

THE KIDNAPPING OF ALGY BEAUCLERC!

With so much money, Algy Beauclerc is bound to attract the attention of such "rough-necks" as Billy Bowers and Four Kings, men who obtain a living by their wits. The dandy of Cedar Creek is quite unconscious of his position, until Four Kings & Co. place their cards on the table. Then Algy finds himself in a situation not at all pleasant—in the hands of the kidnapers!



ALGY IN A FIX!

Dear Sir—Your nery is staying with us in the hills. If you want him to come home it will cost you Five Thousand dollars. Stop cash. Put the money in a bag on the dead oak by the creek. When it's fetched away your nery will come home, not afore I mean business—
Yours
Mexican Jim

Another Topping Tale of **FRANK RICHARDS & Co.**, of the **SCHOOL** in the **BACKWOODS!**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Rough Justice!

THAT'S the chap!" Algenon Beauclerc pulled in his horse suddenly on the trail, and pointed with his riding-whip.

It was a fine, frosty morning, and Frank Richards & Co. were riding on the timber-trail to Cedar Creek School.

As the four schoolboys trotted up the trail, a figure came in sight ahead, tramping through the powdering snow. It was Dry Billy Bowers, of Thompson Town, and he was coming towards the chums of Cedar Creek.

Dry Billy grinned at the Co., and touched his ragged Stetson hat. And then Algenon uttered his surprised exclamation.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "Do you know that galoot, Algy?"

"I know that thumpin' rascal!" answered Algenon.

Dry Billy blinked at the dandy of Cedar Creek with an expression of alarm coming over his rum-tinted visage. It was pretty evident that he recognised Algenon.

"Good-mornin', young gents!" said Mr. Bowers, with feeble geniality, as the four riders stopped. Mr. Bowers had to stop, too, as the horses blocked the trail before him.

"What do you mean, Algy?" asked Vere Beauclerc. "You've had nothing to do with that boozey fellow, surely?"

"Not of my own choice, dear boy," answered Algy. "But that's the fellow who tried to rob me on the prairie the day I came up here."

"Oh!" ejaculated Frank Richards.

"You remember? You fellows came up, and he bolted," said Algenon. "He was robbing me!"

"So that's the rotter, is it?" said Frank.

Mr. William Bowers backed away in alarm.

"The young gent's mistaken," he said. "I guess it's a case of mistaken identity, gents. Never seed the young gent afore."

Algenon shook his head. "I know your voice, too, and your way of speakin'," he said; "and you smelt of rum then, same as you do now."

"You're sure he's the man?" asked Bob Lawless slowly. "It was dark, you know—"

"Quite sure." "What have you got to say, Bowers?" demanded Frank Richards.

"Gents, it's a case of mistaken identity," said Mr. Bowers, with almost tearful earnestness. "I wasn't there that night. I was with a little party at the Red Dog."

"What night?" asked Bob. "How do you know which night Algy refers to, if you weren't there?"

"I—I mean—I—I guess—" stammered Mr. Bowers.

The loafer of Thompson backed away farther, but the four horses were round him now, and the schoolboys followed him up. There was no escape for Dry Billy.

"He's the man right enough," said Frank Richards decidedly. "He's as good as given himself away."

"Yaas, begad!" assented Algy. "We ought to take him to the sheriff and charge him with attempted robbery," said Vere Beauclerc.

"Or give him a thunderin' good hidin', at least!" said Algenon.

"Gents," pleaded Mr. Bowers, "I guess I'm ready to swear—"

"Own up, you rotter!" said Algenon.

"Gents, it was the tanglefoot," said Mr. Bowers, after another hopeless glance round in search of an avenue of escape. "I guess I was full of fire-water, gents, or I'd never have spoken uncivil to sich a nice young gent as this 'yer."

"Well, what are you going to do with the brute?" asked Frank Richards. "We shall be late for school at this rate!"

"Give him a hidin'," said Algenon, after some thought. "Can't be bothered with takin' him to the sheriff. Start him up the trail, and let him run the gauntlet—what?"

"Like that, Bowers?" "Oh! Nope!" gasped Mr. Bowers. "Not at all, sir!"

"Would you rather be run off to the sheriff?"

"Ow! Nope! Nix!"

"Then you can take the hidin'," said Algenon determinedly. "Not so much for tryin' to rob me, though that was bad enough; but for rumpling my clobber and muckin' up my necktie! Start!"

Algenon made his riding-whip whistle in the air.

"I—I guess I was goin' down to White Pine, gents—" pleaded Mr. Bowers.

"Your mistake; you're going back towards Cedar Creek!" said Bob Lawless. "We're on our way to school, and we've got no time to lose. Savvy? Start!"

"But I guess—"

"Here's a lick to begin with!" Mr. Bowers jumped back to escape the "lick."

There was no help for the loafer of Thompson. He was in the toils, and he realised it. "Running the gauntlet" up the trail to Cedar Creek was better than being handed over to the sheriff, and Dry Billy dismally made up his mind to it.

He turned his back on the four horsemen, and started at a run.

Whack, whack!

Algenon's riding-whip got home first on Dry Billy's shoulders, and the loafer uttered a loud howl. Then he put on speed.

"Ha, ha! Go it!" roared Bob Lawless. "Put it on, Billy!"

"After him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

If Frank Richards & Co. had done their worst, Dry Billy would have had an extremely uncomfortable run as far as Cedar Creek. Four trampling horses and slashing riding-whips were close behind him, and the ruffian panted and gasped as he ran and dodged. But, as a matter of fact, the riding-whips missed him all the time, or gave him only light "licks." Dry Billy was a good deal

more frightened than hurt, but there was no doubt that he was very scared indeed.

He was panting stertorously as Cedar Creek School came in sight. There was a group of Cedar Creek fellows outside the gates, and they burst into a roar at the sight of the chase coming up the trail.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Put it on!"

Dry Billy plunged and panted on, and passed the gates amid shouts of laughter. Frank Richards & Co. halted at the gates, chuckling. Up the trail towards the town of Thompson went Dry Billy, almost tottering with his unaccustomed exertions.

"By gad!" remarked Algernon. "That rotter will think twice before he plays the goat once, next time—what?"

The dusty and dismal figure of Dry Billy Bowers vanished up the Thompson trail. And arrived in the town, Dry Billy forgot all about his going to White Pine, and headed direct for the Red Dog Saloon, to seek liquid consolation for his woes.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

In the Hands of the Philistines!

"DON'T get into trouble!"

"Really, dear boys—"

"Well, you know what you are," remarked Bob Lawless.

"Rats, old top!"

Morning lessons were over at Cedar Creek, and Frank Richards & Co, having found the ice strong on the creek, were going out to skate.

Algernon Beauclerc preferred a ride, and he led out his horse.

He shook out his reins, and started up the trail, leaving his comrades to go down to the creek with their skates.

It was a clear day, and a ride was very enjoyable on the trail that ran under the big, leafless branches.

Algernon cantered along in a cheery mood.

The "tenderfoot" from the Old Country had grown to like his new home and to be satisfied with his rough quarters at his uncle's cabin on the creek.

Dainty as he still was in his ways, cousin Algernon had learned a great deal since his arrival in the "wild and woolly West." The rough-and-ready life had brought out the good qualities that he really possessed.

Algy was thinking of the Old Country as he rode up the trail under the trees—thinking of anything but the loafer of Thompson whom he had encountered that morning. But, as a matter of fact, Mr. William Bowers was not far away.

Algy would have been startled if he had been aware that ahead of him on the trail three pairs of eyes were watching him from the thicket.

"That's the guy!" Mr. William Bowers was saying. "That's the dude what chased me up the trail and licked me with a pesky whip behind! That's the ornery galoot, pard!"

"I've seed 'im afore," remarked Euchre Dick, of the Red Dog, "moseying round Thompson with that young Richards and his friends."

"I guess so!" assented the third of the party, Four Kings, the great chief and leader of the "Red Dog crowd." "I've seed the dude! Eyeglass, and all, by hokey! Why, south of the line, I'd have winged him for his eyeglass; but a galoot has to be mighty careful in Canada afore he wings a tenderfoot. Now, down in Montana—"

"He'll be along yer in a minute or

two," said Mr. Bowers, possibly not interested in Four Kings' reminiscences of happenings in Montana. "Aire we going to rope him in?"

"We aire!" said Euchre Dick emphatically.

"I guess he looks as if he was well-heeled," remarked Four Kings.

"Rolling in Durocks, I guess!" said Mr. Bowers.

"But Old Man Beauclerc ain't!" said Four Kings. "Tain't so very long since he was a remittance-man, hangin' around the saloons. He's got no money to pay for his nevvie, Billy Bowers!"

"I tell you this hyre is a rich relation from the Old Country," said Mr. Bowers. "He's well-heeled, and he's got rich folks. I tell you that pesky dude is worth a thousand dollars to us!"

"I guess we'll rope him in, and chance it!"

"Now's the time!" said Mr. Bowers.

Dry Billy made a sudden jump from the thicket as Algernon came cantering by. He caught the bridle and stopped the rider.

Algy's eyeglass gleamed down at him.

"By gad! You again!" he ejaculated.

"Me agin!" grinned Dry Billy Bowers.

"Let go my bridle!"

"I guess not!"

"By gad, I'll use my whip if you don't!" exclaimed Algy angrily, and his riding-whip circled over Mr. Bowers' coppery face.

At the same moment there was a rush of footsteps behind him, and hands grasped him on both sides.

Mr. Bowers' dodge had been to hold his attention, while Four Kings and Euchre Dick seized him, and he had succeeded perfectly.

Almost before he knew what was happening Algernon Beauclerc was dragged out of the saddle, and bumped into the powdery snow of the trail.

"Ow!" he gasped.

"I guess that puts the cinch on him!" chuckled Billy Bowers.

"Leggo!" roared Algy furiously. "You horrid ruffians, you're makin' my clothes dirty with your dirty paws! Let go!"

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared Mr. Bowers.

"Lend me a hand, instead of gurgling, you silly idjit!" gasped Four Kings.

Algy was giving the two ruffians some trouble. Dry Billy came to their help, and the dandy of Cedar Creek was secured, breathless and torn.

"Oh, you rotters!" gasped Algy.

"Get hold of the hoss!" exclaimed Four Kings. "That's a vallyble animal! You idjit, Billy Bowers! Why didn't you get hold of the boss?"

Algy's horse, scared by the struggle, had started back along the trail at a gallop.

Mr. Bowers cast a regretful glance after it. He was a born horse-thief, and he had let an opportunity slip!

"I guess they'll all know what's happened at the school, when that critter gits there!" said Euchre Dick.

"Let 'em know—they'll know soon enough, anyhow," said Four Kings.

"You bet!"

"Let me go!" roared Algy. "Help!"

Four Kings thrust a huge, knuckly fist under Algy's nose, as his comrades held the dandy of Cedar Creek by the arms.

"Do you want that on your jaw?" asked the ruffian.

"Oh gad! No thanks!"

"You'll git it next time you yaup!"

Algy took the hint; and he did not "yaup" again, as the three kidnappers hurried him away into the timber.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Missing!

ALGY'S late!"

Vere Beauclerc made the remark, as the chums of Cedar Creek came into the dining-room at the lumber school.

Algy was accustomed to have his mid-day meal at the backwoods school, like most of the fellows whose homes were at a distance. But he was not to be seen among the Cedar Creek fellows who were coming in.

Bob Lawless gave a grunt.

"Gone wandering, perhaps," he remarked. "I dare say he'll turn up too late for dinner!"

Algy had not turned up by the time dinner was over.

His chums were a little perplexed as they came out after dinner; Algy was too good a rider for them to suppose that any accident had happened to him, but he could hardly have missed his dinner of his own accord.

"Where the thump is he?" said Frank Richards. "There'll be a row if he doesn't come back in time for lessons!"

There was a shout from Chunky Todgers, who was looking out of the school gates.

"Cherub!"

"Hallo, Chunky!" called back Beauclerc. "Is Algy coming?"

"I guess not, but his horse is!"

"What!"

The three chums ran down to the gates.

Chunky Todgers pointed out into the trail with a fat forefinger. A handsome steed was ambling towards the school. The chums recognised Algy's very distinctive and expensive mount at once.

"Algy's horse!" exclaimed Beauclerc.

"What—what has happened to my cousin, then?"

"Goodness knows!" muttered Frank. "He is too good a rider to be thrown! He could ride anything!"

Beauclerc caught the horse and led him in.

There were signs about the animal that he had been galloping, though he had dropped to a walk before reaching the school.

A crowd of the Cedar Creek fellows gathered round, in curiosity and some alarm, as Beauclerc led in the horse.

There was a buzz of voices in the playground.

Miss Meadows stepped out of the School House. Vere Beauclerc led the horse towards the schoolmistress, followed by the crowd. His handsome face was pale and troubled now. His cousin was, in a way, in his charge at the backwoods school; and, though Algy was quite satisfied that he could look after himself, Vere felt that it was his duty to look after him.

"What has happened, Beauclerc?" asked Miss Meadows quietly.

"My cousin's horse has come back without him, Miss Meadows. There must have been an accident," said Beauclerc. "I must go and look for him. Will you excuse me if I am late for lessons this afternoon?"

"Certainly, my boy!" said the Canadian schoolmistress kindly. "You may take your friends, Richards and Lawless, with you!"

"Thank you, ma'am!"

Algy's horse was taken to the corral, and then Frank Richards & Co. led out their own steeds.

Some of the other fellows followed as the chums started up the trail, in the direction Algy Beauclerc had taken.

They had to return for classes, however, and the three chums were left alone on the trail, to pursue their search.

It was easy enough to track Algy's horse in the powdery snow, and by the time classes were recommencing at Cedar Creek, Bob Lawless halted at the spot where the dandy of the school had met the kidnappers.

"This is where the gee turned back," said Bob, regarding the trampled snow with a keen eye. "You can see how far he came, and where the back track begins. There have been a good many galoots round this spot."

The rancher's son examined the traces with searching eyes. His chums watched him in silence.

"Algy wasn't thrown from his horse, I guess," said Bob, looking up at last. "He wasn't such a jay, for one thing. He could ride. But there's proof—these tracks show plainly enough that he was pulled off his horse by two or three galoots. And there's marks in the snow in the thicket where three men waited, keeping in cover. Three different tracks of boots there, and big boots at that! I reckoned at first it might be a lark of the Hillcrest School chaps; but it's not that! It was three big bulldozers who handled poor old Algy!"

Vere Beauclerc compressed his lips. "I think I can make a guess," he said. "Go ahead!" said Frank Richards.

"I think it very likely that Billy Bowers got some of his friends in Thompson to help him to get square for the chase we gave him this morning," said the Cherub.

Bob Lawless nodded. "I thought of that!" he said. "Like enough that Bowers would come back with some of his pals, and hang about the school for a chance of lambasting poor old Algy. But if—"

"But what?"

"They might lick him with a cowhide to get square," said Bob; "but they wouldn't go further than that, if it was for malice. But that's not what they've done, whoever they are. They've taken Algy away. If they'd only licked him, he would have come home by this."

"Then what—"

"They yanked him off his gee, and the critter was scared, and galloped off," said Bob. "That's how I figure it out. And then the three bulldozers led Algy away into the timber."

"And he's still there?" said Frank. "I guess so."

"But why—"

"That's what we've got to find out, I reckon. Come on!"

Leaving the three horses tethered in the trail, under the trees, the chums of Cedar Creek entered the thick wood.

It was easy enough to follow the traces where a way had been pushed through the thickets. Snow had been shaken from branches and twigs, leaving them bare, where the kidnappers had brushed by.

But Bob Lawless' sunburnt face was not very hopeful as he led. The track was a little too plain—it was not likely to lead them to Algy.

Bob's surmise on that point was soon proved correct. A quarter of a mile from the open trail, the murmur of waters fell upon their ears. They came out of the thickets upon the bank of a forest stream. Ice was clinging to the banks, but the stream itself was frozen; it ran in a series of cascades down a rugged hillside. Bob Lawless stopped by the water's edge, and looked about him.

"They came this far!" he said. "And crossed the stream most likely," said Frank Richards.

"Not direct, I guess. Of course, they knew they would be followed, as they've taken Algy with them," said Bob. "I guess they waded some, before they took to the bank again. They might have

landed at two or three miles along the stream."

"Phew!"

"That means a big search!" said Beauclerc.

"I guess so."

"But what can the game be?" exclaimed Frank Richards, in perplexity. "Who are they, and what have they collared Algy for?"

Bob shook his head. "I don't know, at present. But there's only one reason that I can think of. Algy's become pretty well known in Thompson, and up and down the valley as a rich fellow—the galoots know that he's the son of a lord in England. I guess there's only one reason why he's been roped in, and that's to get money for letting him come back!"

"Holding him to ransom!" said Frank.

"That's it! It happens often enough in the States, though it's rather a new stunt in Canada. Algy was really asking for trouble, you know, with his diamond studs and gold watch, and wad of notes, that everybody could see. Some of the rustlers in the valley have got on to it, and they reckon they're going to make a good thing out of poor old Algy!"

"In that case he's safe, Bob."

"Safe enough. They won't hurt him, I guess," said Bob Lawless. "But he's a prisoner, and I guess he'll have to rough it."

"And we don't know where they are," said Beauclerc.

"Some of the Red Dog crowd. I reckon; but we can't tell till we find them. I guess this is a job for the sheriff!"

"I must let my father know," said

Beauclerc. "But let's try, at least, to follow the trail a bit farther, Bob."

"Come on, then!"

The chums waded across the stream, and trampled through frozen rushes and chips of ice to the farther bank.

Thick underwoods met them there, frosty trunks and leafless branches, and blackened larches growing densely.

Until the light began to fail, the chums of Cedar Creek searched the bank for traces to be found. The rascals had evidently waded along the shallow stream for a distance before landing, and a search was required of every foot of the bank, possibly for a mile or more.

As the dusk deepened over the timber the schoolboys gave it up at last. In a grim mood they returned to their horses, and rode away for the remittance-man's cabin.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

In the Heart of the Forest!

"GROOH! It's cold!"

"Shet up!"

"But it's cold, by gad!" said Algy mildly.

Four Kings scowled, and Billy Bowers grinned. Euchre Dick stared at the dandy of Cedar Creek.

The three ruffians had expected the "dude" to be scared to death by the situation he found himself in, but there was no sign of scare about Algy Beauclerc.

With a muscular grasp on either arm, Algy was wading in the stream, and his chief concern seemed to be the coldness of the water. Cold it undoubtedly was; it was only the turbid cascade in its course that kept the forest stream from freezing.

For a great distance the ruffians had



THE CHASE DOWN THE TRAIL! With a loud howl, Dry Billy Bowers put on speed down the trail, with four trampling horses and lashing whips close behind him. "After him!" roared Bob Lawless. "Ha, ha, ha!" Frank Richards & Co. were careful to miss the flying figure of the loafer with their whips; but there was no doubt that Dry Billy was very scared indeed. (See Chapter 1.)

been wading, and Algy had been wading with them.

That search would be made for the missing schoolboy as soon as he was missed, Billy Bowers & Co. knew well enough, and they were very careful to leave no track by which they could be followed.

But the journey was nearly at an end now.

Billy Bowers, who was leading the way, stopped at a point where the mass of thickets on the bank seemed to present an unbroken front. He stooped by the water's edge and lifted a branch.

"Duck under!" he said.

"Oh gad!" murmured Algy.

He guessed that it was a place of concealment that had been reached, and he cast a longing glance up and down the stream.

But the grip on his arms was too strong for him; there was no possibility of escape.

Four Kings and Euchre Dick ducked their heads, and Algy ducked with them, and they passed under the loose branch.

Billy Bowers let it fall back after they had passed.

"You go ahead!" said Mr. Bowers.

Algy was drawn on through the thicket, which scratched and tore his clothes as a way was forced through.

Mr. Bowers brought up the rear, grinning. The trees were so thick that a dim twilight reigned on the earth among the trunks. A dozen yards from the stream Billy Bowers called a halt.

"Hyer we are!" he said.

A dilapidated hut was dimly visible in the thicket. The kidnappers entered it with their prisoner.

Algy looked round him curiously.

The hut was built of roughly cut logs and branches, and was evidently very old, and was in a state of disrepair. There was a frozen buffalo-robe on the floor, and a rusty oil-stove in one corner.

"So this is the shebang!" said Four Kings, with a very disparaging glance round.

"I guess so," said Mr. Bowers. "They won't find this show in a hurry, pards!"

"What a show!" murmured Algy. "Are you fellows thinkin' of keepin' me here?"

"I guess so."

"What for?"

"Till you've paid for your visit!" grinned Mr. Bowers.

"We ain't been through him yet," said Four Kings.

"That ain't necessary. I guess Mister Dude will hand over his spondulics if we ask him nice!" said Dry Billy.

"I won't!" said Algy.

"What's the good of chinwag?" growled Four Kings. "Look hyer, I'm freezing in this show already! I want to vamoose. Hand over your dollars, Mister Dude, afore something happens to you!"

Four Kings clenched a brawny fist.

Algy hesitated a moment. But resistance was evidently out of the question, and he turned out his pockets quietly.

"Thirty dollars!" said Euchre Dick. "I knew he was well heeled! And a ticker—"

"Let the ticker alone," said Mr. Bowers sagely. "We don't want to be roped in by selling a gold ticker in the valley. Let it alone! Now, who's goin' to stay hyer with the dude?"

"I'm going back to Thompson!" said Four Kings at once. "It's your stunt, Dry Billy, and you can stay!"

"Correct!" agreed Euchre Dick.

"I guess—" began Dry Billy.

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"You're stayin'!" said Four Kings decidedly. "You give us the bit of writing for Old Man Beauclerc, and we'll git!"

"Waal, I guess I couldn't trust you galoots to see that the dude didn't vamoose the ranch," remarked Mr. Bowers. "I'll hang on, I guess. But you've got to bring me what I want—blankets, and a tin of kerosene for the stove, and grub, and whisky. Don't forget the whisky! Mister Dude will pay for the lot. You've got the cash in advance!" Dry Billy chuckled. "You object to stayin' hyer with me a bit, Mister Dude?"

Algy made a grimace. He understood how much choice he had in the matter. "Not at all," he answered politely. "Quite a pleasure! In fact, I'm lookin' forward to enjoyin' your company!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"Not so much chinwag!" said Four Kings, with a grunt. "Look hyer, Billy Bowers, gimme the bit of writing and I'll git!"

"I've got it ready," said Mr. Bowers, fumbling in his pocket. "Don't you go to the remittance-man yourself, you galoot! Injun Dick will take the paper, and hold his tongue."

"Sure!"

"And, mind, don't go back by the stream. Strike off north from here, and you'll come into the Thompson trail four miles right on," said Mr. Bowers. "See that you don't leave tracks! That's dangerous, if you've got sense enough to understand that, Four Kings!"

"Stow your chinwag! Let's git!"

"Tie him up first!"

"Yep!"

Dry Billy Bowers produced a cord, which he tied to Algy's ankle while the other ruffians held him. The other end of the cord was fastened to a root close at hand.

"If you try to undo that, my pippin, you get a clout with this stick!" explained Mr. Bowers. "Understand?"

"Oh, quite!" drawled Algy.

"You're a game 'un, you are!" said Dry Billy. "I don't bear you any malice for that leetle joke on the trail this morning. I'm only going to make you pay for it, I guess! You've got a lot of sand for a dude. I guess you won't be here more'n a few days, if your folks stump up the five thousand!"

"The what?" ejaculated Algy.

"Five thousand dollars!" said Mr. Bowers, rubbing his hands with satisfaction. "That's the figure, I guess!"

"My dear man," said Algy, "my Uncle Beauclerc probably hasn't a tenth part of that sum! And if he had, he wouldn't think me worth it. Make it ten dollars, and get your money!"

"I guess we're making it five thousand," answered Mr. Bowers. "I know Old Man Beauclerc hasn't the rocks. But your folks in the Old Country have. Old Man Beauclerc can raise it hyer, and stick your folks for it arter. If you have to wait for the money to come from home, you'll be likely to catch cold afore you see your school ag'in! You galoots goin'? Mind you don't forget the whisky!"

Four Kings and Euchre Dick left the hut, threading their way through the dusky forest to the north.

Algy Beauclerc was left alone with Mr. William Bowers as the dusk deepened over the forest.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Ransom Required!

FRANK RICHARDS & CO. came riding up the trail to the remittance-man's cabin on the creek, tired and somewhat gloomy. They had no immediate fears of Algy's

safety, but they were deeply concerned for the dandy of Cedar Creek, hidden somewhere in the depths of the frozen forest.

A dim figure draped in a tattered blanket was striding towards the cabin from another direction.

"Injun Dick!" exclaimed Bob.

The Indian looked round, after knocking at the cabin door, as the horsemen clattered up. He ducked his head in salute to the chums of Cedar Creek.

Mr. Beauclerc opened the door.

He seemed rather surprised by the number of his callers.

"Come in!" he said.

The three schoolboys entered, and Injun Dick followed them in.

"Father," exclaimed Vere Beauclerc, "there's bad news. Algy—"

"Algernon is not with you?" exclaimed the remittance-man.

"He has been kidnapped!"

"What! Algy kidnapped?" he exclaimed.

Vere Beauclerc explained hurriedly.

The remittance-man listened, with a grim expression growing upon his bronzed face.

"We searched for him till dark," concluded Beauclerc. "Then we thought we'd better come and tell you, father."

The remittance-man nodded.

"Quite right, Vere! You could find the place again as far as you followed Algernon?"

"Oh, yes—easily!"

"Get my horse out, my boy. I will ride over to Thompson and see the sheriff at once. What do you want, Injun Dick?" added the remittance-man, turning to the old Apache.

The Redskin had waited like a bronze statue till he was addressed. Now he groped under his ragged blanket, and produced a letter.

"Injun bring letter!" he explained. "You give Injun dollar! Wah!"

Mr. Beauclerc took the letter, with a puzzled expression.

"Who sent me this?" he asked.

"No say."

"You know who gave you the letter, Injun Dick?"

"Injun no savvy!" answered the red man calmly. "White man put letter in Injun's hand in the dark, give Injun dollar, and say, 'You take this to Old Man Beauclerc, and he give you 'nother dollar.' I have spoken."

And the Apache draped his tattered blanket round him and waited, evidently for the dollar.

Mr. Beauclerc opened the letter, the chums of Cedar Creek watching him eagerly as he did so.

A grim look came over his face as he read the missive.

Without a word, he handed it to his son, and the three schoolboys read it together.

"My hat!" murmured Frank Richards.

The letter ran:

"Dear Sir,—Yore nevy is staying with us in the hills. If you want him to come home it will cost you five thousand dollars, spot cash. Put the money in a bag on the dead oak by the creek. When it's fetched away your nevy will come home, not afore. I mean business.—Yores,

"MEXICAN JIM."

"Who the thump is Mexican Jim?" murmured Frank Richards.

"Mexican Jim!" repeated Bob Lawless. "I guess I've never heard the name."

Mr. Beauclerc smiled slightly.

"It is a false name, of course," he said. "From that signature I am pretty certain that the writer is not a Mexican, and that his name is not Jim."

(Continued on page 23.)

"He won't do that," said Erroll.
 "Where will he go, then?"
 "I don't know. I'm afraid he may have some idea of going out into the world on his own. Goodness knows what will happen to him!"
 "Had he much tin?" asked Raby.
 "Only a few pounds, at the most."
 "Can't have much of that left after what he spent in the tuckshop this morning," remarked Newcome.
 "In the tuckshop?" repeated Erroll.
 "Mornny laid in a supply of grub this morning at the sergeant's," Jimmy Silver explained. "That's what I've been thinking about. I don't believe he's left Rookwood at all."
 "Then where is he?" demanded Lovell.
 "The place has been searched high and low for him."
 "Every nook and cranny," said Newcome.
 "He didn't lay in two quid's worth of grub for nothing," answered Jimmy. "He's made up his mind to hide somewhere, and, of course, he can't live without food. That's the idea. I think very likely he nipped out over the school wall this morning to keep out of reach while he was being searched for. He could stay out all day—in the wood, perhaps. But I think he hasn't gone for good. He wouldn't buy a stack of grub to go with him."

Erroll nodded thoughtfully.
 "I think that's very likely," he assented. "If he's out of gates now he may get in after dark, and take up his quarters in some nook, I shouldn't wonder. But he's only making matters worse for himself; he can't expect this to blow over. If he's not found before night the Head will be in an awful wax."

"Better not mention it outside this study," said Jimmy. "We don't want to be the cause of his being found if he's lurking about Rookwood somewhere. It's not our bizney to find him."

During that evening there was hardly any topic discussed at Rookwood—among the juniors, at least—but the disappearance of Valentine Mornington. Early in the evening Sir Rupert Staepoole arrived, and he was shut up with the Head in his study for some time. The juniors, who watched the baronet on his arrival and departure, announced that he was looking "no end waxy." Mornington had given his guardian a good deal of trouble in his time, and it was no wonder if the old gentleman was growing "fed" with his scapegrace nephew.

What steps the Head and Sir Rupert were taking in the matter, the juniors, of course, did not know; but they were aware that some search for the missing junior was still going on.

At half-past nine that night the Fourth-Formers were very reluctant to go to their dormitory; indeed, Tubby Muffin went so far as to inquire of Mr. Bootles whether they might stay up till there was news of Mornington. Mr. Bootles' reply was a most decided negative, and Bulkeley of the Sixth shepherded the Fourth off to the dormitory, as usual.

After lights out there was an incessant buzz of talk in the dormitory till past ten o'clock.

Then even the various surmises concerning Mornington's fate failed to keep the juniors awake, and they dropped off to sleep one by one:

Erroll did not sleep, however. His distress on his chum's account banished slumber from his eyes, and he lay awake in the silent dormitory, staring at the dark ceiling, and thinking of the hapless, headstrong junior whose restless temper had brought him to such disaster.

He gave a start as he heard the sound of the door opening softly in the darkness. There was a soft footfall, and the door closed again. The soft footfalls came towards the beds.

Erroll, his heart beating, sat up quickly. "Who's there?" he called out, peering through the gloom.

"Shush!"

It was a cool whisper in response, and Erroll recognised the voice.

"Mornny!" he ejaculated blankly.
 "Himself, old top! Are you surprised?"
 "Yes, yes! I'm so glad you've come back, Mornny!" exclaimed Erroll, in great relief.
 "What's that? Mornny?" It was Jimmy Silver's voice, and the captain of the Fourth sat up in bed. "Is that Mornny?"
 "Yes, old top!"

"My hat!"

Half the Fourth had awakened, and the fellows were sitting up in bed, peering

through the darkness. Mornington could not be seen very distinctly, but his voice was well known.

"So you've come back?" exclaimed Lovell.
 "Pro tem, old top!"
 "What do you mean by pro tem., you ass?"

Mornington laughed softly.
 "I haven't come back to stay, you see. I don't see why I should camp out when there's a bed made for me here. I'm turning in for to-night. I'm going again before rising-bell."

"What?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.
 "But you're going to show up in the morning?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.
 "Not at all."

"You mean to clear off before you're seen?"
 "Exactly!"

"Then you oughtn't to have come back," said Jimmy Silver gruffly. "You're putting us all in a rotten position by this. Mr. Bootles will rag us for not letting him know you're here."

"You can go and sneak if you like!"
 "Oh, cheese it!"

Mornington turned in, quite coolly, and was heard settling down in his bed. There was a buzz from the other beds; the Fourth were wide awake now. Mornington's coolness in turning up in the dormitory while the search was going on for him outside

Next Week's Thrilling Cover!



Another Big Budget of fiction for next week. Full particulars of Tuesday's programme will be found on page 27.

Rookwood, astounded the juniors. Yet he was safe enough there. The search for the missing junior was not likely to extend to the Fourth Form dormitory after lights out.

Jimmy Silver tried to imagine what the Head would say, and think, when he learned on the morrow that the missing junior had passed the night in the Fourth-Form dormitory. But he couldn't; it was past imagining. Jimmy was still wondering when he fell asleep—long after slumber had sealed the eyes of the scapegrace of Rookwood.

THE END.

(There will be another magnificent long complete tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, entitled: "The Rookwood Refugee!" next week.)

ANSWERS

EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2:

"ALGY IN A FIX!"

(Continued from page 10.)

"You bet!" said Bob, with a nod. "I guess that's so. Five thousand dollars! They're not making the mistake of asking too little, by gum!"

"They know he's got rich relations in England," said Frank Richards. "The money could be found, I suppose, but it jolly well won't be! Algy won't stay in their hands long."

"I shall take this letter to the sheriff at once!" said Mr. Beauclerc quietly.

Vere Beauclerc left the cabin to take out his father's horse. There was no time to be lost. The remittance-man fixed a searching glance upon the impassive features of Injun Dick.

"You do not know who gave you this letter?" he asked.

The Apache shook his head.
 "Are you to take an answer?"
 Another shake of the head.

"Listen to me!" said Mr. Beauclerc. "It will be worth a hundred dollars to you, Injun Dick, if you can take me to the man who gave you that letter!"

"Hundred dollar!" repeated the old Apache.

"Can you find the man? Take me to him, and I will give you a hundred dollars at once!" said the remittance-man.

Injun Dick shook his head slowly and sorrowfully.

"If Injun know Injun scoop in hundred dollar, you bet!" he answered. "Injun no see."

Mr. Beauclerc compressed his lips. His first thought had been that the old Apache was a confederate of the kid-nappers; but that was evidently not the case. Injun Dick would certainly have told all he knew for a hundred dollars, a sum that would have given him a free run of the whisky at the Red Dog for a week.

"Very well," he said. "You had better come with me to the sheriff's, Injun Dick. My nephew has been kid-napped, and you must tell the sheriff what you can."
 "Injun come."

The remittance-man left the cabin, the Apache following him. In a few minutes he was riding away on the trail to Thompson.

The next day the dandy of Cedar Creek was not seen at the school.

Frank Richards & Co. arrived there in the morning, but not to stay. They came to ask leave from school, to join in the search for the missing Algy. Miss Meadows gave the required permission at once, and the chums rode away, leaving Cedar Creek School in a buzz.

It was the only topic at Cedar Creek, and Miss Meadows found the attention of her pupils wandering that day. And while Cedar Creek was at lessons, the search was going on, far and wide, for the dandy of the school who was kid-napped and held to ransom.

THE END.

(You must not miss reading "Algy's Stratagem!" next Tuesday's roaring, long complete tale of Frank Richards & Co., the chums of the School in the Backwoods.)
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