

Just Starting!



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# The BOYS' FRIEND 1 1/2d

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THREE HALFPENCE.

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## The Boys Who Beat The Kaiser!



The Opening Chapters of an Amazing New Story, introducing "The Boys of the Bombay Castle!"

By Duncan Storm.

THE GOAT WHO WOULDN'T GO! An Amusing Incident from Our Amazing New Serial.

### FOR NEW READERS.

THE KAISER is determined to obtain possession of the Mahdi's huge treasure which is hidden in the heart of the continent of Africa, and, to do so, he employs three desperate Germans named BARON VON SLYDEN, CAPTAIN STOOM, and VON SNEEK.

The papers, however, containing the secret of the whereabouts of the treasure are in the possession of

CAPTAIN HANDYMAN and CY SPRAGUE, who decide to go in quest of the treasure, and to take with them the boys of the Bombay Castle, chief among whom are DICK DORRINGTON, CHIP, ARTY DOVE, SKELETON, PORKIS, and PONGO WALKER.

LAL TATA, a cheery Hindu, TOOKUM EL KOOS, a native wrestler, FLINT PASHA, a member of the Sudan Police, are also amongst the party, as well as the boys' pets, CECIL, the orang-outang, HORACE, the goat, and GUS, the crocodile.

In the last instalment Baron von Slyden and his fellow spies made strenuous efforts to secure the papers containing the secret of the Mahdi's treasure. But the boys of the Bombay Castle defeated them, and they went away empty-handed. But Baron von Slyden is not done with yet, as you will see when you read this week's splendid instalment.

(Read on from here.)

### The Huns' Dastardly Plot.

"Buck yourselves up, boys, or we shall never get away to-day!" exclaimed Mr. Lal Tata, who, with his pink turban cocked rakishly over his left eye, was running to and fro between the sheds of the boatyard and the wharf where the little flotilla was moored.

Lal had been busy all the morning, trotting up and down bearing huge loads of blankets, tents, waterproof clothes, sealed cases of tinned food, and ammunition.

A crowd of idle natives were gathered round the boatyard, squatting up on the high Nile banks and watching the preparations that were going on.

Most of these were idlers, for all over the world, from London Bridge to Jericho, wherever there is a post to lean against and workers to watch, there will always be a few loafers gathered together.

But some of the shrouded, white-hooded figures that squatted on the Nile bank watching Lal and the boys as they loaded up the little fleet were by no means loafers.

Their bodies were idle enough, but their eyes and their wits were busy counting every box of ammunition and every rifle that went aboard the

motor-launch and the three graceful whaleboats that were moored alongside the little jetty.

The Kaiser has never lacked spies in any part of the world, and these were the spies of Germany, set on to watch the preparations of this innocent little expedition of British school-boys to the waters of the Upper Nile.

It was their duty to discover exactly how many people were going with the little flotilla, how many rifles were being carried, and how many rounds of ammunition were loaded up on the four small craft that formed the fleet of the adventurers.

The huge negro wrestler, Tookum el Koos, was loafing on the bank also. It was freely announced amongst the natives that he was to accompany the English pashas on their journey.

Tookum grinned when he told the loafing crowd this bit of news.

He declared that, since he had been licked by the young Pasha Artee in

the Market Place of Omdurman, it was no good keeping up his old game of public wrestler, offering to match himself against all-comers.

So he had offered himself as a boat-hand to the expedition, and his offer had been accepted.

Whilst he chatted and loafed and smoked on the bank with his gang of native pals, Tookum's eyes and ears were open.

He did not fail to notice a swarthy Arab who sat on the bank a little apart from the rest.

And he noticed that every time a box of ammunition was carried on board the boats this Arab tied a knot in the camel-cord that was hanging round his waist.

And for every elephant-gun, rifle, or shot-gun that went aboard the Arab tied another knot in the spare cord that was bound around his turban.

Tookum el Koos knew this Arab

well enough, though the Arab did not know that he was being watched by one of the most astute sleuthhounds of the Indian Secret Service.

The Arab had heard of Tookum el Koos.

He had seen him wrestle, and regarded this huge negro as nothing but a native mountebank.

But for the last twenty years it had been Tookum's business to watch Cassim, as the Arab was called, and Tookum knew as much about Cassim as a Scotland Yard detective knows about an old criminal.

In the bad old days Cassim had been a slavedealer, and one of the most ruthless of the ruffians who devastated the rich Equatorial provinces of Africa by his merciless tyranny.

Cassim's very name had been dreaded over thousands and thousands of square miles as the most unscrupulous and merciless slaveraider ever known in Africa.

Even amongst the Arabs themselves Cassim was feared and hated.

"As hard as the heart of Cassim," was their way of expressing absolute cruelty.

But the British occupation of the Sudan had spoiled Cassim's game.

Cassim had been one of the Mahdi's pet spies and torturers, and when the power of the Khalifas was broken by Lord Kitchener, he had gone down with the rest.

(Continued on the next page.)

## OTHER STORIES IN THIS ISSUE!

### DONE IN THE DARK!

A Splendid Story of Jimmy Silver & Co. By OWEN CONQUEST.

### THWARTED BY THREE!

A Grand Tale of Bob Travers & Co. By HERBERT BRITTON.

### ROUNDED UP!

A Magnificent Yarn of Frank Richards & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.





THE BOYS

WHO BEAT THE KAISER.

(Continued from the previous page.)

He had lost most of his ill-gotten gains, and had gained only a deadly hatred of the British and of the British flag, under which there never treads a slave.

Cassim presently found that he was one of the type of men for whom the Kaiser was looking.

He shifted down to the new province of German East Africa.

Here he was petted and made much of by German officials and officers, who employed him on various secret missions, all of which had for their object the undermining of British rule in Africa.

And Cassim had become a faithful servant and spy of the Kaiser.

For if there was one thing genuine in his evil and shifty character, it was his hatred of all things British, and the fair play and justice to all men that goes wherever the British flag flies.

So Tookum el Kooos kept a sharp eye on Cassim as he sat on the Nile bank, smoking a battered old hubble-bubble pipe amongst a gang of sporting pals from Khartoum.

Tookum knew very well that this Arab was the stormy petrel, and that his presence on the bank in the neighbourhood of the boatyard boded no good for the expedition.

Cassim, though his evil influence was broken, still had plenty of friends like himself up the river.

These were Arabs, who had been stopped at their evil games of slave-raiding.

There were also petty kings, who were no longer allowed to keep their gangs of armed niggers and to fall upon the defenceless villages of their neighbours.

And Tookum el Kooos knew very well that Cassim was now in the pay of the Kaiser, employed directly under Baron von Slyden.

The sombre, flashing eyes of the Arab followed Lal and the boys as they moved with their loads between the boat-sheds and the boats.

The eyes were the eyes of a bird of prey, and though they were half hidden by the shrouding caftan that the spy was wearing, Tookum did not miss the flash of burning hatred that showed now and then when the laughter of the boys came floating up from the boat-wharf.

"Hurry up, Skeleton!" exclaimed Dick Dorrington, who was shouldering an ammunition-box. "Where have you been, and what have you got in that sack?"

"Grub!" said the Skeleton, who had just come down to the boat-wharf with a heavily-laden ass. "I thought I'd lay in a few cakes and odds-and-ends before we started. Mr. Sprague says there are no tuckshops in the centre of Africa."

Three huge sacks were unladen from the pack-saddle of the ass, and brought down to the whaler by a gang of laughing niggers.

Skeleton had treated them all to cake, and under his arm he carried a huge plunk-cake as big as a cheese-box.

Dick Dorrington dumped his box of ammunition in the whaler. Then he stared at Skeleton.

"Crumbs, Skeleton!" he said. "You don't mean to say that you're going to take that cake into Darkest Africa?"

"I thought it would be a handy thing to have with us," said Skeleton apologetically. "You see, Dick, you don't know what sort of people we are going to meet up the river, and if we fell amongst cannibals we could give them a big chunk of cake each, and it would take away their appetites, and they wouldn't want to eat us. I'll bet that any nigger who had had a pound of this cake wouldn't feel like eating his dinner off us!"

Mr. Lal Tata came hopping down the pier with three biscuit-boxes piled on his head, crushing his swell turban flat as a pancake.

"Ah, Skeletons!" he exclaimed at the sight of the cake. "What do you do with all those tucks?"

"I'm going to give the niggers a feast up the river, sir," replied Skeleton respectfully.

"I call that silly donkey idea!" said Lal. "That great cake will not keep ten days in the climates of Africa. I know some nigger feller that will eat your cake long before we get to Equatorial Provinces."

Lal was referring to Tookum el Kooos, but the innocent Skeleton mistook his meaning.

"Have a slice now, sir?" said he hospitably, thinking that Lal himself was the nigger he so artfully referred to.

The result of Skeleton's hospitable offer was an explosion.

"Ha!" exclaimed Lal, dumping his tins of biscuit in the whaler. "You make insults to me, Mr. Skeletons! You call your poor old master niggers! You put mud on the head of your preceptor! You will write me two thousand lines impot! You will write two thousand times, 'The Hindu gentleman is not nigger.'"

Skeleton's face fell.

He knew that he had made a mistake, for there was nothing that made Lal more angry than any suggestion that his face was darker than a white man's.

And the idea of writing two thousand lines at the start of the romantic expedition into the heart of wildest Africa was almost too much for Skeleton.

"Please, sir," he said, "I'm awfully sorry, sir! I didn't mean to say that you were a nigger! You aren't really!"

Here Skeleton began to stammer with confusion. "You are only a sort of coffee colour, sir; just as if you'd stayed at

Margate for a long time. And, please, sir, I haven't got any paper to write the lines on."

"Paper!" stuttered Lal. "I have made big parcels of exercise-books and foolscap papers and other books at corner of Number Three boat-shed. Go and get some paper at once, and start your impots! If I have more impots, from you you shall have more impots. You shall write me impots through one side of Africa and out at the other. You shall write lines from Capes to Cairo!"

Then Lal became aware of a wide grin that was spreading round the group of boys, who had gathered round.

"Ha, you boys!" said the indignant Lal, looking round the group. "You want some impots, too? For what do you make laughs? Do you think it good that your master shall be called hushsee—black man—by his pupils?"

"Please, sir, it's not that," said Tom Morton hastily. "It's Horace, the goat!"

"What do you mean, sar?" demanded Lal.

"Horace," began Tom—"Horace—Why, Horace, he's—"

Then he doubled up with laughter. Lal Tata turned to Chip Prodders.

"What is this foolscap, Chips?" he asked.

"Why, sir," said Chip. "It's old Horace! Horace, he was tied up to the corner of the shed, and Horace—ha, ha, ha!—Horace—"

Chip could say no more. He laughed till the tears ran down his face.

"What is this goat play?" demanded the puzzled Lal. "I ask you boys where are all our paper and exercise-books and our Euclids, and our Caesar books, and you laugh as though you were all silly fellows off your chumps. You behave like lunatic peoples!"

Arty Dove dried his eyes on the corner of an enormous handkerchief.

"Please, sir," he said, "Horace has eaten the lot. Horace got at the stationery bundle. He started on the foolscap; then he ate the exercise-books, and after that he got on to the parcel of school books. And he's got through the lot, covers and all! Now he's holding himself up against the corner of the shed!"

Lal made a rush to the corner of the boat shed.

Sure enough, there stood Horace, the goat, looking as though he wished he had never been born.

All Lal's school stationery—the note-books, the school-books, and the exercise-books—were gone.

Horace had eaten five books of Euclid and a French dictionary by way of sweet-stuff.

Now he was leaning against the boat shed, trying to digest it all.

Lal threw his turban on the ground and danced on it.

Horace had left nothing of his school arrangements but two bottles of blue-black ink and a round ruler.

Even Horace's digestion could not stand ink-bottles and rulers.

Lal shook his fist at Horace.

"Ha, wicked goat fellow!" he exclaimed. "You have eaten all! You have more learning in your stomachs than you will ever have in your wicked head. You have spoiled the school!"

There was no doubt about it.

Horace had done in the school arrangements of the expedition.

There could be no impots if there was no paper to write them on, no lessons if all the books were in Horace's stomach.

Perhaps it was the French dictionary that was disagreeing with Horace.

At any rate, when Lal threatened him with the ruler, Horace blinked and backed, breaking the rope by which he was secured to the boat shed.

As soon as he felt himself free Horace's spirit came back to him.

He determined to show Lal that he was a freeborn goat, and not a school-boy to be threatened with a round ruler.

Down went his head, and Lal, who knew Horace of old, turned to fly.

"Ha, boys!" he shouted. "Quick! Secure the goat! He is most ferocious beast!"

Then he made a run for the boats.

It was here that Lal made the mistake of his life.

Horace gave him three yards start towards the little wharf.

Then, like a shell from a gun, he gave chase.

Lal did not know that Horace was following him so closely.

"Ha, ha! You wretched goat fellow!" he shouted, as he reached the edge of the wharf. "You do not hit me butts this time! You do not punch me in the trousers!"

But Horace was there in the nick of time.

As Lal reached the edge of the wharf, Horace charged him astern, lifting him clean over the edge of the low wharf, sending him flying out over the whale-boat.

There was a mighty splash in the river as Lal fell like a sack into the muddy current of the Nile, and Horace, standing at the edge of the wharf, gazed at the widening circles which spread where Lal had disappeared.

"Man overboard!" yelled Chip. "To the rescue, boys!"

And one after another the boys dived into the water after their master.

But not a boy stayed on the wharf.

Like a lot of seals they plunged to the rescue, and when Lal's head popped up above the water he found himself surrounded by a laughing ring of his pupils, who dragged him to the shore.

It was wonderful to see how the boys fussed over Lal when they got him on the beach.

"Let me dry you down, sir," said Skeleton, as he rubbed Lal's jacket with a handkerchief. "If I get you nice and dry, you won't catch cold, sir!"

Lal had forgotten all about the tremendous impot he had set Skeleton.

But he looked up at Horace, who was calmly standing at the edge of the wharf, and there was blood in his eye.

"I will have that goat executed!" exclaimed the wrathful Lal. "He shall have his head cut off like Lady Jane Grey!"

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Dick Dorrington, grinning behind Lal's back, as he rubbed him down. "Please don't, sir! Old Horace didn't know all the impot paper was in that parcel. We shouldn't have left the stuff so near him. We will do any amount of lines, sir, if you will let Horace off."

Lal's face relaxed.

Lal could never be angry long. And here was Skeleton kneeling at his feet, polishing his wet boots with a handkerchief.

"Ah, you boys!" he exclaimed. "How can I set you impots when Horace has eaten all the papers? But you shall carry all biscuits down to the boat. That shall be your impot. And Horace, he shall be forgiven. But if he remains so ferocious, he shall have boxing-gloves tied on his horns!"

The boys gave three cheers for Lal.

But they gave three times three for Horace, who had eaten up all the school books of the expedition.

There would be no lessons now, and life would be one long holiday.

Horace took no notice of their cheers.

He lurched back to the corner of the shed where he had been tied up, and ate up the length of rope by which he had been tied.

That was Horace all over. Horace did not believe in waste.

The boys filed up to the shed, where the biscuit-tins for the expedition were stored.

"Jimmy!" exclaimed Dick Dorrington, as he shouldered one of the tins. "I bet these are good old jaw-crackers. They weigh about a ton to the tin!"

"I expect they are some of the good old captain's biscuits," said Skeleton, rubbing his stomach. "There's nothing like a good ship's biscuit and a lump of cheese for staying a chap between breakfast and dinner."

But in most of the tins which the boys carried down to the boat there were queer biscuits hidden away.

Apparently sealed up safely against the climate and the torrential rains of Africa, half the biscuits in question were nothing more nor less than ammunition belts, filled with cartridges for Maxim-guns.

Each of these tins bore a tiny scratch or secret mark.

Cy Sprague, who was managing the outfit of the expedition, was not going to show his hand all at once.

He knew very well that Von Slyden's spies would be at work, and that every detail of the expedition would soon be flashed to Berlin in secret code.

And amongst the crowd of loafers on the bank Tookum el Kooos kept a sharp eye on Cassim, the Arab spy, as the biscuit-tins were stowed aboard the boats.

Cassim tied no knots in his camel cord as tin after tin was stowed on the little flotilla. So it was plain that Cassim was taken in.

He may have thought that the British lived entirely on biscuit.

Certain it was that Lal, marching down to the boat with a tin, stumbled with ostentatious clumsiness.

The tin he was carrying split on a piece of old ironwork, and biscuits were scattered in all directions.

Lal threw these to the natives, who scrambled eagerly for them.

And Cassim made no more knots in his camel-cord.

This crafty spy was deceived.

His report to Von Slyden announced that the expedition carried only twenty

rifles, six shot-guns, two elephant-rifles, and three thousand rounds of small-arm ammunition, a miserable armament, which could easily be suppressed by a small and well-armed flying-column.

Cassim was a crafty spy. But he did not know the habits of the British.

He failed to notice that there might be something suspicious, in that no less than twelve cricket-bags were placed on board the whaleboats and the motor-launch.

Cassim knew the shape of a cricket-bag.

He had been foxing the boys for some days now, and he had seen them open cricket-bags and produce bats and stumps and pads.

It did not seem out of the way to him that a few boys should require twelve cricket-bags between them.

And little did he dream that in each of those cricket-bags reposed a Maxim-gun, or that two-thirds of the biscuit-boxes which he had seen stowed on board the little flotilla held between them fifty thousand rounds of ammunition.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon when the last of the stores and supplies of the expedition were placed on board the boats.

The crowd thickened, and amongst them appeared the remaining boys of the Bombay Castle, come to see their lucky schoolfellows off on a trip that they all envied them.

Few of these were in the secret of the expedition.

All they knew was that Captain Handyman and Cy Sprague, with his lucky little gang of boys, were being taken for a trip by Flint Pasha, the chief of the Egyptian Police of Khartoum.

Flint Pasha had provided the launch and the boats of the expedition, a wonderful outfit of craft, which were built in sections, and which could be taken to pieces and packed, carried overland, and put together again like a picture-puzzle.

Flint Pasha had used these boats in a great exploring expedition, which he had made into the pygmy country two years ago.

Now he was going to take the boys and their leaders for a splendid trip up beyond Fashoda.

Perhaps he would take them as far as the Great Lakes themselves, and the boys would have the chance of travelling at ease over the same track as Speke and Burton, Livingstone and Stanley.

That was all the remaining boys of the Bombay Castle knew about it as they lined up on the bank to give the expedition a farewell send off.

They thought that it was nothing more nor less than a pleasure-trip up to the head-waters of the Nile, and most of them would have given their cars to accompany the happy little group that gathered in the boats as the towlines were passed to the motor-launch.

But there were others who knew more than they did.

From a distant hamlet of Khartoum Baron von Slyden, with his confederates Von Sneek and Captain Stoom, were watching the little groups through powerful glasses.

Across the water they could hear the burst of laughter which hailed Gus, the crocodile, as he was dragged unwillingly down the wharf, with a big pink bow tied round his neck, ignominiously hauled along on a dog-collar and a chain.

It was Porkis who pulled Gus along, and Gus did not want to go.

With the dim instinct of a reptile Gus knew that there was something doing.

Gus did not want any boat-trips where people would tread upon him, and where he would be shut up in a cricket-bag with stumps and bats.

He spread out his four dumpy legs, and thrashed with his tail on the boards of the wharf as Porky hauled him along.

"Come along, Gus!" said Arty Dove encouragingly from the boat. "Don't be afraid. Nobody's going to bite you."

Gus was not afraid of anybody biting him.

If there was any biting to be done he was quite capable of doing that himself.

And when Porky had dragged him to the edge of the wharf, Gus, smelling the river, gave a wriggle forward.

Gus was only a small crocodile, but he had a lot of power locked up in his five feet of jaws and tail.

Gus knew his job, too. He saw his chance of getting away.

With a swift lash of his tail he cut Porky's feet from under him, and dived over the edge of the wharf.

But Gus had not reckoned on the whale-boat beneath the wharf.

With a clump he and Porky tumbled into this, scattering the frightened crew in all directions.

Porky's fall was broken on the shoulders of Pieface, the cook, who was bowled on to his face in the bottom of the boat.

"Sorry, Pieface, old chap!" he said. "It was Gus."

Porky had no chance to say any more, for Pieface flopped about on the bottom of the boat, howling like a foghorn.

Gus, vicious at losing his chance of escape, had been quick to bite.

He snapped at the first thing to hand, and this was one of Pieface's enormous ears.

Pieface had ears that were like flaps of leather, standing out from his woolly head like fans.

"Wow-yow!" yelled Pieface. "Gus bite my ear! Take 'um way!"

This was easier said than done.

Pieface's legs were kicking up in the air, but his bullet-head was held down to the floor of the boat.

It was not until a cricket-stump had been forced between Gus' jaws, to lever them open, that Pieface was released from the crocodile's grip.

Gus was shoved in a cricket-bag, and all the ship's company were now aboard but Horace, the goat.

Captain Handyman, who had taken his seat at the wheel of the launch, was getting impatient.

And when Horace suddenly made up his

mind that he was not going on any old expeditions, and straddled his thick legs on the wharf, with a look of trouble in his evil, green eye, Captain Handyman grew more impatient still.

"Look here, you boys," he shouted, "if you think I'm going to wait here all night whilst you load up your Noah's Ark, you're mistaken! If that goat won't come aboard I'm going to leave him behind!"

There was a rush of boys on to the wharf at this awful threat.

It was headed by Pongo Walker and Cecil, the orang-outang.

"Come on, Horace!" exclaimed Dick Dorrington, taking Horace by the horns. "Don't be a silly goat!"

But Horace refused to budge.

He stuck out his stubborn hoofs, and stood steady as a rock, although the boys pulled and shoved him.

Horace had got a purchase on the plank, and meant to stay where he was.

"Pack up behind him, boys, and make a scrum!" urged Arty Dove.

The boys packed up behind Horace. "On the goat, school!" yelled Dick Dorrington delightedly.

The boys gave a heave good enough to shift a brick-wall, but they could not shift Horace.

It seemed as if Horace knew that they were going on a long and arduous expedition, and that the Kaiser was on their track.

At any rate he refused to budge.

He just slid along six inches, and came to a standstill.

The boys shoved behind him till the veins stood out on their foreheads, and beads of perspiration trickled down their faces.

But Horace stood as steady as a granite drinking-fountain.

It was Skeleton who was stricken by a bright thought.

He had seen a ship launched, and he knew that when a ship was shoved from the stocks into the water the ways over which she passed were plentifully besmeared with grease.

"Half a mo', you chaps!" he said. "I'll fix him. Keep on shoving so that he can't go back."

Skeleton slipped down into the whaler, and climbed up again with a large pot of grease, which was used to prevent the chafing of the towropes in the fairleads.

Quickly he was back again, and, smearing the plankways from Horace's stubborn feet to the edge of the wharf, he laid a sort of slide.

A dab of grease under Horace's cloven hoofs finished the job.

Skeleton surveyed his work with great satisfaction.

"I think he'll go now, boys!" he said comfortably. "Now I'll come behind Arty, and when I give the word shove all you know!"

The boys packed up behind Horace, who turned his head suspiciously, wondering what was the next move.

"One—two—three!" exclaimed Skeleton. "Now, heave!"

The boys locked up in a tight scrum, and gave a mighty heave.

Horace gave a bleat of anger.

He slipped forward three inches, and then took the greasy slide under his feet.

Then he shot forward like a cricket-ball to the edge of the wharf with such a suddenness that the scrum went flat on its face, whilst Horace, with a slide and a grunt of anger, slid over the edge of the wharf, and dived into the whaler with a thump that nearly sent his head through the bottom.

A yell of delight went up from the boys of the Bombay Castle. The natives yelled in concert.

The scrum party, covered with black grease, tumbled hurriedly over the edge of the wharf, throwing themselves into the boat and on to the angry Horace, before he had a chance of getting to his feet.

Horace, formidable enough where he had room to charge, was as helpless as a baby when he was stowed on his back in a boat, with his hoofs beating in the air.

Before he had time to recover his forefeet were hobbled, and he was rolled right way up in the whaler.

Pongo Walker took off his straw hat with the school riband, and clapped it on Horace's horns.

In the launch Captain Handyman set the engine running, and the boat, with the three whalers in tow, slid out into the wide stream.

A tremendous cheer of farewell went up from the boys of the Bombay Castle, who were standing on the bank.

A shrill lu-lu-ing went up from the natives.

And the sound of all this cheering floated across the water to the little group of German spies who were gathered on the roof-top watching the departure.

"Ach! What fools these British are!" snarled Baron von Slyden, as he watched the graceful little flotilla of white boats heading up the broad river. "The British are always boys. They make sport of all things. That is why we Germans shall beat them—we men who make sport of nothing!"

And, with an evil glint in his eyes, the Kaiser's spy, who, from the flat square of the roof, watched the boats till they dwindled down to white specks on the blue river.

Then from his pocket he furtively drew the message of the Kaiser and read it:

"It is my will that this expedition of British boys shall be stopped at all costs, and by any means whatsoever. Those who do so will have my personal protection. The interests of the German Empire in Africa are at stake. Act accordingly."

"



# THE BOYS WHO BEAT THE KAISER

(Continued from the previous page.)

German Empire had not stayed the starting of that little string of boats that showed as four little specks on the broad current of the Nile as they headed away to the south into the mysterious heart of Africa.

He watched them till they disappeared round a green bend of rushes.

Then he turned abruptly to Von Sneek, who was awaiting his master's orders.

"Donner und blitzen!" he ground out. "They must be cut off, Von Sneek! They are still within our reach. Bid the Askaris assemble at moonrise by the three palms."

Von Sneek nodded.

Hidden away in the foulest quarters of Khartoum were thirty Askari tribesmen, brought by Von Slyden from German East Africa.

These were thirty of the worst characters who could be scraped up from the native troops under the German rule.

In half an hour they could be called together; in an hour they could be assembled with their camels at the three palms which stood ten miles to the southward, beyond the gates of Khartoum.

For days they could dog the expedition, for the launch, with her tow of boats, would advance but slowly up the twisty way of the river, whilst the fleet body of camel-men, cutting across the great bends, would be there to meet them and to dog their steps at any halting-place.

The Nile above Khartoum is bordered by swamps and marshes, and the landing-places are few.

It was not Von Slyden's intention to strike at once. For days the expedition would be too near Khartoum and the headquarters of British rule to make it safe to interfere openly with it.

But accidents might happen, and it was Von Slyden's intention to strike stealthily as a snake strikes its victims.

He had been taken aback by the sudden departure of the expedition. He had made allowances for the time necessary to fitting out such a party, and had not reckoned that Flint Pasha would come forward with the full equipment necessary.

The expedition had got the start of him, and he must delay it at any cost.

He descended from the flat roof of the house into a room that was fitted as an office.

Here awaited him the spy Cassim, with Captain von Stoom.

The Arab, without a word, handed his master a slip of paper inscribed with Arabic characters.

It gave particulars of all the guns, rifles, and ammunition taken by the expedition, but it made no mention of the boxes of supposed biscuits which had been put aboard the boats.

Nor did it mention the cricket-bags. The baron gave a sniff of contempt as he read the list which the spy gave him.

"Ach!" he muttered hoarsely. "These British are fools! They go unarmed into the deserts. We shall soon crumple this party up!"

Which shows that, German as he was,

Baron von Slyden had already forgotten how he had been beaten by a football, a cricket-bat, and a few British school-boys behind them.

But the arrogance of the Prussian was topmost in him now.

He almost laughed when he read that twelve cricket-bags had been taken on board the whalers.

"They think of nothing but games, these British!" he muttered.

This was a very natural remark for a German to make, who has no idea of playing cricket.

"Von Stoom!" he snapped. Captain von Stoom clicked his heels together with a click, and saluted.

"You will take command of the Askaris!" ordered the baron. "You will not show your hand. But things must happen to this party of British boys who have dared the wrath of his Imperial Majesty! Things must happen, Von Stoom! You understand?"

Captain von Stoom clicked his heels again, and saluted, to show that he well understood what was required of him.

"It is the will of our master, the All Highest War Lord, that these boys shall be stopped!" snapped the baron, unrolling a map. "Their first stopping-place will of a certainty be by the east bank at El Katif, where the anti-hills show on the bank. It is possible, Von Stoom, that things might happen amongst those anti-hills!"

Captain von Stoom grinned. And the combe eyes of Cassim, the Arab, lit up with an evil gleam.

Both Von Stoom and Cassim, each in his way, had had some experience of anti-hills.

In East Africa Von Stoom had pegged

down a sulky soldier to one of these queer heaps by way of punishment.

The poor wretch had been pegged down at night.

In the morning all that had remained of him was a skeleton, picked white as snow by the myriads of swarming ants.

Many a time had Cassim that past-master of cruel slavers, played the same game.

Mutinous slaves had been pegged out, and left to die, fearing the torture of the ants less than they had feared their cruel master.

The baron did not miss the red gleam in the Arab's evil eyes.

"Cassim will show you how it is done, if you don't know, Captain von Stoom!" said Von Slyden, with a sneering chuckle.

"I can see that our good Cassim is aching for a chance of pegging out one or two of these miserable Englishers!"

Cassim's evil-lips curled in an ugly grin, showing teeth that were like the teeth of a wolf.

"Boys in a new country will stray," said the baron, with a crafty smile. "At the very first stopping-place an accident might happen. The people of El Katif have an ill-name, and the punishment will be visited on them. So they will hate the British more than they do now!"

The baron chuckled. His spirits had risen since he had realised the small strength of the little party he was up against.

"Things might happen, Von Stoom—d'you understand?" he said, tapping the map at the point of the river where El Katif was marked.

"Things shall happen, Excellency!" replied Captain von Stoom stolidly, his little pig's eyes rolling angrily. "I have

not forgotten the trick those young pig-dogs played me last night! They shall pay—and pay with interest!"

The baron gave a snuffle.

"Go, Von Stoom," he said, lifting his hand—"go! And remember that you are fulfilling the will of our Mighty War Lord in whatsoever you may do! Collect your men, and see that they proceed to the three palms singly, to meet at moonrise in the shadows of the old temple there! Act cautiously, for this Flint Pasha has eyes everywhere! The hand of the German Empire must not show in this business. If you succeed it will count as the Third Class of the Red Eagle to you! I shall personally commend your efforts in the German cause to his Most Gracious Majesty!"

The baron spoke with true German solemnity.

He was a Prussian of the Prussians, and to his warped mind the planned murder of a few harmless schoolboys was a deed which might be properly rewarded with one of the most coveted decorations of the German Empire.

Von Stoom clicked his heels, and withdrew from the room, followed swiftly and stealthily by Cassim, the Arab.

The sunset lit the walls of Khartoum as they went about their work of warning their men.

And, a few hours later, the rising of the moon showed the gathering of thirty-two of the most evil scoundrels in all Africa to do the behest of Kaiser Wilhelm, the arch-murderer of Potsdam!

(Another magnificent long instalment of this amazing serial in next Monday's issue of THE BOYS' FRIEND. I should be glad if readers would write and let me know what they think of this new story.)

## A MAGNIFICENT STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO.



# DONE in the DARK.

By OWEN CONQUEST.



### The 1st Chapter.

#### Something Like a Stunt!

"I've got an idea!"

Arthur Edward Lovell made that announcement with due impressiveness. The Fistical Four were seated outside a tent, in the School Meadow at Rookwood.

Long lines of white tents were close at hand.

From the distance came the clink of tools, where workmen were busy upon repairing the old buildings of Rookwood, that still showed signs of the injury sustained in the air-raid.

Rookwood School was under canvas for the present, and classes were held in the open air. Fortunately the weather was perfect.

That is to say, it was fortunate from the point of view of the Head and his staff.

Rookwooders generally did not consider it so very fortunate, as a few heavy showers would have knocked lessons on the head, and allowed them to go about more important affairs.

Bright weather naturally made the juniors feel inclined to give classes a wide berth, and ramble by wood and river, and that desire was all the keener now that they were not shut up in the accustomed class-rooms.

Tubby Muffin, indeed, had fallen into the habit of watching the sky like a professional astronomer, and he asked Jimmy Silver whether they could afford to buy a barometer for the tent.

Tubby's opinion was that the weather was simply exasperating.

If you were going up the river you could be sure it would rain, but when it was a question of classes, the sky retained an unbroken smiling serenity.

The Fistical Four were resting in the grass as they waited for afternoon classes, but they were not thinking of the valuable instruction they were going to receive from Mr. Bootles that afternoon. They were thinking of a golden river rippling under green branches.

And then Arthur Edward Lovell, whose brow had been corrugated for some time with a deep wrinkle of thought, announced that he had an idea.

His chums did not look very hopeful. Arthur Edward's ideas were not, generally, of the most brilliant kind.

Still, they were willing to give him a hearing.

Any fellow who could think of a wheeze for getting off lessons that afternoon would deserve well of his country.

The juniors considered that that was work of national importance.

"Go it!" said Jimmy Silver encouragingly. "It's time you had an idea, old scout! I remember you had one last term, too."

"If you're going to be a funny idiot, Jimmy Silver—" began Lovell.

"My dear man, one funny idiot's enough for a family of four, and I'm not going to wedge in as your rival!" said Jimmy. "Get on with the idea!"

"We don't want classes this afternoon," said Lovell.

"Hear, hear!" assented Raby and Newcome, with great heartiness.

"Is that the idea?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"No!" roared Lovell. "That's not the

idea, you chump! I was pointing that out to begin with. Look at the sky! Not a dashed cloud anywhere! The weather's keeping simply perfect now we want rain!"

"Well, a run up the river wouldn't be very ripping in the rain," said Newcome. "I'd give a week's pocket-money for a shower just bad enough to break up classes for the day!"

"That's what I'm thinking of," said Lovell. "Suppose it rains?"

"It won't!"

"But suppose it does?"

Jimmy Silver sat upright, and stared at Arthur Edward.

"That the idea?" he asked. "We're to suppose it rains, when we know it won't! If you call that an idea, Lovell, I can only say you're jolly easily satisfied!"

"If you'd use your ears a little more and your lower jaw a little less, a fellow would have a chance to explain!" said Lovell crossly. "My idea is for it to rain this afternoon—not very bad, but bad enough to break up the class."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Surprised you—eh?" grinned Lovell.

"Well, that's the idea. What do you think of it?"

"Think of it!" repeated Jimmy Silver. "I think we'd better have a whip-round in the Classical Fourth, and buy you a strait-jacket, Lovell. Do you think you can produce rain by pressing a button?"

"Not by pressing a button, fathead! Can't you let a fellow explain?" howled Lovell. "Now, old Bootles is taking us in about ten minutes from now. The Fourth Form gathers yonder, by the big oak—"

"What the dickens—"

"Old Bootles is short-sighted—"

"We know that."

"He's a bit of an ass, too—"

"There's chaps in his Form who can beat him in that line, though."

"Oh, dry up a minute, Jimmy! Now, the gardener—"

"The gardener?" repeated Jimmy Silver.

"Yes, the Head's gardener—"

"You were talking about Bootles, weren't you?"

"Yes, ass! Now, the Head's gardener—"

"Keep to the point."

"I'm keeping to the point!" shrieked Lovell. "Give your jaw a rest, I tell you! You'll wear it out at this rate! The Head's gardener has a big garden-syringe—you've seen him using it. Now, my idea is to bag it. It's kept in the tool-shed, and easy enough to bag."

"What on earth for?"

"A chap fills that syringe with water—it holds about a gallon!" said Lovell impressively. "He climbs into the oak—"

"Does he?"

"Yes, he does. The foliage hides him from sight. As soon as class has fairly started he sends a shower over Bootles."

"Oh, Christopher Columbus!"

"Bootles thinks it's raining—"

"Great pip!"

"Dismisses the class, and there you are!" said Lovell triumphantly.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome blinked at Lovell.

That was Arthur Edward's idea!

"Well, my hat!" said Raby.

"Easy as falling off a form," said Lovell, with great satisfaction. "Old Bootles always keeps in the shade of the tree, so he will be within easy range of the squirt. He's horribly afraid of rain, because he's got rheumatism or lumbago, or something. He's bound to dismiss the class, and make tracks for cover."

Jimmy Silver reflected.

Arthur Edward's idea certainly was startling.

It was true that Mr. Bootles was a bit of an ass, but it was a great question whether he was sufficiently asinine to be spoofed by such a scheme.

Lovell had no doubts. But, then, it was Lovell's idea, and he was prejudiced in favour of it.

"Don't you think it would work?" demanded Lovell warily.

"Well, it might," admitted Jimmy Silver cautiously. "If it did it would be a corker. But—"

"Don't start butting!" said Lovell.

"Let's get the syringe and fill it."

"But who's going to be in the tree?" asked Raby. "Every chap in the Fourth will have to turn up for lessons."

Lovell paused.

That consideration, obvious as it was, had apparently not yet occurred to him.

"Well, somebody will have to do it, of course," he said. "Some chap will have to cut classes, and chance it. Jimmy, I'm instance—"

"My dear man, it's your scheme, and you can work it. I'm not going to bag your scheme over your head," said Jimmy Silver. "Buzz off and get the syringe, and get into the tree before Bootles happens along. There's a chance in a million that it may work, and this afternoon is too gorgeous to be wasted on lessons, if it can be helped."

"Newcome's rather a nimble chap at climbing," remarked Lovell, in a casual sort of way.

"Not nimble enough to climb a tree when it's time for lessons!" grinned Newcome.

"What about you, Raby?"

"Nothing about me, old chap," said Raby. "I don't think of these brilliant ideas, and they're too much for me to deal with."

"It's up to you, Lovell!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

Lovell granted.

"Well, I'll do it," he said. "It will work, I know that. You're not the only pebble on the beach, Jimmy, when it comes to thinking of things! I'll jolly well get that syringe, and we'll see!"

And Arthur Edward Lovell, detached himself from the grass and hurried away. His three chums grinned.

Cutting classes, without a good excuse to give, was rather a serious matter, and projecting a shower of water over a Form-master's head was still more serious.

Still, the weather was so glorious that day that it had to be agreed that it was worth a little risk to get a holiday.

The scheme might possibly be a success. It depended on the extent to which Mr. Bootles might be relied upon to be asinine.

And Lovell's chums agreed that it was worth trying—especially if it was Arthur Edward Lovell who tried it.

### The 2nd Chapter.

#### Not According to Plan.

Mr. Bootles trotted down to the school meadow with his quick, jerky tread.

The master of the Fourth was wearing a big Panama hat, which assorted oddly with his gown.

But when lessons were given in the open air on a sunny afternoon, what was to be done?

The Rookwood Fourth were all in their places, with one exception.

Arthur Edward Lovell was not to be seen.

Mr. Bootles blinked over his class. Jimmy Silver wondered whether he would notice that Lovell was not there; he was not very observant as a rule.

Mr. Bootles did notice.

"Silver!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir?" said Jimmy.

"Where is—ah—Lovell? What—what?"

Jimmy Silver looked round over the class.

"I don't see him, sir," he answered; which was perfectly accurate; for the thick foliage of the tree quite hid Arthur Edward from sight.

"Do you know where Lovell is, Silver?"

"I—I think he's not far away, sir."

Mr. Bootles grunted.

"We shall commence without Lovell," he said, with a look which indicated that there was to be trouble later for the absentee.

Tubby Muffin rose to his feet.

Tubby had dined not wisely but too well, having obtained supplies in addition to the school dinner, and he was feeling very fat and sleepy.

He would have given anything for a nap in the grass under the trees, and lessons seemed to Muffin just then an insult and an injury added together.

"If you please, sir—" began Tubby.

"Well, Muffin?"

"D-d-don't you think it looks like rain, sir?"

"What?"

"I—I'm afraid of catching cold if it rains, sir," mumbled Tubby.

There was a chuckle in the Fourth.

Save where the shadow of the big tree fell, there was unbroken sunshine, and not a cloud in the bright blue sky.

Townsend, in fact, had set up a parasol to keep the sun off, having fears for his complexion.

Mr. Bootles blinked sternly at Muffin over his glasses.

"Muffin!" he rapped.

"Yes, sir?"

"Are you attempting, sir, to delude me into allowing you to avoid work this afternoon, Muffin?"

"Oh, sir!"

"Take your seat immediately!"

Tubby Muffin sat down with a suppressed groan.

Lessons commenced, Arthur Edward Lovell still being conspicuous by his absence.

Mr. Bootles kept in the shade of the big oak.

He was keeping out of the sun, not dodging a shower; but, as a matter of fact, it was a shower he was in danger of getting.

About ten minutes later the Form-master gave a jump, as there was a sudden sprinkling of water over his book and his Panama hat.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles, in surprise.

He blinked upward.

Right over his upturned face came a light shower of spray.

"Dear me! It is raining, after all!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles, in great annoyance. "Bless my soul!"

The Fourth-Formers simply stared. They knew very well it wasn't raining, and the sight of water sprinkling on Mr. Bootles astounded them.

But it enabled them to guess where Arthur Edward Lovell was, and there was a general grin in the class.

"Had we better go, sir?" squeaked Tubby Muffin.

"Remain where you are!" snapped Mr. Bootles. "It is simply a momentary shower."

Swoosh!

"Ooooop!" gasped Mr. Bootles.

It was more than a shower that smote him then; it was a regular deluge.

Water simply swamped him from above.

Lovell had turned it on lightly to begin with, but as that had been in vain, he had discharged the whole contents of the big garden syringe upon the devoted head of his Form-master.

Mr. Bootles' Panama hat ran with water, his book was soaked, and his gown was streaming.

"Bless my soul! This is—is most unnerveing!" he stammered. "Gather under the tree at once, my boys; it will doubtless pass in a few minutes."

"My only hat!" murmured Jimmy.

The juniors obeyed the order at once.

They left their seats and hurried to gather round the trunk of the big oak, for shelter from the supposed downpour.

Lovell, unfortunately, had no further water supply.

Had he been able to keep up the shower-bath, Mr. Bootles might have dismissed the class, "according to plan."





# DONE in the DARK.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

(Continued from the previous page.)

"Are you insane, Carthew? Cannot you see that I am drenched?" Carthew could see that, and it puzzled him.

But he was not likely to believe that it was raining, all the same. "Well, it wasn't rain that did it, sir," he said, with a suspicious glance at the grinning Fourth.

"Nonsense!" There was a sound of scraping on the trunk of the tree.

Mr. Bootles did not notice it, especially as Jimmy Silver and some other juniors were shuffling their feet to make a noise at the same moment.

But Carthew was a little sharper than Mr. Bootles.

He whipped round the tree. Arthur Edward Lovell was just sliding down, keeping the trunk between him and the Form-master.

His little scheme having been a failure, Lovell had very eagerly decided that the sooner he got out of the tree the better.

In a minute or less he would have dropped among the crowd of juniors under the tree, and nothing would have been known, the syringe remaining concealed among the branches to be retrieved later.

Carthew's presence made all the difference.

"Lovell!" shouted the prefect. "So you were in the tree!"

"What—what?" came from Mr. Bootles.

Carthew caught Lovell by the shoulder as he dropped to the ground, and marched him round the big trunk to Mr. Bootles.

He had an old score against the chums of the Fourth, and he was greatly pleased at having caught one of the Fistical Four "out."

Mr. Bootles, having dried his glasses, replaced them on his nose, and blinked at Arthur Edward Lovell in surprise.

"He was in the tree, sir," grinned Carthew. "His hands are wet, too. I fancy he can tell you how you got wet."

"Bless my soul! You—you were in the tree, Lovell?"

Lovell was silent and dismayed.

He gave Carthew a look that spoke volumes, but he said nothing.

As a matter of fact, there was nothing for him to say. He was fairly caught.

Mr. Bootles began to understand.

"What were you doing in the tree, Lovell?" he thundered.

### The 3rd Chapter.

#### Going Through It!

Jimmy Silver & Co. were not grinning now.

The matter had become serious. Lovell was silent, as Mr. Bootles blinked at him in great wrath.

The Form-master, having replaced his glasses, could see easily enough that it was not raining.

Naturally, his wrath was great.

"You were in the tree, Lovell!" he stutered. "You—you have thrown water over me! Me—your Form-master! Goodness gracious! It is scarcely—scarcely credible."

"Shall I take him to the Head, sir?" asked Carthew officiously.

Lovell bit his lip hard.

"Answer me, boy!" thundered Mr. Bootles. "You were in the tree?"

"Yes, sir!" muttered Lovell.

"Did you throw water over me?"

"I—I squirted it, sir."

"Bless my soul! I can scarcely believe my ears! You—you have been guilty of what amounts to an assault upon your Form-master!"

"Oh, sir!"

"How dared you, Lovell! I repeat, how dared you!"

"It—it was only a lark, sir," stammered the dismayed junior.

"A lark! You call drenching your Form-master with water a lark?"

"I—I thought you'd dismiss the class if you—you thought it was raining, sir," gasped Lovell.

"A trick to get out of work, sir," said Carthew. "I dare say the others were in the game, too. No doubt they wanted to slack."

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked very uncomfortable.

Certainly they had wanted that glorious afternoon off, but they had not regarded that desire as "slacking."

Carthew, who was a good deal of a slacker himself, as well as a good deal of a blackguard, had no right to throw that taunt at them, anyway.

Mr. Bootles caught on to Carthew's suggestion at once.

He scented a plot.

He was a most good-tempered little gentleman as a rule, but being drenched with water was enough to make the best-tempered man wrathful.

"Very probable, Carthew, very probable!" he exclaimed. "Lovell, were others concerned with you in this—this nefarious scheme?"

Lovell did not answer.

"Answer my question at once, Lovell, or I will request the Head to administer a flogging!" thundered Mr. Bootles.

Still Lovell did not speak, but Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome came forward at once.

"We were in it, sir," said Jimmy Silver meekly.

"I thought so!" sneered Carthew.

"I might have guessed as much!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "Were any others concerned in this rascally plot?"

"Nunno, sir."

"Very good! You four will be dealt with," said Mr. Bootles.

Carthew chimed in once more.

"Shall I take them to the Head, sir?"

The bully of the Sixth did not want to see his old enemies escape with a light caning.

"Mind your own business, Carthew!" exclaimed Lovell angrily. "Can't you shut up?"

"Silence, Lovell!" thundered Mr. Bootles. "Carthew, you may certainly take these four boys to the Head. You will explain to Dr. Chisholm what has occurred, and mention that I desire them to be punished with adequate severity."

"Certainly, sir," said Carthew. "Come along, you young rascals!"

The Fistical Four hesitated a moment.

But Mr. Bootles waved his hand imperatively, and they followed Carthew.

Mr. Bootles was very shocked and angry, but his Form did not see eye to eye with him on that point. They would have been quite pleased to be dismissed for the afternoon.

They felt that the Fistical Four had done their best in the common cause, and they were sympathetic accordingly.

But sympathy was not of much use to Jimmy Silver & Co.

They were "in for it," and their anticipations were dismal as they marched after the prefect.

Lovell looked the gloomiest of the quartette.

This was the outcome of the great scheme, the outcome that might really have been expected, for the scheme had been a harebrained one.

But Lovell, at least, would have escaped detection, but for the officiousness of his old enemy of the Sixth.

The Fistical Four would willingly have collared Mark Carthew, and bumped him in the grass for his officious interference.

Carthew grinned at them when they were some little distance from Mr. Bootles. He was enjoying the situation.

"Precious young slackers!" he said jeeringly.

"Oh, dry up!" grunted Lovell. "Not such slackers as some cads in the Sixth."

"What?"

"We may want to cut lessons, but we shouldn't go to the Bird-in-Hand to play billiards or back geegoes," said Lovell recklessly. "What luck have you had at banker and nap lately, Carthew?"

"Dry up, Lovell, you ass!" whispered Raby, in alarm.

Carthew's face was like thunder.

His sportive proclivities were more than suspected in the Lower School, but to be talked to on the subject by a junior was a new experience to the black sheep of the Sixth.

"You insolent young cub!" he gasped at last.

"Oh, rats!" snapped Lovell.

Carthew clenched his hands, as if meditating assault and battery.

Jimmy Silver & Co. regarded him grimly, quite exasperated enough to handle the bully of the Sixth, if he began.

"Follow me!" gasped Carthew at last, choking back his rage.

"Lead on, Macduff!" answered Jimmy Silver.

The prefect strode on, and the Fistical Four followed in his wake, all the eyes of the Sixth being turned upon them as they came up.

Dr. Chisholm looked at them severely, and then inquiringly at Carthew.

"Mr. Bootles has sent these boys to you, sir," said Carthew. "Lovell hid himself in the tree, and drenched Mr. Bootles with water during lessons, and the others planned it with him."

The Head uttered an exclamation.

"Is it possible?"

"Mr. Bootles requests that a very severe punishment may be administered, sir," said Carthew.

"Quite so! Kindly hand me my cane, Carthew."

Carthew did that promptly and willingly.

He would have preferred to see the Fistical Four flogged; but the Head's expression showed that they were not to escape lightly.

The business-like way in which Dr. Chisholm gripped the cane showed that also.

He was evidently getting ready for a really athletic performance.

In turn, the Fistical Four underwent the infliction, which came to six for each of them, and each of the six was a real "twister."

By the time the infliction was over they wished it had been a flogging, instead.

The Head did not run the risk of spoiling the child by sparing the rod.

"You may go!" snapped the Head.

The chums of the Fourth went.

They fairly limped back to the Fourth Form, with pale faces, squeezing their hands with almost frantic energy.

"Oh, dear!" moaned Raby. "You idiot, Lovell!"

"Yow-ow!" answered Lovell. "It was a good idea—Yow-wow!"

"You get another idea into your silly head, Lovell, and we'll scalp you and boil you in oil!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"It was a good idea!" howled Lovell.

"Nothing would have happened, anyhow, if that cad Carthew hadn't spied me out! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Yow-ow!"

"Oh, dear!"

With mumbles and moans of deep suffering, the unhappy victims of Lovell's brilliant idea returned to their form.

Mr. Bootles eyed them sternly as they came up.

"Silver!" he rapped.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"What?"

"I—I mean yes, sir! Yow!"

"I trust this will be a lesson to you, Silver!"

"Oh, dear! Certainly, sir! Ow!"

"You may go to your places," said Mr. Bootles, a little more kindly, for he saw that the Fistical Four were suffering severely.

"Ow! Oh! Ow!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. went to their places in the lowest possible spirits.

They had wanted that afternoon off because it was so glorious; but it was glorious to them no longer.

It was a long-drawn-out misery till lessons were over.

The Head had laid it on with a severity he considered was called for in the circumstances; but his unhappy victims considered that he had done his duty not wisely but too well.

When the Fourth Form was dismissed at last Jimmy Silver & Co. were still suffering, and they only groaned in answer to condoling remarks from Erroll and Mornington and Tommy Dodd.

"You'll get over it," said Conroy comfortingly.

"Is it very bad?" asked Flynn.

"Groan!"

"My hat! What a gang of dismal Jimmies!" said Peele. "Travel out of hearing, dear boys, if you're goin' to kick up that row!"

"Yaes, do, there's good chaps!" said Townsend.

And Jimmy Silver & Co. were too dispirited even to bump Peele and Townsend in the grass.

Like great Julius Caesar of old, they had fallen low, and none were so poor as to do them reverence.

### The 4th Chapter.

#### Reprisals!

"What about reprisals, Jimmy?"

Tubby Muffin asked that question.

It was after tea, and the Fistical Four were feeling a little better, though still sore and not sweet-tempered.

Tubby Muffin cornered them in the quadrangle, and asked that question with a very serious blink at the suffering four.

"Eh! What are you turbling about?" grunted Jimmy.

"Reprisals," said Tubby. "I believe in reprisals. You fellows have been through it, haven't you?"

"Feels like it," mumbled Raby.

"Well, what about getting your own back?"

"Fatehead! Bootles was right enough to send us to the Head, after he'd been swamped with water."

"I don't mean Bootles," said Tubby. "That cad Carthew, you know. He ought to be made to sit up."

"Blow him!"

"Lovell wouldn't have been spotted at all but for Carthew meddling," went on the fat Classical. "And he was egging on Mr. Bootles as much as he could to make it hot for you, wasn't he?"

"Yes, the beast!"

"Of course, he's a prefect!" said Tubby. "But he's no right to be down on you for slacking when he's a rotten slacker himself!"

"We weren't slacking!" growled Lovell.

"Well, trying to get out of work is slacking, isn't it?"

"Oh, rats!"

"But Carthew's a regular slacker," continued Tubby. "It would be different if it had been Bulkeley or Neville; but Carthew was only down on you out of spite. That's so, isn't it?"

"Yes, blow him!"

"Well, then, what about reprisals? What about making Carthew sit up?"

The Fistical Four stared at Tubby.

They had, as a matter of fact, already been thinking of schemes—possible and impossible—for making Mark Carthew sorry that he had chipped in with such disastrous effect.

But it was a surprise to hear the fat and lazy Falstaff of Rookwood proposing to go on the war-path, with a prefect of the Sixth Form as the destined victim.

"What's come over you, Tubby?" demanded Jimmy Silver. "Are you going to ask Carthew to step into the gym and have the gloves on?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I think he ought to be punished," said Tubby. "I've got an idea for making him sit up, if you'd care to hear it."

"Go ahead!"

"You know, Carthew digs in a tent now, same as the rest of us," said Tubby. "He shares a tent with two other seniors—Jones major and Lonsdale. Of course, he keeps his things there. Well, what about raiding his things? Easy enough to get at them in a tent, especially after dark."

Jimmy shook his head.

"No good ragging his clothes and things; there would be a row," he answered. "Think of a better one, Tubby."

"I wasn't thinking of his clobber, you ass. I was thinking of his grub!"

"Grub! You fat duffer, I might have guessed that! I wonder if there's a minute of the day when you're not thinking about somebody's grub?"

"Well, of course, I mean to punish Carthew—not because of the grub. I don't care much for grub, as you know!"

"Oh, great pip!"

"But Carthew had a hamper to-day," continued Tubby, his eyes glistening.

"It's in his tent now. I've had an eye on it."

"You needn't tell us that!" growled Lovell.

"I don't really approve of hampers in war-time," said Tubby. "I shouldn't wonder if there's something outside the ratons in it. Carthew's a cad, you know, so very likely his people are cads, too. Might be cakes and jellies and tins of meat and things. Think of that, Jimmy! Think of Carthew's feelings if you fellows raided his grub!"

"Scat!"

"That's reprisals, if you like!" urged Tubby. "You raid the hamper after dark, and—I'll put it somewhere! I'll take all the risk of disposing of it, if you get it away from Carthew's tent!"

"I dare say you would!" snapped Jimmy Silver. "So that's your idea of reprisals, is it? We're to raid Carthew's hamper for you to gorge! Turn round!"

"Eh! What for?"

"So that I can kick you!"

"Look here—"

"All together!" said Jimmy Silver, drawing back his foot.

Tubby Muffin beat a strategic retreat without waiting for four boots to be planted on his podgy person.

The Fistical Four continued to rub their hands, and to make remarks about Carthew, and things generally, in a dismal frame of mind.

But Tubby Muffin did not relinquish his idea.

Having failed to induce the Fistical Four to take "reprisals," Tubby was driven to the stern necessity of raiding Mark Carthew's hamper himself.

He did not want to take the risk certainly, but the thought of what might possibly be in the hamper spurred him on, and helped him to screw up his courage to the sticking-point.

He hovered about the Sixth-Form quarters, with an eye on Carthew's tent, and was soon spotted by the bully of the Sixth, who called on him to fag.

Tubby had not bargained for that, but there was no help for it, and Carthew kept him fagging for an hour.

Finally he dismissed him with a cuff, perhaps by way of testifying gratitude for his services.

But Tubby Muffin did not go far.

As the dusk deepened he lurked among the tents, keeping a watch on Carthew's quarters, waiting for the tent to be left vacant.

Jones major and Lonsdale were in Bulkeley's tent, he knew, and he did not suppose that Carthew would remain in his tent by himself.

He was right. After a time Carthew strolled away, and Tubby crept cautiously to the tent he had quitted and tiptoed in.

It was dark in the tent, but the fat Classical knew where the hamper was, and in a minute or less his fat fingers were upon it.

He was feeling over the fastenings, when there were footsteps outside the opening of the tent, and he stopped suddenly.

"No light here," said a voice—the voice of Frampton of the Modern Sixth.

Tubby Muffin shivered.

Carthew had not gone, after all. He had simply called on Frampton, and returned with him, and they were both about to enter the tent.

"I've got some matches, I think," said Carthew.

Tubby trembled.

The two seniors had entered the tent now, and were standing within a few feet of the unhappy Tubby, while Carthew fumbled in his pocket for matches.

"I suppose it's safe here, Carthew," said Frampton, speaking in a low voice. "Carthew laughed contemptuously.

"Safe enough! Why not?"

"Well, if anybody happened to look into the tent, and saw cards goin' on—"

"Why should anybody? Besides, we could douse the gim, in a second if we heard anyone comin'."

"What about Jones and Lonsdale—if they come in?" muttered Frampton, evidently uneasy. "They're not our sort."

"They're staying with Bulkeley, I believe."

"You're not sure?"

"Well, I think so."

"Dash it all, Carthew, that's not good enough! Look here, you'd better come over to my quarters. Catesby and I have a tent to ourselves, and Catesby is true blue, if he comes in."

Scratch!

Carthew's match flared up.

It glimmered on the fat, scared face of Tubby Muffin.

"What—who—" stutered Frampton, startled by the fat face suddenly glimmering out of the darkness.

Tubby Muffin made a desperate rush.

He knew what to expect if Carthew laid hands on him just then, especially after what he had overheard.

He bolted for the doorway, just missing a savage clutch Mark Carthew made at him.

"Stop!" shouted Carthew.

Tubby Muffin was not likely to obey that order.

He dodged panting out of the tent, and bolted for the Fourth-Form quarters, stumbling over several tent-ropes in his progress.

"Who—who was that?" gasped Frampton. "Some junior—"

"Muffin, I believe!" said Carthew between his teeth.

"Do you think he heard—"

"Of course he did! I'll skin him! I'll—I'll—"

"Better let him alone just now, if he heard what we were saying," said Frampton drily. "He might talk."

"Oh, rot! Nobody would believe him!"

"I'd give him a rest, all the same, I think. Least said, soonest mended. Look here, you'd better come over to my tent, Carthew, after this!"

"Oh, all right!"

The two seniors quitted the tent and moved away to the Modern quarters.

The fact that Rookwood school was under canvas, and that it was a little more risky to enjoy the delights of

## IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN

Write to me whenever you are in doubt or difficulty. Tell me about yourself; let me know what you think of the BOYS' FRIEND. All readers who write to



banker and nap, did not make any difference to the black sheep of the Sixth. They did not intend to make any change in their pleasant little customs. But they realised that it was necessary to be more than usually cautious. In Frampton's tent they found Catesby, a bird of the same feather, and the tent-flap was carefully fastened down before the cards and the cigarettes were produced. The three young rascals were quite on the alert while they were enjoying their "little game."

The 5th Chapter. Uncle James Has an Idea.

"Oh, dear!" Tubby Muffin gasped breathlessly as he rolled into the tent he shared with the Fistical Four and Dick Van Ryn. Jimmy Silver & Co. were getting their sleeping-quarters ready, as it was close on junior bed-time. Tubby collapsed on a box and gasped for breath, and the Co. gave him inquiring looks.

"You've been after Carthew's hamper, you fat burglar!" growled Lovell. "Oh! Oh, dear!" "I hope he jolly well larrupped you!" said Raby charitably.

"Well, he didn't!" grunted Tubby. "I say, they're awful beasts! They'd have mopped me up if they'd caught me! I say, Jimmy, if you care to raid that hamper now—"

"Scat!" "It's quite safe!" said Tubby eagerly. "Jones and Lonsdale are with Bulkeley, and Carthew's gone over to the Modern side to play cards in Frampton's tent."

"What?" "Rotters, ain't they?" said Tubby indignantly. "If I was a sneak I'd jolly well tell Mr. Bootles about what they're doing."

"How do you know what they're doing?" demanded Jimmy. "I heard 'em talking. They didn't see me in the dark, till that beast Carthew struck a match!" grunted Tubby. "Ain't they a precious set! And Carthew's a prefect, too! Precious prefect—I don't think!"

Jimmy Silver looked thoughtful. "You're sure of this, fathead?" he asked.

"Yes; of course! I heard—" "What did you hear, then?" Tubby Muffin breathlessly explained. The captain of the Fourth listened very attentively, with a thoughtful frown upon his brow.

"So, you see, it's safe enough to raid the hamper after lights-out," said Tubby in conclusion. "The Sixth don't go to bed before half-past ten, so Carthew won't be back. What do you think, Jimmy?"

"I think I'll scrag you if you say another word about the hamper!" growled Jimmy Silver in exasperation. "But—but I thought—"

"Oh, dry up!" "What have you got in your noddle, Jimmy?" asked Van Ryn, the South African junior, with a curious look at the captain of the Fourth.

"I've got it!" answered Jimmy, with a chuckle. "This is where we make Carthew sorry he spoke! We've got him on the hip!"

"Blessed if I see how!" said Newcome. "Haven't you heard Tubby's chintzy music—Carthew's gambling with Catesby and Frampton in their tent on the Modern side?"

"No business of ours." "Quite so. But suppose Mr. Bootles dropped in on them?" "Jimmy!" exclaimed the Co. in chorus. "Well?" growled Jimmy.

"Carthew's a rotten cad, but we're not going to sneak about him!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. "I am surprised at you, Jimmy!"

"Fathead!" was Jimmy's polite reply. "Well, you suggested—" "Cheese it! Here comes Bulkeley!" "Lights out in five minutes!" said Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, looking into the tent.

"Right-ho, Bulkeley!" answered Jimmy. Nothing more was said of Jimmy Silver's wheeze, whatever it was, till after lights-out, and the junior tents were wrapped in darkness. Then Jimmy Silver sat up. "You fellows asleep?" he asked sarcastically.

"No, ass! Going to sleep, though, if you'll give your lower jaw a rest," answered Lovell. "Don't you want to get even with Carthew, duffer?"

"Not by sneaking about him to Mr. Bootles." "Whiz!" "Yaroooh!" roared Lovell. "Who buzzed that boot at me? Ow, ow! Was that you, Jimmy Silver, you dangerous maniac?"

"Do you want the other?" asked Jimmy in sulphurous tones. "Why, you—you—I'll—I'll—" "Shut up and let me explain! It's a wheeze, you chump—a wheeze—something a bit better than climbing into an oak-tree and asking for a licking. Those three cads are gambling in Frampton's tent, and that's where we come in! Can't you see?"

"Ow-ow!" "What's the matter with you, ass?" "You silly chump, do you think you can buzz a boot at a chap without hurting him?" shrieked Lovell. "Oh, dry up a minute!"

"Whiz!" Lovell had found the boot, and he returned it to its owner. Jimmy Silver received it on his nose, and there was another roar in the tent, followed by a chortle from Arthur Edward.

"I'll keep this game up as long as you do, Jimmy," he remarked.

Jimmy Silver rubbed his nose, and breathed hard. "You frabjous ass!" he said witheringly. "I've a jolly good mind to mop up the tent with you." "Bow-wow!" "Get on with the wheeze, Jimmy," said Van Ryn pacifically. "Well, listen, then. If those cads heard Bootles outside the tent, they'd put out their light at once, wouldn't they, so that he couldn't see their game?" "I suppose so." "Well, then they wouldn't see Bootles."

"They wouldn't, naturally. But what the dickens—" "So it's only necessary to have Bootles' voice, and not Bootles himself," said Jimmy. "Do you see?" "Wandering in your mind?" asked Lovell. "Are you going to ask Bootles to lend you his voice?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Oh, you've got the brain of a Hun," said Jimmy. "Think a bit! Haven't you ever noticed the unearthly squeak that Bootles calls a voice? Anybody could imitate it a treat."

"Oh!" "Dutchy could do it on his head, frinstance. In fact, he's done it lots of times, for fun." "Easy enough," said Van Ryn. "Oh, I see," admitted Lovell. "Why couldn't you explain that before? You're so jolly long-winded, Jimmy."

Jimmy Silver snorted. "Dutchy's practised that sort of thing, being a blessed ventriloquist," he said. "This isn't a case of ventriloquism, though. All we want is a chap to imitate Bootles' squeak. I could do it myself all right, but Dutchy can do it better."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Van Ryn. "That's the idea," said Jimmy. "We get round Frampton's tent, and Dutchy turns on Bootles' voice, and you can guess how those cads will shiver. It would mean the sack for the lot of them if the Head knew their game. They'll be

scared right out of their wits—such as they are. There was a chuckle in the tent. "But, I say, Jimmy—" came a fat voice. "Well?" "I can suggest an improvement," said Tubby Muffin. "Suppose you let Carthew alone and raid his hamper instead? Then—Yah! Oh, yah! Yoooop!"

"Anything more about Carthew's hamper?" inquired Jimmy Silver, laying on with his pillow with great energy, while Muffin squirmed and yelled. "Yow-ow! Stoppit! No! All right! Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "You stay in bed, you fat scavenger!" growled Jimmy. "You other fellows get into your clobber. Put on Bootles' squeak, Dutchy, and let's see whether you've got it in order."

"Silver! Boy, how dare you! Are you alluding to me?" came a voice from the darkness, and Jimmy Silver jumped in utter dismay. "Oh! Oh, sir! I—I—I—" "Then he stopped."

He had spun round towards the tent-flap, supposing that Mr. Bootles had arrived there in time to hear his remark. But the flap was closed, and the Fourth Form-master certainly was not there. There was a chuckle from Van Ryn.

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy. "You—you Dutch villain, it was you, was it?" "Why, you asked me—" "I didn't ask you to make me jump out of my skin, you utter ass!" growled Jimmy Silver. "Do stop cackling, you silly asses! I don't see anything funny in this."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Will it do?" chuckled Van Ryn. "Yes, ass!"

And the Fistical Four and their African comrade finished dressing in the dark, and crept out under the tent, leaving Tubby Muffin to sink into balmy slumber and dream happy dreams about Carthew's hamper.

The 6th Chapter. "Done" in the Dark.

"Your deal, Catesby!" "Got a match?" "Here you are! Use the candle—matches are short." Carthew, Frampton, and Catesby were enjoying themselves after their own fashion in Rupert Frampton's tent. An upturned box served as a card-table, and they sat round it on camp-stools, by the light of a candle. They preferred a candle for illumination, as it could be extinguished instantly in case of need.

Not that there was much likelihood of interruption. Frampton and Catesby were prefects of the Modern side, and Carthew was a Classical prefect. Like Cæsar's wife, they were above suspicion. Still, they did not forget caution.

As prefects they were not likely to be suspected, but as prefects they would suffer unsparing punishment if they were discovered in delinquency. The "order of the boot" was sure and certain if the Head learned of the sportive proceedings in Frampton's tent.

The cards and little heaps of money glistened in the candle-light, and there was a scent of cigarette-smoke in the tent. Stephen Catesby lighted a fresh cigarette at the candle, and then proceeded to deal the cards.

Catesby was looking in rather high feather. He had been winning, and Frampton and Carthew were looking much less satisfied. Losses at gambling did not conduce to good temper or friendly feeling.

Carthew gave a sudden start, as the Modern senior was dealing the cards, and his eyes turned uneasily towards the tent-flap. "Is that somebody outside?" he asked. "Only some fellow goin' to his tent," said Frampton. "Knowles very likely; he's in the next."

"Manders isn't likely to come along?" "Frampton! Have you been so utterly reckless as to allow a candle to fall over, at the risk of setting fire to the whole place?" "I—I put it out instantly, sir. I—I put my foot on it."

The new-comer had stepped inside the tent, but he had allowed the flap to fall in place behind him, shutting out whatever glimmer there might have been to relieve the darkness. If Mr. Bootles wanted to see what was going on that was rather careless of him; but the three gamblers were thankful enough for his carelessness.

They could not see Mr. Bootles—not even the vaguest outline of him—and that gave them the comforting assurance that he could not see them. In the blackness, Catesby was almost hysterically counting the pack of cards, to make sure that none were scattered on the floor to be seen as soon as there was a light.

Any one out of the fifty-two would have been sufficient. "Strike a match at once, Frampton!" Frampton was not likely to obey that order.

He was feeling over the box, to make sure that the loose money was all collected up. "Do you hear me, Frampton?" "I—I haven't any matches, sir! I—I'm looking for some."

"Have you any matches, Catesby?" "Nunno, sir!" Catesby ground his teeth with fury. He had had to answer Mr. Bootles, and he had lost count of the cards he was counting in the dark.

He had had to begin from the beginning. "Carthew! You are here, Carthew?" "Ye-es, sir." "What are you doing here, Carthew?" "I—I dropped in for a chat with Frampton, sir. He—he's been telling me about botany, sir."

"Botany?" "Yes, sir. I—I'm interested in botany."

"Quite sure, sir! Oh, quite sure!" "Really, this appears very suspicious to me! It is extraordinary, to say the least of it, and looks as if there is something in this tent you do not desire me to see."

"Oh, sir! If—if Muffin has been telling you anything, sir—" "What? What?" "Muffin is a wretched little liar, sir!" "I really do not see, Carthew, why you should refer to Muffin. What has Muffin to do with the matter?"

Carthew breathed more freely. If Mr. Bootles had no direct information he could only be acting on suspicion, and it would be easier to bamboozle him. "Shall I fetch some matches, sir?" asked Frampton. "Or perhaps you would step into Knowles' tent and ask for a light, sir. It would only take you a minute."

The three young rascals waited breathlessly for the answer. If the unwelcome visitor would only depart for one minute that would be enough, by Carthew's flash-lamp, to clear away the last guilty traces.

"What? What? A good suggestion! Quite so! However, I will remain here, while you go to Knowles' tent, Carthew. Ask Knowles to step here, and bring a lamp."

"Oh!" "Go to once, Carthew!" "Oh, dear!" "What—what did you say, Carthew? Go to once, and I will come with you!" said the voice of the unseen visitor. "Come! Precede me from the tent, Carthew."

"Oh, what luck!" breathed Frampton. The three seniors had not dared to hope that Mr. Bootles would quit the tent, and leave them free from observation before a light was brought. They felt quite thankful to him at that moment.

Carthew stepped out of the tent into the darkness. The next moment he uttered a fendish yell. Four dim figures started up in the gloom, and four pillows swept through the air and smote Carthew all at once.

The bully of the Sixth went staggering. "Biff, biff, biff, biff!" Carthew, howling with surprise and wrath, rolled on the ground, the pillows smiting him mercilessly as he rolled.

He was taken so utterly by surprise that he could do nothing but gasp and stutter and howl. "Bless my soul! What is that noise? Carthew, what tricks are you playing?" "Yaroooh! Oh! My hat! Help! Yoooop!"

"Biff, biff, biff." The four dim figures vanished into the darkness, with a soft sound of chucking, and a fifth figure scudded after them. Carthew sat up, dazedly. Frampton and Catesby peered out of the tent, in utter wonder.

"What the—" "Ow! Oh! Ah!" Carthew staggered to his feet. "Mr. Bootles, I have been assaulted! I—I—I—Ow! Where is he? Mr. Bootles? Are you here, sir?"

There was no reply. Evidently Mr. Bootles was no longer on the scene—if he had been on the scene at all!

"He's gone!" gasped Catesby. "Gone?" stammered Carthew. "What luck!" muttered Frampton. "Look for that blessed card, quick; he may have gone for the Head!"

"Oh, crumbs!" "At that horrifying suggestion Carthew forgot even the pillow he had received, severe as it had been. The three seniors hurried into the tent, closed the flap, and by the light of a flash-lamp they quickly had the place in good order, waving newspapers to drive off the remnant of the smoke.

In a few minutes all was ready for inspection—if Mr. Bootles returned with the Head! But Mr. Bootles did not return with the Head—he did not return at all, and Carthew & Co. were left utterly bewildered.

They would have been enlightened if they could have heard the chorus of chuckling voices in Jimmy Silver's tent on the Classical side. The Fistical Four had lost no time in regaining their quarters, and "Mr. Bootles" crawled under the tent with them, chortling.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Arthur Edward Lovell. "What a lark! They—they thought it was Bootles all the time! They'll be expecting him back! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I didn't half think it was Bootles when I heard Dutchy pitching it to them!" chortled Jimmy Silver. "Poor old Carthew! I rather think we're even now! Ha, ha! What a happy evening for a set of merry blades!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" The chums of the Fourth chuckled themselves to sleep, what time Carthew and Co. were wondering uneasily whether they were to hear anything further of the affair on the morrow.

On the morrow, however, they heard nothing of it; and when they saw Mr. Bootles he looked quite unconscious, and made no allusion whatever to the incident.

The trio were puzzled, but relieved. Jimmy Silver's only regret was that he couldn't tell Carthew the real identity of "Mr. Bootles"; but it was a case in which a still tongue showed a wise head.

THE END.



Four dim figures started up in the gloom, and four pillows swept through the air and smote Carthew all at once.

"My dear man, Mr. Manders wouldn't believe this if he saw it!" chuckled Frampton. "He would take it as an optical delusion."

Carthew laughed. But his laugh died away the next moment. The tent-flap was shaken from without, and a sharp, squeaky voice was heard. "Bless my soul! What—what? Is it possible?"

Carthew started to his feet. "Mr. Bootles!" he breathed. Catesby left off dealing the cards, and made a scrambling clutch to gather them up again.

The flap was shaking. "Bless my soul! Let me in at once, Frampton! I understand that a Classical prefect is here; and I can smell smoke—tobacco-smoke! What—what? Shocking! Unheard of! Dr. Chisholm shall hear of this!"

Frampton blew out the candle. Darkness wrapped up the sportive scene. At any instant the flap might open, and Mr. Bootles, certainly, could not be allowed to see what was going on.

Cards and money and cigarette-smoke would have given the game away too completely. In the darkness Catesby was still gathering up cards with frantic energy and haste, but he was not at all sure that he had them all.

"Do you hear me, Frampton?" "Ye-es, sir!" gasped Frampton. "Let me in!"

There was no help for it. Frampton unfastened the flap. He thanked his good fortune that it was not yet time for the moon to rise, and outside it was almost as black as within the tent.

"Bless my soul!" went on the squeaky voice, as the flap fell aside. "I can distinctly smell smoke! What have you put the light out for?" "It—it fell over, sir." "What, your lamp? I did not hear it fall!" "It—it was a candle, sir."

"I am very glad, Carthew, to find you interested in so harmless a subject. I trust, Carthew, that your statement is correct."

"Oh, sir!" "But I can distinctly smell tobacco-smoke."

"That—that's the candle, sir. It—it fell on some—some brown paper, and— and scorched it."

"Bless my soul! The smell appears to me to be quite different. Carthew, procure a light at once!"

"I—I'm feeling for some matches, sir." "It is very extraordinary that not one of you has any matches. However, perhaps I have a box myself."

There was a sound of fumbling. The three black sheep were almost sick with apprehension.

What had caused Mr. Bootles to pay that sudden and suspicious visit was a mystery, and Carthew wondered whether Tubby Muffin had been talking. A chance visit they would have been prepared for, but this sudden and suspicious invasion of the tent quite took them by surprise.

"Fifty-one!" breathed Catesby. "Eh! What did you say?" exclaimed the squeaky voice of the Form-master. "N-n-nothing, sir."

But Carthew and Frampton understood. Catesby had fielded fifty-one of the cards, and the other one was lying somewhere in the gloom, to be revealed as soon as there was a light.

"Bless my soul! Where are those matches?" It was an irritated murmur. "Can I have omitted to place the box in my pocket? Dear me!"

Carthew & Co. devoutly hoped that Mr. Bootles had omitted to place the box of matches in his pocket.

Otherwise, their only chance was to get a foot on the missing card, and cover it up before Mr. Bootles could see it, when a match was struck.

"Bless my soul! I do not appear to have any matches. Are you sure, Carthew, that you have no matches?"

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## THWARTED BY THREE!

A Splendid New Story, introducing  
**BOB TRAVERS & CO., the Chums of  
Redclyffe School.**

By **HERBERT BRITTON.**

### The 1st Chapter. A Licking for Four.

"I am ashamed of you!" Dr. Hamlin, the Head of Redclyffe, made the remark as he sat back in the chair in his study, surveying with a severe frown the four juniors who stood before him.

Bob Travers, Dicky Turner, Jack Jackson, and Bunny, the new boy, moved restlessly at the Head's statement.

The Fourth Formers were not surprised that Dr. Hamlin was ashamed of them; but, all the same, they did not like him mentioning the fact.

"In interfering with Detective Short in the execution of his duty you committed an act of gross indiscretion," went on the Head slowly. "Possibly it was a mistake, but—"

"It was a mistake, sir," interposed Bunny quickly. "We thought he was Jabez Brown, the bank-thief."

"I am aware of that fact," said Dr. Hamlin coldly. "It may have been a mistake on your part, and I was inclined to excuse you, in spite of the fact that you prevented the detective from making a capture, and caused him to utter a threat to report you to headquarters. I pleaded with him to allow the matter to rest for a while, and he consented. In view of your latest misdemeanour, however, I cannot expect Mr. Short to abide by the arrangement."

"Oh!" "I understand," continued the Head severely, "that you boys left your dormitory after lights-out for the purpose of engaging in a pillow-fight with the juniors of the New House dormitory. Is that so?"

"Ye-es, sir," faltered the juniors in chorus.

"You must be aware," resumed Dr. Hamlin, "that in doing so you were breaking the rules of the school. For that act alone you deserve most severe punishment. Apart from this, however, one of you had the audacity to imprison Detective Short in one of the Fourth-Form studies, just at the very moment that he was about to track down the rascally bank-thief!"

"I thought he was the thief, sir," said Bunny haltingly. "I saw him prowling along the passages, and I thought—"

"You had no right to think such a thing!" broke in the Head sternly. "Had you remained in your dormitory, as you should have done, you would not have been aware of the fact that Detective Short was in the school buildings. He would then have been able to attend to his work without interference. As it is, Jabez Brown is still at liberty, due entirely to your acts of indiscretion. Detective Short is extremely angry—I am hardly surprised at that—and has reported you to headquarters for interfering with the law."

Dr. Hamlin paused for a few moments, to allow the meaning of his words to become impressed on the minds of the juniors.

That he achieved this object there was no doubt, for the faces of the juniors paled slightly as they thought of the trouble that was in store for them.

The Head rose from his chair at length and picked up a cane.

Then he stood before the juniors, and looked at them sternly.

"You, Travers and Turner," he said coldly, "I have always looked upon as juniors in whom I could place implicit trust, but I fear I have been mistaken. You have been at Redclyffe long enough to know that juniors are not permitted to leave their dormitories after lights-out. Therefore your conduct is inexcusable, and you thoroughly deserve the punishment which I am about to give you. Hold out your hands!"

Bob and Dicky held out their hands as commanded, and received the biggest hidings of their school careers.

There was no disguising the fact that Dr. Hamlin laid it on very severely, but the juniors received little more than they deserved.

The Head was a stickler for discipline, but he was just. He was never guilty of inflicting an excessive punishment.

At length he dropped his cane to his side, and gave Bob and Dicky a grim look.

"Remember," he said, "that any further transgression of the school rules on your part, and I shall be compelled to deal with you more severely. You would be well advised in future not to interfere in affairs which are no concern of yours. You may go."

Bob and Dicky went, with feelings that were too deep for words.

No sooner had the door closed behind them than the Head turned to the other juniors.

"As you are new boys I make some slight allowance for you," he said in kindly tones. "You would do well to bear in mind, however, that in leaving

your dormitory at night you are breaking the rules of the school."

"I knew that, sir," admitted Jack Jackson, unwilling to escape punishment because he had only been at Redclyffe a short time.

"H'm!" The Head coughed. "Well, mind you don't forget it in the future, Jackson," he said. "Rules are made for a purpose, and those who break them must expect to be punished. You, Bunny, would do well to remember this. I should certainly deal with you more severely, but for the fact that this is only your second day at Redclyffe. You have, indeed, made a very bad start."

The new boy stared hard at the Head. He did not like being told this.

"It is entirely your fault that you and your schoolfellows have angered Detective Short," went on Dr. Hamlin. "I do not exonerate the others from blame, as I consider that they should not have been affected by your suspicions."

"But I thought, sir—" began Bunny, when, with a gesture, the Head cut him short.

"I do not want to argue the matter further, Bunny," he said. "You have made two gross errors in mistaking Detective Short for the bank-thief, the consequences of which might still turn out to be serious. We must hope for the best, however, and in future reason things out before you act. You will avoid a good deal of trouble by so doing. Now, hold out your hands!"

The juniors obeyed the order, and received the punishment that was due to them.

The Head dealt with them comparatively lightly, considering the nature of their offence.

They left Dr. Hamlin's study at length, and wended their way in the direction of Study No. 5.

Bob Travers & Co. were sitting moodily by the fire.

Dicky Turner jumped up from his chair at sight of the new boy.

"Buzz off!" he cried commandingly. "This isn't a home for duffers. We don't want—"

"Surely this is Study No. 5!" remarked Bunny quietly.

"It is, but—"

"Then I've come to the right room," said the new boy, quite unperturbed by the warlike look on Dicky's face.

"You jolly well haven't!" snorted Dicky. "Hasn't Chambers told you which study you're to dig in?"

"Yes."

"Well, why don't you go to it?"

"I've come."

"My giddy aunt!" gasped Dicky in amazement. "Surely that beast Chambers hasn't had the sauce to plant you on to us?"

"Mr. Chambers told me directly after breakfast that I was to share this study," explained Bunny. "I am very glad, as I am sure we shall all be very happy together."

"Happy!" exclaimed Dicky Turner. "How the merry dickens could we be happy with a duffer like you knocking around? Oh, scissors! This is the giddy limit!"

"Surely you are not annoyed?" asked the new boy simply. "If you would rather I went into another study, I—"

"I would much rather!" said Dicky promptly.

"Very well, I will mention the matter to Mr. Chambers," said Bunny, moving towards the door of the study.

"Better not let him go, Dicky!" said Bob Travers sagely. "You know what old Chambers is. He'll come down on us like a thousand of bricks, and—"

"Oh, dear!" groaned Dicky dismally.

"Shall we ever be free of troubles? Come back, you silly duffer, and make yourself scarce!"

"But I do not wish to make myself scarce!" protested the new boy.

"Well, sit down and keep yourself quiet."

"I will certainly sit down, and, if you wish it, I will keep quiet," said Bunny. And he forthwith sat down.

It was nearly dinner-time, and Bob Travers & Co. discussed what to do that afternoon, which happened to be a half. The cricket season had come to an end, and as football did not commence for another week, the chums were not keen on playing either game.

Had the weather not been quite so warm a football practice might have filled the bill. But it was hot—very hot for the time of year—and therefore football had to take a back seat for a while.

"Hanged if I know what to do!" said Bob Travers, when two or three suggestions had been made and rejected.

"I've been thinking—" began Bunny, his brows knitted in thought.

"Well, stop it, then!" growled Dicky Turner.

"But I've been thinking it would be a good idea to—"

"It wouldn't!"

"Really, Turner!" protested the new

boy. "I have not told you my idea yet."

"And I don't want you to!" said Dicky. "We've had enough of your ideas!"

"But you want something to do," said Bunny.

"Quite so."

"Well, I've a good idea," explained the new boy. "Being new to Redclyffe, I am not acquainted with the place. Supposing you spend the afternoon in showing me round. I should enjoy myself immensely, and—"

"We shouldn't!"

"But—"

"Clang, clang!"

"Hallo, there's the bell for dinner!"

said Jack Jackson, jumping up. "Come on, you fellows!"

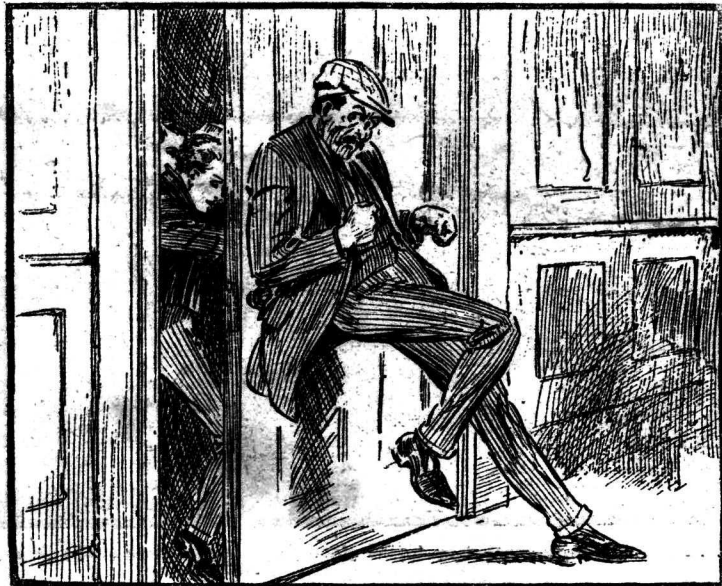
Bob Travers and his two chums slipped out of the study, leaving Bunny blinking after them in amazement.

The new boy followed a moment later but although during dinner he contrived to place his suggestions before the School House chums again, he was unsuccessful.

During dinner Bob Travers & Co. arranged to go for a spin on their bicycles that afternoon, and they took care to dodge Bunny directly the meal was over.

The new boy was left on his own, and he spent the afternoon in roaming over the school.

He had tea in Hall, and as Bob Travers & Co. had not returned he was unable to make any more suggestions to them.



The three chums pushed on the door with all their might, and gradually they forced their way into the room.

After tea Bunny resolved to explore the old tower, and he set off alone in this direction.

The evening being fine, most of the fellows left the precincts of the school, and nobody observed the junior making for the tower.

After exploring the lower part of the ruin, Bunny mounted the winding staircase leading to the top of the tower.

When he had climbed half the stairs the new boy stopped, for he had suddenly heard the sound of a movement above.

Was somebody else exploring the tower, or—

Next moment Bunny uttered a startled cry as he caught sight of the figure of a man a short distance ahead.

The latter looked over his shoulder, and muttered under his breath as he observed the junior.

He gazed at Bunny, a bitter, malevolent look on his face.

"Confound you!" he exclaimed hoarsely.

"What do you want?"

"I—I—" faltered the junior: "Dear me! I— Who are you?"

"I'm a traveller," said the man slowly.

"I've just come here to—to—"

"I don't believe you!" exclaimed Bunny. "I shouldn't be surprised if you're Jabez Brown, the bank-thief!"

"What?"

"Yes, I'm sure you are!" said Bunny fervently. "I recognise you now. I—"

"Ow! You! Grooogh!"

"I'll teach you to spy on me!" ground out the man, as he leaped forward and clapped his hand over the junior's mouth.

Bunny tried to utter a cry, but the words were forced back down his throat.

He struggled and kicked, but the man picked him up in his powerful arms and carried him to the room at the top of the tower.

He flung the junior down on the floor, and glared at him fiercely.

"You spying hound!" he growled. "I'll make you suffer for following me! Who told you I was here?"

"N-n-nobody!" faltered the junior, giving the scoundrel a grim look.

"Don't lie to me!" roared the man savagely. "Tell me the truth, or, by hokey, I'll pay you for it! Does anybody else know I'm here?"

"I really cannot say," faltered Bunny slowly. "I came here to explore the tower, and—"

"Is that the truth?"

"I see no reason why you should doubt my statement!" said Bunny resentfully. "Nobody but me knows you are here, and it is really a good thing, as I shall have the pleasure of informing the police that—"

"What?" gasped the man.

"I shall have the pleasure of telling the police that you're hiding here," said Bunny. "As soon as I leave here I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the man coarsely. "You're not going to leave here for a long while yet. What do you take me for—a blessed idiot? D'you think I'm going to let you get away and put the police on my track? No, my pippin, you're going to stay here as long as I think fit!"

"But—but I must return to the school!" insisted the junior. "They will wonder where I've got to!"

Bunny rose to his feet and moved towards the door.

But the villain picked him up in his strong arms and hurled him to the floor again.

Next moment he caught sight of a rope on the floor, and he grinned evilly at the junior.

"The very thing!" he muttered. "Now we'll see whether you're going back to the school!" He passed the rope round Bunny's ankles, and knotted it tightly.

"I'm desperate, my pippin, and I'm not in the humour to stand any nonsense. Stop kicking, or— Take that, you little fool!"

The man planted his fist full in Bunny's face, and the junior fell back partially dazed.

The man worked quickly at his task, and soon the junior's hands were tied firmly to his sides, and his feet knotted together.

The villain rose to his feet and surveyed the helpless Bunny with an evil look.

"I'm sorry I've had to treat you like

sorry for him if he interferes with that detective Johnny again!"

"I sha'n't!" declared Dicky Turner. "It'll serve him right all he gets, the burbling chump! The silly duffer's got us into a nasty mess, and he'll have only himself to blame if he gets into a worse mess."

"I know," said Bob thoughtfully; "but—"

"Look here, Bob," broke in Dicky vehemently. "I can see what's working in your mind. You're thinking we ought to go and search for the duffer."

Bob smiled.

"You've hit the nail on the head, Dicky," he said. "You see— Hallo, here comes Harcourt!"

The captain of the school came striding towards the juniors, his brow knitted in a serious frown.

"Bed-time, you kids!" he said quietly. "Anything been heard of Bunny, Harcourt, old man?" asked Bob Travers, stepping up to the captain.

"No," replied Harcourt. "The Head's in a rare old temper about it. I shouldn't be surprised if his days at Redclyffe are numbered. But there, it's his own fault. He must know he's not allowed to leave the school like this. I suppose you kids haven't any idea where he's gone?"

"We thought he might have gone searching for that bank-thief," said Bob Travers.

"Have you mentioned this to Mr. Chambers?" asked Harcourt.

"No, it only just occurred to us," said Bob Travers. "I'll go along and see him, if you like."

"No, you won't," said the captain at once. "Mr. Chambers said I was to see that you went straight to bed."

"But, I say, Harcourt," said Bob. "don't you think we ought to organise a search-party to go and look for the chap? He may have come to some harm, you know, and—"

"I've already made the suggestion to the Head," said Harcourt genially. "He wouldn't listen to it, however. He's rung up the police and also the kid's father, and told them what's happened. Possibly something will be done in the morning, if Bunny doesn't return in the meantime. Now, get a move on."

The juniors moved on towards the Fourth Form dormitory, discussing the mysterious disappearance of Bunny.

Once in their beds, however, most of the fellows dismissed Bunny's disappearance from their minds.

But Bob Travers and Jack Jackson remained awake, thinking about the mysterious affair.

The whole dormitory was quiet, save for the deep breathings of the sleepers, when a low cry could be plainly heard coming from the quadrangle.

Bob Travers sat up in bed at once and listened.

The cry was repeated, and, slipping out of bed, Bob Travers darted towards a window which overlooked the quadrangle.

A full moon was shining in a clear sky, and the porter's lodge stood out distinctly.

Suddenly Bob uttered a startled cry as he observed a dim light shine out through the open doorway of the lodge.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "There's something happening in old Merks' lodge. It may be burglars, or— Slip your things on, Jackson. I'm going down to look into this."

Jack Jackson tumbled out of bed at once, and started to put on his clothes. At the same moment Dicky Turner sat up in bed, and gazed around him.

"What the dickens is the matter with you chaps?" he demanded.

"Don't make a noise, Dicky," urged Bob. "We don't want the whole dormitory to wake up. There's something jolly fishy going on in old Merks' lodge, and we're going to investigate. Shouldn't be surprised if it's burglars."

"Oh, rats!" growled Dicky. "You've got burglars on the brain!"

"No, I haven't," said Bob, putting on his canvas shoes. "But don't you worry, Dicky. You turn over and go to sleep."

"No fear!" declared Dicky firmly. "I'm coming with you."

And a few moments later, having put on their coats and shoes and trousers, the three chums quietly left the dormitory, and wended their way downstairs.

It did not take them long to leave the school by means of a window on the ground floor.

Then they scuttled across the quadrangle towards the porter's lodge, the door of which was slightly ajar.

Suddenly a figure loomed in the doorway, and next moment the portly form of old Merks appeared in the opening.

He was holding his hand to his head, and appeared to be in a dazed condition.

The juniors were about to call to him, when he came hurtling out of the doorway and landed with a thud on the ground.

At the same instant another form came darting out of the lodge, and peited across the quad, away from the juniors.

The strange occurrence struck the juniors spellbound, and for a moment they were undecided whether to give chase to the running figure, or to lend assistance to the old porter.

It was Merks who decided the question for them.

"Old 'im!" he cried, pointing towards the running figure. "Old the brute! 'E's pinched my grub, 'e 'as! 'E's taken my rattons, and— Oh, old 'im!"

The juniors did not need a second bidding. They raced after the mysterious figure, now very faint in the light of the moon.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Jack Jackson breathlessly. "I wonder who he is? I— Look! He's making for the old tower!"

"So he is."

The juniors put on a spurt, and when the running figure entered the tower they were only a short distance behind.

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"I sha'n't!" declared Dicky Turner. "It'll serve him right all he gets, the burbling chump! The silly duffer's got us into a nasty mess, and he'll have only himself to blame if he gets into a worse mess."

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"What the dickens is the matter with you chaps?" he demanded.

"Don't make a noise, Dicky,"



Bob Travers was the first to enter, and he raced up the stairs, three at a time. His chums followed suit, and as they did so they heard the laboured breathing of somebody struggling up the stairs in front of them.

The juniors made as little noise as possible. Nevertheless, the man ahead heard them, and, fearing capture, darted up the stairs.

The juniors dashed after him, and when the man reached the top flight of stairs the juniors were a very short distance behind.

The man darted into the room in which Bunny was lying a prisoner, and endeavoured to close the door.

But, just in the nick of time, Bob Travers managed to wedge his foot inside the room.

"Push, you fellows!" he exclaimed, in a breathless voice. "Push for all you're worth!"

Dicky and Jack obeyed the summons with alacrity.

The man inside the room threw all his weight on to the door in an endeavour to close it, but Bob's foot was planted too firmly there for his efforts to succeed.

Bob pushed on the door with all his strength, and gradually the three chums moved into the room.

"Hurry!" cried Bob.

Exhausted from running, the man inside the room could not withstand that last desperate effort of the juniors.

The door shot open, the man was bowled completely over, and the three chums dashed into the room.

They hurried themselves upon the man, and held him a prisoner on the floor. He struggled fiercely, and hit out with his hands and legs; but the juniors were in a desperate mood, and they held on to the man grimly.

"Yell for help!" urged Bob Travers.

The juniors immediately yelled.

Loud as the chums' voices sounded in that confined space, they were only faintly heard by a man who was walking slowly along the lane which ran by the gates of the school.

Pulling up short, he listened for the cry to be repeated.

"Help, help, help!"

This time the cries were much louder, and, turning on his heel, Detective Short started in the direction from which the call for assistance came.

It did not take him long to guess that the cry came from the top of the old tower, and he was soon peeping up the winding stairs.

He could hear the sounds of a furious struggle, intermingled with the juniors' cries for assistance, and with one hand on his revolver and the other holding an electric torch, he at length reached the top of the stairs.

Then shining his torch ahead of him, he rushed into the room. The sight that met his gaze caused him to utter a cry of amazement.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "Hang me if it isn't Jabez Brown!"

"We've got him, sir," said Dicky Turner excitedly. "Get those handcuffs ready!"

Detective Short released his hold on his revolver, and drew forth a pair of handcuffs.

A moment later they had been fastened on the wrists of the missing bank-thief.

The detective ran his hands quickly over the villain, and when he discovered the missing papers his delight knew no bounds.

"By gad!" muttered the detective. "You've had a long run, Jabez Brown, but you won't escape me again. You'll spend the next few years in prison, and— Good heavens! What is that boy doing there?"

The light of the detective's torch had suddenly shone on the bound figure of Theodore Bunny, and the juniors started in surprise.

"My hat!" exclaimed Dicky Turner. "This beats the giddy band! How the dickens did Bunny get here?"

"We'll soon find out," said the detective, proceeding to cut away the bonds which held the junior prisoner.

Bunny was too astounded to give an explanation for a few moments. But at length he blurted out his experiences of that evening.

The detective listened intently, and then nodded genially to the juniors.

"Well, you young rascals have given me a lot of trouble," said, in a kindly voice. "But I suppose I must forgive you. You've helped me to capture this villain, and—"

"We're awfully sorry, sir," said Bob Travers politely.

"Not a word," said the detective quickly. "You couldn't help making a mistake. I must confess I was rather annoyed, but so would you have been if you'd been in my position. But, thanks to you, I've got this scoundrel at last. I'm jolly grateful to you for helping me, and I wish I could do something for you in return."

"You could, sir, if—" began Bob Travers.

"What is it?" demanded the detective. "Tell me, quick!"

"Well, sir," said Bob Travers, "I'm afraid Mr. Chambers will be jolly ratty—I mean annoyed—with us for leaving our dormitory, and if you'd say a word or two—"

"I will," said Detective Short promptly. "I'll put things right for you!"

And he did.

Not a word did Mr. Chambers say to them in regard to their midnight escapade, and neither did the Head. And, what was more, the juniors heard nothing of the complaint the detective had sent to headquarters. Here, again, they had Detective Short to thank, and there was no doubt that he had risen considerably in their estimation since the occasion when they had mistaken him for the missing bank-thief.

THE END.

(Next Monday: "Bunny's Misadventure" By Herbert Britton. Don't miss it!)

# ROUNDED UP!

A Magnificent Long Complete Tale of FRANK RICHARDS & CO., the Chums of the School in the Backwoods.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

## The 1st Chapter. Last Chance Camp.

Posy Pete, proprietor of the Pine Log Hotel, of Last Chance, was standing in his doorway in his shirt-sleeves when Frank Richards & Co. rode into camp.

Posy Pete wore a cheerful smile upon his fat, rubicund face.

The sun was setting on the Cascade Mountains, and the "boys" were coming in from the gulches after a day's work on the placers.

There was a tramp of feet in the rugged, unpaved street as brawny miners passed, pick on shoulder.

Posy Pete nodded genially to the "boys" as they trod by.

He was in a cheery mood. After the day's quiet the Pine Log was about to wake up to its usual evening liveliness, when the miners came in from the claims with "dust" in their pockets.

Behind the fat landlord, as he stood smiling into the street sounded the musical clink, clink, as the Chinese bartender washed the glasses in the bar.

Down the middle of the street came Frank Richards & Co., riding, followed by their pack-mule, and Posy Pete glanced at them curiously.

"Halt!" sang out Bob Lawless as they reached the hotel.

"Hotel" the Pine Log was, and the only one in camp; but it was only a rough structure of log and lumber of the most primitive kind.

Guests at the Pine Log had to do their own washing and sweeping, and to provide their own bedclothes if they wanted any.

Frank Richards & Co. dismounted, eyed by the fat landlord.

A schoolboy party was unusual enough at the mining-camp in the mountain wilds of North-Western Canada.

There were five in the party—Frank, Bob, and Vere Beauclerc, Chunky Todgers, and Yen Chin, the Chinese, all on holiday from Cedar Creek School, in the far-off Thompson Valley.

"I guess this is the hotel," remarked Bob Lawless.

"I guess you've hit it," said Posy Pete. "You're a new outfit in these parts. What are you children doing 'hyer?"

Bob Lawless grinned.

"I guess we're on holiday, and doing the North-West," he answered. "Business, too. We want to know where to find the sheriff. I reckon there's a sheriff in this camp?"

"Correct!"

"Where does he hang out?"

"'Hyer."

"In this hotel?" asked Frank Richards.

"Yep."

Posy Pete chuckled.

"You see, I'm the sheriff," he explained, "likewise, landlord of the Pine Log. Do you want the landlord or the sheriff?"

"Both," said Bob, smiling. "We want the landlord to give us a couple of rooms, and fodder for our horses; and we want the sheriff to take down a charge against a rustler named Carson, otherwise Handsome Alf, who belongs to this camp, I guess."

"Right!" answered Posy Pete. "This is Handsome Alf's home, if anybody wants him. But I guess I'd advise you youngsters not to quarrel with him. He's a bad man to quarrel with."

"We've done that already," answered Bob. "We charge him with trying to steal our horses, and some other things."

Posy Pete whistled.

"That's your business, as sheriff of the camp," said Vere Beauclerc.

"Correct! But—" The sheriff paused. "Take your horses round, my sons," he went on. "You'll find fodder for them. I guess I can give you two rooms, and I reckon there's grub for you inside. About Handsome Alf. You'd better think it over again, and call another time."

"But—" began Frank Richards.

"Coming!" called out Posy Pete, in answer to an imaginary call from within; and he disappeared into the hotel.

"Oh, my hat!" said Frank.

"That galoot don't want trouble with Handsome Alf," remarked Chunky Todgers sagely.

"Looks like it," agreed Bob. "But we've come here for trouble with the rascal, and we're going to have it. Bring along the gees."

The party led their horses round to the corral at the back of the lumber hotel, the corral answering the purpose of a stable.

The schoolboys adventurers had not expected "Eastern" refinements in the mountain mining-camp, and they were prepared to look after their mounts themselves.

The horses and the mule having been rubbed down and fed, and looked after generally, the chums washed off the dust of the trail at the pump in the yard—that being the place where residents in the hotel performed their ablutions in public.

Then they entered the Pine Log. A Chinese servant showed them to their



Three or four brawny men grasped the rail, and Handsome Alf was forced to sit astride of it, grasping it with both hands to keep his position.

room, a large apartment on the ground floor at the back of the house.

There was no choice about being on the ground floor, as the Pine Log had only one storey.

The "beds" consisted of planks, and any covering had to be provided by the guests themselves; but they were prepared for that.

"Well, there's room for the lot of us," said Bob Lawless; "and it's just as well to keep together. If Chunky snores we'll get up and brain him."

"Look here—" began Chunky Todgers warmly.

"Me hungry!" murmured Yen Chin.

"I'm jolly hungry!" remarked Chunky. "I hope they've got something decent to eat. I don't mind roughing it so far as accommodation goes, but I do want a square meal."

"This way," said Bob.

The five schoolboys proceeded to the dining-room.

There were a good many guests there, and a meal was going on.

Frank Richards & Co. secured places at the long board table, and found that the meal, though roughly served, was decidedly "square."

There was enough and to spare, and even Chunky Todgers was fully satisfied.

A good many glances were cast at the schoolboys by the other diners, most of whom wore red shirts and big, muddy boots, and had their hats on the back of their heads.

They did not stand on ceremony in Last Chance Camp.

A good many inquiries, too, were directed to them, all of which they answered cheerfully, and they found the mountain miners friendly enough.

After the meal Frank Richards & Co. looked for the sheriff.

But the sheriff had vanished, and the landlord had taken his place, so to speak.

Posy Pete was only playing one half of his double turn at present.

He was in the bar-room, busy helping his Chinese bar-keeper to serve his many customers, the "boys" apparently having come in from the gulches with a very powerful thirst on them.

But the chums of Cedar Creek were determined to interview Mr. Posy Pete in his capacity of sheriff, and they waited for an opportunity.

When, in a lull of business, the landlord went into his own room, and they saw him through the half-open door eating his supper, they followed him in.

"Can we speak to you now?" inquired Bob Lawless.

"I guess you can, if you like," answered the landlord. "Ain't you satisfied with your room?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Ain't you satisfied with the price?"

"Certainly!"

"Then I guess there's nothing to be said."

"It's about Handsome Alf—"

"Think again!" urged the sheriff. "Carson's a bad man to run against. I'm warning you."

"Look here," said Bob Lawless warmly, "I suppose there's some law in this town, isn't there?"

"Heaps!"

"And you're the sheriff?"

"Yep."

"Then you're bound to take our charge against that rascal."

"I guess you can run on, if you won't learn sense," answered Posy Pete. "Go ahead, my son!"

"Well, then—"

"And cut it short."

"I'll cut it as short as you like," said Bob. "We ran on Carson in the foothills, and saved him from being chewed up by a grizzly bear. He owed us an old grub, because we prevented him from robbing a miner, named Bill Lomax, who belonged to this camp, a while back. He attacked us, tried to kill two of us here present, and steal our horses. We're prepared to swear it in court. We want the villain arrested and tried."

Posy Pete wrinkled his brows. "You ain't dreamed all that?" he asked.

"No."

"You're all witnesses?"

"Yes."

"I guess Handsome Alf will deny it."

"Most likely he will," agreed Bob. "But something's got to be done."

"I guess you can leave it in my hands," said the sheriff, after a long pause. "I'll see what Handsome Alf has to say in the morning. I reckon you never expected to find law courts, lawyers, an' judges, all complete, in this camp, sonny! Galoots generally settle their little differences between themselves; excepting horse-thieves and claim-jumpers, who generally get stretched on the branch of a tree. I guess I'm the only law-officer in this hyer town, and I guess I was set up by the boys. I ain't appointed from New Westminster!" Posy Pete grinned. "But I'm taking notice of what you say, and I reckon I'll see what can be done. That's your way out."

And, leaving the worthy landlord-sheriff to finish his supper, Frank Richards & Co. left him.

But Bob turned in the doorway. "I think you said Carson is in camp now?"

"Yep."

"Where's he to be found?"

"He runs the faro-bank at the Flare-Up," answered Posy Pete.

"Where's the Flare-Up?"

"Across the way. I guess the naphthalms are aight now, and you'll find it easy."

"Right-ho!"

"But it won't be healthy for you youngsters to call on that galoot," added Posy Pete warningly.

"We shall see."

And the chums of Cedar Creek left.

## The 2nd Chapter.

### Handsome Alf at Home.

Frank Richards & Co. emerged from the Pine Log Hotel into the street.

Darkness had now fallen.

Across the street, a flare of naphthalms lighted up the dusk, and they easily picked out the saloon which bore the expressive name of the "Flare-Up."

That evidently was the headquarters of Handsome Alf, the "sport" of Last Chance.

Frank Richards & Co. were a little puzzled how to proceed.

"Well, I guess this lets out!" remarked Bob Lawless. "I reckon that fat galoot is more landlord than sheriff, and he don't want trouble with a rustler of Carson's kidney."

"That's plain enough," agreed Vere Beauclerc.

"You see, there isn't any court in camp, except when the sheriff calls the boys together to deal with a case," said Bob thoughtfully. "He don't feel inclined to do that on the strength of our yarn of what happened in the foothills. If he did, I guess Handsome Alf's got friends of his own sort, who'll swear that he was in camp at the time he was tackling us in the hills. But—Bob's brow grew grim—"we're not letting up on Carson."

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Frank Richards warmly. "He's got to be prevented from doing any further harm, anyhow!"

"We go killee!" suggested Yen Chin, whose ideas were extremely Oriental, in spite of his having lived most of his days in Canada.

"Fathead!" answered Frank.

"Me tinkee killee!" persisted Yen Chin. "Shootee—oh, yes!"

"Do you want to be strung-up, you young ass?" growled Bob Lawless.

"I say—" began Chunky Todgers.

"Well, what do you think, Chunky?"

"Why not go to bed?" asked Chunky, with the air of a fellow propounding a really brilliant suggestion.

"What?"

"We're tired, you know—at least, I am. Let's go to bed."

"You silly jay!" howled Bob. "What about Handsome Alf?"

"Oh, never mind him! I'm sleepy."

"Chunky had better go to bed," said Beauclerc, laughing. "And Yen Chin had better go with him."

"Me sleepee allee light," assented the Chinese.

"Vamoose, then!" grunted Bob.

Chunky Todgers very willingly made for the bed-room, where his resonant

snore was soon added to the other noises of the Pine Log Hotel.

Yen Chin went with him.

But Frank Richards, Bob, and Beauclerc remained in the street, debating what was to be done in the affair of Handsome Alf.

"I guess we're going to call on the galoot!" said Bob Lawless at last. "Come on!"

And the three chums crossed the street to the Flare-Up Saloon.

They had their rifles on their backs and their hunting-knives in their belts; but that equipment was not at all unusual or remarkable in the street of Last Chance.

Passing through the flare of the naphthalms, they entered the saloon.

Frank Richards looked round him with a great deal of interest. It was the first time he had set foot in a place of the kind.

In the unsettled mountains of the North-West matters were on a very different footing from that he had been accustomed to.

The camp of Last Chance had grown up like a mushroom round the claims when a "gold-strike" had been made in the valley.

Cabins stood here and there with hardly any attempt at order.

The main street itself was simply the old trail that had run through the valley, marked only by tramping hoofs and heavy boots.

After the gold-seekers had come those who lived by ministering to their wants—the hotel-keeper, the Chinese laundryman, and the "sport," or professional gambler.

The Flare-Up Saloon was built of lumber from the nearest timber, thrown together, as it were, to last but a little while.

When the "placers" petered out, the camp was likely to cease to exist, leaving only decaying cabins to fall to pieces in the wind and weather.

Then such characters as Handsome Alf would seek fresh fields and pastures new to ply their calling.

On the other hand, if more permanent gold discoveries were made, the camp would grow into a town. "Stores" would be opened, the log hotel would grow into a handsome building, the street would be paved and lighted, enterprising agents would appear, and sales of "town lots" would set in, and law and order would prevail.

In that case, too, Handsome Alf & Co. would have to leave town, and find other quarters.

Last Chance was at present in the doubtful stage of existence, and the following year might find it a growing town, or desert.

Meanwhile, Handsome Alf and his conferrers were making hay while the sun shone.

There was a goodly crowd in the Flare-Up when Frank Richards and his chums entered.

At the end of the long room was a bar, where two Chinese were kept very busy serving out the potent fire-water.

A good half of the patrons of the establishment were collected there.

But there was a good crowd, too, round a table in the middle of the room, where Handsome Alf kept the faro-bank.

The Californian was seated at the table.

The schoolboys recognised at once the dark, rather handsome face and the gold ear-rings of their old enemy.

Carson did not observe them as they mingled with the crowd round the table. He held a silver box in his hands containing the cards, and was pronouncing the familiar formula of the faro-banker: "Make your game, gents!"

Coins, notes, and little bags of gold-dust dropped on the table as the "gents" made their game.

The Californian proceeded to deal the cards.

Frank Richards & Co. watched the scene curiously enough.

It was the first time they had seen a faro-bank in operation.

"Make your game, gentlemen!"

The Californian was dealing the cards.

The result of the deal was profitable to the sport, who raked in a good many of the coins and notes on the table.





ROUNDED UP!

(Continued from the previous page.)

don't stand your trial they'll know what to think of you, anyhow."

He stepped back. The three chums moved off from the table, keeping a wary eye open, however. Handsome Alf dropped into his seat again, and took up the silver box containing the cards.

"Make your game, gents!" he said. Some of the onlookers laughed, and the game of faro continued.

But Handsome Alf's eyes, calm as he looked, were burning. His glance rested once or twice on the chums of Cedar Creek, and the gleam of them told of the rage within.

Frank Richards & Co. quitted the saloon. There was a grim smile on Bob Lawless' sun-burnt face as they came out into the naphtha-glare in the street.

"I guess that does it!" he remarked. "It'll be the talk of the camp, and Mr. Posy Pete will be bound to take the case in hand, whether he wants to or not. I half-expected that gang to begin a row. But I guess they saw we could give as good as they could send."

"The rotter will have to stand up to his trial now, or else clear out of the place over-night," said Frank. "Yes; or else—"

"He can't do anything else!" said Beauclerc. "He might," answered Bob quietly. "He don't want to leave Last Chance. He seems to be doing good business here. And I guess he don't want to stand up before a jury who'll hear our evidence. We're not going to sleep to-night, my pippins!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Frank. "Unless I'm jolly well mistaken, Handsome Alf's thinking of a third way out of the trouble," said Bob. "We shall see."

The three chums returned to the Pine Log Hotel in a thoughtful mood. They were satisfied, so far; but the matter had not ended yet, by any means. Last Chance was a lawless place, but not lawless enough for Handsome Alf to use his revolver recklessly, as he would have liked to do.

But in the dark hours of the night, when the camp was sleeping, it was only too probable that he would take measures to silence the awkward witnesses who had turned up against him.

Posy Pete met the three schoolboys as they came in, and gave them a fat grin. They could see that he had already heard of the scene in the Flare-Up.

"I guess you young antelopes have been looking for trouble," he remarked. "And we've found it!" smiled Bob. "Want your hosses?"

"Eh? No!" "You ain't leaving camp?" "I guess not!"

"You'd better," said the landlord-sheriff. "You take my advice, and light out. I tell you Handsome Alf's a bad man to have trouble with."

"Thanks!" said Bob. "We're going to bed. Good-night!" And the chums of Cedar Creek went to their room.

The 4th Chapter. Caught in the Act.

Chunky Todgers was snoring serenely when Frank Richards & Co. came in. Yen Chin was fast asleep, too. A single candle was guttering in the room, shedding a dim light.

Bob Lawless closed the door and shot the bolt. Then he crossed to the window and examined it.

A wooden shutter closed the window, which was quite innocent of glass. The window was secured by a single wooden bar, which kept the shutter fastened.

"I guess that's easy enough to open from the outside," remarked Bob, in a low voice; "and I guess we'll make it easier."

He removed the bar. "What's that for?" asked Frank, in surprise. "In case of visitors," said Bob coolly. "You want them to come in?"

"I reckon." "Phew!" Bob Lawless tapped the coiled trail-ropes, which he had taken into the bedroom.

"I shall be awake," he whispered; "and a galoot who gets in at that window won't get out so easy."

"Oh!" said Frank. "It's a bit close in here," went on Bob, in a louder voice. "I guess we'll have the window open."

He blew out the candle, and threw the wooden shutter wide open. The window was only a couple of feet from the ground outside, and Bob stood in the darkness, looking out.

Behind the hotel stretched the waste ground as far as the claims on the creek, two or three hundred yards distant. Beyond lay the dark mountains, clothed in pine, with a glimmer of starlight here and there breaking the gloom.

The night was warm, high up in the mountains as they were, and a soft breeze brought the scent of the pines in at the open window.

Bob Lawless turned from the window, and in the darkness of the room examined the rifles and placed his rope handy. "I guess you galoots can snooze," he remarked. "I'll wake you up if I want you."

"I guess not!" answered Frank. "No fear!" said Beauclerc quietly. And the three schoolboys stretched themselves on their beds to rest, but not to sleep.

The open window and the patch of glimmering starlight without were quite sufficient to banish all desire of slumber.

Anyone who chose could reach the room easily enough, and to enter it from without was equally easy; and if Handsome Alf chose to pay them a visit, he would have no difficulty in learning which room had been assigned to them.

A few words with the Chinese servant and a tip would get him all the information he wanted about the Cedar Creek party.

The night grew older, and the many noises of the Pine Log Hotel died away. In the street of Last Chance the lights of the Flare-Up Saloon were extinguished at length, and darkness reigned.

To a still later hour footsteps could occasionally be heard, as some belated pilgrim wandered home to his cabin.

But the latest footsteps died away, and Last Chance Camp lay in silence and slumber under the stars.

There were three at least who did not sleep. It was two hours past midnight, but Frank Richards & Co. had not closed their eyes.

They had removed their boots in order to be able to move without sound, and that was all. Frank Richards felt a soft touch on his arm in the darkness, and started.

"Onlee! Ill! Chinee," murmured Yen Chin. "Me tinkee heel something. You wakee. Bad manee comee."

"Quiet!" whispered Bob Lawless. "Chunky Todgers was still deep in slumber, and his deep snore was audible in the silence of the night."

Frank Richards & Co. made no sound. Invisible themselves in the darkness of the room, they watched the faintly glimmering square of the open window tensely.

A dark shadow blotted the starlight. Frank felt his heart throb. "Outside the window a man was standing, his head and shoulders silhouetted clearly against the glimmer of starlight. He was peering into the room. But within there was complete darkness, and he could see nothing.

Several minutes passed without a movement. Then a faint whisper was heard within.

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out; but, faint as it was, the listening chums recognised the tones of Handsome Alf.

It was the Californian. "It's a cinch, I reckon. Sleeping sound."

"I guess so," came another whisper. The sport was not alone. Still the chums of Cedar Creek made no movement, no sound. They waited grimly for the Californian to proceed.

The two figures receded cautiously, and the silhouette disappeared from the window. Bob Lawless, rope in hand, stepped a little nearer to the window, and bent his ear to listen.

There was a faint whispering without. He counted five dim forms in the starlight, close by the lumber wall near the window.

"No noise!" It was the Californian's sibilant whisper. "We don't want the whole camp buzzing round us. There's five in the crowd. I guess the Chinese don't amount to much, but he's got to go with the rest. Follow me in without a sound, and when I turn on the lantern each of you catch your man. Knock them on the head if they try to yell."

"You bet!" "Rope them up and gag them," went on the soft whisper. "We can carry them as far as the creek, and get the horses there. Last Chance will find them gone in the morning. The boys'll reckon they lit out because they were skeered. Nobody will look for their bones at the bottom of the canyon a mile away, I reckon."

There was a whisper in return which Bob did not catch. He smiled grimly in the darkness. The Californian's rascally scheme was not likely to work out according to programme, cunning as it was.

The minutes passed, and there was a faint sound without, and several dark heads were visible outside the window. The chums were still as mice.

A swarthy hand was laid on the win-

dow-frame, and with the stealthy softness of a panther the lithe Californian drew himself into the room, his companions waiting till he was inside before they attempted to follow.

Handsome Alf stepped down inside the window.

All was dark and still. The Californian, cautious as a cat, stood inside the room, listening intently, before he made his comrades a signal to follow.

In the darkness, only a few feet from him, Bob Lawless' hand was already raised, with the noosed rope in it. Whiz!

The sudden sound in the gloom made the Californian start and quiver; but before he knew what was happening the noose was over his head, and Bob Lawless was dragging fiercely on the rope.

Handsome Alf went to the floor with a crash, the noose tight round him, and Bob Lawless dragging it tighter.

A gasping cry left his lips as he fell. There was a sudden buzz without, and a dim figure clambered in at the window, to receive a fierce thrust from Frank Richards' rifle-barrel, and fall with a crash outside, and a loud yell.

The next instant Vere Beauclerc slammed the wooden shutter, and jammed the bar into its place.

There were loud exclamations of surprise and rage outside, and a heavy blow was struck on the shutter.

The chums did not heed it. Handsome Alf was rolling on the floor, struggling furiously to escape from the grip of the rope, but struggling in vain.

His arms were pinned by the tightened noose, and Bob Lawless was on him, knotting the rope.

Frank Richards struck a match and lighted the candle. Fiercely as he struggled, Handsome Alf was a prisoner, and he had no chance of escape.

His black eyes blazed as he rolled and wriggled. Crash! Outside, heavy blows fell on the shutter.

"Give them a shot, Franky!" called out Bob Lawless, without even looking up from his prisoner, whom he was securing. Frank Richards put his rifle muzzle to a crack in the shutter, and pulled the trigger.

Crack! There was a wild howl outside, and a sound of hurrying footsteps. The crashing blows and the shot had awakened the whole building, and voices could be heard on all sides.

Handsome Alf's gang evidently did not consider it prudent to remain longer, and one of them carried away Frank's bullet in his arm as he ran.

"They're going!" panted Frank. "Gone!" smiled Beauclerc. "All except this beauty!"

The Californian was still struggling breathlessly, and uttering savage curses. Unheeding his wild words, Bob Lawless knotted the rope about his legs as well as his arms, and then his struggles ceased.

There was a loud knock on the room door. "What's this hyer rumpus?" demanded the voice of Posy Pete. "Open this hyer door, you galoots!"

Frank Richards threw open the door.

The 5th Chapter.

The Last of Handsome Alf.

Bob Lawless rose breathlessly from the Californian, who lay on the floor a helpless prisoner, bound hand and foot.

Posy Pete, who held a candle in the neck of a bottle in his hand stared blankly into the room.

Behind him appeared several guests of Pine Log Hotel, in shirt and trousers, and with weapons in their hands.

All eyes were turned upon the Californian. "Waal, I swow!" ejaculated Posy Pete. "I reckon this hyer beats the bull deck! What sort of a circus do you call this hyer?"

"Can't you see for yourself?" asked Bob Lawless. "What do you think Handsome Alf is doing here at this time of night?"

"Oh, Jerusalem!" was the sheriff's reply. "The rest of the gang have got off," said Bob. "We don't want them. But this galoot walked into the trap as pleasant as you please. He didn't calculate that we were sleeping with one eye open."

The Californian did not speak. There was despair now in his haggard face.

He had been outwitted by the chums of Cedar Creek, and it was of little use for him to speak.

"There were a gang of them," said Bob. "They've got the horses by the creek all ready to run us out of camp—if we'd been asleep, as they reckoned. And Mister Carson thought nobody would look for our bones at the bottom of the canyon. I guess our bones won't ornament the canyon bottom just yet."

"Oh, Jerusalem!" repeated Posy Pete. "Sport, I reckon the game is up for you. I allow you can't play these hyer games in Last Chance, nohow! Boys, you keep that galoot tied up till morning!"

"We're going to," said Bob. Posy Pete, with a last look at the bound man, turned away, and tramped back to his room.

Frank Richards closed the door. The Pine Log Hotel was soon quiet again, but the chums of Cedar Creek did not think of slumber.

Even Chunky Todgers, who had been awakened by the uproar, did not close his fat eyelids again.

Needless to say there was no sleep for Handsome Alf.

He lay on the floor, bound hand and foot, able to use only his tongue, and he used that until a cut with the trail-ropes put an end to his oaths.

After that he lay in sullen silence. Frank Richards & Co. were watchful for the remainder of the night, lest the Californian's "pards" should attempt a rescue.

But those worthies did not return. An open attack was a little too desperate a venture for them, and they were content to leave their leader to his fate.

The schoolboy chums were glad enough when morning dawned on the valley and the sunrays stole into their room.

Bob Lawless threw open the shutter as the daylight strengthened. In the early sunshine miners were already turning out to tramp down to their claims.

A gladly crowd, however, turned in at the Pine Log for breakfast.

Breakfast was later than usual that morning at the Pine Log; there was another matter to be attended to first.

Posy Pete and a couple of bearded miners came to the room, and the Californian's legs were released, and he was marched out into the street before the hotel.

With his arms still bound, the wretched gambler stood in the midst of a buzzing crowd.

The proceedings were short and simple. Legal proceedings in Last Chance were quite innocent of formality or red tape.

A dozen men were called up by Posy Pete—who was all sheriff for the nonce, and had dropped the landlord half of his character—to act as jury.

Round them a thick crowd gathered, to look on, and to take a hand in the proceedings also, if the spirit moved them to do so.

Posy Pete, seated on a sack in his shirt-sleeves, called upon Frank Richards & Co. to make their charge.

There was a deep murmur from the crowd of miners as the accusation was made. Handsome Alf stood in sullen silence.

He had no defence to make, having been caught red-handed.

He could only thank his good fortune that he was in Canada, where Lynch law was not in favour.

"I guess the case is clear," was Posy Pete's comment, when the accusation had been made. "This hyer galoot is charged with hoas-stealing, attempted, and murder, also attempted; and he's caught mooseying into the boys' room in the middle of the night. There ain't no doubt what he meant to do. Gentlemen of the jury, guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty!" "Lynch him!" shouted a voice. "I guess there won't be any lynching hyer," said Posy Pete. "Handsome Alf is sentenced to be rid on a rail out of town, with the warning that he'll be strung up on the nearest tree if he shows his nose within ten miles of Last Chance agin. You hear me yap, Mister Carson?"

The sport did not answer. He had no defence to make, and he was fortunate to escape so cheaply. Only his black eyes glittered at Frank Richards & Co.

Sentence having been pronounced, it was carried out without delay.

A rail was brought from the nearest fence, and the Californian was freed from the rope, and ordered to take a seat upon it.

Frank Richards & Co. looked on quietly. It was the first time they had seen that peculiar Western punishment, of riding on a rail, carried out.

Three or four brawny men grasped the rail, and the sport was forced to sit astride of it, grasping it with both hands to keep his position.

Shoulder-high above the ground the rail was borne along, in the midst of a shouting, boozing crowd.

To keep a seat on the rocking rail was impossible, and Handsome Alf was soon clinging to it like a cat, with arms and legs, to save himself from a fall.

From the Pine Log, Frank Richards & Co. watched his progress down the street, and he disappeared from their sight at last.

The crowd returned at last without Handsome Alf.

He had been set down half a mile outside the limits of Last Chance, with the stern warning to "hoof it" for new quarters, on pain of being "strung up" if he was seen again.

"I guess we've seen the last of that galoot!" remarked Bob Lawless, as the chums went in to breakfast.

And the chums of Cedar Creek were glad enough to know that they had seen the last of their bitter enemy.

Far away in the foot-hills, Handsome Alf was tramping away, his face set southward, not again to trouble Frank Richards & Co. during their holiday in the North-West.

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY.

THE STRANDED SCHOOLBOYS! By MARTIN CLIFFORD. DON'T MISS IT!