

**TRACKING DOWN THE SMUGGLERS!** Whilst out on the prairie looking for stray steers, Jimmy Silver & Co. come across evidence of the prairie smugglers, and promptly get on the trail!

# Rogues of the Bad Lands!



A GRIPPING EXTRA-LONG COMPLETE STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO. OF ROOKWOOD, DEALING WITH THEIR ADVENTURES OUT WEST.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. Seeking for Strays!

**L**EAVE it to me!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. Jimmy Silver sighed, and Raby and Newcome grinned. It was Arthur Edward's way, when there was a difficulty, to consider that he was the fellow to tackle it. Lovell was blessed with complete confidence in himself. Unnumbered failures had not discouraged him.

There was a difficulty now. The chums of Rookwood had ridden out from the Windy River Ranch early in the sunny morning. It was the busy season at the Alberta ranch, and Hudson Smedley and the "outfit" had plenty to do, for which Jimmy Silver & Co. naturally desired to make themselves useful.

A bunch of "strays" had disappeared—half a dozen valuable steers—and they had to be found. It was possible that the steers had been "run off" by some cattle thief, or by some wandering "bucks" from the Indian reserve. But the probability was that they had wandered from the grasslands round Lone Pine, and were lost somewhere in the "bad lands" north of the ranch. And Jimmy Silver & Co. had

taken on the task of searching for them.

They had been some hours in the saddle that morning, but so far no trace had been discovered of the strays. Jimmy Silver, who had picked up by this time a considerable knowledge of trails and prairie-craft, had not succeeded in finding any "sign." Jimmy's idea was to ride direct to the bad lands, and resume the search there among the ravines and ridges. But Lovell shook his head with an air of superior wisdom.

"Leave it to me," he said. "The fact is, Jimmy, old man, you're too keen on having your own way."

"Oh, my hat!" said Jimmy: "You're a bit obstinate, old fellow, if you don't mind my mentioning it," said Lovell.

"Not at all," said Jimmy sarcastically.

"You see, a chap ought to take a back seat when another chap knows better," explained Lovell. "You see that?"

"Quite!" assented Jimmy. "I'm only waiting for you to take the back seat."

Raby and Newcome chuckled. Lovell frowned.

"Don't be an ass, Jimmy. Now, I don't suppose for a moment that the cattle have wandered into the bad lands. They're on the prairie somewhere."

"They'd have been seen before this," said Raby.

"Oh, there's lots of hollows and gullies and so on where they might be out of sight," said Lovell. "We've simply got to pick up their trail and—and follow it, and—and run them down, and there you are. It's perfectly simple!"

"Simple as Euclid," said Newcome.

"I'll tell you what," said Raby. "Let's take a rest while Lovell picks up

the trail. He's so good at these things that it would be a pity to stop him."

"Good egg!" said Newcome. "I could do with some lunch."

Jimmy Silver laughed. "That's a cinch," he said. "Go it, Lovell. We'll give you an hour to root around, and then we'll ride on to the bad lands and search for them there."

"I don't suppose I shall want an hour, if you fellows won't keep on interrupting and bothering," said Lovell. "Go it, then!"

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome proceeded to camp in the shade of a tree. The hot summer sun was blazing down on the plain, and they were glad of the rest and shade.

They unpacked food from their saddle-bags and lunched, while Arthur Edward Lovell hunted for the trail of the lost cattle. Lovell disappeared from their sight, busy on the quest. The three juniors smiled as they watched him go.

They did not share Lovell's confidence in his powers as a trailer. But they were willing to give him his head, so to speak, while they lunched and rested.

Having finished their meal they stretched themselves in the grass, while their horses cropped the herbage round them contentedly. Overhead the sky was blue and cloudless; westward, the sun glinted on the snow-capped peaks of the Rocky Mountains. Innumerable insects buzzed round them in the grass, and every now and then there was a sharp smack as one of the juniors squashed a mosquito.

Jimmy Silver sat up at last. "The hour's up!" he remarked. "Lovell doesn't seem to have found that trail."

"I suppose it would take him about ten years," remarked Raby thoughtfully.

fully. "We can't wait so long as that."

"Hardly!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "We'd better be getting on, I think. It's practically certain that the strays are in the bad lands, and we want to find them before sundown if we can."

"Hallo, here he comes!"

"Looks as if he's found something, too," said Newcome.

Arthur Edward Lovell was coming back to the camp at a gallop. Jimmy Silver & Co. rose from the grass to meet him. They observed that Arthur Edward was looking jubilant. Evidently he had returned to report a success.

"Got it?" asked Raby, as Lovell jumped down from his horse.

"Yes."

"Great pip!"

"I've found the trail," said Lovell carelessly. "I think I told you fellows that I should."

"You did!" said Jimmy, with a nod.

"Well, you see, then—"

"We don't see the trail yet."

"You will when I've had a snack," said Lovell. "Hand out some of the grub. I'm hungry. I've picked up the trail of one of the strays, but, of course, one will lead us to the others. They generally keep together, I believe."

"And where's the trail?"

"Half a mile from here," said Lovell. "I'll show you. I can eat while we're riding. Come on!"

The juniors remounted their horses and followed Arthur Edward Lovell across the plain. Jimmy Silver was wondering whether Lovell really had found the desired trail. There was, as he privately remarked to Raby, such a thing as fool's luck.

"Here you are!" exclaimed Lovell triumphantly, slipping from his saddle at last. "Here it is, plain as a turnpike! What do you think now, Jimmy Silver?"

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### On the Trail!

**J**IMMY SILVER dismounted from Blazer and examined the trail.

There was no doubt that it was a trail, and a clearly-marked one, and it looked fresh. It ran from south-east to north-west—the direction, as Jimmy noted, from the Windy River Ranch to the bad lands. Undoubtedly it was a fresh trail, easy to follow, and perhaps Lovell had cause to feel triumphant. There was only one detail that had escaped Arthur Edward's eagle eye; but it did not escape Jimmy's. The trail was that of a horse—not of a steer.

Lovell had not observed that trifling detail. As the juniors were looking for steers, not for horses, the trail was not of much use, in Jimmy's estimation. He smiled.

"Well, isn't it a trail?" demanded Lovell.

"No doubt about that!" assented Jimmy Silver.

"And I found it," said Lovell.

"You did, old chap."

"If we'd pushed on to the bad lands, as you wanted us to, we should have missed this," said Lovell.

"We should!" agreed Jimmy.

"It leads towards the bad lands," said Lovell. "But the steer can't be as far as that yet—the trail's so fresh."

"The steer?" said Jimmy.

"The stray that made this trail, I mean."

Jimmy smiled again. Raby and Newcome had not dismounted. They were leaving the leadership to Jimmy Silver.

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They saw the trail, but from the saddle they did not notice its special characteristics.

"Well, let's get on," said Lovell, remounting. "We can follow this steer up, and he's pretty certain to lead us to the whole bunch. What are you grinning at, Jimmy?"

"Was I grinning?"

"Yes, you ass! What's the joke?"

"You are, old fellow."

"Look here!" bawled Lovell. "Are we following this trail or not, now I've found it?"

"Certainly!"

"Then come on, fathhead!"

"Right you are!"

Jimmy Silver jumped on Blazer again, and the four youthful cowboys rode off. Lovell in the lead, keeping ahead with his eyes on the trail. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome rode behind him abreast. Raby and Newcome eyed Jimmy Silver inquiringly from either side.

"Is the trail all right?" asked Raby.

"That depends," answered Jimmy cheerfully. "If we're looking for a horseman who rode away from the ranch this morning to join Inspector Steel in the bad lands we're all right."

"A—horseman?" ejaculated Newcome. "Is that a gee-gee's trail?"

"Just that!"

"That ass Lovell—"

"What the thump are we following it for, then, if it isn't the trail we want?" demanded Raby.

"It's all right," said Jimmy. "My idea was to make for the bad lands, and this trail leads us right there, so we may as well follow it as not. But we shan't come up with a stray steer. We shall come up with Trooper Bright, of the Canadian Mounted Police, if anybody."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It will be quite a pleasant surprise for Lovell," said Jimmy. "Only I hope he won't rope in Mr. Bright with his lasso before he discovers that he's not a stray steer."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Raby and Newcome roared, and Lovell looked round suspiciously. He had not heard the talk, but he heard the roar of laughter.

"What's biting you fellows?" he snapped.

"Only mosquitoes," said Jimmy Silver blandly. "Keep going, Lovell. We're following our leader, you know."

Lovell snorted, and rode on ahead again. His three comrades followed him cheerfully. They were going the way they wanted to go, and it did not matter whether there was a false trail under their horses' hoofs or not.

The trail was so plain in the thick grass that there was no mistaking it, and Lovell put his horse to the gallop. The Co. galloped after him contentedly.

Jimmy Silver kept his eyes on the prairie ahead, expecting to see, sooner or later, the stalwart uniformed figure of Trooper Bright, of the Canadian Mounted Police. Lovell was watching the plain for a steer, which he was not so likely to behold.

But no moving figure broke the expanse of rolling plain. The juniors drew nearer at a gallop to the bad lands, the stretch of broken, stony country that lay between the plains and the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. The herbage grew sparser under the horses' hoofs, and sand and rocks cropped out of the soil. The ground was broken up into rocky ridges and gullies, and the galloping hoofs clinked on loose stones.

Lovell reined in his horse. The trail, which he had followed for miles by this time, was lost on the hard soil.

"Stopping?" asked Jimmy Silver, reining in Blazer as Lovell wheeled back.

"You can see the trail's lost!" snapped Lovell. "I shall have to look for sign."

Jimmy Silver did not answer. His glance was turned to the sky. Overhead, a short distance in advance, a buzzard was wheeling on its pinions in the blue. It shot down suddenly, and disappeared into a rocky gully.

From the westward came sailing another of the obscene birds of prey, and from the east another. Both of them wheeled round over the gully, and shot down into it with the speed of arrows.

Jimmy Silver's face was grave now.

He knew that the settling of a buzzard meant—that some dead carcass lay below, hidden by the rocks. From near and far the hideous birds were gathering to the feast.

"Come on!" said Jimmy hurriedly.

"I haven't found the trail yet."

"Never mind the trail! Come on!"

"Look here—" roared Lovell.

"Don't you see the buzzards, you ass?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver impatiently. "There's something, or somebody, dead in the bad lands ahead of us. Come on, I tell you!"

He rode on at a gallop, giving Arthur Edward Lovell no further heed. There was a fear in his heart that some mischance had happened to Trooper Bright, who had ridden away from the ranch so cheerily that morning.

Lovell stared after him.

"Look here, you fellows—" he said.

"Oh, come on, old chap, and give your chin a rest!" said Raby.

"It's possible that that steer has pegged out," said Lovell. "The buzzards would nose it out at once, of course. But I'd rather look for sign if—"

"Look for it and be blowed!" said Newcome.

Raby and Newcome galloped on after Jimmy Silver, and Lovell, after expressing his feelings in an expressive snort, rode after them. Jimmy Silver had put Blazer to a gallop, and the horse's hoofs were rattling and clattering at a great rate over stony soil. Buzzard after buzzard was now dropping into the gully ahead, and Jimmy could hear the discordant cries of the obscene birds. He rode breathlessly into the rocky gully, and came on the flock of birds of prey, gathered in clamorous quarrel over the carcass of a horse.

Jimmy Silver sprang down, and lashed round with his riding-whip, and the buzzards, with savage and raucous cries, scattered under his attack, reluctantly leaving their prey. They settled on rocks near at hand, fearful to venture nearer, but watching with greedy eyes.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### The Redskins!

**L**OVELL and his companions came up clattering, and jumped from their horses. Jimmy was bending over the dead animal lying on the rocky ground. There was a bullet hole in the head of the dead horse, and already the carcass had been torn by the beaks of the birds of prey. Jimmy recognised the horse—a black, with white patches, which Trooper Bright had ridden that morning from the ranch. But, to his great relief, there was no sign of the trooper himself at hand. It was only the body of a

horse, not of a man, that the buzzards had been clamouring over.

"What—what's this?" exclaimed Lovell, staring at the dead horse. It was a steer that he had expected to find there.

"Bright's horse," said Jimmy shortly. "Oh!" said Lovell. "Bright's taken a tumble, then—"

"It's been shot through the head."

"Phew! But where's the steer?"

"The what?"

"The steer whose trail we've been following all this time."

"We've been following this horse's trail, you ass!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver impatiently.

Lovell jumped.

"This—this horse?"

"Yes, fathead! Now give us a rest." Arthur Edward Lovell blinked at the slain horse, and blinked at Jimmy Silver. The expression on his face would have made his chums chortle at any other time. But the discovery of Trooper Bright's horse, shot dead, made them too serious to think about Lovell and his egregious mistakes. An enemy's hand had shot the horse down; and what had happened to the trooper?

"Then—then it was a horse's trail all the time?" stuttered Lovell, at last. But nobody heeded Lovell.

He blushed unseen, as it were.

Jimmy Silver looked about him with keen eyes. The stray cattle of which the juniors were in search were forgotten now. The fate of the trooper was a more important matter.

Close at hand, Jimmy found Trooper Bright's carbine. It had been smashed by a heavy blow on a rock, and tossed into a crevice. The lock was in fragments.

Jimmy picked it up.

"That was done to make it useless, and it was thrown away," he said. "Bright never did it, of course. He's been collared and disarmed. He was ambushed as he was riding through this gully, it's pretty clear, and his horse shot down from cover. Then they collared him before he could handle his carbine."

"They—who?" said Newcome.

Jimmy's answer was direct.

"The bootleggers!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Lovell.

"It's lucky that Lovell hit on that trail, after all," said Jimmy quietly.

"It's no use us looking for the stray steers; but never mind the steers now. We've got to help Trooper Bright out of a scrape—that's our duty. Hudson Smedley won't mind our letting the steers slide, for that."

"You—you think he's still alive?" asked Raby.

"I'm sure of it. They could have shot him down as easily as shooting his horse; but they wouldn't have troubled to take the body away."

"Oh!" gasped Lovell.

"He's a prisoner," went on Jimmy Silver. "I dare say he was knocked out by falling on the rocks when his horse went down, and was collared without a fight. It's the bootleggers, of course—Jude Bunker and Lebel, the half-breed—and perhaps more of the gang. This is only a short distance from the spot where their wagon was run down, and you know that Inspector Steel stayed in the bad lands to watch them; he believed that they had hidden their cargo of liquor before the wagon was overtaken. He was after the smuggled liquor. Trooper Bright came on here to join him."

"And instead of joining him, he fell in with the bootleggers?" said Newcome.

"That's it. And they've got him."

"Then they've very likely got the inspector, too."

"I shouldn't wonder. He was watching them, to find out where they had hidden the liquor; and very likely they guessed, and were watching him, too."

Raby looked round at the wild, solitary rocks, with clumps of pine and fir and straggling bush. Save for the croaking of the buzzards, the bad lands were silent, in the blaze of the sun. But the juniors realised that every boulder, every patch of bush, might give cover to a hidden, watching enemy.

"Blessed if I know how we're going to help them!" said Raby. "If we ride back to the ranch for help, we shan't get there before dark—"

"No time for that," said Jimmy Silver decidedly. "It's what we can do ourselves that counts."


"They've got hold of Trooper Bright and Inspector Steel," said Lovell. "Well, all we've got to do is to follow up their trail."

"It's not easy to pick up sign on these rocks."

"Leave it to me."

"What?"

**NEXT  
WEEK:—**



**"REDS ON THE  
WAR-PATH!"**

**By Owen Conquest.**

**Another Topping Tale of  
the Rookwood Chums  
out West.**

"Leave it to me," said Lovell, while his comrades stared at him almost dazedly. "You know how good I am at a trail. I'll manage it all right."

"Well, my word!" murmured Newcome.

Evidently Arthur Edward was not discouraged by failure. Having picked up a horse's trail in mistake for that of a stray steer, he was prepared to distinguish himself again—doubtless with results equally good.

"Lovell, old man," said Jimmy, after a pause, "be good, and chuck it. This is a serious matter."

"That's why you'd better leave it to me," explained Lovell.

"For goodness' sake, old fellow, dry up!" said Jimmy, almost losing patience at last.

"Look here, Jimmy Silver—"

"Oh, rats!"

Leaving Lovell in a somewhat wrathful and excited frame of mind, Jimmy Silver proceeded to make his own investigations. At Rookwood, Jimmy had been one of the best of the Boy Scouts, and he had picked up a great deal of practical knowledge from the cowboys since he had been on the

Windy River Ranch. He needed it all now, if he was to help the victims of the liquor smugglers. Somewhere in the bad lands—probably near at hand—were Jude Bunker and the breed, with the cargo of liquor they were smuggling to the Redskins in the Blood Indian reserve farther north. And probably in the hands of the bootleggers were Trooper Bright and Inspector Steel, of the Canadian Mounted Police. Jimmy Silver hunted for sign which would indicate in what direction Trooper Bright had been taken by his captors. From the fact that the birds of prey had not yet devoured the slain horse, he could calculate that it was not long since the attack on the trooper had been made; so the trail, if any, should have been fresh.

But "sign" was difficult to find on hard rocks, and for a long time Jimmy Silver hunted in vain. At length, at a little distance up the gully, he came on a fragment of cloth caught on a bush, with traces where two men at least—perhaps three—had tramped through. He called back to his chums: "This way!"

Beyond the bushes were rocks again, with no trace of a trail. But Jimmy Silver was hopeful now.

"They went in this direction, at least," he said.

"I don't feel so jolly sure of that," said Lovell, with a shake of the head.

"Well, we'll try this direction, anyhow," said Jimmy Silver mildly.

And the four juniors rode on up the gully, keeping their eyes well open on all sides. They had covered about half a mile, when Jimmy suddenly pulled in his horse.

"More sign?" asked Lovell sarcastically.

"Stop!" said Jimmy. "Listen!"

From somewhere ahead came a rumbling sound, echoing through the rocky ravines and gullies of the bad lands.

"Hoofs," said Jimmy, "and at least twenty horses. I should say."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Lovell.

"There's only two of the bootleggers; and even if they've got a gang about here, there wouldn't be twenty of the rotters."

"They're smuggling the liquor to the Blood Indians," said Jimmy. "I remember the inspector said that they wouldn't be likely to drive the wagon openly to the reservation. It's more likely that a party of the Redskins would come to meet them here in the bad lands, and take the liquor away."

"Oh, you think they're Redskins—"

"I'm pretty sure of it."

"Well, they won't hurt us," said Lovell. "The Indians in Alberta are all peaceful."

"Not if we came between them and smuggled fire-water," said Jimmy Silver quietly.

"Oh!" said Lovell.

Jimmy Silver bent his head and listened intently. The rocks were so full of echoes that it was difficult to "place" the sound of the trampling hoofs—growing louder every moment now. Beyond the gully that the juniors were following a rocky ledge rose against the blue sky, running north and south. As the trampling grew clearer, Jimmy decided that the unseen horsemen were riding from the north, the rocky ridge hiding them from the sight of the juniors.

He signed to his chums to remain where they were—a sign rather unwillingly heeded by Lovell—and crept forward on foot. In a cleft of the rocks

a tall pine-tree grew, and Jimmy Silver clambered actively up the tree to a height that enabled him to look over the ridge. He needed only one glance. That glance showed him a troop of Red Indians riding at a trot, twenty or twenty-five in number. They were not in war-paint, and so evidently not upon the warpath, and at any other time Jimmy Silver would not have hesitated to let the bucks see him; but he knew now that they were a party of the Bloods on their way to meet the bootleggers. And to come between a Redskin and his fire-water was about as safe as to come between a panther and his prey.

Jimmy slid back down the tree and rejoined his chums. The trampling of the Redskins' horses grew fainter beyond the ridge to the southward.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### In Ruthless Hands!

"I GUESS we're all hunky now."

Jude Bunker, the bony, lantern-jawed bootlegger, spoke in tones of satisfaction. His companion, the sullen, savage half-breed, nodded without speaking.

Jude Bunker stood under a clump of trees in the bad lands, looking to the north. The breed was seated on a rock near at hand, chewing tobacco.

Behind the trees was a mass of irregularly-piled rocks, in which a fissure opened. Beyond the fissure, which was nearly concealed by bush, was a cave, and in the cave was stacked the contraband cargo of the bootleggers.

On the ground, bound hand and foot, lay two men, whom Jimmy Silver & Co. would have recognised as Inspector Steel and Trooper Bright, of the Canadian Mounted Police.

"All hunky and O.K.," continued Jude Bunker, blowing out a cloud of smoke from his pipe. "Leaping Elk will be here before sundown with his bucks, Lebel."

The half-breed nodded again.

"And then, I guess, we're going to clear," said Bunker. "The sooner we vamoose the ranch, old pard, the better for our health. I guess there might be some more M.P.'s nosing along into the bad lands when Mr. Steel don't turn up at Mosquito agin."

Lebel showed his teeth, brown with tobacco.

"And leave them to tell what has happened?" he asked, jerking a dusky thumb towards the two prisoners. "Do you think we should be safe in Canada afterwards?"

"I guess not," said Bunker thoughtfully, staring at the two prisoners.

"I tell you," said the half-breed, "they shall not live to hunt us down. We fooled them before, but they have seen the fire-water now, and their word is good enough to send us to prison. Are you thinking of getting over the border into the States and throwing up the game, then?"

Bunker shook his head.

"I guess not," he answered. "Bootlegging among the Reds is a paying game, breed, and I guess I ain't quitting."

Lebel rose from the boulder and drew a knife from his belt. There was no mercy in his dark, savage face as he stepped towards the prisoners.

"Then it is settled," he said. "If you are afraid to look on it, Jude Bunker, turn your back."

A revolver glittered in the hand of the bootlegger.

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"Put up that knife, breed!"

He rapped out the order sharply.

Lebel swung round towards him, his black eyes glinting, the knife clutched in his hand.

"I tell you—" he hissed.

"Put it up or, by gum, I'll drop you in your tracks!" shouted Bunker angrily.

Suddenly the breed drove the knife back into the case in his belt.

"But they shall not live to betray us, all the same," he said sullenly.

"I guess, breed, that it's a serious matter to spill the juice of the Canadian Mounted Police," said Jude Bunker coolly. "Ain't that so, inspector?"

"I guess you'll find it so if you go that far," answered Inspector Steel quietly.

"Jest so," assented Bunker. "Why, it's enough to bring all the Mounted Police in the North-West scurrying hyer to the bad lands to find out what's happened, and to get hold of Jude Bunker. What?"

"Sure!" said Steel.

"That breed is jest an Indian savage, Mr. Steel," said Bunker, taking a seat on a rock near the prisoners and regarding them while he smoked and talked. "He's allers too mighty spry with that sticker of his. Why, what would our necks be worth, Mr. Steel, if you was found cut up—or if you wasn't found at all, for that matter?"

"Very little, I guess."

"Prezactly!" assented Bunker. "All the same, I guess that at this blessed minute you're thinking of getting your men from Mosquito and rounding us up."

"Correct!" said the Canadian inspector calmly.

"You wouldn't think of letting us rip, not if we offered you a stake in the game?" said Bunker.

"Not if you offered me all the profits of your rascality ten times over," said Steel.

"Jest so," assented Bunker. "Don't I know you. You can't bribe the Canadian Mounted, and if you do stick one, as that breed wants to do, you have the whole b'iling on your trail, and they won't let up this side of Tophet, I guess. I reckon we can hand over the fire-water to Leaping Elk and his bucks, inspector, and finger the dust they're handing out for it, and light out for the States before you can get your galoots arter us. But that means keeping clear of Canada and bootlegging arter, and that ain't our game, Mr. Steel."

The inspector did not answer. Trooper Bright watched the bootlegger's thin, hard face in silence. Neither of the Canadians had any hope of escaping alive from the hands of the bootleggers, and they wondered why Bunker had restrained the hand of the savage half-breed.

"You shouldn't have butted in, Mr. Steel," said Bunker. "If you'd gone back arter finding the wagon empty you'd have been safe. You had to hang on and watch us, and nose out where we'd hid the liquor. You've asked for it, Mr. Steel, and if you get it you've got yourself to thank. If we hadn't roped you in you'd have run us in, you would, and the same with your man, hyer, what dropped into our hands as obligingly as possible."

Trooper Bright knitted his brows.

"You're goin' back to Mosquito," went on Jude Bunker. "That's where you're goin'—back to Mosquito."

The breed uttered a fierce exclamation.

"Can it, man, can it!" said Bunker impatiently. "I tell you your sticker

ain't wanted. They're going back to Mosquito by way of Windy River."

Lebel stared at him.

"I guess accidents will happen in the bad lands, even to an inspector of the Canadian Police," said Bunker, with a savage grin. "We ain't fur, hyer, from the head-waters of the Windy, inspector. When you float down as far as Mosquito they'll fish you out, and I reckon they'll figure it out that you tumbled into the water. Cause why, there won't be a mark on you to tell different."

Steel drew a deep, hard breath, and Trooper Bright started. The breed burst into a harsh chuckle.

"Savvy now?" asked Bunker, grinning at his companion in crime.

The breed nodded.

"Plenty savvy. Good!"

"I guess a good many galoots, riding careless in the bad lands, have taken a tumble," remarked Jude Bunker, reflectively. "I guess it ain't nothing new for a careless galoot to pitch into a river in the bad lands and get drowned. And who's to guess that you was held under water with your hands tied till you was a gone coon, and then untied and set floating? I ask you that, Mr. Steel."

Steel did not speak. He comprehended, now, the dastardly scheme of the bootlegger for covering up his tracks. If either the inspector or the trooper escaped alive Jude Bunker's occupation was gone, as a bootlegger—and the profits of the illicit liquor trade with the Indians were too great to be relinquished. And probably it was not the first time that his rascally trade had driven the bootlegger to desperate deeds.

Two dead men would be floating in the Windy River, with nothing to show that they had met with violence. Even before the bodies were found Jude Bunker and his associate would be gone. And even if foul play was suspected there would be little to fix suspicion on Bunker; but it was not likely that his dastardly scheme would even be suspected. The bodies would not be the first that had been "found drowned" in the waters of the Windy River.

The sound of hoofbeats came echoing among the rocks, and Jude Bunker rose to his feet.

"The Injuns, I guess!"

A few minutes later Leaping Elk and his band of braves came in sight. The crowd of Blood Indians came sweeping up to the rendezvous and halted. Leaping Elk alighted from his shaggy horse and saluted Jude Bunker gravely and courteously. It was evident that they were old acquaintances.

"The Leaping Elk is glad to see his white brother," said the Blood, in English, and in the stately fashion of an Indian chief.

"And I guess I'm glad to see you, chief," said Jude Bunker, stepping out from the trees. "More'n glad, I guess. I ain't keen on hanging on in this part of the country."

"My white brother has brought the fire-water?" said Leaping Elk, with an eagerness that could not be wholly hidden under the habitual gravity of a Redskin.

"Sure! I guess we're ready to trade," said Bunker.

"The Leaping Elk is glad."

Some of the Redskins glanced curiously at the two bound men lying under the trees, but they made no comment. For a considerable time Jude Bunker and Leaping Elk were engaged in talk, apparently settling the details of their "trade." Fur and other articles were unloaded from the Indian ponies, with little buckskin bags of gold-dust, painfully sought in the beds of mountain

streams by the Indians, to be exchanged for the potent fire-water which they loved, and which the wise laws of Canada forbade them to taste. For the Redskin, howsoever peaceable and law-abiding in these latter days, is restored at once to all the irresponsible ferocity of his savage ancestors once the fiery spirit mounts to his brain. Jude Bunker's consignment of fire-water, if once landed safely in the Indian reserve,

"You galoots ready to mosey on?" asked Jude Bunker, with ferocious good-humour.

The two men were lifted from the ground and placed on a couple of horses. Jude Bunker led one, and the half-breed the other, and they moved away, following the course of a ravine which led towards the upper waters of the Windy River, at the distance of a quarter of a mile. From the bad lands the Windy River, with many a rush of rapids in its course, flowed down long miles to the plains, past the grass lands of the Windy River Ranch, and on to the town of Mosquito, and on beyond Mosquito to the great Red Deer River. Somewhere in its turbid course—doubtless at Mosquito, where there was a ford—the bodies would be found, sooner or later—at all events, they would be found. There was no hope in the hearts of the two hapless Canadians as the bootleggers led the horses away towards the river.

Silver. "But we can't chip in now. Those Redskins wouldn't make more than a mouthful of us. Keep in cover."

The Rookwood juniors watched. The Redskins were evidently making preparations for departure.

They started at last, and came riding up the ravine, directly towards the spot where the juniors stood. Lovell uttered a startled exclamation.

"They're coming this way, Jimmy."

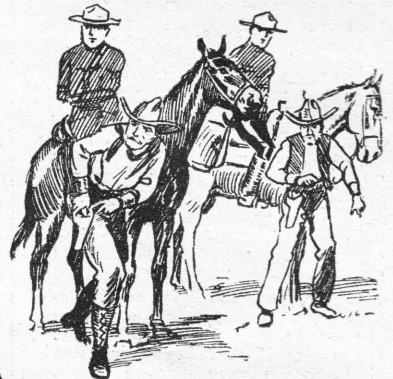
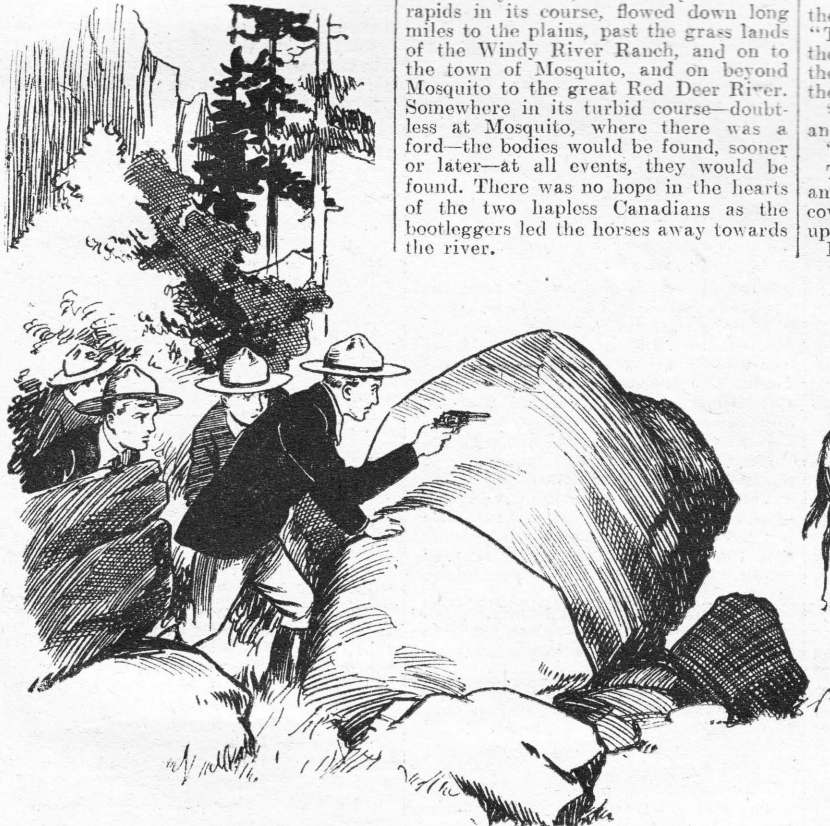
"Naturally. They're going back to the reserve," said Jimmy Silver. "They've got the fire-water now, and they're going home with it. When they've gone we may get a chance at the bootleggers."

"If the Redskins don't drop on us and scalp us!" suggested Lovell.

"Keep in cover, ass!"

The juniors backed their horses among the rocks, and crouched in cover as the Redskin party came riding up the ravine.

Leaping Elk and his braves rode by



**JIMMY SILVER TO THE RESCUE!** Jimmy Silver suddenly rose into view, revolver in hand, the barrel levelled at the bootleggers. "Hands up!" he rapped out. There was a yell of surprise from the bootleggers as they stared in blank astonishment at the Rookwooders. (See Chapter 5.)

meant serious trouble with the Redskins in the Windy River section—a circumstance which did not trouble the hardened trafficker in poison in the least.

The bootleggers' wagon was at hand, and the larger articles were stacked in it—the gold-dust being stacked by Jude in his own pockets. Then the cases of liquor were carried out of the cave, and loaded on the Indian ponies.

That transaction completed, Leaping Elk bade a grave adieu to his white brother, and the Bloods rode away to the northward in a state of great delight. That night, and on the morrow, there were to be great times in the Blood reservation—with, in all probability, a wild outbreak in bloodshed to follow.

Jude Bunker grinned a satisfied grin. "I guess we're all hunky, breed," he said. "I calculate that we only want two more trips like this to set up as pesky millionaires in the States, with a mansion on Fifth Avenue, and founding free libraries for common folk." He chuckled. "We're starting in the wagon at sundown, and afore then we've got to say good-bye to our friends hyer."

"The sooner the better," growled the breed.

#### THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

##### Turning the Tables!

"**T**HERE they are!" Keeping in the cover of the rocks, Jimmy Silver pointed.

"The Redskins——" said

Lovell.

"And the bootleggers!" added Raby.

From the rocks the Rookwood juniors looked down on the scene. Jimmy Silver & Co. had followed on the track of the Redskin riders. They had no doubt that the Blood Indians were on their way to meet the liquor smugglers, and so they had followed, keeping at a safe distance behind the Redskins.

Now they were looking down on the scene, distant, but plain to the view in the clear Alberta air. They watched the two bootleggers, whom they recognised at once, in talk with the Indians, and saw the cases of liquor loaded on the horses.

"The awful rotters," said Raby. "No doubt now that they're smuggling fire-water to the Indians."

"I don't see anything of Bright," said Lovell.

"It's pretty certain that the bootleggers have got him," said Jimmy

with a thunder of hoofs, never dreaming that four anxious schoolboys were crouching in the rocks on the rugged side of the ravine, waiting with beating hearts for them to pass.

The Blood Indians clattered by, and turned along the bank of the Windy River and disappeared.

The clattering hoofbeats died away in the distance, and Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath of relief.

"Thank goodness they're gone," he said.

"Yes, rather," said Raby. "But what's the game now, Jimmy?"

"I think——" began Lovell.

"Never mind what you think, old chap," said Raby affably. "Let's hear what Jimmy thinks."

"Look here!" snorted Lovell. "My idea is that Jimmy is on the wrong track. There's the bootleggers, but I don't believe that Trooper Bright is there, and——"

Jimmy caught his arm.

"Look!" he said quietly.

"Oh!" ejaculated Lovell.

Jude Bunker and Lebel, the half-breed, appeared from the trees, with the two prisoners in their grasp, and

placed them on the horses. Even at that distance, in the clear light, the chums of Rookwood could recognise the two bound men.

"Trooper Bright and Inspector Steel," said Jimmy Silver. "Do you think they're there now, Lovell?"

"H'm!" said Lovell, taken quite aback.

"What on earth are they up to?" asked Newcome, puzzled. "They're taking them somewhere. They're coming this way, by Jove!"

Jimmy Silver looked perplexed. "They're not breaking camp," he said. "You can see they're leaving the wagon—there it is, backed up near the trees. They're taking the prisoners away somewhere."

"To the Indian reserve, perhaps," said Raby.

Jimmy shook his head. "If they were handing them over to the Indians, they'd have done it before the Redskins left, I should think," he answered. "But certainly they're going in the same direction."

"Blessed if I catch on!" said Lovell.

"Anyhow, they're coming this way, and the Redskins are gone," said Jimmy Silver. "I fancy this is where we chip in."

"You've got your revolver?" asked Lovell.

"Yes, rather!"

"Hand it to me, then," said Lovell quickly. "I'm unarmed, you know. You can get hold of a rock."

"Fathead!"

"Look here, Jimmy Silver—"

"Dry up, old chap!" Jimmy Silver looked out from the cover of the rocks, taking his revolver from his hip-pocket as he did so.

Up the middle of the ravine Bunker and the breed were leading the laden horses. Their way led towards the river; but unless they were following the Bloods to the Indian reservation, the juniors could not guess what their destination was. But the band of Redskins were out of sight and out of hearing now, and it was clear that if an attempt was to be made to rescue the prisoners, now or never was the time.

His comrades were only armed with riding-whips. Both the bootleggers were armed, and a struggle was likely to be a desperate one.

The surprise would be on the side of the Rookwood juniors, however, for it was plain that Jude Bunker had not the remotest suspicion that enemies were at hand in the lonely wilderness of the bad lands.

"We've got to tackle them," said Jimmy Silver, in a low voice. "I don't know what their game is now; but this is our only chance. If we let them pass, we may as well chuck up."

"We're ready!" muttered Raby, his grasp closing on a heavy, jagged chunk of rock.

"You give the word, Jimmy," said Newcome quietly; and he also grasped a fragment of rock to use as a weapon.

Lovell had his riding-whip in hand. Jimmy Silver peered out from the screening rocks and bushes. The bootleggers, leading the horses, were almost abreast of the spot where the juniors crouched in cover. In the distance the murmur could be heard of the Windy River, rushing down in a torrent to the lower plains.

Jimmy set his lips. "I could pot both the brutes from cover before they knew what had hit them!" he muttered. "Only—only I can't do it. I'll give them a chance!"

He waited a few moments more. THE POPULAR.—No. 450.

Then suddenly he rose into full view, revolver in hand, the barrel levelled at the bootleggers.

"Hands up!" rapped out Jimmy Silver.

There was a yell of surprise from the bootleggers. They stared in blank astonishment at the Rookwood juniors. "Them kids agin!" gasped Jude Bunker.

"Hands up!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "I guess not!" snarled the bootlegger. He was already grasping at a revolver in his belt. Jimmy Silver did not hesitate longer. Life was at stake now. Crack!

The ring of the revolver was followed by a fearful yell from Jude Bunker. He rolled over, his own weapon clattering on the rocky ground.

Jimmy Silver dropped back into cover only just in time. There was a six-shooter in the half-breed's hand now, and the rascal fired point-blank. The bullet whizzed over Jimmy Silver's head as he dropped back.

Through an opening in the bush that screened him Jimmy Silver fired again.

The half-breed fired at the same moment into the bush, and the bullet tore away the leaves and almost grazed Jimmy's cheek, so close did it come. But Jimmy Silver's bullet had not missed.

With a groan the breed dropped. He raised himself on one knee, his dusky face drawn and white, and, with a terrible effort, took aim and fired again. But the bullet flew wide, spattering on the rocks a dozen yards away; and the wounded breed, his strength exhausted, sank back on the ground, the revolver falling from his hand.

"Come on!" muttered Jimmy.

He ran forward, his revolver ready for another shot if it was needed. But it was not needed.

The half-breed was unconscious, and Jude Bunker was groaning and writhing in the agony of a broken arm.

"We seem to be dead in this act!" growled Lovell.

The conflict was over. The two startled horses were rearing and whinnying. Jimmy Silver and Raby caught at their bridles, and the two bound men were lifted off and lowered to the ground.

Lovell opened his knife and cut through the bonds that fastened their limbs.

"All serene, Mr. Steel!" he grinned. The inspector rose rather painfully to his feet. The bonds had been upon his muscular limbs a long time, and he was

stiff and numbed. But his bronzed face was full of satisfaction.

"I guess you kids take the cake!" said Trooper Bright. "I reckon we'd be glad of you 'uns in the Canadian Mounted, for a fact!"

"I guess so," said the inspector, with a smile. "Better tie the hands of those scallywags, Silver, before they can do any more harm."

"Right-ho!" said Jimmy. He followed the inspector's directions, while Mr. Steel chafed his numbed limbs. The half-breed's dark eyes opened, and he glared at his captors like a savage animal caught in the toils, but he spoke no word. Jude Bunker was still groaning dismally.

"I guess it's a clean rope-in," said the inspector. He stepped towards Bunker and examined his wound, the bootlegger glaring at him as he groaned. "You've slipped up on it this time, you see, Bunker. There won't be anybody found floating in the Windy River at Mosquito Ford after all."

Bunker only groaned. His game was up, with a vengeance, and he was in despair.

"What's that?" asked Jimmy Silver. The inspector smiled grimly.

"I guess you've saved our lives," he answered.

"You don't mean—"

"That was the game—to put us under water, and send us floating down the Windy River," said Mr. Steel. "And I guess the game would have been played out to a finish if you 'uns hadn't blown in—I can't guess how."

"The awful villains!" exclaimed Jimmy, aghast. "We couldn't guess what their game was, but—"

"Well, that was the game; but they've slipped up on it, thanks to you," said Inspector Steel. "It's unucky that the fire-water has been handed over to the Bloods; but I guess we're pretty pleased to save our lives!"

"But how the thunder—"

"We were looking for strays from the ranch," explained Jimmy Silver, with a smile. "Then Lovell came on Mr. Bright's trail, and we followed on, and so—"

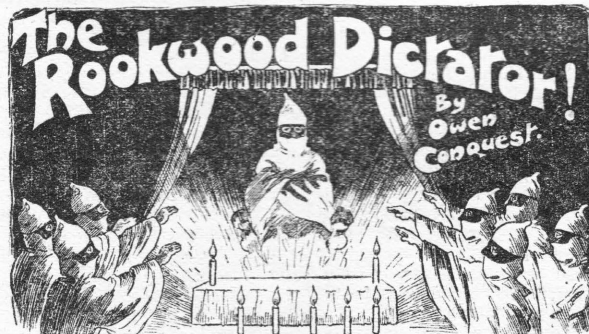
"I guess I'm glad you did," said the inspector. "But why did you follow Bright's trail?"

Lovell blushed. His comrades grinned. They could not help it.

"That was Lovell's idea," explained Raby, with a chuckle. "Lovell thought it was the trail of a stray steer!"

(Continued on page 27.)

## DON'T MISS THIS POWERFUL STORY.



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**ROGUES OF THE BAD LANDS!**

(Continued from page 16.)

"Eh? Bright wasn't riding a cow, I suppose?" exclaimed the inspector in astonishment.

"Ha, ha! No. But Lovell doesn't mind a little thing like that when he's picking up a trail—do you, old man?"

"Oh, rats!" growled Lovell, whose face was crimson. "Anyhow, it's jolly lucky we did follow the trail, as it turns out, even if I did take it for a cattle-trail."

"I guess there's no doubt about that," said Inspector Steel, pouring oil on the troubled waters, as it were. "Whatever brought you 'uns here, you came in mighty useful. I guess we two would have been gone coons by this time else. Now, I reckon we'll borrow that wagon to get these two scoundrels to Mosquito, where we can get a doctor to them."

The two wounded men were put upon the horses, and led back to the bootleggers' camp. Save for the dismal groans of Jude Bunker, they were silent. Their defeat was overwhelming. They were in the hands of justice, to meet a proved charge of fire-water smuggling, as well as to answer for their attack on the inspector and

the trooper of the Canadian Mounted Police. The bootleggers' game was up, in the Windy River section of Alberta, with a vengeance.

Under the setting sun the wagon rumbled away over the rocky soil of the bad lands, with Trooper Bright driving, and the inspector sitting inside, watching two wounded men, his prisoners. Four cheerful youths rode by the wagon, a triumphant escort. The stray cattle from the Windy River Ranch were still astray; but Jimmy Silver & Co. gave them no thought now; and they knew that Hudson Smedley would not give them a thought when he learned that the bootleggers had been rounded up.

The sun disappeared, and the moon came up, and the wagon still rumbled on, over grassy plains now, heading for the Windy River Ranch, on the way to Mosquito town. It was a late hour in the night—or, rather, early in the morning—when the ranch was reached, and the Windy River cowpunchers turned out of the bunkhouse, and Baldy, the cook, out of the cookhouse, and Hudson Smedley came down, half-dressed, to learn what was "on." And when they learned there was a buzz of excitement and jubilation.

"Got the scallywags," said Pete Peters, staring into the wagon. "Got 'em, by gum! You kids have anything to do with it?"

"Oh, we just looked on!" said Jimmy Silver, with a smile.

"You haven't found the strays?" "Nunno! We've been so busy rounding up bootleggers," said Jimmy laughing. "We'll look for the strays again to-morrow."

And as the wagon rumbled on its way to Mosquito, the Fistical Four of Rookwood went into the ranch and went to bed. By dawn the bootleggers were safe in the timber calabooze at Mosquito, with Doc Jones to look after their wounds. And Jimmy Silver was glad to hear, later, that they were in no danger, but would be fit to stand their trial at Calgary in a couple of weeks.

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not go out to hunt for the "strays" the next day. Hudson Smedley bade them not to ride out of sight of the ranch-house. The news that the cargo of fire-water had reached the Indian reserve made the rancher very grave.

"I guess that means trouble with the bucks," he told the juniors. "Ten to one they'll break out of the reserve hunting for trouble. You keep to the ranch."

And Jimmy Silver & Co. wondered whether to their other experiences of the Canadian West was to be added the rarer experience of seeing Red Indians on the warpath. They were soon to know.

THE END.

(You'll all enjoy "Reds on the Warpath!"—next week's splendid story of the Rookwood chums out West.)

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