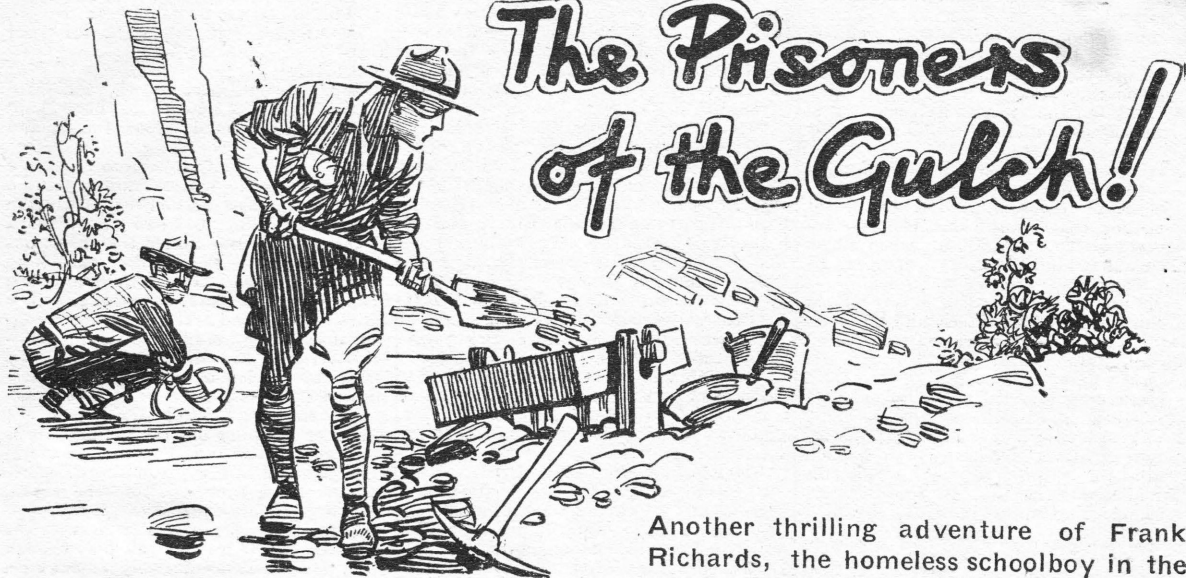


DEAD MAN'S CANYON! Along the rocky trail Frank Richards—rolling stone, makes his weary way, until he comes to Dead Man's Canyon. There a glistening rifle barrel brings him to a halt.



The Prisoners of the Gulch!

Another thrilling adventure of Frank Richards, the homeless schoolboy in the Backwoods of Canada.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Held Up!

"HALT!" Frank Richards stopped in his tracks.

Over a rough boulder on the rocky trail ahead of him, a Stetson hat rose into view, and a rifle-barrel glistened in the sun.

A moment before that rocky trail winding up the canyon from Hard Pan, had seemed utterly deserted and desolate, the silence broken only by the tramping feet of the wandering schoolboy.

Frank had left Hard Pan at sunrise, on his way to the placer diggings at Indian Creek, and he had begun to doubt whether he had missed the trail. But in the solitary foothills of the Cascade Mountains there was no indication of the route, and he could only push on and trust to luck. He did not look scared, though he was startled, as the rifle-barrel bore on him from the boulder in the trail. The outcast of Cedar Creek had nothing to lose; he was not worth the while of the hardest-up road-agent to be found between the Yukon and the American border.

"Put up your hands!" came the rapped order, as Frank Richards stopped.

Frank put up his hands.

There was no arguing with a levelled rifle, within a dozen feet of him, even if he had been inclined to resist. A slight smile came over his sunburnt face as he obeyed the order. The road-agent—if road-agent he was—was booked for a disappointment when he came to "go through" his victim.

"Right-ho!" called back Frank.

"Up they go!"

The man rose further into view from behind the boulder.

Frank gazed at him rather curiously.

He was a big, powerful man, with a face tanned by sun and wind almost to the hue of copper. But he was a white man; his features showed that.

The big man came down the rocky trail towards Frank. He had lowered the rifle now, but still held it ready for

instant use. His deep-set, keen eyes scanned the schoolboy.

"Keep 'em up!" he snapped.

"Right!"

"Where are the others?"

"What others?" asked Frank.

"You're not alone here?"

"Yes."

"I guess that's a lie!"

The bronzed man looked past Frank, scanning the windings of the wide, rocky canyon below. A gopher was to be seen in the distance, sunning himself in a patch of scrub; that was the only living thing in view.

"Are you heeled?" asked the bronzed man abruptly, his glance fixing on Frank Richards again.

"Armed? No!"

"I guess I'm going to see."

Dropping his rifle into the hollow of his arm, the bronzed man ran his hand through Frank's pockets.

The schoolboy submitted quietly.

There was nothing of value to steal; and besides, he had realised by this time that the bronzed man, whatever he was, was not a thief.

The man found no weapon about him, excepting a pocket-knife, which he left in Frank's pocket. He puckered his brows in a puzzled way as he stared at the schoolboy.

"You're not heeled," he said, "and you're only a kid! I reckon you was sent up here as a spy!"

"What the thump is there to spy on in these foothills?" exclaimed Frank.

"You've never heard of Bronze Bill?"

"Never!"

"Never heard that he's located a rich strike in the foothills that a crowd of galoots are after?"

"No."

"I guess I can't afford to take that on trust," said the bronzed man. "You've come up here, and you'll stay. Get a move on and walk in front of me. If you try any monkey-tricks, remember there's a loaded rifle just behind you!"

"But—"

"Get a move on!"

Bronze Bill made a motion with the rifle.

There was nothing for it but to obey.

Frank Richards moved on, and the big man followed him—every now and then turning his head to scan the canyon behind him. But the wild rocks and scrubby larches were silent and deserted as ever as he marched his prisoner away.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Held in Bondage!

FRANK RICHARDS tramped on ahead of the big miner, wondering how the strange adventure was going to end.

But he was not feeling particularly troubled by the scrape he had fallen into. Frank was down on his luck; there was hardly a cent remaining in his pockets, and his chance of making a "strike" at Indian Creek was very problematic. His old home was barred to him; Cedar Creek School seemed almost like a vision or a dream when he thought of it now. He did not mean to be kept a prisoner if he could help it. But at least, so long as Bronze Bill detained him, he would have to feed him—and Frank had been wondering where his next meal would come from. So his spirits were not dashed in any way as he tramped on in front of the broad-shouldered miner.

"Stop!"

Frank halted.

Twenty yards or so along the rough canyon from the spot where he had been captured. Bronze Bill rapped out the order to stop.

Frank looked round him.

He had gathered that the big miner was working on some hidden claim in the foothills; but there was no sign of a claim to be seen here. He glanced back inquiringly at the bronzed man.

In this spot the canyon wall rose in an almost perpendicular rock to the height of several hundred feet.

In the rocky wall was a narrow opening not more than three feet across, and as black as a pit.

Bronze Bill jerked his thumb towards the narrow cave.

"That's the way!"

"Into the cave?" asked Frank.

"Sure!"

"Oh, all right!"

Frank stepped out of the burning sunlight into the dark, cool shadow of the cave.

The change from sunshine to shadow blinded him for some moments, and he stumbled and groped his way with his hands.

Behind him the miner's heavy boots rang on the rock.

Frank felt the rock wall on either side of him as he stumbled on, the big miner close behind.

In a few minutes a glimmer of light came to his eyes.

Light of the sun, and a breath of fresh air that fanned his cheeks. He realised that what he had taken for a cave was a kind of natural tunnel, looking into a deep and narrow gulch.

On all sides the gulch was enclosed by high walls of rock, bare and desolate. But at the bottom there was a rippling spring, round which grew herbage and several stunted trees.

The spring bubbled and rippled away in a creek, and by the side of the creek Frank discerned the tools of the placer-miner—spades and picks, rough wooden cradles for washing the gold. This was the hidden claim that Bronze Bill was working, ten miles into the foothills from the camp of Hard Pan.

"Oh!" exclaimed Frank.

"Get on!"

Frank Richards moved on into the open air of the locked gulch.

"Is this where you camp?" he asked.

"I reckon so."

"You've got a good claim here?" asked Frank.

"I reckon you know it," said Bronze Bill dryly. "I reckon them galoots sent you spying to nose it out!"

"You're mistaken about that—I'd never heard of you before," said Frank patiently.

Bronze Bill shrugged his broad shoulders.

"I reckon you're lying," he said coolly. "But lying or not, I ain't taking any chances with you, young 'un. You're hyer, and hyer you're goin' to stay, dead or alive!"

"Alive, if it's all the same to you," said Frank Richards.

"I guess that depends on you. If you make a step to vamoose the ranch, you get winged instanter."

The big man bent to a boulder that lay beside the opening of the tunnel and rolled it. It blocked the tunnel sufficiently to make it impossible for anyone to pass without removing the boulder.

As that was the only precaution he took, Frank could guess that there was no other way out of the locked gulch.

And indeed a single glance round him revealed that the high walls of rocks shutting in the gulch were inaccessible to a climber.

Frank's heart sank a little.

The gold-miner, who was watching his face, laughed grimly as he saw the schoolboy's expression change.

"I guess you're in for it, and you may as well make up your mind to it," he said. "It's your own funeral; you came up here of your own accord."

"You've no right to keep me a prisoner here," said Frank hotly.

"I guess safety comes first, young 'un. I found this hyer claim, and I'm workin' it, and I guess I ain't sharing it out with all the loafers of Hard Pan!"

"You could register the claim, and make it your own legally," said Frank. "Then no one could touch it."

Bronze Bill laughed.

"I guess we're a bit too fur from the towns for that," he answered. "That

gang wouldn't take much notice of a sheriff thirty miles away. Writs don't run in these foothills, sonny. Sides, the claim will peter out when I've worked it a few weeks. It's a rich placer, but it won't last. I guess I've taken out more'n half the dust already. I reckon I hoped I'd clean up and get clear before that gang got on my trail. But Le Couteau scented it out, the half-breed hound!"

"Le Couteau?" exclaimed Frank.

"The galoot that sent you up hyer spying," said Bronze Bill. "I reckon you know the name well enough."

Well enough indeed Frank remembered the name of the French-Indian half-breed whom he had encountered, many a long mile from Hard Pan, weeks before.

"I know the name," he said. "If it is the same man, I have seen him."

"A breed, nearly as dark as an Injun," said Bronze Bill.

"I stopped him from robbing a rancher near Kicking Mule Camp some weeks ago," said Frank. "That's all I know of him. I did not know that he was in Hard Pan."

"Mebbe, mebbe," said Bronze Bill. "But I'm not taking any chances. I know that Le Couteau was in Hard Pan last time I went down for tack, and I know he watched me changing dust at the hotel, and follered me into the hills arter, with three or four other breeds. I know I've sighted him on the foothills twice since, and that he's put a bullet through the rim of my hat at long distance. I guess I've been on the watch since, and I ain't taking any chances."

There was evidently no moving Bronze Bill from that determination, and Frank Richards had to make the best of it.

"Behave yourself hyer, and you won't hurt," continued the big miner. "Try to vamoose, and I'll rub you out like a mosquito. You'll be wise to make the best of it. I've got grub hyer for a month, and you won't starve; and you can help me with the cradles, as I'm not going to feed you for nothing. Savvy?"

Frank nodded.

It was a curious situation, and not exactly a pleasant one; but Frank Richards felt no ill-will towards the mountain fossicker.

If the half-breed, Le Couteau, was watching for a chance to jump his claim, the man was justified in keeping well on his guard, though it made matters awkward for Frank Richards.

"Hungry?" asked the big miner, with a change of manner.

In spite of his suspicions, Frank's look and manner had impressed him a little, and he seemed prepared to treat his prisoner well.

"Yes, rather!" said Frank.

"I guess you can feed with me."

Close by the rocky wall was a wooden shack, made of saplings and branches fastened together with withies. It was the rudest of shelters, and only of use in the summer months. Bronze Bill's camp in the locked gulch was evidently a very temporary one. From the shack he rolled out a rough box, which appeared to be his larder. Frank Richards sat on a boulder, and shared the rough-and-ready meal with his host or captor. There was hard cornmeal and cheese and bully beef, washed down by water from the spring, Bronze Bill adding something stronger from a keg in the shack.

When the dinner was over, Bronze Bill filled a black pipe, and began to smoke. Frank was glad to lean back against the rock and rest. He had tramped a good many miles that morning, and he was tired.

But the rest was not of long duration.

The miner finished his pipe and put it away, and rose and stretched himself.

"I guess we're working now," he remarked.

"You want me to help?"

"Don't you want to work for your grub?"

"Certainly."

"I guess you'll have to, anyway," said Bronze Bill. "You could have kept clear, if you'd liked. Now for it, and don't shirk!"

And Frank Richards set to work.

He was new to placer mining, though he had watched it sometimes in the Thompson Valley, and had a rough idea of the work. But under the directions of Bronze Bill, he worked cheerfully enough. He was, after all, earning his keep, and that was something. The shovelling of sand and gravel, the creaking of the rough cradles, went on industriously, and Frank soon saw that the claim was a rich one, though evidently limited in extent.

For centuries probably the little creek had been washing out the golden grains from the rocks, and the precious metal had gathered and reposed in the sandy bed of the stream. From the sands, golden glimmers came through the purling water, showing how rich was the deposit. But it was a small one, though rich, and it was not likely to take an experienced placer-miner more than a few weeks to "clean up" all that was to be gathered.

After that, it was Bronze Bill's intention to "pull up stakes," and clear off with what he had gained, abandoning the worked-out claim.

It was not till sundown that the two workers "knocked off." The big miner was pleased to give Frank a word of approval.

"I reckon you don't slack," he remarked; "and I guess, sonny, that if you stick it, and don't play any gum game, I'll squeeze out a handful of dollars for you when we strike camp. You can figure it out that you're booked to work for me for a few weeks, and pay to come. If it's true that you was looking for work, that'll suit you."

"It's true," said Frank, "and I'm willing to accept the offer, but not as a prisoner."

"I guess you're a prisoner till I've cleaned up here, sonny. And there's a bullet ready for you if you try to skip," said Bronze Bill gruffly.

Frank made no reply to that.

While the burly miner was preparing his evening meal, Frank wandered along the creek to the end of the locked gulch, to survey his surroundings. The miner raised no objections. It was clear that there was no way out, excepting by the tunnel. Frank followed the creek to its end, where it flowed through a split in the rocky wall, over a sheer precipice. He could hear the sound of waters tumbling beyond, but he did not venture anywhere near the fall. There was no escape that way, excepting for a bird.

He had, in fact, satisfied himself that there was no chance of escape, unless on some occasion when Bronze Bill was absent from the gulch. From his meeting with the miner that morning, he knew that the lonely gold-seeker emerged sometimes into the open canyon to scout for his expected enemies. On the next occasion Frank resolved to try his luck in getting through the tunnel; for the present, he could only make up his mind to yield to circumstances.

He rejoined Bronze Bill, who gave him a rather grim smile, no doubt guessing the cause of his exploration of the gulch. But he made no remark, and they ate their evening meal in silence.

Then the miner tossed Frank a blanket from the shack; and he rolled himself in it, under the stars, and slept soundly enough.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Enemy.

WAKE up!" The prod of a heavy boot in his ribs awakened Frank Richards from slumber.

He sat up and rubbed his eyes, throwing the blanket aside.

"No slackers here, sonny!" said Bronze Bill. "I reckon there's work to be done!"

"I'm ready!" answered Frank.

He jumped up actively enough, and after a dip in the creek, was quite ready for breakfast. The fare in the lonely miner's camp was hard enough; but Frank Richards had roughed it too long to be fastidious. He ate with a hearty appetite, and turned out cheerfully to work at the placer.

Bronze Bill left him at work during the morning, rolled the big boulder aside, and disappeared into the tunnel.

Apparently he was going out to take a survey of the canyon again, now that the sun was well up.

Frank paused in his labours when he was gone.

He had resolved that he would make an attempt to escape as soon as he was left unobserved. But doubts assailed him now.

Bronze Bill was not likely to be far from the egress of the tunnel, and he was certain to be on the watch. And he had made quite clear his determination to shoot if he saw his prisoner attempting to escape.

Frank Richards thought it out, standing idle, spade in hand.

He would have been willing to accept a fair offer from the fossicker, to work for him at a fair wage; but working under compulsion, and as a prisoner, was quite a different matter.

He came to a resolution at last.

Leaving the tools by the creek, he went to the shack for his wallet, and slung it on, and then stepped to the rocky tunnel.

He listened for a few minutes, with the suspicion in his mind that Bronze Bill might be in the tunnel watching for him.

But there was no sound, and the schoolboy determined to chance it at last.

Stepping softly, lest the watchful miner should be at hand in the shadows, Frank entered the tunnel.

With hardly a sound, he crept on through the shadowy passage till the daylight in the canyon beyond struck on his eyes.

A minute more and Dead Man's Canyon lay wide and open before him, with the hot sun glistening down on rock and scrub.

Frank did not emerge at once from the cave.

He knew that the bronzed miner must be somewhere at hand; and, keeping back in the cover of the rock, he scanned the canyon for Bronze Bill.

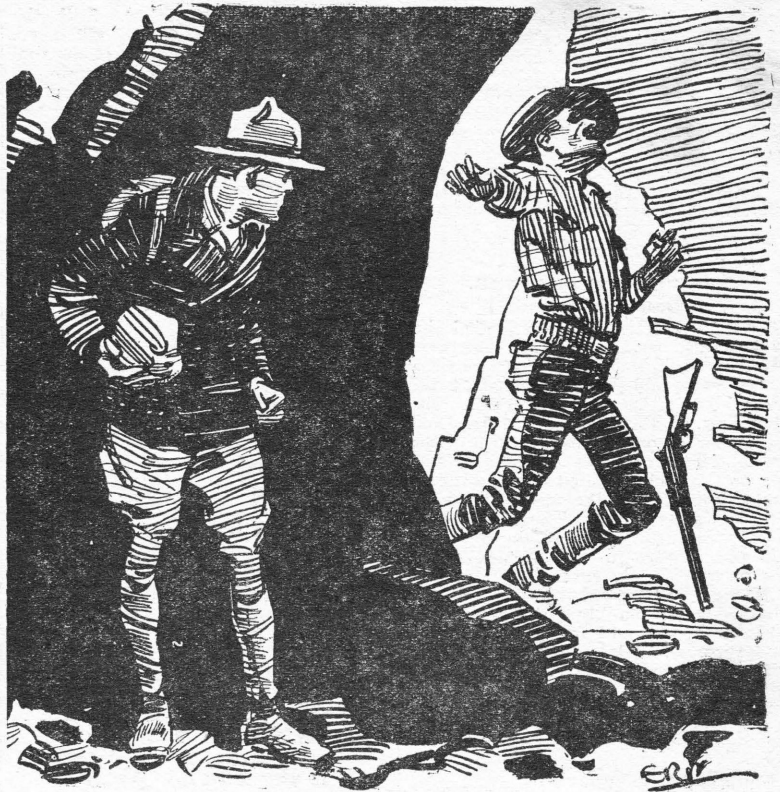
He could not see the miner.

But far away down the canyon he caught sight of five or six moving figures that were advancing.

Distant as they were, Frank Richards could tell by their dark faces that they were half-breeds.

"Le Couteau and his gang!" he muttered, his heart beating faster.

If Le Couteau, the trail robber, was among the copper-skinned gang, he was too far off for recognition. But Frank could have no doubt that these men



THE ENEMY'S SHOT! The miner's heavy footsteps rang at the opening of the cave; his burly figure was framed there in the sunlight. Frank Richards drew back into the shadows. Crack! A rifle shot rang out from the canyon. To Frank's horror, a hoarse cry burst from the miner, and he staggered forward into the cave, and fell heavily. (See Chapter 3.)

were the gang that Bronze Bill feared. If they had been hunting for the solitary goldseeker, they were getting very near to his hiding-place at last.

Crack!

He could not see Bronze Bill, but it was evident that the miner had seen the half-breeds, as the crack of a rifle suddenly awoke a thousand echoes in the canyon.

There was a yell from the distance.

Frank, with beating heart, watching the bunch of half-breeds, saw one of them stagger as a Stetson hat spun from his head. But the man recovered himself at once. The bullet had carried away his hat.

The next moment the gang had vanished from sight, burrowing into cover among the rocks like so many prairie rabbits.

Frank Richards heard a hearty curse near at hand.

"Missed him, by thunder! I reckoned I'd got Le Couteau that time, darn him!"

From a clump of larch and sassafras, Bronze Bill's burly form rose into view, not a dozen yards from the cave mouth. He came hurrying back towards the cave.

Now that he had seen his enemies, and that his shot had put them on their guard, the miner evidently did not wish to encounter them in the open wide canyon, where their numbers gave them the advantage. If they tracked him to the narrow tunnel under the hillside, it was a favourable place for defence.

Frank Richards stepped back in the darkness, his heart thumping.

Bronze Bill was running towards the cave, and in a minute or two more he would know that his prisoner had been attempting to escape.

Frank thought of darting back to the locked gulch; but he knew that his footsteps would be heard before he could get clear of the tunnel. There was no concealing the fact that he had sought to escape. A hard, angry look came into Frank's face. He had a right to his freedom—a right to fight for it. He crouched back in the darkness, with a lump of rock in his hand. If Bronze Bill raised the rifle against him—

The miner's heavy footsteps rang at the opening of the cave; his burly figure was framed there in the sunlight. Crack!

A rifle-shot rang from the canyon.

To Frank Richards' horror, a hoarse cry burst from the bronzed miner, and he staggered forward into the cave and fell heavily.

The rock dropped from Frank's hand.

Bronze Bill rolled on the rocky floor of the cave at his feet, groaning. This man, whom Frank had been prepared to fight for his freedom, lay at his feet, wounded by the bullet from behind, and helpless. From the canyon there came a yell. The man who had fired had seen the fall of the miner, and knew that his bullet had taken effect. Distant, but drawing nearer, came the sound of running feet on the rocks.

A deep groan burst from Bronze Bill. "They've got me! They've got me! The game's up!"

He made an effort to rise, and sank back again. Frank Richards sprang to his side, and seized the fallen rifle. The running feet in the canyon were close now.

The wounded man's eyes turned on Frank, seeing him for the first time. A bitter look came over the bronzed face.

"Shoot, you young villain!" he muttered. "I was a fool not to shoot you when I had the chance! Now it's your turn!"

Frank did not heed him. With the miner's rifle in his hands, he turned to the mouth of the cave.

Crack! Crack!

He fired twice, and there was a yell and a sound of rapid retreat. For the moment the attack was stopped.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Desperate Defence!]

FRANK RICHARDS reloaded the rifle, panting. He kept well back in the narrow mouth of the cave, and it was well that he did

so. From the canyon came the crackling of three or four rifles, and bullets struck on the rocky mouth of the tunnel. Two or three of them, glancing on the rock, whizzed into the tunnel and dropped. But the rush of the half-breeds was stopped. They knew that there was a ready rifle within, and they did not venture to show themselves in the open before the cave.

Bronze Bill raised himself on one elbow, staring blankly at the schoolboy. Frank's action had taken him utterly by surprise. Only the schoolboy's prompt defence had saved him from the knife of Le Couteau.

Frank glanced round at him as he heard him move.

"They've stopped!" he said.

"They reckoned I was alone here," mumbled Bronze Bill. "They knew I hadn't a pard with me. I guessed as you was one of them, sonny—"

"You know better now!" grunted Frank.

"Sure!"

There was a sound without, and Frank Richards turned quickly to the opening. A boot had scraped on the rocky ground.

"Stand back, there!" shouted Frank. "I shall fire if you show yourself!"

"Pardieu! He is not alone!" Frank heard a savage voice exclaim, and he thought he recognised the voice of Le Couteau.

"They'll rush us!" muttered Bronze Bill. "There's half a dozen of them, and if they find it's only a boy—"

"We've got to get out of this!" said Frank hurriedly.

"I can't move!" muttered the miner, with a groan.

"I shall have to help you."

"If they rush—"

"We've got to chance that."

It was clear that a determined rush of the half-breeds would have settled the matter. And Frank was aware that they were creeping cautiously closer round the mouth of the cavern, though as yet carefully keeping out of the line of fire. When they were near enough they would make a rush.

He slung his rifle on his back, and stepped over Bronze Bill.

The miner was wounded in the shoulder, and a pool of blood had formed beside him on the rock.

"Help me, kid, and I'll do my best!" he gasped.

"It's not far," said Frank. "Once through, in the gulch, we can stall them off!"

"I guess I'll try."

Frank Richards bent all his strength to the task, and Bronze Bill exerted himself to the utmost, though the effort cost him dear. His face was like chalk, and beads of perspiration rolled down his skin as he struggled. But somehow he was got along the tunnel, and he sank down in the grass under the sunny sky

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in the locked gulch at last. Still, the rush of the half-breeds had not come. Probably they knew nothing of the tunnel through the rock, and only supposed that the hunted man had taken refuge in the cave, and believed that they had him cornered.

Leaving the wounded man in the grass, Frank turned to the big boulder with which Bronze Bill was accustomed to bar the tunnel.

He struggled to move it, but it was beyond his strength.

For several minutes, with sweating brow, he struggled at the task, but the mass of rock hardly shifted. Bronze Bill watched him hopelessly.

"I reckon you can't do it, bub," he muttered. "You ain't hefty enough for that. It was all I could do."

Frank Richards gave it up at last, panting for breath.

He seized his rifle again and looked into the dark tunnel.

There was blackness before him, with indistinguishable sounds from the distance.

It was upon him, the prisoner of an hour ago, that the defence fell. Not that he had any more mercy to expect than Bronze Bill from Le Couteau and his gang. Frank had quite forgotten his rough treatment at the hands of the bronzed miner; his only thought now

was to save the wounded man from the knives of the gold-robbers.

He listened for a sound in the tunnel under the rock, and he thought he detected the faint noise of creeping boots. He could guess that the gold-robbers, on hands and knees, were creeping forward in the darkness, puzzling their way through, knife in hand, for an encounter in the shadows. Ere long they would see the daylight at the inner end of the tunnel, and would know that there was an outlet. Then would come a rush—

Frank gritted his teeth, prepared to meet it.

"You can't stop them, kid. There's only one way—a way I reckoned on if I was ever cornered," muttered the miner faintly. "If you've got the nerve—"

Frank gave a rather harsh laugh.

"I've got nerve enough if there's a way," he said. "I don't see a way. I shall drop one or two of them, and then—"

"You've seen the little chest in the shack, where I keep my cartridges?"

"Yes."

"Have you got the nerve to handle dynamite?"

"Dynamite?" repeated Frank, with a start.

"Sure!"

Frank breathed hard.

"Yes," he said; "but—"

"There's a big stick of dynamite in the chest, same as they use in the quartz-mines," said Bronze Bill. "That was what I meant, if they hunted me out—to chuck it into the tunnel and close it up—"

It was on Frank's lips to say that the blocking of the tunnel meant their imprisonment in the locked gulch. But he did not speak. That was better than death under the knives of Le Couteau and his gang.

"If you've got the nerve, kid," Frank did not stay to hear more.

He ran into the shack and opened the chest. In a few seconds he came dashing back, with the stick of dynamite in his hand.

A false step, a stumble, and he would have been blown to atoms. But it was no time for fears. The wings of the angel of death were hovering over him and over his comrade, and his nerve did not fail.

He looked into the opening of the tunnel again. He was framed there, with the sunlight behind him as he stood, and there came from the darkness of the tunnel a sudden ringing shot, and a bullet whizzed past him. The enemy was near.

Frank did not hesitate.

He raised his hand, with the stick of dynamite in it, and with a tremor he hurled it with all his strength along the rock tunnel.

As it left his hand he sprang back and threw himself down in the grass.

It seemed at the same instant that there came a blinding, deafening roar from the heart of the rocky hillside.

Crash, crash!

The rush of air from the tunnel swept past the schoolboy as he lay. The roar of the explosion deafened, almost dazed him. He lay dizzy, with the crash of falling rocks in his ears. The din died down at last.

Frank Richards staggered to his feet.

He had his rifle ready, in case any of the enemy should have escaped on the near side of the explosion. But there was little chance of that.

He peered into the tunnel.

Only a few yards from him it was blocked with masses of blasted rock,

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not leaving a space that a prairie rabbit could have crept through.

And the half-breeds—
Frank shuddered.

If the gang had been in the tunnel when the explosion came, nothing could have saved them. Such as were in the cave were undoubtedly buried, crushed out of all human semblance, under the fallen tons of rock from above.

Frank's face was white as he turned away.

There was no further danger of attack by way of the tunnel, at all events. The gold-seekers were shut in the locked gulch; but Le Couteau and his gang, if any survived, were shut out.

A grin of triumph came over Bronze Bill's grim face as he met Frank Richards' eyes.

"I guess that's stopped 'em!" he said. "Yes," said Frank in a low voice.

"I reckon it was their lives or ours, pard," said Bronze Bill. "They'd have knifed us when they got near enough, you bet your boots. I hope Le Couteau went under with the rest. But he's as cunning as a fox; I guess he may have kept clear. But we're safe hyer now. I reckon you'd better do what you can for this hole in my shoulder, sonny."

Frank Richards nodded.

With a white face, but steady hand, he examined the miner's wound. The bullet had passed clean through, and Frank washed and banded the wound, which was serious enough, but not fatal, with care, and with the big miner's iron constitution to help him through. But it was certain that Bronze Bill would have to lie helpless for some time, cared for by the schoolboy he had driven into the locked gulch as a prisoner.

"We are both prisoners now!" Frank Richards remarked, with a faint smile. Bronze Bill nodded.

"I guess while there's life there's hope, sonny," he said. "I reckon we'll find a way out somehow when it's time. You and me, kid, is pardners now in this hyer claim—share and share alike. When we've cleaned up the gold we'll get out of this hyer trap somehow. Never say die!"

Beyond the rocky barrier, in the sunlight of Dead Man's Canyon, Le Couteau, the half-breed, brandished his fists and spat out curses. He had escaped the explosion, being well to the rear of his gang, but the force of it had hurled him out of the cave, half-stunned. He had recovered, to find himself alone, and an impenetrable barrier between him and the gold he sought. He shook his dusky fists, and cursed in mingled French and Indian and English, mocked by the hollow echoes among the rocks of Dead Man's Canyon.

THE END.

("Robbed!" is the title of next Tuesday's thrilling long complete story of Frank Richards, the Homeless School, and the miner of Dead Man's Canyon!)

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Bucking Up The Slackers!

(Continued from page 6.)

Smythe & Co. yelled with anguish and wriggled with shame as they were whacked. A public licking before a yelling crowd was a little too much for even Adolphus to stand with lofty equanimity. When the interval was over, and the lickings fairly distributed, the slackers' eleven were told to "get on with it."

They lined up, breathing fury.

Smythe cast a longing eye around, seeking an avenue of escape, but there was no escape. He was in for it, and his followers were in for it, and there was nothing to do but to play up.

Slacking and fumbling in the second half meant further punishment, and Jimmy Silver had warned them that it would be more severe.

So, in sheer desperation, the slackers played up.

The second half of that surprising match was much better played than the first. Indeed, some of the slackers, now that they settled down to it and did their best, found that they rather liked it, and found some pleasure in stopping the Modern attacks, and playing the game as it should be played; and when Gower of the Fourth actually succeeded in putting the ball into the Modern goal, there was a round of cheering that made Cuthbert Gower colour with pleasure, and from that moment Gower played up manfully.

But to most of the slackers that dreadful match was like a nightmare. They

were staggering and limping when the whistle went at last, and never had a whistle sounded in Adolphus' ears so much like a strain of heavenly melody.

The game was over—actually over. The fearful ordeal was past. How many goals the Moderns had beaten him by, Adolphus neither knew nor cared. He limped off the field in a collapsed condition, looking almost as if his chin would collide with his knees; and his team followed him in the same state, gasping and mumbling, to the accompaniment of roars of laughter from the Rookwood crowd.

"Not so bad at the finish," said Jimmy Silver, as they crawled past. "Jolly good for you, Gower, anyhow. Feel bad, Smythe?"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"You'll feel better in your next game if you keep up practice and keep yourself fit."

"Groogh!"

And Smythe & Co. limped away groaning.

Bulkeley of the Sixth strolled along to Little Side on the next practice day to have a look at the juniors. He found them all there—Smythe & Co. among the rest. And Smythe & Co. were looking much better for it already.

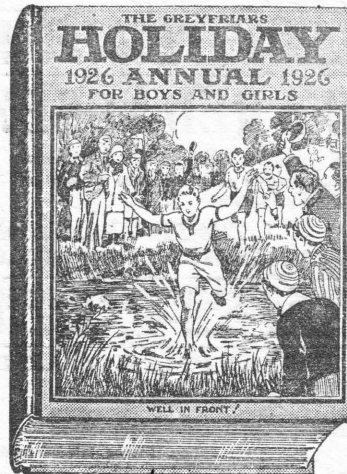
In the circumstances—the dreadful circumstances—Adolphus & Co. felt that it was better to toe the line peaceably, and they toed it, and it did them good. And, in case of back-sliding, Jimmy Silver was still Bucking up the Slackers.

THE END.

(Another humorous long complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co., and the Slackers Brigade next week, entitled: "The Slacker's Challenge!" by Owen Conquest.)

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