

## SOMETHING LIKE OLD TIMES! In a strange place and in still stranger circumstances, Frank

Richards, the homeless schoolboy, meets an old acquaintance and a queer partnership is formed!



# A Queer Partnership!

A Stirring, Long Complete Story, dealing with Frank Richards' amazing adventures in the Backwoods of Canada!

### THE FIRST CHAPTER. An Old Acquaintance!

**T**HE rain was coming down in torrents. The drenched cedars moaned in the wind; the larches draggled and dripped. It was one of the sudden rainstorms of British Columbia, and it had caught Frank Richards on the open trail. With his head bent to the wind and rain, the wandering schoolboy tramped up the Siskoo trail, which was churned into thick mud under his feet.

Somewhere in the darkness ahead of him was Siskoo, on the edge of the lake. But neither camp nor lake was to be seen—only the dripping, swaying branches loomed through the gloom. Faintly to Frank's ears came a hollow boom, which he guessed was the sound of the lake's waters, lashed by the fierce wind. It was the third day since he had tramped out of Kicking Mule Camp, with six dollars in his pocket, and all Canada before him, and, so far, his lines had not fallen in pleasant places!

For half an hour now the storm had beaten upon him, the wind at times almost sweeping him from his feet. There was no shelter in the wind-driven thickets by the trail. He hoped at every moment to see the lights of the camp as he tramped on through splashing mud. Of his six dollars, one remained; enough to pay for a night's shelter, at least. But Siskoo seemed to have been swallowed up in the night—the trail ran on endlessly among the dripping larches.

Frank Richards stopped at last. He felt dead beat. He stood close to the trunk of a big cedar to keep off the wind, and breathed hard. He thought, just then, of his cosy room at the Lawless Ranch, in the far-off Thompson Valley, and his heart was heavy. It was several weeks now since he had looked his last upon Cedar Creek School. He wondered despondently whether he would ever see the backwoods school and

his old friends again. But the sight of a faint light winking through the gloom drove the dismal reflections from his mind. The light, faint and distant as it was, told of a human habitation, and renewed his hopes.

He stepped out from under the tree, and tramped on, his head bent to the wind. The light winked and disappeared, and appeared again; every few seconds it vanished, only to reappear. As he drew nearer he found that it shone from the open window of a cabin; a loose shutter, blowing to and fro in the wind, shut it off at intervals. The flapping of the shutter on the log wall came to his ears through the howl of the wind like a succession of pistol-shots.

He could not help wondering what sort of man had left his window shutter blowing open on such a night. The cabin could scarcely be deserted, as the lamp was burning within. But whoever was the denizen of the lonely log cabin, it offered shelter from the storm, and Frank tramped on hopefully. He reached the cabin at last, and thumped on the door.

There was no answer from within.

He thumped again and again, but no reply came. There was no handle to the door; it was made of rough planks, nailed together, and hung loosely on leather hinges. As it did not open to the touch, it was evidently wedged inside.

"Anybody at home?" shouted Frank, thumping on the door.

But there was no answer; and he moved round to the window. He caught the blowing shutter and held it back, and put his head into the room.

The lamp, dirty and smoky, burned on a pine-plank table. An upturned box and a bunk seemed to be the only other articles of furniture. There was a farther room, into which he could not see. In the bunk he made out the outlines of a sleeper, under a dirty blanket. The cabin was evidently occupied; and the man in the bunk must have been sleep-

ing very soundly, as the roar of the storm and the thumping at the door had failed to awaken him.

"Wake up!" shouted Frank.

The sleeper did not stir.

Frank hesitated a few moments.

He was drenched with rain, and frozen with the bitter wind. There was shelter in the cabin. Hospitality in the Canadian West was boundless; there were few settlers who would have refused to open their door to a homeless stranger. The window was large enough for Frank Richards to creep through, and he determined to enter unbidden, as the man in the bunk showed no signs of stirring.

He put his shoulders through the narrow opening, and climbed in carefully. A minute more, and he was standing inside the cabin. He drew the shutter in, and fastened it, keeping out the wind and the rain that had already drenched a large space of the earthen floor. Then he sat down on the upturned box to rest, too wearied to think of anything else for some time.

The man in the bunk stirred at last, and Frank heard him grunt in his sleep as he turned over. A far from agreeable aroma of whisky came to him, and he understood the cause of the fellow's deep slumber. He rose to his feet and stepped towards the bunk. He was prepared to sleep on the floor, but he felt that it would not do to allow the man to awaken and find him there unexpectedly. He bent over the sleeper, catching a glimpse of a stubby and unshaven face in the shadow, and shook him by the shoulder.

"Wake up!"

"Groogh!" mumbled the sleeper.

Frank shook him again.

"Go 'way!" came a mumbling voice.

"Let up! Why, what in thunder—"

The man came to himself, and sat up in the bunk, rubbing red eyes and blinking in astonishment at Frank Richards.

His face was in shadow, but something in his voice seemed familiar to the schoolboy of Cedar Creek.

"Young Richards!" ejaculated the

man in the bunk. "What the thunder are you doing here?"

"You know me!" exclaimed Frank. "Don't I?" was the reply. "I guess you know me too, you young scallywag! Your fault that I'm here, I guess, instead of running the 'Thompson Press' in Thompson Town. How did you get here?"

Frank picked up the lamp, and threw the light on the stubbly face. Then he knew the man in the bunk.

"Mr. Penrose!" he exclaimed.

"I guess so."

"My only hat!"

Mr. Penrose blinked at him in return for his astonished stare. Frank Richards remembered him well enough. He had cause to remember him. Mr. Penrose had run the local paper in the Thompson Valley, and Frank Richards' earliest literary work had appeared in the columns of that publication. Mr. Penrose had departed quite suddenly from Thompson Town, with a crowd of angry "galoots" looking for him; and evidently his fortunes had not improved since.

The "wild and woolly" Western editor was not exactly a desirable acquaintance; but Frank Richards was glad to see a familiar face again—even a stubbly, boozy face like Mr. Penrose's. He felt quite cordial towards the dilapidated gentleman at that moment.

"How the thunder did you get in?" demanded Mr. Penrose.

"Through the window."

"Did I leave it open?" mumbled the man in the bunk. "Gosh! Well, and now you're here, young Richards, what do you want?"

"A night's shelter," answered Frank. "Take it!" said Mr. Penrose.

He rolled over in the bunk, drew the dirty blanket over him, and in another minute was snoring.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Mr. Penrose Goes Shopping!

FRANK RICHARDS set the lamp on the table, and turned away from the snoring gentleman in the bunk. Evidently there was to be no further conversation from Mr. Penrose that night. The potent fire-water, which had caused Mr. Penrose's failures in Thompson Town, was still exercising its influence over him—and no doubt he had zigzagged up the trail to his cabin after the latest saloon had closed in Siskoo.

Frank was drenched to the skin, and he proceeded to build a fire in the rusty old iron stove. Fortunately, there was fuel in the cabin. He raked out the stove, built the fire, and dried himself and his clothes, rubbing himself dry with a strip of canvas. When his clothes were dry he dressed again, and laid himself down to sleep, with an old sack under him, and another for a pillow.

It was not a comfortable couch, but Frank was too fatigued to be particular. In a few minutes he was in a sound slumber.

Outside the log cabin the storm roared and howled, till it had spent its force. Then the wind died down, the rain ceased to dash on the cabin and the muddy trail, the stars came out bright and glittering in a sky of darkest blue. The stars faded as a rosy flush came into the sky from the east, and a new day crept over the hills and valleys of British Columbia—a fresh, spring day, with bright sunshine that drew clouds from the rain-soaked thickets. Still Frank Richards slept on before the dead fire; and still Mr. Penrose snored in his bunk.

It was the latter that awoke first of the two.

Frank Richards did not awaken, and Mr. Penrose groped for a boot, and hurled it at him. His hand was not steady, and his aim was bad. The boot missed Frank and crashed on the stove. The crash awakened the schoolboy of Cedar Creek, and he started up.

"My hat! What—"

"Hallo!" yapped Mr. Penrose. Frank jumped to his feet. He was stiff from his uncomfortable couch. He blinked at the man in the bunk.

"Good-morning!" grinned Mr. Penrose.

"Good-morning!" said Frank.

"Slept well?"

"I—I think so."

"I wish I had!" grumbled Mr. Penrose. "I've got a head on me this morning. Is there anything in the jug?"

"The jug?" repeated Frank.

"Anything to drink, I mean," said Mr. Penrose anxiously. "Don't you carry a flask?"

"No."

"That's a mistake, Richards. You should always carry a little when you're travelling; you may want it suddenly. But you always were a jay, I remember. Oh, gosh, I'm dry."

"I'll get you some water—"

"Don't be funny," said Mr. Penrose crossly. He rolled out of the bunk, yawned, stretched himself, and yawned again. "Oh, gosh! Waal, I'm glad to see you again, Richards."

"Thank you!" said Frank.

Mr. Penrose threw open the door, letting in the fresh breeze and a flood of sunshine.

"Pesky queer you should happen on me like this, Richards. What are you doing sixty miles from home?"

Frank coloured.

"I've left Cedar Creek School," he answered. "I—I've left my uncle's ranch. I'm on my own now."

"What have you been up to, you young scallywag?"

"Nothing."

Frank did not care to explain that he had left home with a shadow on his name. Mr. Penrose was not the man to confide in. Moreover, the thirsty gentleman was not curious. He was thinking about himself, not about Frank, and he hardly waited for a reply.

"Waal, what about breakfast?" he said. "There's nothing hyer. Have you got anything in your sack?"

"Only a crust."

"I calculate that ain't enough for two. Tell you what, Richards, you get the fire going, and I'll mosey along to the camp and get some grub."

"Is it far?" asked Frank.

"Not more'n fifty yards round the bend of the trail. I'll be back in a brace of shakes."

"Right-ho!" said Frank cheerily.

Mr. Penrose picked up a ragged Stetson hat, and put it on, and started for the door. Then, as if struck by a sudden thought, he turned back.

"Say, I guess I've run out of dust," he remarked. "Can you stand a couple of dollars, Richards?"

"I've only one left."

"Shell out," said Mr. Penrose, stretching out his hand. "I guess if you stand brekker for two, I'll rouse out a dollar in time for dinner, and that's fair play."

"Good enough," said Frank, with a smile.

He handed over his last dollar to Mr. Penrose, and that gentleman left the cabin at once. Apparently, he was in a hurry for his breakfast, for he almost ran up the sunny trail towards Siskoo.

Frank Richards was left alone in a rather cheery mood. The sight of a

familiar face had cheered him, and a good night's rest had done him good. He looked out of the doorway, upon a wide prospect of rolling hills, broken by belts of timber, and leaping torrents that flashed in the sun. It was a glorious morning after the wild, stormy night. Frank's face lighted up at the beauty of the scene. He turned almost gaily into the cabin again to perform his duties. In a few minutes he had the stove roaring, and then he searched out an old broom and swept the cabin clean. The place was even more untidy than he remembered Mr. Penrose's old quarters in Thompson to have been; but in half an hour Frank had made a great difference. The room looked quite tidy and cosy when he had finished.

Mr. Penrose had not returned, and as Frank was very hungry, he finished the crust from his wallet, and washed it down with clear water from the creek near the cabin. Then he looked up the trail for Mr. Penrose, but that gentleman was not in sight.

A doubt smote Frank Richards now. Well he remembered Mr. Penrose's old habits, and he wondered whether the thirsty man had expended the dollar in a "morning nip" instead of upon provisions for breakfast. It would have been very like him. It was not a pleasant thought to Frank; he wanted his breakfast, and that dollar was his last.

He re-entered the cabin, and looked into the second room, which he had not entered yet. There was a pine bench in the room, and a stool. On the bench was a battered old typewriter, and a packet of typing paper, pens and ink, and a few other articles. In the machine was a partly-written sheet, upon which Frank read:

"The SISKOO GAZETTE!"

"LATEST NEWS!"

Apparently, poor Mr. Penrose was seeking to follow his old business in his new quarters. But there was no sign of any printing outfit. The sight of the typewriter stirred Frank, reminding him of old days, when he had clicked off his contributions to the "Thompson Press." He sat down at the machine and ran his fingers over the keys. It was sadly out of order, and extremely dirty. And Frank filled in the next hour cleaning it and putting it in order as well as he could. Then he looked out again for Mr. Penrose. But the trail was still deserted. It was pretty clear that dilapidated editorial gentleman did not intend to return for breakfast. And at last Frank closed the door of the cabin, and started up the trail for Siskoo—to look for Mr. Penrose, and to reclaim any fraction that might be left of his dollar.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### The Last Dollar.

SISKOO LAKE burst upon Frank's sight as he came round the bend of the trail. The waters were still rough from the wind of the night, and they rolled golden and glistening in the sunshine, backed by mountain ranges and dark forests. Two or three bark canoes, with Indians in them, dotted the waters of the lake. Close by the shore were the shacks and cabins of Siskoo—two dozen or so primitive buildings. In the distance was a saw-mill, with busy men at work. A frame-built shanty bore a roughly-painted sign, "Golden West Hotel." Frank started for that building, where he suspected Mr. Penrose to be; and he was not mistaken.



As he came up to the open door he heard Mr. Penrose's voice within, apparently in conversation with a Chinese bar-keeper.

"Chalk it up, John. Chalk it up, I tell you!"

"No chalkee."

"I guess I'm getting a remittance up from Kamloops this afternoon, John. One more cocktail, and chalk it up," went on Penrose's persuasive voice.

"No chalkee."

"You pig-tailed heathen!" Mr. Penrose's voice was no longer persuasive. "You wall-eyed Chink! Can't you trust a decent white man for a cocktail?"

"No trustee."

Mr. Penrose swung out of the bar-room, and met Frank Richards face to face at the door.

He had the grace to flush as he met Frank's accusing eyes.

"Oh, you!" he ejaculated. "I—I guess—Have you got the fire started, Richards?"

"Long ago!"

"I—I guess I was coming back," mumbled Mr. Penrose. "I—I was just coming back. You run back now, and I'll be after you in two shakes!"

"Hand me the dollar, and I'll get the stuff," said Frank. "The store's close by."

"I—I guess I—I've lost the dollar," said Mr. Penrose. "I'm sorry—real sorry! I—I dropped it right in the creek—"

"What's the good of telling lies?" said Frank angrily. "You've spent it in whisky!"

"Richards," said Mr. Penrose, with a change of manner, "I confess it—to my shame! Never take to drink, Richards. It's a good servant, but a bad master. Take example from me, Richards, and never put the vile stuff down your throat."

"I never intend to," said Frank contemptuously. "But what I want now is some breakfast."

"So do I," said Mr. Penrose sadly. "It's an old want with me. I've had bad luck, Richards."

"Oh, rats!" said Frank impatiently. "I'm wasting time. Good-morning, Mr. Penrose!"

He turned away, but before he had taken half a dozen steps, Mr. Penrose's hand was on his shoulder.

"Hold on, Richards!" he said. "Look here, don't let us quarrel. I guess we can be useful to one another. It's a stroke of luck your dropping in on me as you did. As for breakfast, I can fix that. The Chink who keeps the store here will give you something on your watch. And then, if you like, we'll talk business. There's an opening here for you and me. Fair and square, Richards!"

"What sort of an opening?" asked Frank.

"I guess I'll explain over brekker," said Mr. Penrose. "I'm hungry. Come along to the Chink and put in your watch!"

Frank hesitated. But he was hungry. In the keen mountain air he felt almost ravenous. It was necessary to eat if he was to work; and a job had yet to be found.

He followed Mr. Penrose at last into the store. There a smiling Chinaman consented to take the watch off his hands for three dollars—a tenth of its value. But Frank could not afford to refuse the offer, and he accepted the three dollars, expending two of them at once in provisions. Mr. Penrose eyed the third dollar hungrily, as Frank put it safely away. But he did not venture to ask for it.

With the supply of provisions the two

queerly-assorted companions returned to the cabin up the trail, and were soon at breakfast. And when that late but hearty meal was over Mr. Penrose came to business.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Mr. Penrose Talks Business!

"I GUESS it was real luck, you dropping in as you did!" said Mr. Penrose, lighting his pipe—after a search all through his pockets for stray fragments of tobacco. "You're just the pardner I want. There's a big opening in this camp for us two—really. There's me, with an inside knowledge of the newspaper business, and you, that can write and keep steady. Jest the pair to run as a team. You get me?"

"Not quite," said Frank. "I hoped to get some work here at the lumber, and if that failed I was going on to the gold-mines. But I'll hear what you've got to say, Mr. Penrose. What are you doing here, anyhow?"

Mr. Penrose sighed.

"Jest marking time—from want of capital," he said. "I had to light out of Thompson sudden, as you know. Never mind that. I sold my horse and—"

"It wasn't your horse you left Thompson on?"

"Well, I sold it," said Penrose, unabashed. "That gave me a bit of a start. I got this cabin from a man who was down with fever and clearing out. The old typer was all I had by way of an outfit. But I'm a business man—you've noticed that, I guess. I started the 'Siskoo Gazette.' There never had been any paper in this quarter before, and it went all right. Typed copies went at twenty-five cents a time you know. I got the news—what news there was—and typed it, and put in stuff from old papers that came up the river, and—and invented telegrams from New York and Chicago and Montreal, and so on. You know the game. The 'Siskoo Gazette' went all right. But I've jest about made food and drink."

"Especially drink!" said Frank sarcastically.

Mr. Penrose did not heed that remark.

"But I tell you," he went on impressively, "there's an opening hyer. With a little capital I could make things hum. Same game that we played in Thompson, Richards. You can write up the stuff, and I'll print it, and turn out a paper that will work up a circulation. It's a fortune for both of us, with any luck."

Frank Richards looked thoughtful.

He remembered that the Thompson Press would have been a successful venture but for Mr. Penrose's intemperate habits and addiction to roguery. It was possible that the "Siskoo Gazette" might be a success, with a steady hand on the rein. And certainly running a Western paper was a more attractive idea than working on a saw-mill or splitting logs. The chief drawback to the scheme was Mr. Penrose's own character. He was such an exceedingly unreliable gentleman.

"Where's the capital to come from?" asked Frank.

Mr. Penrose coughed.

"I guess we could start on a hundred dollars," he said. "I should have to borrow a hoss and ride down to the railroad town. I know where to pick up a hand-press cheap, and I know how to buy the stuff. You've got money in the bank at Thomson and—"

"I can't return to Thompson," said Frank, with a frown.

"No need. You know how to write. I suppose? You've simply got to send

the manager a note, and the money comes by post."

"Oh!" said Frank. "But—my uncle might find out where I am from that."

"Why shouldn't he?"

"Well, I don't want it!"

"It's all serene," said Mr. Penrose. "Bank-managers don't talk, you know. No reason why the galoot should mention the matter to your uncle at all. Get the hundred dollars, and we'll get going. I guess I'll leave the cash in your hands, as the moneyed partner. I can't say fairer than that."

Mr. Penrose eyed the schoolboy of Cedar Creek eagerly.

Frank Richards reflected.

"I'll think it over," he said at last. "I'll have a look round the camp to-day, and tell you this evening, Mr. Penrose."

Frank Richards made up his mind that evening. He had a strong disinclination to communicate with Thompson Town in any way. He knew that Mr. Lawless would try to find him out if he could from a sense of duty. But he made up his mind. The letter to the bank at Thompson was written and signed, and in the morning Mr. Penrose hired a horse, and rode away to the railway to post the letter. He returned late in the day in a state of great satisfaction.

"Now we've got to live on your last dollar till the spondulics come through," he said. "And we'll get ready for business, Richards. You've got to turn out copy ready for the paper, like old times—what?"

And Frank Richards brightened up considerably at the prospect of getting to work on the typewriter again. He had already put it into a state of good repair.

Several days had to elapse before an answer could be expected from Thompson. During that time Frank Richards was very busy, getting out "copy" for the forthcoming "Siskoo Gazette."

He liked the work, and the sunny days passed pleasantly enough.

Meanwhile, Mr. Penrose was perfectly sober—from necessity. Frank's last dollar went on provisions—which he fetched himself this time. In spite of Mr. Penrose's reform, the schoolboy author did not care to trust him with cash. But the editorial gentleman was really on his best behaviour. He did the "chores" about the cabin, while Frank typed, and was very good-humoured and industrious. He was looking much better in health, too, from the necessity of keeping sober.

Every day added to Frank's pile of "copy," and Mr. Penrose read it over and expressed great approval. He was so delighted at having secured Frank as a "partner" that gradually the schoolboy of Cedar Creek came to share some of his enthusiasm for the new venture, and looked forward to the time when the "Siskoo Gazette" should have a circulation reaching for a hundred miles north and south of the camp. It was possible enough, with steady, hard work and application to business; and, so far as Frank, at least, was concerned, there would be no slacking.

Mr. Penrose had the first number of the paper "made up," before it was time to ride to the railroad town for the remittance. All was ready for the start; only the cash was wanted. And at last the two partners had a lift in a wagon going south, and Frank Richards called at the post-office in the railroad town, and found his letter there. And at the sight of a bill for a hundred dollars Mr. Penrose smiled a seraphic smile, and, like the Latin gentleman of old, seemed likely to strike the stars with his sublime head!

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

## A Peculiar Partner!

**B**ETTER let me take care of the cash," said Mr. Penrose.

"I think I can manage it," answered Frank.

Mr. Penrose had a discouraged look.

His eyes had followed the hundred-dollar bill longingly as Frank tucked it safely away in an inside pocket. There was no doubt that Mr. Penrose had come down to the railroad town with the firm intention of making the necessary purchases for the starting of the "Siskoo Gazette" as soon as the money came to hand. But at sight of the bill quite different thoughts had risen in his mind. A hundred dollars would have seen him through a glorious "bender." And just then a "bender" appealed to Mr. Penrose much more than the ambitious scheme he had lately discussed with his youthful partner. His reform was telling on him, in fact. For nearly a week he had abstained from drink. And his whole thirsty being was yearning for the potent tanglefoot. The demon had taken too deep a hold upon him to be lightly shaken off.

"I guess I'm older than you," said Mr. Penrose. "The bill will be safer in my hands, Richards. I reckon there's hoodlums around this burg who would knock you on the head for a hundred dollars, as soon as look at you. You'd better hand it over, I guess."

Frank shook his head.

"Look here!" exclaimed Mr. Penrose warmly. "Do you trust me, or don't you, Richards?"

Frank looked him in the face.

"Not with money," he answered.

"I guess our partnership ain't much use if you can't trust your pardner with a hundred dollars!" growled Mr. Penrose. "I kinder reckon we'd better chuck the stunt, then."

"Just as you like," answered Frank.

"Ahem! I don't mean that exactly," said the editorial gentleman hastily. "But it's hard not to be trusted, Richards. But let's have some lunch and get to business. We can get the stuff we want in this town, and I know exactly where to look for it; and I reckon we can hire a lift on a wagon to-morrow going up the Siskoo Valley."

"Right-ho!" said Frank.

After lunch at the lumber hotel by the railroad Mr. Penrose was ready. He requested to be entrusted with the cash once more, but as Frank declined brusquely the schoolboy of Cedar Creek accompanied him in his round to make purchases. That part of the business Mr. Penrose knew well enough; and Frank admitted that his partner secured good value for the money. The goods were taken to the hotel, Frank paying for them and getting the receipts. The sum of seventy dollars was expended, leaving thirty for the partners to subsist upon until, as Mr. Penrose expressed it, the money began to roll in.

Seats were booked for themselves and their goods in a supply wagon going up to Siskoo the following day, and Frank and Mr. Penrose returned to the

lumber hotel to sleep. Mr. Penrose cast a longing eye at the bar-room, where a crowd of railwaymen were drinking and chatting. But Frank was deaf to his request for even one dollar. If there was going to be a partnership, Frank was determined that it should be on business lines. Mr. Penrose could "booze" away any money of his own earning, but not the capital of the company. Every dollar of his own money Frank intended to keep in his own pocket.

In a greatly discouraged frame of

Frank breathed hard. His first impulse was to speak; but he checked it. With grim expression on his face he closed his eyes again, and lay quite quiet as Mr. Penrose approached.

"You asleep?"

The man's voice was husky with eagerness and alarm. Frank remained silent.

Mr. Penrose's hand groped in his jacket for the inside pocket where he had seen Frank place his money.

Then a surprising thing happened.

From the supposed sleeper a clenched fist suddenly drove out like a hammer,



**FOILING A THIEF!** Frank Richards felt the hand search his pocket, and he struck out and smote Mr. Penrose full in the face. With a yell Mr. Penrose went over backwards, and Frank rose to his feet and lit the candle. "Do you want any more?" he asked. "If you do, you'd better try again to bag my dollars!" (See Chapter 5.)

mind Mr. Penrose proposed to turn in early, and Frank assented. Two plankbeds in an unfurnished room supplied their accommodation. Frank stretched himself on his primitive bed, and was quickly asleep. But his hapless partner remained awake, listening to the sound of a raucous chorus from the bar-room below. As the night wore on Mr. Penrose's thirst became more and more imperative, until it was something like torture.

At last the wretched man could bear it no longer, and he sat up. He turned a guilty eye upon his partner.

Mr. Penrose softly crept from his bed. With the stealthiness of a Red Indian he crept towards Frank Richards.

The bare boards of the floor creaked under his feet, and he almost trembled. A glimmer of starlight fell into the room through chinks of the shutters. Frank Richards' eyes opened, but his face was in shadow. His eyes, as they opened, fell upon the crouching figure of his partner, creeping stealthily towards him,

and smote Mr. Penrose full upon his red and bulbous nose.

Crash!

With a yell Mr. Penrose went over backwards on the floor.

Frank Richards sat up.

He struck a match and lighted his candle. The light glimmered on Mr. Penrose sprawling on the floor, dazedly rubbing his nose and blinking.

Frank Richards eyed him grimly.

"Well?" he said.

"You pesky young varmint!" roared Mr. Penrose. "Whatter-you mean by landing out at a galoot and knocking him over, say?"

"Do you want any more?" asked Frank coolly. "If you do, you'd better try again to bag my dollars, Mr. Penrose."

"I—I guess I—I wasn't—"

"Rats! Listen to me!" said Frank. "You won't have a red cent out of me for drink, and if you try that game

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window. I say, turn it on Carthew's study, and let's see whether the cad is smoking."

"There's a tree in the way," said Jimmy, moving the telescope slightly and very carefully. "No; it's all right. My hat! Carthew's window's open, and I can see right into the study. Carthew's standing by the table. He's got his cane in his hand and—"

"Not smoking?" grinned Lovell.

"Ha ha! No!"

"He wouldn't be now, as he's just sent for Tubby to go to his study," remarked Newcome.

"Can you see Tubby there?" asked Raby.

The Fistical Four were all keenly interested in the powers of their new possession. It struck them as rather interesting to behold the interview between Carthew and Reginald Muffin. Certainly they did not believe that the Sixth-Form bully had sent for Tubby to request him to exercise his detective ability on the case of the mysterious footprints. Those footprints were not at all mysterious to the Fistical Four; they had a pretty shrewd guess at the facts.

"The door's just opened," said Jimmy, with his eye to the telescope. "That's Tubby coming into Carthew's room. He's smirking no end. Oh, my hat!" Jimmy went off into a yell.

"What's up?" gasped Lovell.

"Oh, dear! Carthew's got him by the collar—"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"He's laying into him with the ash-

plant—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can almost hear the whacks!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "This is a splendid telescope—plain as anything. Carthew's given him about a dozen now—"

"Poor old Tubby!"

"Now he's booting him out of the study—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And slamming the door after him!"

Jimmy Silver quitted the telescope and chortled. He had witnessed quite an exciting scene in Carthew's study. He was still chortling when footsteps came along the Fourth-Form passage, and the Fistical Four looked out of the end study and beheld Tubby Muffin.

The fat Classical was limping along,

groaning. But he pulled himself together as he saw the chums of the Fourth, and grinned feebly.

"Well, you have taken on the case?" chuckled Lovell.

"Yes."

"What?" yelled the Fistical Four in chorus.

"Carthew was very civil," said Tubby. "He—he asked me to look into the—the mystery. I—I told him I would when I got time. What are you fellows blinking at?"

"Well, my hat!" gasped Lovell. "Of all the merry Ananiases—"

"Of all the giddy George Washingtons!" stuttered Raby.

"I'm telling you the exact facts, of course, you fellows—"

"My dear old barrel," said Jimmy Silver, "I'll show you how to do deductions! From the colour of your eye-lashes, and the way you do your back hair, I can tell you exactly what happened in Carthew's study. When you got there you found him standing by the table—"

"How—how do you know?" gasped Tubby in amazement.

"He had an ashplant in his paw and—and—"

"I say—"

"He took you by the back of the collar—"

"Oh!"

"And gave you over a dozen wal-lops—"

Tubby simply gasped.

"And then booted you out of the study, and slammed the door after you!" concluded Jimmy Silver. "How's that for deduction?"

"How do you know?" spluttered Tubby.

"Deduction, my dear fellow!" said Jimmy Silver loftily. "Nothing to what we can do in the end study when we try. Come in, you fellows; it's tea-time."

And the Fistical Four went in to tea, leaving Tubby Muffin rooted to the passage floor with sheer amazement.

THE END.

*(If you want another long laugh, read: "The Tale of a Tenner" by Owen Conquest—next week's splendid long story of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, featuring the fat and fatuous Tubby Muffin of the Fourth.)*



(Continued from page 11.)

again I'll turn my back on you, and leave you on your own. Now get out of the room! I'm going to bolt the door on you before I go to sleep again."

"Where am I to sleep, then?" blustered Mr. Penrose.

"Where you like! Either you get out, or I do—and if I do I'm going to have nothing more to do with you."

Mr. Penrose scrambled limply to his feet.

"Jest one dollar, Richards, to get one little drink!" he pleaded.

"There's plenty of water—"

"Groooh!"

"Not a red cent! Are you going?"

"Oh Jerusalem!" groaned Mr. Penrose.

He limped out of the room, and Frank bolted the door before he returned to his plank-bed. He was not disturbed again till morning.

After breakfast they joined the supply wagon on for Siskoo, and started up the trail into the mountains.

Mr. Penrose, with a sort of hopeless expression on his face, lent a hand at unloading the baggage when they reached the cabin. While Frank was getting things to rights in the room used as an office, Mr. Penrose hung about the cabin dolefully. He quitted it at last, when the sun set, and limped away up the trail to the camp, doubtless with the forlorn hope of picking up a stray drink from some hospitable lumberman at the Golden West Hotel. Apparently he was successful, for when he returned it was nearly midnight, and he was singing in a cracked voice as he came down the trail.

Frank looked out of the window. Mr. Penrose was holding on to a tree. He blinked gravely at Frank.

"Ain't you letting me in?" he stuttered.

"No. Not till you're sober."

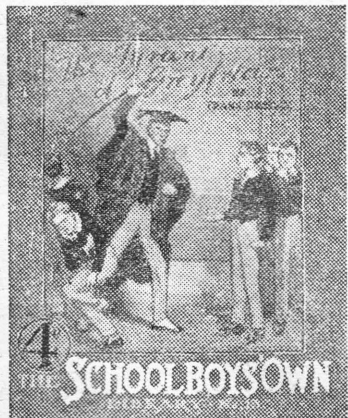
"Shober as judgsh!" stuttered Mr. Penrose.

"Go and eat coke!"

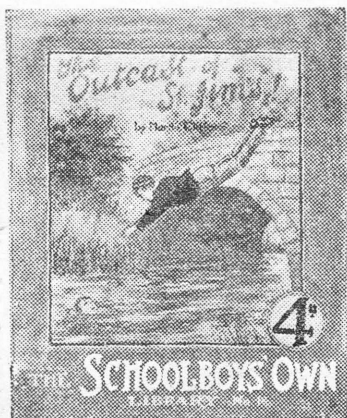
Headless of the thumping on the door, Frank went to sleep. The hammering continued for some time, till Mr. Penrose gave it up as a bad job, and departed in search of other quarters, possibly not wholly satisfied with his new state of affairs as Frank Richards' partner!

THE END.

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