

**HELP AMONG THE SAVAGE OUTLAWS!** Help comes to Jimmy Silver and Rancher Smedley, prisoners of the savage rustlers, from a very unexpected quarter. Pequod, the man whose life Jimmy had once saved, remembers that service, and repays the debt in full!

# Rookwood beats Spanish Kit!

BY  
OWEN  
CONQUEST.



A BREATHLESSLY-THRILLING, LONG COMPLETE TALE OF JIMMY SILVER & CO. IN THE WILD WEST.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. With the Mounted Police!

"**W**E'RE going!" said Arthur Edward Lovell emphatically.

"We jolly well are!" said Raby.

And Newcome nodded. There was hustle and bustle at the Windy River Ranch that sunny morning. Soon after sun-up a troop of the Mounted Police had ridden in from Mosquito—a dozen brawny troopers in khaki. The horses were tethered by the corral, and the troopers, on the benches outside the cookhouse, were breakfasting, keeping Baldy, the cook, very busy.

Sergeant Kerr, who was in command of the detachment, was talking with Pete Peters, the foreman of the ranch. Lovell and Raby and Newcome were looking on—and thinking of their absent chum, Jimmy Silver. Half a dozen of the Windy River outfit were preparing to ride with the troopers on the trail of the rustlers, and the three Rookwooders had taken out their horses with the intention of accompanying the party. Pete Peters had shaken his head when Lovell mentioned the matter.

"I guess tenderfeet would only be in the way," he said.

Lovell nearly said "Rats!" in reply, but, fortunately, restrained himself.

"We're going!" he repeated to his chums. "Jimmy's gone, like an ass, and we're going after him."

The Rookwood chums were quite determined on that.

Sergeant Kerr rose from the bench, his breakfast finished. Then Arthur Edward Lovell came up to him.

"We want to come, sergeant," he said.

The sergeant shook his head, just as Mr. Peters had done. Apparently he, too, was under the impression that the tenderfeet would be in the way.

Lovell looked dogged.

"You see, our pal, Jimmy, went after the rustlers last night," he explained.

"Mr. Peters has told me. I guess

it's to be hoped that he never found them," said the sergeant dryly.

"They've got his cousin, Mr. Smedley, a prisoner," said Lovell. "That's why Jimmy went. Of course, he was rather an ass to go alone."

"Sure!" assented the sergeant.

"He ought to have told us, and we'd have gone with him," said Raby.

Sergeant Kerr grinned.

"That would only mean four missing instead of one," he said. "You tenderfeet are safer on the ranch."

"Only we don't specially want to be safe," said Newcome warmly. "If Jimmy's got into danger we're going to help to get him out."

"Can't you leave it to us?" asked the sergeant, with a touch of sarcasm.

"Well, we want to be in it," said Lovell. "You're taking some of the cowpunchers. Take us, too."

The sergeant shook his head again.

"Look here, my lads," he said, "this is going to be rough work. There'll be shooting before we've finished with Spanish Kit and his gang. They've got hold of Mr. Smedley, and most likely they've got young Silver by this time. We may be days on the trail—perhaps weeks; we're going to scour the foothills for that gang till we find them. You'd be hospital cases long before we got through. So drop it."

And with that the burly sergeant turned away to his horse.

"Cheek!" said Lovell.

Fortunately, the sergeant did not hear that remark.

At the word of command the troopers mounted. Skitter Dick and Spike Thompson, and four more of the Windy River outfit mounted to ride with them.

With a jingling of bridles and a clattering of hoofs the party rode out on the western trail towards the blue line of the foothills, beyond which rose in the far distance the mighty range of the Rocky Mountains.

"Come on!" said Lovell.

"What-ho!"

The three Rookwood juniors mounted, too.

"Stop that, you young guys!" shouted Pete Peters wrathfully. "Didn't you hear the sergeant tell you to hang on?"

"Rats!"

Lovell said "Rats!" at last. It was all he had to say to the excited and indignant Mr. Peters.

The three Rookwooders rode away at a gallop, leaving the ranch foreman staring after them. If Mr. Peters had had a lariat in hand at that moment Lovell would probably have been jerked out of his saddle before he got out of reach of the rope.

As it was, the three juniors rode away cheerfully, leaving Mr. Peters to stare and to shrug his shoulders.

They galloped on the track of the Canadian troopers, and came up with the party a quarter of a mile from the ranch.

"I guess you young 'uns will be sent back," said Skitter Dick, with a grin as the Rookwooders joined the cowpunchers.

"Guess again!" said Lovell. "We're coming, anyhow."

Lovell & Co. rode with the cowpunchers. Sergeant Kerr, riding with the troopers, gave them one glance and smiled slightly, and then bestowed upon them no further attention. It was probable that the worthy sergeant considered that Lovell & Co. would drop out of their own accord when the fatigues of the trail began to tell upon them.

But the chums of Rookwood were resolute.

The night before Jimmy Silver had left the ranch alone in a reckless attempt to help his cousin, Hudson Smedley, who was a prisoner in the hands of the rustlers. And Lovell & Co. were too anxious about their chum to care for the fatigue of the trail.

Five miles after mile vanished under the clattering hoofs as the sun rose higher and higher in a cloudless sky.

Before noon the troopers rode into the foothills, and the rocks and pines of Gopher Creek Canyon afforded a welcome shade from the blaze of the sun.

"This is where the boss was roped in by the rustlers somewhere about hyer," Skitter Dick told the juniors.

"And this is where Jimmy came to look for him," said Lovell.

"I guess we may come to him wandering about if the rustlers haven't got him," said Skitter Dick.

The troopers camped in the canyon.

They shared the midday meal of the cowpunchers, while the more skilled of the party were hunting for "sign."

"Sign" was found lying along the banks of the stream of the canyon, and the party took the trail again in the afternoon, the juniors, at least, feeling hopeful. But it did not take them long to discover that Sergeant Kerr was at a loss.

Somewhere in the foothills the rustlers had their camp, to which stolen cattle were driven after raids on the ranches. But hard rocks and gravel gave little "sign" that even the most experienced trapper could pick up.

Deeper and deeper into the foothills the troopers rode, but it was almost at a snail's pace, and more than once Lovell & Co. fancied that they were returning on their own tracks.

The high hope with which the juniors had started had faded away by the time the sun was sinking beyond the peaks of the Rockies.

They were tired by the day in the saddle, but they were determined to take no heed of fatigue until they had found their chum. But it was borne upon

their minds that the sergeant's warning was well founded; the trail was likely to be a long one, extending, perhaps, over weary weeks among the rocky foothills.

"But we're not giving in!" said Lovell when the party camped at last at nightfall.

"No jolly fear!" said Raby.

"Not till we find Jimmy, anyhow!" said Newcome. "We can stick it out as long as these chaps do."

"You bet!"

But the Rookwood chums were very glad to roll themselves in their blankets, after a cold supper. The night was cold in the hills, but there was no camp-fire. The light of a fire would have given warning to any lurking outlaw on the watch for an enemy.

To the hardy troopers, and the equally hardy cowpunchers, it was all in the day's work. But it was likely to tell upon the schoolboys from the Old Country. They awoke in the night and slivered, and wrapped their blankets round them more closely, and slept again; but they found it difficult to drag themselves from their blankets when the camp turned out at the first glimmer of dawn.

"You kids fed-up?" asked Sergeant Kerr, as Lovell & Co. rubbed their eyes and stretched their tired limbs.

"No fear!" answered Lovell promptly.

"You'd better ride home."

Lovell grunted.

"I can put you on the right trail for the ranch," said the sergeant. "Another day of it will knock you up."

"We're not made of putty at Rookwood!" said Lovell sarcastically. "If you turn us out, sergeant, we shall keep on, on our own, and look for Jimmy Silver."

The sergeant shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Stick to it, then," he said.

And Lovell & Co. stuck to it manfully.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### In the Rustlers' Camp!

JIMMY SILVER stirred uneasily.

The night was dark in the valley in the heart of the foothills, the darkness broken only by the glimmer of the stars overhead.

All was silent in the camp of the outlaws.

In the group of rough shacks the rustlers were sleeping, save for the member of the gang who was keeping watch.

Jimmy Silver lay in a little shack, on the hard earth, with ropes on his limbs—a prisoner.

In another shack near at hand he knew Hudson Smedley lay, bound hand and foot.

Jimmy had rolled to the opening that served as a doorway of the shack, and lay looking out at the camp.

The camp-fire had burned low, almost extinct. Around it he could dimly make out the figures of three or four of the rustlers rolled in dirty blankets, their feet to the dying fire. The rest of the gang were in the shacks.

From the surrounding darkness came faint sounds that told of the neighbourhood of horses and cattle. In that hidden valley in the untrodden recesses of the Alberta foothills the plunder of the ranches had been gathered, concealed from all eyes until the cattle-thieves could dispose of it. Jimmy thought of his own horse, Blazer, somewhere among the stolen animals.

A figure moved in the dim starlight. It was that of the outlaw on guard. Jimmy saw him dimly—a rough figure

in a Stetson hat, with a rifle sloped under his arm.

Where was Pequod?

All Jimmy Silver's hopes were centred on the half-breed, Pequod le Couteau, the desperado whose life he had saved, and who had not forgotten. In that gang of desperate outlaws and law-breakers he had one friend—one of the most desperate, as he knew—a man whose life had been a series of crimes. But somewhere in Pequod's hard heart was a spark of good, and he had not forgotten how Jimmy Silver had dragged him from the torrent long ago; and he had whispered to the prisoner that he would help him during the hours of darkness. But it was long past midnight now, and Pequod had not come.

There was a sound in the stillness of the camp—the sound of a low groan. It came from the shack occupied by Spanish Kit, the leader of the rustler gang.

On his bed of leaves and blankets the Mexican lay, sorely wounded. Through half the night Jimmy had heard him babbling deliriously. The groan was repeated, and a figure stirred by the fire. Jimmy made out the burly form of Cactus Bill.

Cactus crossed over to the Mexican's shack and stooped his head and entered it.

"Agua! Agua!"

In the silence the faint voice of the Mexican came across the intervening space to Jimmy Silver's ears. The delirium had passed. Spanish Kit was himself again, but the voice sounded low and weak. He spoke, unconsciously, in his own language.

"I guess you'll have to say it again, boss!" said the rough voice of Cactus Bill.

"Water!"

"Sure," said Cactus.

He came out and filled a tin pannikin at the stream, and returned to the Mexican's shack.

Jimmy's heart was sinking.

As yet Pequod had not been able to aid him—or had the breed forgotten his promise, scared by the terrible danger from his associates if they discovered him? And now Spanish Kit had come to his senses.

Jimmy listened.

The voice of the Mexican, faint and low as it was, reached his ears again in the stillness.

"The prisoners—they are safe?"

"Sure, boss."

"The boy—the boy who fired on me—"

"I guess he's safe—roped up hand and foot," said Cactus.

"Look, and make sure!"

"I guess he's all O.K."

"Look, I tell you!" snapped the Mexican. "If he escapes before I can deal with him, lives will answer for it."

"I guess I'll take a peep, boss."

Jimmy Silver rolled back hastily from the opening, and closed his eyes, as the heavy tread of the outlaw approached the shack. Cactus Bill entered and struck a match.

The glimmer of light showed Jimmy Silver lying bound on the floor, apparently asleep.

The rustler bent over him and felt the knots of the rope with his fingers. Jimmy Silver opened his eyes.

"What's that?" he muttered drowsily.

Cactus Bill did not take the trouble to reply. He left the shack and returned to the Mexican.

"He's all right, boss."

"Muy bien! I shall sleep now."

"Good!"

Cactus Bill returned to his blankets by the dying fire, and his deep snore soon showed that he was sleeping.



From the Mexican's shack there came a groan, low and faint, and it was followed by silence. Spanish Kit was sleeping.

Jimmy rolled back to the opening, and looked out with almost despairing eyes into the dim starlight. Had Pequod forgotten his promise? If the half-breed failed him it was the end of all things for him, as he knew only too well. With the dawn would come the vengeance of the Mexican upon the schoolboy who had shot him down.

The dim figure of the outlaw on guard moved into view again and stopped at Jimmy's shack.

"You are awake?"

It was a faint whisper, and it thrilled through Jimmy Silver—for it was the voice of Pequod le Couteau.

The sentinel was the "breed." Pequod, silent and swift, entered the shack.

"I'm awake!" breathed Jimmy Silver.

"Silence—on your life! It is death to both of us if they find out!"

"I know!" whispered Jimmy.

A keen knife glided over the ropes. The fragments of cut rope fell away, and Jimmy Silver was free.

He rose to his feet and chafed his limbs. His heart was beating hard. In the darkness of the interior of the shack he could scarcely see the half-breed, but he caught the glitter of Pequod's eyes.

"I have the horses ready!" breathed Pequod. "It was not easy, but I have cut out two and saddled them. They are hidden in the pines yonder."

"And you—"

The half-breed laughed softly.

"I must ride with you, mon petit. They will know that it was the man on guard who released you. We must be far away by dawn."

"My cousin—"

The half-breed gave a shrug.

"Boss Smedley is nothing to me. I did not bargain to save him. Come! There is no time to lose." He grasped the junior's arm.

Jimmy Silver held back.

"I can't go without Mr. Smedley. They will kill him! Spanish Kit intends his death. You know that!"

"I know."

"I can't go without him!"

The breed muttered a savage exclamation, his eyes gleaming like a cat's in the gloom.

"I tell you I will risk nothing for Boss Smedley! It was he that handed me over to the police at the ranch. Let him die!"

Jimmy shook his arm free.

"You've helped me," he said. "Save yourself now, Pequod! You've done more than I should ever have hoped. Save yourself now, and leave me to take my chance. I cannot go without Mr. Smedley."

"Oh, you are a fool—a fool!" breathed the half-breed. "If Spanish Kit awakens again he may send to see that you are safe. At any moment, all may be lost!"

"Leave me to it!"

A muttered exclamation was the only reply.

"Help me to save my cousin, then," whispered Jimmy. "Mr. Smedley is rich. He will reward you."

"Bah! I am not selling my comrades for money!" growled the half-breed sulkily.

Jimmy Silver was silent. Even that desperate outcast had his point of honour.

"But—you will not stir without him?" muttered Pequod.

"I cannot!"

"If it were not for giving the alarm I would force you to it," said the half-

breed in a savage whisper. "But I will save you, as you saved me; and if you will not go without him, I will do my best. Wait here for me, in silence!"

The half-breed glided silently from the shack.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Hunted!

JIMMY SILVER waited.

He could not distrust the breed, who was risking his life to serve him. But his ally was so savage, so desperate an outcast, that the Rookwood junior was full of uneasiness.

But he could do nothing but wait as Pequod had bidden him.

The minutes passed on leaden wings.

Once or twice Jimmy thought that, in the stillness, he caught a faint sound of whispering from the next shack. But he could not be sure. In the gloom he could not even be certain that Pequod le Couteau had entered the shack where the rancher lay a bound prisoner.

His heart beat painfully as he waited. One of the sleepers by the fire stirred and rolled over, dragging his blanket about him, and Jimmy felt his heart jump. But the man settled down to sleep again.

"Jimmy!"

It was a whisper at last, and in the voice of Hudson Smedley. The breed's dusky hand gripped Jimmy's arm and drew him out of the shack.

"Cousin Smedley!" breathed Jimmy.

"I'm here!"

The rancher's burly figure loomed up in the shadow between the two shacks.

Pequod whispered:

"Follow me, and not a sound!"

His dark form glided away, and the rancher and Jimmy Silver followed him.

Pequod led them down the bank of the stream.

He plunged knee-deep in the shallow water by the bank without hesitation, and held on down the course of the stream. Without hesitation Jimmy and the rancher followed him into the water.

It struck icy-cold to Jimmy's limbs, but he hardly noticed it. He understood why Pequod had taken to the stream. The sloping bank hid them from the camp as they crept away, and they stooped low over the water as they crept.

The thumping of Jimmy Silver's heart was painful as he crept along the sandy bed of the stream, the icy waters swishing round his knees, here and there splashing round his waist as he stepped into a hollow. There was no sound of alarm from the camp. But for the fact that Pequod had been the man on guard the escape would have been impossible. Even now, if one of the rustlers should awaken and look about him, the sentry would be missed. In the swishing, murmuring water, treading on soft sand, it was impossible to hurry, but every second seemed an hour to Jimmy Silver.

Farther and farther they went, down the stream with the murmuring current, and still there was no sound of an alarm behind.

The half-breed stopped at last, and held up his hand.

"Prenez garde! Careful here!"

He clambered through bushes up the bank, and Jimmy Silver and Hudson Smedley followed, and found themselves in a clump of pines. Pequod, with a gesture, indicated a spot of glowing red in the distance—it was the last glow of the dying camp-fire, and looked very distant in the surrounding gloom.

There was a rustling movement in the pines, and Jimmy made out the forms of two horses tethered there. There was

a faint whinny, and a soft muzzle smuggled under his arm.

"Blazer!" whispered Jimmy, rubbing his favourite's neck.

"It is your horse," said the breed. "I got him for you—and another for myself; but now there are three of us. We cannot delay to get another. I shall go afoot. Mount!"

"But—"

"Silence, and follow!"

The half-breed was leader, and the others obeyed. Jimmy Silver mounted Blazer, and the rancher the other animal. Pequod took the bridles to lead them.

Leaving the clump of pines between them and the camp of the outlaws, they moved away along the stream for a short distance. Then the breed turned away from the water. The darkness hid all but dim shapes of mountains from Jimmy Silver's eyes; but Pequod did not pause for a moment.

He broke into a rapid trot, and the horses were put to a trot to keep pace with him.

There was rich grass under the animal's hoofs now. The hoof-strokes made little sound. From the night came an echo of hoofs, and Jimmy started and listened.

"Only the cattle!" said the breed. "There are many here."

Two or three dim shapes loomed past the fugitives in the gloom—steers they had disturbed from grassy couches in their passage.

The red point of the distant camp-fire was long out of sight. Only the brooding night, the silent hills, surrounded them.

Hudson Smedley spoke at last.

"This isn't the way down to the plains, Pequod."

Jimmy started, and looked sharply at the half-breed in the gloom. Pequod shrugged his shoulders.

"The trail to the plains is watched," he said. "Black Henri and three others are posted to watch for the troopers."

"Then where are we going?"

"Into the hills."

"I guess you're boss of this outfit, Pequod," said the rancher. "We follow your lead!"

"Silence!" hissed the half-breed suddenly.

He threw his rifle forward. A shadowy form loomed up ahead.

"Halt!"

The sharp voice rang in the gloom. Jimmy Silver obeyed Pequod's swift gesture, and drew in his horse.

It was one of the rustlers ahead. Watch was kept in more than one point in the hidden valley.

"Who's that?" demanded the voice.

"Speak up, or I guess—"

Crack!

Pequod's gleaming eye was looking along his rifle, and the challenging voice was his guide for the shot. The voice broke off in a yell of alarm and pain; and there was the sound of a crashing fall in the grass.

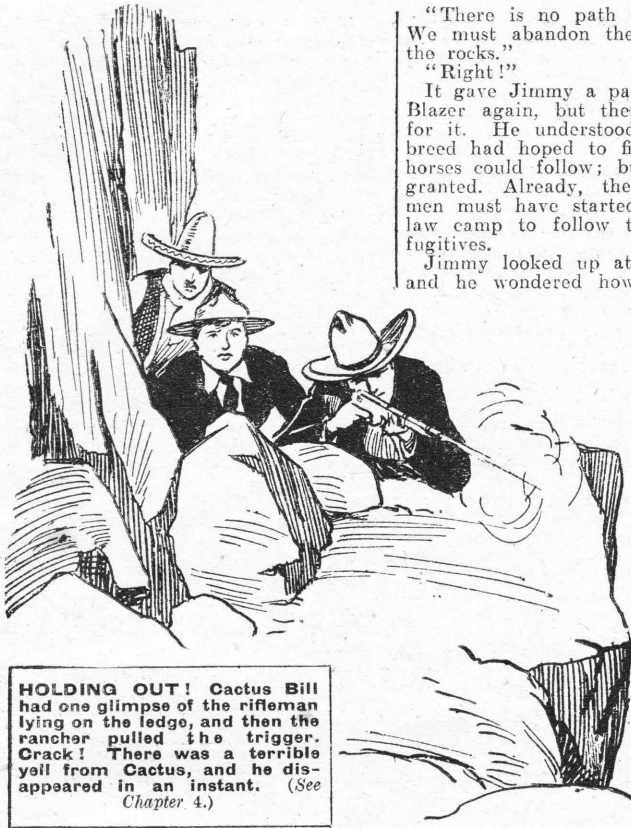
"Quick, now!" breathed Pequod. "That will be heard at the camp."

He plunged away in the darkness and seized the riderless horse. A man was groaning in the grass, but the breed did not give him a glance.

From the distance came a sound of calling voices. The shot in the valley had alarmed the camp of outlaws.

"Follow me!" called Pequod.

He leaped upon the horse of the fallen outlaw and rode on in the darkness. Jimmy and the rancher followed him fast. The stars were paling now, and in the east there was a glimmer of grey. Dawn was at hand.



**HOLDING OUT!** Cactus Bill had one glimpse of the rifleman lying on the ledge, and then the rancher pulled the trigger. Crack! There was a terrible yell from Cactus, and he disappeared in an instant. (See Chapter 4.)

"There is no path for horses here. We must abandon them and take to the rocks."

"Right!"

It gave Jimmy a pang to part with Blazer again, but there was no help for it. He understood that the half-breed had hoped to find a path that horses could follow; but time was not granted. Already, they knew, horse-men must have started from the outlaw camp to follow the trail of the fugitives.

Jimmy looked up at the steep cliff, and he wondered how it was to be

He helped Jimmy up the rock, and the junior, clinging to the rope, climbed actively, and joined Pequod on the ledge. Hudson Smedley came clambering up after him.

The ledge was not more than two feet wide, jutting upward from the face of the cliff. Pequod signed to them to lie down as close to the rock as they could get, and followed their example. Lying on the ledge, they were invisible from below.

Gallop, gallop!

A bunch of horsemen swept by, but did not halt. The trail of the three horses turned loose led them onward, and they rode past the cliff without a suspicion.

Jimmy Silver caught the voice of Cactus Bill as the riders swept by.

"They can't get out of the valley!



Loud and confused shouting sounded behind, in the distance, and Jimmy could guess that the escape of the prisoners had been discovered. The three riders rode on at a desperate gallop.

Jimmy felt the ground rising under his horse's feet. He knew that they were close now on the hills that shut in the lonely valley. The bar of grey in the eastern sky was whitening; dimly, like phantoms, objects became eerily visible.

Pequod had turned from his course, almost at right angles, and the fugitives followed without question. As the dawn strengthened Jimmy could see the face of the breed, and he saw that it was drawn and tense.

A grassy slope, ending in a precipitous rise of rock, was on their right hand as they rode. All escape from the valley was shut off in that quarter.

And now that there was light Jimmy Silver could see that the present course they were following would take them back towards the stream that flowed across the valley—nearer to the outlaw camp. He saw a grim look come over the bronzed face of Hudson Smedley.

"A rat-trap, and no way out!" muttered the rancher.

He swept his glance back towards the stream.

In the dim dawn the group of shacks could be made out in the far distance. In any direction the hidden valley was only a few miles in extent. And on all sides, as it seemed, rugged walls of rock shut them in. There was one way out—the opening of the canyon where Black Henri and his comrades kept watch and ward, and that way was impassable. Pequod le Couteau dragged his horse to a halt at last.

"What now?" asked Jimmy Silver quietly.

negotiated, even without the horses. But Pequod was not at a loss.

He dismounted, and gave his horse a smart blow, and sent it galloping off. He signed to his companions to do the same.

"The trail will lead them away from this spot," the half-breed muttered. "They will follow it till they find the horses. That will give us a chance."

The breed sought along the rugged cliff, grasped a cleft, and drew himself up the precipice. A dozen feet above a ledge jutted from the rock, and with the agility of a mountain-goat the half-breed reached it.

Jimmy Silver essayed to follow him, and a root came out in his hand, and he rolled back. Hudson Smedley caught him as he fell.

"Wait!" called back the breed.

Kneeling on the narrow rocky ledge, he uncoiled a lasso, and the rope came slithering down.

Pequod fastened the end to a spur of rock, and signed to them to climb. From the distance came the sound of hoof-beats. The outlaws had picked up the trail, and the trail of the horses in thick grass was plain enough to follow at a gallop.

"They're coming!" breathed Jimmy Silver.

"Quick!" panted the half-breed above.

"You first, Jimmy," said Hudson Smedley.

There's nary a road for a horse, 'cepting the canyon—"

His voice was lost as he rode on. The galloping hoofs grew fainter in the distance.

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER.**

**Cornered!**

**P**EUQUOD LE COUTEAU stirred at last. He rose on his knees, and looked from the ledge over the valley, and his comrades rose also. The sun was now high in the sky, and the lonely valley in the heart of the foothills glowed with morning light. From that perch on the face of the cliff the whole valley was spread before their eyes with the



stream and the group of shacks in the distance, and the bunches of cattle moving about in the rich grass.

Far away was a black gap in the wall of hills, where the canyon opened the way down to the plains. In that direction several tiny figures of horsemen could be discerned.

They guessed that the only outlet from the hidden valley was doubly guarded now.

Cactus Bill and his men, on the trail of the loose horses, had ridden on out of sight. But Jimmy realised that now it was a bright day it would not take the rustlers long to discern the trick, and the sight of the horses without their riders would warn Cactus Bill that the fugitives had taken to the rocks.

"The sooner we get on the better," Jimmy Silver remarked.

"I guess so!" assented the rancher. "You're the guide, Pequod."

The breed shrugged his shoulders. "It is only three days since I joined Spanish Kit's outfit," he said. "I have not before been in this part of the valley."

"You can't do more than your best," said Jimmy Silver. "Anyhow, we're better off here than in the shacks yonder."

"That's so, sure!" said Hudson Smedley. "We can put up a fight if they get after us, I guess!"

Both Jimmy and the rancher were unarmed. Hudson Smedley glanced at the breed's rifle and then at the revolver in his belt. A grim smile came over Pequod's face.

"Our lives are not worth much if Spanish Kit is able to get on the trail," he said. "But if we come through, Hudson Smedley, I am still an outlaw, and there is a price on my head."

"But after what you've done for us—" said Jimmy Silver eagerly.

"I guess, Pequod, that if you choose to go straight after this I can see you through!" said Hudson Smedley.

"Je suis ce que je suis!" muttered the half-breed. "What I have done was because the petit saved my life. You I would not have saved. It was because he would not go alone. If we get through Hudson Smedley, we part, and you raise no hand to stop me. That is agreed?"

"Sure! I guess I shouldn't be likely to raise a hand to stop you after this," said the rancher.

"It is a promise?"

"Yes."

Without a word more Pequod handed his rifle to the rancher. Then he led the way along the ledge.

"A steady head here, Jimmy," whispered Hudson Smedley.

"You bet!" said Jimmy.

He needed all his nerve. The rocky ledge wound along the face of the cliff, with a bulging wall of rock on the right. It wound upwards, and on the left was a sheer drop, growing steeper at every step that was taken.

Against the bare rock of the precipice the three figures showed up in the sunlight, in full view from below if anyone had been at hand to see.

Pequod suddenly halted, and pointed over the valley below.

Five or six horsemen, with Cactus Bill at their head, were riding back towards the hillside. Evidently they had found the riderless horses, and were riding back for the spot where the fugitives had abandoned them.

Crack!

Jimmy Silver gave a sudden start as the rifle-shot rang, and there was

a crash on the rock a foot from his head. A bullet had flattened there, and it dropped to the ledge at his feet.

They had been seen!

"Down!" shouted the half-breed.

They threw themselves on the ledge on their faces, and only just in time. Five or six bullets struck the rock above them, and rebounded or fell flattened.

There was a thunder of hoofs, and the horsemen below rode up to the cliff and halted. The ledge at this point was thirty feet above the heads of the riders, and the figures lying on it out of their sight. A shouting voice came up to them.

"We've got you. You 'uns had better come down, or you'll be riddled!"

Cactus Bill received no answer. A volley rang from below, but the bullets struck the rock well above the figures on the ledge.

"You ride back and tell Spanish Kit we've got 'em cornered!" Cactus Bill was speaking. "I guess he'll be loosing off his shooter at somebody if he don't get news of them."

Jimmy Silver heard the hoof-beats of a departing horseman riding back to the outlaw camp.

"Follow me!" whispered the half-breed.

Pequod le Couteau was crawling along the ledge with a serpentine motion. His companions followed him. Jimmy Silver raised himself as far as his hands and knees, and a moment later his back was grazed by a bullet from below, and he promptly dropped at full length again.

Below, the voices of the outlaws could be heard in savage consultation. More and more of the gang rode up, gathering at the spot, till Jimmy guessed that fifteen men at least were gathered there. Occasionally a shot rang out, and a bullet clattered on the cliff.

"We got to get arter them!" came Cactus Bill's voice at last, in savage tones. "There'll be shootin' if we get back to camp without them. Spanish Kit's as mad as a hornet already. Where they can go we can go. Leave the hosses and foller!"

And a sound of heavy boots scraping on the cliff was heard as the outlaws sought for ways to clamber up to the ledge.

Pequod le Couteau stopped suddenly. Jimmy Silver looked past him, and saw the reason. The ledge had come to an end, shut off by the bulge of the cliff above.

Jimmy Silver felt a chill.

"Cornered!" muttered the rancher.

Pequod le Couteau turned on his elbow and surveyed the cliff above him. It sloped back from the ledge to a height of a hundred feet to the top of the cliff. It was possible to climb it, but to rise from the ledge was to expose themselves to the firing from below.

"Morbleau! We are trapped!" said the breed coolly. "If we live through the day we can climb the cliff when the stars come out. But if—" He finished by shrugging his shoulders.

"They can only follow us by the way we came," said Hudson Smedley. "It will not be easy for them."

The rancher turned back with a quick movement and lay on his chest, looking along the ledge, with his rifle stretched out before him. His eye was steady along the barrel, his finger was on the trigger.

"Good!" muttered the breed.

Jimmy Silver waited tensely.

Neither party could see the other now. But as soon as an outlaw clambered on the ledge he would be in sight, and the advantage now was with the rancher.

At a distance along the rugged cliff, at the lowest point of the jutting ledge, a Stetson hat rose into view. The rancher shifted his aim a trifle and waited.

The Stetson rose higher. Under it a bearded face appeared, the fierce eyes staring watchfully. Cactus Bill had one glimpse of the rifleman lying on the ledge, and then the rancher pulled the trigger.

Crack!

There was a terrible yell from Cactus Bill, and the Stetson and the bearded face disappeared in an instant. The fugitives heard the sound of a heavy body rolling down the cliff, to crash on the earth below.

A yell of rage rang out from the rustlers, and a volley of bullets spattered on the rock above the ledge. Two or three climbers were heard to scramble back into safety.

"I guess that's stopped them!" said Hudson Smedley grimly.

And the rancher was right. No head rose again above the level of the rocky ledge. But from below came almost without intermission the ringing of the rifles, and incessant bullets spattered and clattered on the rocky cliff.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Lovell in Luck!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL stopped.

He felt dismayed.

The sun was blazing down with all the heat of a Canadian summer's day. Lovell's face streamed with perspiration under his Stetson.

And he was alone.

There was no doubt of it. He had called again and again, and there had come no answering shout.

Lovell stood still and stared round him.

Sergeant Kerr and his party had left their camp on foot. The horses had been left in charge of one trooper. In the high rocky gulches and gullies before them there was little foothold for the horses. But the tramping on foot told hard upon Lovell & Co. They stuck it bravely; they were determined to stick it to the finish. But even Arthur Edward Lovell was beginning to realise that he was not quite equal to sharing the arduous work of a Canadian Mounted man.

By what "sign" the sergeant was led the juniors did not know; but they had read in Kerr's bronzed face that he was hopeful. The way had lain through a rocky gulch, piled with great boulders, patched with firs and pines, and the members of the party were seldom in one another's sight. Rocks and pines hid them from each other.

Lovell, for an hour or more, had not been able to see more than one or two troopers at a time. And when, after a hard clamber up a rocky acclivity, he had sat down on a boulder to rest for a few minutes, they had all passed from his sight.

That did not make him uneasy. He had only to hurry on and rejoin them. But, as it happened, when he hurried on, he did not rejoin them. The rocks and firs, all of a bewildering sameness, perplexed him, and after a time he realised that he had missed the party.

Then he had shouted, at the risk of

being heard by the rustlers if they were at hand.

But no answer came, not even from Raby and Newcome. His chums were still with the troopers and the cow-punchers. They had not stopped for a brief rest as Arthur Edward had.

Feeling rather alarmed now, Lovell plunged to and fro among the rocks and stunted trees, searching for a sign of the party, without finding one. He stopped at last, with the knowledge that he was lost.

Round him stretched the barren foothills, ridge rising over ridge, shaggy hillside over shaggy hillside, cliff over cliff. No trace that Lovell's eye could read was left on the barren rocks.

Whether the troopers had passed where he stood he could not guess. They might be miles away now, or they might be hidden only by the next ridge. At all events, they were out of range of his voice, that was certain.

"Better keep on, I suppose!" grunted Lovell. "Silly asses to miss me like this! I'd better look for them."

And he tramped on, tired and irritated, keeping his eyes well about him, both for friends and for foes.

Suddenly he stopped again, bent his head, and listened. Through the clear mountain air came a distant sound—distant, but unmistakable. It was the cracking of rifles.

Lovell's face brightened.

"Good egg! That's a signal to me."

And he hurried on.

Keeping on towards the sound he heard it more clearly—sometimes a single sharp shot, sometimes five or six reports blended together. Doubts assailed him as he tramped on. His first thought was that Sergeant Kerr was signalling to him, to enable him to rejoin the party. But he wondered now whether the sergeant would betray his presence in the hills to the outlaws by such continuous firing. It was more likely that fighting was going on, that the troopers had met the enemy.

"And me out of it!" snorted Lovell.

He fairly ran now, forgetting his fatigue, and bounding from rock to rock. Still the firing continued, at short intervals, louder and clearer to his ears.

"Oh, rotten!" gasped Lovell at last.

He had to halt, for he had almost reached the verge of a cliff. From that high, rocky upland he caught sight of a glimpse of green far below. There was a valley beyond the cliff, but the drop was almost sheer. And it was from the valley that the firing came.

Lovell dropped on his hands and knees and crawled forward. The dizzy height of the cliff made his head swim a little, but he set his teeth and pulled himself together.

He crept closer and closer to the verge of the precipice.

Where the downward drop began, he stopped. A steep slope was below him, a slope that might have been climbed from below by an active climber with a foot as sure as that of a mountain goat, but almost impossible to descend. For a hundred feet the steep slope ran down, and below that the drop was sheer.

And below, as he looked over the cliff, Lovell could see a group of men in rough garb and Stetson hats, mostly with rifles in their hands. Every now and then one or another of them fired at the ledge on the face of the cliff.

Lovell wondered why. He did not need telling that that savage-looking crowd was a gang of rustlers—undoubtedly the gang Sergeant Kerr was in search of. But why they were firing

at the blank face of the cliff was a mystery to him.

He could see the jutting ledge for most part, but in places it was hidden from his eyes by a bulge in the cliff. But he guessed at last that on some part of the ledge, which he could not see, someone had taken refuge, and that it was at the unknown refuge that the rustlers were shooting. Lovell moved along the top of the cliff slowly and cautiously, and looked down again, getting a view of the ledge hitherto hidden from his eyes.

Then he gave a gasp.

Three figures were stretched face down on the ledge squeezed close against the cliff for protection from the fire from below. One had a rifle stretched out before him.

"Jimmy!" breathed Lovell, staring down blankly at the middle figure.

It was Jimmy Silver. And the man with the rifle was Hudson Smedley. The third man Lovell did not recognise, only he guessed that he was a half-breed.

"I've found them!"

Lovell's impulse was to shout to his friends below, but fortunately he checked it and drew back. Not one of the raiders thought of glancing up to the summit of the cliff, but a shout would have drawn their attention at once, and bullets would have followed.

Lovell thought it out.

He—Arthur Edward Lovell—had found the rustler gang, and found Jimmy Silver and Hudson Smedley. They were out of reach and he could not help them. While the troopers were vainly exploring distant hillsides and shadowy canyons Lovell had done the trick, as it were. For the moment he did not remember that he had happened on the spot by sheer chance through losing himself in the hills. He was not anxious to dwell on that circumstance.

"Well, I've found them!" said Lovell, with a satisfied grin. "They look safe enough there, too, for a bit. Now, all I've got to do is to bring up the troopers."

And then Lovell remembered that he was lost. He stared round him rather hopelessly.

Where were the troopers? To find them and bring them to the rescue of Jimmy and his comrades was the next step. But how?

Lovell tramped back from the cliff with something like despair in his breast. To find his chum without being able to help him was too bitter. Where were the troopers? He realised that they must be out of hearing of the rifles, and that meant a great distance in the clear mountain air. If they had heard the shooting it would have drawn them to the scene as it had drawn Lovell.

He desperately resolved that he would find them somehow. He tramped away from the great cliff, and found himself descending a dark canyon that rived the hillside. He tramped on wearily, venturing now to call out occasionally as the sound of the rifle-fire grew fainter in the distance behind him.

"You young jay!"

It was Skitter Dick's voice. The cow-puncher waved to him from a distant slope, and Lovell, his heart beating with joy, hurried towards him. He was glad to see Skitter Dick, but for once the good-tempered cowpuncher was angry.

"You young jay! I've been hunting for you!" he growled. "We're two miles from the camp. Come on!"

"I say—"

"Come on, I tell you!" Skitter Dick tramped away without

listening to a word. Lovell followed him. After all, it was to the sergeant he had to tell his news. He grinned at the thought of the Skitter's surprise when he heard it.

He was almost limping when the Skitter led him at last into the new camp of the troopers. They had stopped to rest at noon in a shadowy canyon, but they were preparing to move again when Skitter Dick arrived with Lovell. Raby and Newcome gave their chums a welcoming hail, but Sergeant Kerr fixed a frowning glare on him.

"You're going back to the ranch," the sergeant said, without waiting for Lovell to speak. "I'm sending a cowboy, and you're going back, too."

Lovell laughed.

"Don't you want to hear my report?" he asked.

Snort from the sergeant.

"You see, I've found the rustlers," explained Lovell airily.

"What?"

"Jimmy Silver and Mr. Smedley and another man have got away from them somehow, and are stuck on a ledge on a cliff. I've seen them. I can take you straight to the place."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Raby.

Sergeant Kerr stared at Lovell unbelievably. But he signed to him to go on, and Lovell gave a full description of what he had seen.

"By thunder!" said the sergeant at last. "You're a young ass, but you've come in useful. You can remember the way back to the cliff?"

"If Skitter Dick guides us to where he met me I can show you the way from there," said Lovell confidently.

"Good!"

The troopers were all in motion at once. Skitter Dick slapped Lovell on the back.

"Good for you, tenderfoot," he said heartily. "It's jest fool's luck, but mighty handy now."

Whereat Lovell frowned, and Raby and Newcome grinned. But Arthur Edward looked cheerful again as the Rookwooders tramped on after the active troopers. Fool's luck or not, Arthur Edward had done it, there was no doubt about that, and it was a score for Rookwood. Lovell & Co. were tired to the bone, but their faces were very bright as the party came out at last on the high cliff overlooking the hidden valley, and the troopers, lying on their chests along the verge of the cliffs, turned their rifles upon the gang of rustlers below.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### The Last of the Rustlers!

**J**IMMY SILVER, as he lay on the rocky ledge in the hot sun, wondered whether flesh and blood would hold out till nightfall. It was almost impossible to move without exposing himself to a shot, and when the sun passed the zenith the rock was hot to the touch and there was scarcely any shade for the hapless trio. Below the ledge the whole gang of rustlers had gathered now, and every now and then a rifle still rang out and a bullet clipped the rock.

Twice Jimmy's Stetson had been pierced by bullets as he moved to ease his position, and one ball had cut a lock of hair from his head. Pequod le Couteau, in spite of all his caution, had a red streak along his dusky forehead, where a bullet had grazed. And the sun was still high in the heavens. Long, long hours intervened before the fugitives could hope to make an effort to

(Continued on page 26.)



gracefully. "The rogue has gone. But where is your escort, madam? Surely the Princess Royal does not drive alone so late without a following?"

He had recognised the King's eldest daughter, who, as soon as she saw the uniform of her deliverer, recovered her courage, of which she had plenty.

"Oh, sir! How can I thank you for your timely aid?" cried the Princess Anne.

"An officer of his Majesty's Guards needs no thanks, your Royal Highness," said Captain Jack, with another bow. "I see your coachman lying across his box in a dead faint, but no one else."

"The fault is mine for not turning back with our first disaster," said the Princess Anne. "The journey has been nothing but a chapter of accidents. Twice something happened to a wheel, and we were delayed two hours. As for the four gentlemen who attended me, the ruffian shot one dead, and the others were not so valiant as you, sir, it would seem."

"Egad! Dead?" exclaimed Anchovy. "Yes; he lies on the road here, slain by the highwayman's pistol."

"I must look to the poor gentleman," said their deliverer, dismounting. And there, sure enough, he found

him stretched out upon his back, staring up at the stars with a white, still face that told him he had passed beyond human aid.

The two ladies who rode with the Princess Royal in the coach stilled their fears, and the three fair creatures waited breathlessly until their preserver rose from his knee and returned to their side.

"Unhappily, yes; the gentleman has been foully murdered," he said. "As for those poltroons who abandoned you, the less we say of them the better. But here come your brave postillions now that all danger is past."

And his listeners marked the biting scorn in his voice.

"But you will not leave us, sir?" implored the Princess Anne. "We are on our way to Windsor, which is indeed not far now."

"And whither I myself am bound," said Captain Jack. "Poor Cousin Lancelot, you seem doomed to sup your fill of trouble to-night, and yet 'tis no fault of mine. Have no fear, madam, I will be your escort," he added aloud, and the princess clapped her hands.

"I have not yet your name, sir," said her Royal Highness. "The King must hear of your gallantry."

The question, though delivered in a

tremulous voice, was at the same time a command, and Captain Jack groaned internally as he said:

"I am Captain Lancelot Somerset, of the First Regiment of Guards, madam, and your Royal Highness' very devoted and humble servant."

"Never to my dying day shall I forget it!" cried the grateful girl. "And, when I have told papa all, you will never forget it, either."

"Egad, I can quite believe that!" thought Anchovy to himself, as he bowed and turned to the frightened postillions. "Now, you cowardly dogs," he said, in his best parade voice, "pick up this poor gentleman and place him beside the coachman. That villain may return at any minute with more of his kind, so I warn you make haste."

It did not take long to cut the dead horses clear of the traces and drag them to one side of the road; but they saw no sign of the three other gentlemen, who were afterwards dismissed with ignominy, though they one and all vowed that their nags had bolted, terrified by the firing.

Fretting and fuming, and entirely forgetting his lost cloak, "Captain Lancelot Somerset" rode by the coach door, with the starlight glinting on his

(Continued on opposite page.)

## "Rookwood Beats Spanish Kit!"

(Continued from page 7.)

escape by climbing the dizzy cliff above them.

More than once Jimmy Silver felt himself growing dizzy, and had to pull himself together hard. One moment's loss of caution would have been enough to cost him his life. There were twenty ruffians below now—the whole gang, and every man had a rifle in his hands watching for a chance. It seemed inevitable in the long hours of sunshine that had still to elapse, the end must come. Among the ruffians below Jimmy had caught an instant's glimpse of Spanish Kit—wounded, white as chalk, savage as a wild beast. The Mexican had been carried to the spot, and lay on blankets in the shadow of a rock, watching the ledge above with sleepless, savage eyes. When the firing slackened down his bitter voice was heard, and the rifles recommenced.

And then suddenly—it seemed like the strange change in a dizzy dream to Jimmy Silver—there came a blaze of rifle-fire from the top of the soaring cliff.

Like thunder the volley rang and pealed with a thousand echoes in the hollows of the hills.

For the moment Jimmy fancied that another party of rustlers had gone by long, steep paths over the hills to attack the ledge from above.

But he was quickly undeceived by the chorus of yells and groans that rose among the rustlers.

It was the enemy that was being fired upon from the summit of the cliff.

"Morbleau!" muttered Pequod le Couteau. "It is the troopers!"

"The troopers!" repeated Hudson Smedley.

"Hurrah!" gasped Jimmy.

The rustlers were no longer firing. Five or six of them were on the ground, out of action, and the rest were fleeing back across the valley towards the shacks. They were fully exposed to the

rifles on the cliff-top, and their only thought was for cover.

But the rifle-fire continued, and more than one of the ruffians reeled as he ran, and dropped into the grass.

The voice of Spanish Kit was heard screaming, but his followers did not heed him now. They were thinking only of their own safety.

Jimmy Silver sprang to his feet. There was little danger now. He looked down from the ledge. Seven or eight wounded men lay in the grass, and the rest were disappearing in flight, some of them flinging themselves upon horses hastily caught. Spanish Kit had staggered to his feet, but he sank down again from sheer weakness, groaning.

Jimmy looked up the steep, rocky slope above him. A well-known face looked down. Lovell waved his hand.

"Back up, Jimmy!"

"Hurrah!"

Half a dozen lariats came slithering down the cliff. Clinging to the ropes with the activity of panthers, the troopers clambered and slid down, and one by one reached the ledge, and clambered down to the ground. They did not stop for a word. Headed by Sergeant Kerr—who stayed only to clap the handcuffs on Spanish Kit—they rushed in pursuit of the rustlers across the valley.

Last down the ropes came Lovell and Raby and Newcome, and they stopped on the ledge.

"Here we are again!" yelled Lovell, hugging Jimmy Silver. "What price Rookwood now?"

"Hurrah!"

It was hard for Jimmy Silver to realise that the danger was past, that the enemy were gone, and that his old chums were round him once more. Hudson Smedley was gone; he had rushed on with the troopers to attack the remnant of the rustler gang in their camp.

Pequod le Couteau stood on the ledge, impassive. Lovell, as he turned to see who Jimmy's companion was, recognised him.

"That blessed breed!" exclaimed Lovell in amazement. "What—"

"He saved us," said Jimmy.

"Great pip!"

Pequod looked across the valley, and then up at the cliff. Then he grasped the rope that hung from the summit.

"You're not going!" exclaimed Jimmy.

The half-breed grinned.

"There is a price on my head. When the troopers have finished with the rustlers, if they see me, I am a prisoner, if not a dead man."

"But—" exclaimed Jimmy.

"You could not help me."

The half-breed grasped the rope to climb. Then he paused a moment, and held out his dusky hand to Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy grasped it warmly. Whatever the man was—and would be again—Jimmy could not forget what he had done.

"I—I suppose you'd better go. Good-bye and good luck!" said Jimmy. "But I shan't forget. And if you want a friend, Pequod, you'll find one at the Windy-River Ranch as long as I stay there."

And the half-breed clambered up the rope. Jimmy Silver & Co. watched him pass the summit of the cliff. There he waved a dusky hand and disappeared.

It was a triumphant party that set out from the hidden valley in the late afternoon. Spanish Kit's gang of rustlers had been "wiped out," as the troopers expressed it. Spanish Kit himself was a prisoner, with all, or nearly all, that survived of his gang. Cattle and horses, raided from a dozen ranches, were driven away by the Windy River cow-punchers, and Jimmy Silver, mounted on Blazer, helped in the driving. And there was a real "jamboree" at the Windy River Ranch when the victors arrived there at last.

THE END.

NEXT WEEK:

"The Trickster of the Ranch!"  
By OWEN CONQUEST.

Another thrilling extra-long tale of the Rookwood Chums in the West!