeley's study, which was partly open. Bulkeley and Neville, of the Sixth, were at tea in the study, and Muffin caught Bulkeley's voice as he passed. "Counterfeit notes—"

Tubby Muffin halted suddenly in the passage. Those words struck him like a thump on his fat chest.

He blinked towards Bulkeley's doorway. The voice of the Rookwood captain went on: "You remember when the counterfeiters were arrested, Neville—the time that kid Clare, Smythe's cousin, was here. One of them was hiding among the old quarries on the heath. The police collared him, and they got a lot of the counterfeit notes the rascals had been printing. But it seems there were a lot more. The fellow threw them away before he was caught, and they haven't been found. I met Boggs, the Coombe bobby, on the heath this afternoon, poking around, looking for them—"

"Oh!" gasped Tubby Muffin. The fat junior stood rooted to the floor. Like a flash of light the true explanation of his mysterious find came over him. He understood at last.

Carthew of the Sixth waited for his expected guest in vain. Tubby was not thinking of tea with his friend in the Sixth Form. He was thinking of the currency-notes—the counterfeit notes—in his study and in his pockets, and of those that he had spent. And he was wondering, in dire terror, what was going to happen. And he was wishing, from the very bottom of his soul, that he had never acted upon that unscrupulous maxim that "findings are keepings."

THE END.

(There will be another splendid, long, complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood, entitled: "Wanted by the Police!" in next week's issue.)

A SCARE for the FAMOUS FIVE!

(Continued from page 17.)

"Oh dear!" "They—they can release you from the promise," said Nugent.

"You can ask 'em to," said Lord Mauleverer. "My impression is that they won't. But you can ask 'em."

"We're fairly dished," said Bob Cherry. "Greyfriars will be beaten to the wide, and it's all our own fault. Squiff, old man, why were you born so humorous?"

Squiff grunted dismally. "That's Squiff's fault," said Wharton. "We all backed up the idea. I must admit that I refused to captain the team against Rookwood. I'd have let Bunter take it on if he'd offered. None of us thought of this, and it's our fault all round. We ought not to have taken any chances in cricket."

"But who'd have thought it?" groaned Squiff.

"Well, we oughtn't to have concluded that Rookwood would always play a team of bally idiots," said Johnny Bull. "We were all to blame."

"You see," remarked Lord Mauleverer, "it wouldn't help you much if I did resign, for you'd have to promise solemnly to play my team. The places have been promised to them, and they've got to have them."

"We couldn't promise you that of course."

"Besides, I'm not resignin'," grinned his lordship.

"Look here, you'll have to make changes in the team," growled Johnny Bull.

"Can't! And don't you begin dictatin' to your skipper," said Lord Mauleverer

loftily. "Just you remember that I'm captain, and that you're not even in the eleven."

"Oh!" said Johnny Bull. There was a long silence. Lord Mauleverer closed his eyes, and appeared to be going to sleep. Harry Wharton spoke at last.

"Mauly, old man—"

Lord Mauleverer opened his eyes, and blinked at the dismayed Removites.

"Begad! You fellows still there?" "You've got no objection to changes in the team, if—if we can persuade the members of the eleven to resign?"

"Not at all—on condition that you only persuade 'em," said his lordship. "None of your blessed ragging. If a fellow tells me you've bumped him or ragged him, I shall play him all the same, and shall refuse to accept his resignation."

"Oh, you rotter!" Lord Mauleverer grinned.

There was evidently nothing more to be got out of the new cricket captain, and the juniors quitted the study in very low spirits. Lord Mauleverer stretched himself comfortably in the armchair, and winked at the ceiling. The slacker of the Remove had a feeling that this was the last time, as well as the first, that he would be disturbed from his repose for the purpose of captaining a cricket team.

THE END.

(Don't miss reading "The Remove's Great Win!"—a topping Greyfriars tale next week.)

ALGY'S CHALLENGE!

(Continued from page 10.)

Creek he hardly knew. But he did cover it, and the lumber school came in sight at last.

Algy was on the point of exhaustion when he staggered in at the gates of Cedar Creek.

Afternoon lessons had ended at the backwoods school. Boys and girls were crowding out into the playground, when Algy tottered in with Eben Hacke on his back.

In a moment Algy was surrounded by a crowd. Miss Meadows came quickly out of the schoolhouse.

"What—what has happened?" she exclaimed.

Frank Richards and Bob Lawless relieved Algy of his burden. Algy staggered, and caught Vere Beauclerc's shoulder for support.

"Sorry!" he gasped. "Sorry, Miss Meadows! I know I oughtn't to have cut lessons, but—"

"I will deal with that matter later!" said Miss Meadows severely. "Go into the kitchen at once and dry your clothes, you reckless, foolish boy! Lawless, kindly look after Hacke!"

Before a blazing log fire in the school kitchen, Algy of Cedar Creek soon dried himself, and recovered his cheerful smiles. It took Eben Hacke a much longer time to recover.

Frank Richards & Co. looked at Algy grimly when he joined them.

"What a rippin' run—what!" he remarked.

"I guess I've a jolly good mind to punch your silly head!" growled Bob Lawless. "We nearly had to carry Frank home—"

"Beauclerc!"

It was Miss Meadows' voice.

"Yes, ma'am!"

"Come into my study!"

The Honourable Algernon was rubbing his hands ruefully when he came out again. But he contrived to smile as the chums of Cedar Creek mounted their horses for the homeward ride.

"Never mind!" he remarked. "We had a jolly good run. Next time you want to play follow-my-leader, I'll be leader again, if you like, and we'll have a longer run!"

"I don't think!" chuckled Frank Richards.

THE END.

(Another Topping Tale of the School in the Backwoods next week.)

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