



# Jimmy Silver's Sentence!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of the Chums of Rookwood.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

## The 1st Chapter.

### Tubby in Trouble.

"Oh, dear!"

That ejaculation, in the most dolorous tones, struck upon the ears of the Fistical Four of Rookwood, as they sauntered through the old stone archway into Little Quad.

"Oh, dear! Oh!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked round. They knew the fat tones of Tubby Muffin, of the Classical Fourth.

To judge by his lamentations, Tubby was in trouble—not an unusual experience for the fat Classical.

Tubby Muffin was seated on the old oaken bench near the archway, under a big beech, now nearly leafless.

His chubby hands were driven deep into his pockets and his eyes were fixed on his boots, his whole expression one of deep woe.

The chums of the Fourth grinned as they saw him.

They were not unsympathetic; but they knew Tubby's kind of troubles of old.

"Oh, dear! What am I going to do? Oh, goodness gracious!" mumbled Tubby, unconscious of the four juniors close at hand.

Arthur Edward Lovell woke him up, as it were, with a clap on the shoulder, and Reginald Muffin jumped and yelled:

"Yow! Yah! You silly ass!"

"What's the row, fatty?" asked Lovell.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Well, that's a row, and no mistake!" remarked Raby. "Don't do it, Tubby; you're frightening the rooks!"

"I say, Jimmy—" began Tubby, rubbing his shoulder where Lovell's too hearty clap had fallen, and fixing a doleful look on Jimmy Silver.

"Poor old chap!" said Jimmy Silver. "I know all about it, Tubby! You haven't had enough to eat. You never have."

"You see—"

"Oh, yes, I see! You thought you were going to wallow in the fleshpots of Egypt as soon as the war was over," said Jimmy Silver, with deep sympathy. "And it hasn't come off! Poor, poor old Tubby!"

"Alas!" sighed Newcome sadly.

Tubby Muffin grunted.

"Tain't that!" he said.

"Then you're short of money, and you want to borrow bobs, and there are no lenders," grinned Jimmy Silver. "We know—we know! It's awful, Tubby—terrible, in fact! My heart aches for you! I'd do anything except lend you a bob."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tain't that!" roared Tubby Muffin.

"No!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, in astonishment. "Then if it isn't food, and

it isn't cash, it's something new. Have you fallen in love?"

"Look here, you ass—"

"Isn't it that?"

"No!" shrieked Tubby.

"Then I give it up!" said Jimmy Silver. "Unfold the harrowing tale, Tubby, and rely on us for sympathy."

"And for nothing else!" chortled Lovell.

"It's awful!" said Tubby Muffin pathetically. "How would you like to be flogged by the Head, Jimmy?"

"Not the least little bit," said Jimmy, laughing.

"Well, that's what I'm booked for, unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless I can raise a quid!" said Tubby.

The Fistical Four stared at Tubby Muffin.

They had fully expected a request for a loan of a shilling or eighteenpence, but this rather surprised them.

"You want to raise a quid, to get off a flogging!" said Jimmy Silver. "Are you to tip the Head a quid to let you off?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Co.

"Tain't that, you ass! I—I owe the money—"

"You've been running up an account at the tuckshop, you fat bounder!"

"No, I haven't! Old Kettle won't trust me," said Tubby sadly. "That's really how I came to borrow the money. You fellows must have noticed how thin I've got."

"Fading away!" said Lovell. "Nearly disappearing! Only a ton or two of you left, poor old chap!"

"A little more, and you'll be gone from our gaze like a beautiful dream!" remarked Raby sadly. "When you've lost another fifteen stone—"

"It's all very well for you to poke fun at a chap," said Tubby. "But I've signed a paper for a quid."

"You crass ass!" said Jimmy Silver. "But what do you mean? A money-lender wouldn't lend you money!"

"I tell you I've signed it!"

"Then who lent you the money?"

Muffin was silent.

"We'll have this out," said Jimmy Silver grimly. "I think I can guess. I know that Leggett, of the Modern Fourth, lends fellows money, and charges them interest on it, like a rotten Shylock. Is it Leggett?"

"I—I agreed not to tell you," faltered Tubby.

"Well, you needn't tell me; I know. You owe Leggett a pound, and you've given him a paper. What's that got to do with the Head?"

"Leggett only lent me fourteen shillings, altogether," mumbled Tubby. "The rest

is interest. It's piled up, you know. Leggett keeps the accounts."

"Don't pay him a penny!" said Lovell.

"Then he'll go to the Head."

"Ha, ha! I think I can see him."

"But he says he will, and—and he's going to show the Head my paper, to prove that I owe the money!" gasped Tubby. "He says the Head will flog me if I don't square. And—and I can't, you know!"

"You utter idiot!" said Jimmy Silver, in disgust. "Do you think Leggett would dare to let Dr. Chisholm know of his rotten game? He'd give all the money he's squeezed out of fellows this term to keep it dark from the Head."

Tubby Muffin brightened up.

"Do you think so, Jimmy?" he asked.

"I know it, fathead!"

"Fancy that!" ejaculated Tubby. "Leggett said the Head would give me a flogging."

"He was frightening you, you fat booby!" growled Lovell. "If you'd had any sense you'd have punched his nose!"

"B-b-but—"

"That cad Leggett has got to be stopped!" said Jimmy Silver angrily. "It would serve him right to let the Head know; only we can't do that! The prefects ought to spot him; but he's so jolly deep! But he's not going on like this."

"I—I say, Jimmy, I'd rather you lent me a pound to pay him," mumbled Tubby Muffin.

"I'll lend you a thick ear!" growled the captain of the Fourth. "You won't pay Leggett any of his precious interest, Tubby. If you do, I'll wallop you!"

"But he'll go to the Head!" wailed Tubby.

"He won't, you ass! He dare not!"

"But—but—but—"

Tubby Muffin was evidently in an unhappy state between hope and fear.

Leggett's threats had had a deep effect upon his far from brilliant mind, and he dreaded the result of the cad of the Fourth carrying them out.

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

"You'll pay Leggett his fourteen bob if you've borrowed it, and you can take your time about it," he said. "If you pay him any interest I'll squash you! I'll see Leggett about it!"

"Oh, I say—"

"And you'll come with me," said Jimmy Silver, taking Muffin by one fat arm. "Leggett's going to hear some plain English."

"I—I say, Jimmy—" stammered Tubby.

"Dry up, and come along!"

And Tubby Muffin, in great trepidation, was marched along with the Fistical Four

into Big Quad, in search of Albert Leggett of the Modern Fourth.

And, judging by the looks of Jimmy Silver & Co., there was not a pleasant time in store for the Shylock of Rookwood when they met.

**The 2nd Chapter.**  
**Rough Justice!**

"There's the cad!"

Leggett of the Fourth was spotted under the beeches in Big Quad.

The Modern junior had his hands driven in his pockets, and a deep wrinkle in his brow, as if he were engaged in some very deep calculation.

Probably he was. But if so, he was not destined to finish that calculation.

The Fistical Four surrounded him under the beeches, and Leggett stared at them. And then, as he noted that Tubby Muffin was with the Co., he looked rather uneasy.

Leggett was a good deal of a rascal, and he had few scruples; but he carried on his rascalities under difficulties at Rookwood.

There was always danger of masters or prefects spotting him, though Leggett was very careful indeed to keep his proceedings from the knowledge of the powers that were.

And there was greater danger of rag-gings from fellows who did not approve of his methods of turning an honest penny.

Tommy Dodd, among the Moderns, had often hammered Leggett for his own good. And Tommy had a heavy fist which Leggett did not like at all.

And Leggett had to be careful, too, to keep his proceedings from the knowledge of Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth, as far as he could.

He was not always quite successful, however, as on the present occasion.

Really, Shylocking hardly seemed a paying game under such circumstances. But Leggett did very well out of his school-fellows in one way or another.

Some fellows were careless with money, and sometimes hard up and in a hurry to raise the wind, and then Leggett's chance came.

Tubby Muffin, indeed, would have borrowed ad libitum, to expend every shilling at the school shop, and he would have signed I O U's till they caused a paper shortage if he had been allowed.

But Leggett limited him to the amount he thought he could extract from him again with accumulated interest.

Tubby had reached that limit, and now, instead of further loans, he was confronted with demands to pay up, and dire threats of what would happen if he did not.

Hence the distressful lamentations of Tubby, which had brought Jimmy Silver & Co. into the affair.

Leggett made a movement to walk away as the Fistical Four surrounded him; but a shove from Arthur Edward Lovell stopped him abruptly.

He turned round quickly, and another shove from George Raby stopped him again. And then Leggett stood where he was.

His narrow eyes glittered spitefully at the Fistical Four.

"What do you want, you Classical rotters?" he muttered sullenly.

"I—I say, Leggett," squeaked Tubby Muffin, alarmed by the lowering look of the cad of the Fourth, "I—I didn't ask these chaps to interfere—I didn't really, you know! I never told Jimmy anything! Did I, Jimmy? He guessed, you know! Fancy that, Leggett!"

"Shut up!" said Jimmy Silver. "Leggett, you've been lending Muffin money!"

"Is that your business?" sneered Leggett.

"Yes, if you charge interest on a loan like a rotten moneylender!" said the captain of the Fourth. "It seems that you lent Muffin fourteen bob, and it's mounted up to a pound."

Leggett gave the fat Classical a deadly look.

"I—I say, Leggett, he—he guessed that, you know!" gasped Tubby. "Fancy that, old chap!"

"I've told Muffin he's not to pay you any interest," added Jimmy. "We're going to thrash him if he does."

"What-ho!" said Lovell. "And we're going to thrash Leggett, anyhow, ain't we, Jimmy?"

"Hold on a minute, old top! You've got an I O U signed by Muffin, Leggett?"

Leggett gritted his teeth, and did not answer.

"I—I gave it him, you know!" mumbled Tubby. "I—I say, I don't want you to chip in, you know!"

But Tubby was not heeded.

"You've been threatening the fat idiot and frightening him," pursued Jimmy Silver. "You've taken advantage of his being a fat idiot."

"Oh!" gasped Tubby.

"Now," continued Jimmy Silver, "you're going to set a match to that I O U, here in our presence, and burn it. Tubby will pay you the fourteen bob when he chooses; you took your risk about that. Out with the paper, sharp!"

Leggett's lips came together in a tight line.

"You interfering cad!" he muttered.

Tubby Muffin brightened up.

The burning of the I O U seemed an excellent idea to the fat Classical. In spite of Jimmy's assurances, he was by no means sure what view the Head would take if he saw that valuable paper.

"That's a jolly good idea!" said Tubby heartily. "You can depend on me, you know, Leggett. My word's as good as gold—better, in fact!"

"It's all Leggett's going to have, anyway!" said Jimmy Silver. "I'm waiting for you to trot out that paper, Leggett!"

"I won't!" said Leggett between his teeth.

"Do you want it taken away from you?"

Leggett clenched his thin hands savagely.

"You—you rotter—"

"Well, we won't take it," said Jimmy, after some consideration. "We'll only bump you till you destroy it of your own accord."

"I won't!" howled Leggett.

"You've got to stop your money-lending tricks, Leggett. Are you going to burn that paper?"

"No!"

"Then you're going through it, you cad!"

Leggett made a desperate rush to escape.

But the Fistical Four grasped him at once, and he was hauled back, gasping, and struggling furiously.

"No, you don't!" grinned Newcome.

"Let me go!" shrieked Leggett. "I'll yell for help!"

"If you bring a prefect on the scene, old nut, you know what to expect," said Jimmy Silver. "Please yourself!"

"Bump him!" said Lovell impatiently.

"Oh! Ah! Ow!"

Bump!





# Jimmy Silver's Sentence!

(Continued from the previous page.)

"Hullo! Here come the Modern rotters!" said Raby. "Never mind! Get on with Leggett!"

Tommy Dodd & Co. of the Modern Fourth were coming up at a run. Much as they despised Leggett, he was a Modern, and the three Tommies did not mean to see a Modern handled by Classics without interfering.

Bump!

"Yarrah! Rescue!" yelled Leggett. "Rescue, Moderns!"

Dodd and Cook and Doyle came up with a rush.

"Let go Leggett!" shouted Tommy Dodd. "Do you hear? Now then, sharp's the word!"

"Rats!"

"Buzz off!"

"Then we'll jolly well make you, bedad!" exclaimed Tommy Doyle.

Bump!

Albert Leggett smote the ground again, with a fiendish yell; and the next instant Classics and Moderns were "scrapping" over him.

Tubby Muffin essayed to flee, but a rush of the combatants sent him spinning, and he sprawled over Leggett, and sat on him.

"Ow!" gasped Tubby, sitting, quite winded, on Leggett's neck. "Oh, dear!"

"Groooh!" came from Leggett.

Crash!

Tommy Dodd and Jimmy Silver, struggling, stumbled over the fallen juniors, and rolled on them.

There was a shout from the distance: "Cave!"

But the combatants were too excited to heed the warning.

The battle was still raging when Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, came whisking up, his gown streaming behind him.

"Boys!" gasped Mr. Bootles.

"Oh, my hat! Bootles!" ejaculated Lovell.

The combat ceased as if by magic. Classics and Moderns backed away from each other, glaring breathlessly.

Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd staggered to their feet. But Tubby Muffin, in a dazed and winded state, was still sprawling on Leggett, and Leggett, with all the breath knocked out of him, gasped feebly under Tubby's weight.

Mr. Bootles frowned grimly at the gasping juniors.

"Silver! Dodd! I will not have these incessant disturbances!" he exclaimed. "I shall punish you all severely! What were you disputing about?"

"Ahem!"

"Muffin, get up at once!"

"Ow!" gasped Tubby. "Oh, dear!"

"Leggett! Dear me! Leggett appears to be hurt!"

"Oh, he's all right, sir!" said Tommy Dodd. And he dragged the gasping Leggett to his feet.

"Now, Silver, I insist upon knowing the cause of this disturbance!" said Mr. Bootles sternly. "From what I have observed, Dodd and Cook and Doyle were to blame. I saw them rush here—"

"Ahem! They—they—" stammered Jimmy Silver. He certainly did not want to throw the blame on the Moderns.

"They assailed you, Silver?"

"Ahem! We were bumping Leggett," said Jimmy. "They only chipped in."

"Then you began it, Silver?"

"Um! Yes."

"And for what reason, Silver, were you bumping, as you term it, Leggett?" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "Have I come upon a very bad case of bullying, Silver?"

Jimmy crimsoned.

"Certainly not!" he exclaimed.

"Are you hurt, Leggett?"

"Ow, ow! Yes!"

"Silver, unless you were ill-using Leggett entirely without cause, I demand to know the reason."

Jimmy Silver was silent.

Rascal as Leggett was, Jimmy did not intend to betray him to the school authorities, which would have meant a flogging at least.

Leggett was looking alarmed, now.

He was the most anxious of all that the truth should not come to light.

"If—if you please, sir, I—I don't mind," he stammered. "I—I—"

"Nonsense! You say you are hurt."

"It—it's nothing, sir."

"I do not agree with you, Leggett. I demand to know the cause of this unruly outbreak. So far as I can see, five Classical boys were assailing one Modern," said Mr. Bootles sternly. "I shall investigate this matter. Dodd and Cook and Doyle may go. The rest of you will follow me to my study."

Mr. Bootles whisked away angrily.

"Oh, dear!" groaned Tubby Muffin. "We're in for it now, Jimmy Silver, and it's all your fault."

"Oh, dry up!" growled Jimmy.

And in a dismal mood the Fistical Four and Leggett and Tubby Muffin followed Mr. Bootles to his study.

"Now," said Mr. Bootles, holding up an admonitory forefinger, "it is my duty to ascertain the facts of this case. Five Classical boys have—"

"I—I say, sir—"

"Well, Muffin?"

"I—I hadn't anything to do with it, sir," squeaked Tubby anxiously. "Jimmy Silver will bear me out in that. Leggett knows, too! I asked Jimmy not to interfere. Didn't I, Jimmy?"

Grunt from Jimmy Silver.

"To interfere?" repeated Mr. Bootles.

"Yes, sir! I told Jimmy I'd rather he lent me the pound."

"The—pound!"

Mr. Bootles blinked at the fat Classical in blank amazement.

"I—I mean—I don't mean the pound!" gasped Tubby Muffin, realising that he was giving away a little too much. "I-d-d-did I say the—the pound, sir?"

"You did, Muffin."

"I—I meant to say there—there wasn't a pound—nothing of the kind, sir."

"What do you mean, Muffin?"

"J—just what I say, sir! I never asked Jimmy to lend me a pound to pay Leggett, sir; that's what I really meant to say. C-c-c-can I go now, sir?"

"No, Muffin; you cannot go!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles sternly. "You will explain yourself first, Muffin. Do you owe Leggett money?"

"Oh, dear!"

"Was that why you attacked Leggett, with these juniors?"

"I—I didn't, sir!" gasped Tubby. "I—I wanted to bunk."

"What, what?"

"I—I mean to scoot, sir," gasped Tubby. "Only I was pushed over! I wasn't fighting anybody. I asked Jimmy not to interfere, because if the Head knew—"

"If the Head knew what, Muffin?"

"N-n-nothing, sir!"

"There appears to be more in that matter than I suspected," said Mr. Bootles grimly. "It seems, Muffin, that you owe Leggett a pound."

"Oh, dear!" groaned Tubby, as he met Leggett's furious look. "I—I don't know how you guessed that, sir. It's no good glaring at me, Leggett; I can't help Mr. Bootles guessing things—I don't know how he does it, do I?"

"Leggett, you are making signs to Muffin!" thundered Mr. Bootles.

"I—I—"

"I insist upon knowing the facts of this case!" exclaimed the Form-master angrily. "Muffin, you say that Leggett lent you a pound."

"Oh, no, sir!"

"What! How can you owe him a pound if he did not lend it to you?"

"The interest, you see, sir!" gasped Tubby Muffin.

"The what?" thundered Mr. Bootles.

Tubby jumped.

"I—I mean—not the interest—certainly not the interest!" he stuttered. "I—I—"

don't know what made me say interest! What I really meant was—was—"

"Well?"

"I—I mean, I—I've got some lines to do for Bulkeley, sir!" gasped Tubby. "C-c-can I go now, sir?"

"Is it possible, Muffin, that Leggett has lent you money, and charged interest on the loan?" demanded Mr. Bootles, in a terrifying voice.

"I—I say, Leggett, I don't know how Mr. Bootles guesses these things," groaned Tubby. "It's no good pinching my arm you—"

"Stand away from Muffin, Leggett!" Leggett moved away, with a face like a demon.

"And so," rumbled Mr. Bootles, "we are getting at the truth. This had and wicked boy lends money at interest among his Form-fellows, then! Was that why you interfered in the matter, Silver?"

"Ahem!" murmured Jimmy.

"I asked him not to, sir!" exclaimed Tubby Muffin eagerly. "I did really, sir! He'll tell you so. I said I'd rather he lent me the pound. Didn't I, Jimmy? I'd rather have paid Leggett and got my IOU back."

"Bless my soul! You have an IOU from Muffin, Leggett?"

"No, sir!" muttered Leggett desperately.

Tubby blinked at him.

"Have you lost it?" he exclaimed. "If I'd known you'd lost it, I needn't have worried."

"I never had one!" ground out Leggett.

"Never had one!" exclaimed Tubby, in astonishment. "I mean the one you were going to show the Head, Leggett, if I didn't pay you the fourteen bob and the six bob interest."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Lovell.

It was all out now, with a vengeance. The expression on Mr. Bootles' face was almost petrifying.

"You were charging Muffin six shillings interest on fourteen shillings, Leggett! Bless my soul!"

"It's for six weeks, sir," explained Tubby. "Bob a week on the loan. Of course, I'm going to settle up. My word's as good as gold, sir. Can I go now?"

"Leggett, you unscrupulous young rascal!"

"It—it's not true, sir," stammered Leggett, in desperation. "It—it's all made up, sir! Silver's put Muffin up to this. I believe, sir, to get me into a row."

"Oh!" ejaculated Jimmy, quite taken aback by that unexpected accusation. "Why, you lying worm—"

"That is enough, Silver!"

"Ahem! Yes, sir."

"Place that IOU on my table at once, Leggett."

"I—I haven't got one, sir. It's all—all lies!"

"Turn out your pockets!"

"Oh!"

There was no help for it. Leggett had to turn out his pockets, even to the lining.

Mr. Bootles' voice broke in suddenly.

"Give me that paper you are trying to slip into your sleeve, Leggett!"

"Oh!"

The paper was handed over.

Mr. Bootles' very spectacles seemed to glitter with angry scorn as he read it.

The paper was in Tubby Muffin's sprawling writing, and it undertook to pay Leggett a shilling a week until the loan was cleared off.

That paper was much more dangerous to Leggett than to Tubby, if it came to light; but Leggett had never dreamed of its coming to light.

It was good enough to frighten the obtuse Tubby with, and that was all he wanted.

Now it was in the Form-master's hands, and Albert Leggett was likely to get a good deal more than he wanted.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bootles. "Silver! I understand your action now. You four juniors may go—I certainly excuse you. I understand your contempt of this boy's baseness."

"C-c-can I go, too, sir?" gasped Tubby.

"No, Muffin, you may not! You will come with me to the Head, and Leggett also."

"Oh, dear!"

"Follow me at once, both of you!"

Mr. Bootles rustled out of the study.

Tubby Muffin, with a groan, followed him.

Leggett paused to give Jimmy Silver a bitter look.

"You've landed me now, you rotter!" he said, between his teeth.

"Your own fault!" said Jimmy Silver.

"You intended—"

"Oh, shut up! You know I never meant to say a word, and wouldn't have. But I'm not sorry Tubby's let it all out—it serves you right! And if you're turned out of Rookwood, all the better for Rookwood!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"Leggett!" came Mr. Bootles' voice from the passage.

The Rookwood Shylock left the study.

Arthur Edward Lovell whistled softly.

"Well, the game's up with Leggett now," he said. "Serve him jolly well right! It was a paying game, I suppose; but it was a jolly risky one, as it turns out!"

"It's a flogging at least!" said Jimmy.

"Serve him right!"

And when the news spread in the Lower School that Leggett was "up before the beaks," and that his weird financial transactions had come to light, the general verdict was the same as that of the Fistical Four—"Serve him right!"

## The 4th Chapter. A Lesson for Shylock!

Quite a little army of juniors gathered at the corner of the corridor while Leggett and Tubby Muffin were in the Head's study.

Mr. Bootles was there, too; and the closed door hid what was undoubtedly an interesting scene from the curious eyes without.

"I don't envy Leggett," remarked Mornington of the Fourth. "Tubby may get off cheap, but Leggett—"

"Even money on a floggin' or the sack!" said Peete.

"I'll take you—in quids," said Smythe of the Shell.

Jimmy Silver frowned.

"It isn't a thing for betting about, you two rotters!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, give us a rest, dear youth!"

# 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 me, and enclose a stamped envelope or postcard, may be sure of receiving a prompt and kindly reply by post. All letters should be addressed: "The Editor, the BOYS' FRIEND, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4."

### A TREAT TO COME!

Have you ordered your copy of the "Penny Popular"? On Friday week, January 24th, this paper will make its reappearance, and every reader must order in advance if he wishes to make sure of securing a copy. And the order must be in the newsagents' hands some time this week.

Some time ago an order came into force that prevented newsagents from returning unsold copies. This restriction is still in force. Therefore, newsagents are only ordering copies for which they know they have a sale. It is really very little use you waiting until publication day before you put in your application for the "Penny Popular." That way lies disappointment. But by ordering at once you will be able to visit your newsagent on January 24th and find that a copy of the "Penny Popular" is waiting for you.

Now for a few words about this particular number of the "Penny Popular." Chief amongst the numerous attractions will be a

### A MAGNIFICENT PLATE

of Billy Bunter of Greyfriars. A reproduction of this plate appears on the cover of this week's BOYS' FRIEND. This will give you some idea of the plate, but the real thing will be considerably better. To begin with, the size of the plate will be 10in. by 6in., and it will be printed in a most attractive tone. It is quite the finest plate that has ever been given away with a boys' paper, and I am confident that you will think so highly of it that you will be anxious to have it framed and hung on the walls of your house.

Now for the stories in this splendid issue. Readers of the BOYS' FRIEND will, I am sure, be glad to learn that there will be a story of the Rookwood chums. This tale is entitled "The Rivals of Rookwood," and it will deal with Jimmy Silver's arrival at the school.

The second story is "Billy Bunter's Postal-Order," and in it you will read of the excitement that occurred when Billy Bunter's postal-order arrived—at last!

### FOR NEXT MONDAY.

The issue of the "Penny Popular," on sale January 24th is, without doubt, a most attractive one; but next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND is equally attractive. The instalment of our amazing new adventure serial,

### "THE BOYS WHO CAUGHT THE KAISER!"

By Duncan Storm,

is quite one of the finest that famous author has ever written. There are countless humorous incidents—incidents that made me laugh heartily when I read them. You are bound to enjoy them as much as I did, for there is something fresh about all of them—something that will make them appeal very strongly to you.

Our next story of Jimmy Silver & Co., which is entitled

### "DISMISSED FROM ROOKWOOD!"

By Owen Conquest,

is of a somewhat more serious type; but, nevertheless, it is a tale that will appeal to every one of you. Mr. Bootles has always given the impression that he was a weak and inoffensive individual, but in our next story he appears in an entirely

### "FRANK RICHARDS & CO'S PRECIDENT!"

By Martin Clifford.

In this story your sympathy will be drawn towards Frank Richards & Co. when you read of their awkward predicament. Many boys think nothing of breaking a promise; not so Frank Richards & Co., however. Miss Meadows makes them promise not to fight Gunten. Gunten gets to hear of it, and, like the cad he is, he endeavours to make things very unpleasant for the chums. Your feelings towards Gunten when you read this tale are bound to be of a bitter nature.

Just recently I have received many letters from readers commenting on our school serial,

### "BARKER, THE BOUNDER!"

By Herbert Britton.

Readers have expressed their sympathy for Jack Jackson, and have also mentioned how much they admire Bob Travers for standing by his chum. In our next instalment there are amazing developments. There is trouble for Mason, the bully, and a little more trouble for Jack Jackson. Poor Jack! He has had enough trouble as it is, and when, in next Monday's instalment, he is accused of being a sneak, who can wonder that he despairs of ever righting himself with his schoolfellows?

yawned Adolphus Smythe. "I back Leggett for a floggin', Peete."

"Yarrah!"

A sudden howl came from the Head's study before Cyril Peete could reply.

"That's Tubby!" said Erroll.

"Tubby's sweet voice, and no mistake!" grinned Lovell. "But it's not a flogging; Mack hasn't been sent for. I suppose old Bootles hasn't hoisted Tubby?"

"He couldn't!" chuckled Flynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loud sounds of anguish came from the dread apartment, and the chuckle died away among the juniors.

Tubby Muffin seemed to be going through it.

The door of the Head's study opened suddenly, and Tubby Muffin came out, the door closing after him.

He squeezed his hands, and grunted, as he came rolling along the corridor.

"Had it bad?" asked Conroy.

"Yow-ow-ow! Awful!" groaned Tubby.

"Two on each hand, you know! Fancy that! It wasn't my fault Leggett charged me interest on a loan! Yow! I'm sure I didn't ask him to! Yow!"

"And what's Leggett got?" asked Oswald.

"I've got to take word to Mack. Leggett's going to be flogged!"

"Oh!"

"Serve him right, I think!" said Tubby. "He's an unscrupulous beast! Yow-ow-ow! Blessed if I know what the Head caned me for! Bad temper, I suppose!"

And Tubby, still grunting, rolled away to carry his message to Mack, the porter.

In a few minutes old Mack appeared on the scene.

He passed the crowd of juniors in the corridor, and disappeared into the Head's study.

"Now for the circus!" murmured Mornington.

"The 'circus' was not long in beginning."

There was a sound of steady swishing from the Head's study, and it was soon accompanied by loud yells.

Tubby had been caned for his share in the money-lending transaction; but his punishment was a joke to Leggett's.

Of Leggett's conduct the Head took a very serious view, naturally enough; and the flogging was a very severe one.

By the time the swishing ceased, Leggett's yells had died away into quivering sobs.

Jimmy Silver & Co. moved quietly away. They did not wish to listen to that; it was painful enough to hear.

Richly as the rascal of Rookwood deserved his punishment, the chums of the Fourth could not help feeling some slight compassion for him in his ordeal.

They went up to their quarters in the end study.

"He asked for it, after all," Jimmy Silver said slowly. "Tubby blurted it all out to Bootles because he's such a crass ass; but Leggett was taking advantage of his being an ass, so he can't grumble."

"He asked for it, and he's got it!" said Lovell. "I hope it will do him good! He's no credit to Rookwood!"

Jimmy Silver moved restlessly about the study.

Leggett had, indeed, "asked for it," and the facts had come to light through Tubby Muffin's chattering; but Jimmy reflected that the matter might never have transpired but for his having taken up Tubby's cause.

Still, he could not blame himself for that; he acted rightly.

But he was anxious to know that the infliction was over.

Some of the juniors were still lingering in the corridor when Leggett came out of the Head's study.

He limped along the passage, his face white and his eyes burning.

One or two of the fellows spoke to him, but he did not answer.

He passed them, looking round him, and then he spoke suddenly.

"Where's Jimmy Silver?"

"In his study, I think," said Erroll. "You're not going to row with Jimmy, Leggett? It's all your own fault, from start to finish!"

"Mind your own business!"

Leggett went up the staircase.

Erroll knitted his brows a moment; but he let Leggett's reply pass. He did not want to add to the wretched junior's punishment.

Leggett, white and furious, tramped along the Fourth-Form passage to the end study.

"Hallo, he's come here!" ejaculated Lovell, as the Modern junior's white and writhing face looked in at the doorway.

Jimmy met Leggett's savage glance.

The Modern junior shook a trembling fist at him.

"I owe this to you, Jimmy Silver!" he said, between his teeth. "I've been flogged in the Head's study. You know it!"

Jimmy nodded.

"You asked for it," he said. "You must have known all the time that you would be flogged if you were found out!"

"You managed to get me found out!"

"That's not true," said Jimmy calmly; "and you know it's not true, Leggett. You've got yourself to blame, and no one else!"

Leggett gritted his teeth.

"It's all through your meddling, at any rate," he said. "I'll make you suffer for it, Silver!"

Jimmy laughed contemptuously.

"You can cackle!" said Leggett savagely. "I mean it! Wait a bit, and you'll see, hang you!"

He turned away, and limped painfully to the stairs.

"Dear man!" grinned Lovell. "What a sweet temper! Aren't you trembling in your shoes, Jimmy?"

"Not quite!" said Jimmy, laughing. "What about tea?"

The Fistical Four sat down to tea, their leader quite untroubled by Leggett's threat.

Leggett tramped away dismally to his own house.

He went up to the dormitory on the

*Upper Editor*



Modern side, and threw himself on his bed. He was aching and quivering from the castigation, and it was likely to be some time before he recovered from it. Anger and malice and all uncharitableness ran riot in his breast, as he lay and mumbled with pain. His hatred of the Head, who had inflicted that severe but just punishment, was bitter; but it was upon Jimmy Silver that most of his malice was concentrated. But for Jimmy's meddling, as Leggett called it, he would not now be quivering with pain and humiliation. Somehow, anyhow, he would make Jimmy Silver sorry he had interfered; he was savagely determined upon that. The dormitory door opened, and Tommy Dodd came in. Leggett gave him a sullen look, as Tommy stood gazing down on him with a grim expression. "So you're here," grunted Tommy. "Ow!" was Leggett's reply. "You've had enough," said Tommy Dodd. "I can see that! If you hadn't your worm, I'd give you a thumping good licking! If I'd known what those Classics were handling you for, I'd never have chipped in!" "Ow!" "You've got what you wanted," continued Tommy; "and mind this, Leggett—if you begin the same tricks again, you'll get another dose of the same medicine—if not from the Head, then with a lives-but in my study! So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!" And Tommy Dodd, with a last contemptuous look, walked out of the dormitory. Leggett groaned and mumbled.

**The 5th Chapter. A Collision on the Line.**

"Look out!" "The Head!" But it was too late. It was a couple of days after Leggett's flogging, and that matter had almost disappeared from the minds of Jimmy Silver & Co., who had other and much more important matters to think about. A grey mist from the Channel had rolled inland, and enveloped hill and dale, and Rookwood Quadrangle. Football was impossible, and it was not yet tea-time, and some of the Classical Fourth were amusing themselves with leap-frog on the gravel path between the school-house and the gates. Playing leap-frog in the mist was rather exciting, leading to a good many casualties, but the Rookwood juniors did not mind that; they were not, as Lovell expressed it, made of putty. Indeed, the game became quite thrilling when Hansom of the Fifth came along, ignorant of the fact that leap-frog was proceeding, and Arthur Edward Lovell crashed into him and sent him spinning. There was trouble with Hansom for some minutes, but the odds were too great, and the Fifth-Former was routed. Then Jimmy Silver & Co. cheerily resumed their game. Butting into Hansom of the Fifth was not a very serious matter—excepting for Hansom—and the juniors, in the excitement of the game, did not reflect that they were likely to butt into more important personages. When the awful catastrophe came, it came too suddenly to be helped. Jimmy Silver was coming along a line of bended backs, and had reached the last in the row, which was Lovell's. As his hands lightly touched Lovell's back, and he rose to the leap, two or three voices called out in horror, as a majestic figure loomed up from the misty gloom. "The Head!" But Jimmy Silver was fairly flying over Lovell's back, and it was too late to stop. Crash! Dr. Chisholm was coming along from the House, muffled up against the cold. The first he knew of the leap-frog was Jimmy Silver crashing at him from the mist. The Head started back, in alarmed amazement, and fortunately escaped the severe butting Hansom had received. Jimmy Silver landed on his feet, and his chin smote on the Head's buttoned overcoat, but that was all. It was enough, however. The Head staggered back, and almost sat down. Fortunately, he did not quite sit down. He recovered his balance just in time. Jimmy Silver stood frozen with horror. The jar on his chin had jarred all his teeth, and hurt him considerably, but he was hardly conscious of it. He was only conscious of the awful thing that had happened—that he had smote Dr. Chisholm on the chest and sent him staggering. There was a sound of scattering footsteps in the mist. The leap-froggers were vanishing on all sides, fleeing from the wrath to come. They fled in consternation, with one exception; Leggett of the Fourth, who grinned as he ran. It was rather agreeable to Albert Leggett to see Jimmy Silver booked for trouble. And there was no doubt that he was. "Silver!" gasped the Head, after an awful silence that seemed to poor Jimmy to last hours, but really lasted only a few seconds. "Oh, sir!" stammered Jimmy. "You—you—you have—"

"You must learn to think, Silver! Go to my study at once, and fetch my cane!" "Oh, sir!" "I am waiting, Silver!" Jimmy Silver tramped off to the House. Arthur Edward Lovell joined him as he went in, and caught his arm. "What's happened?" he whispered. "I've got to take out the old bird's cane," said Jimmy dismally. "Hard luck!" "Serve you jolly well right!" came a very unpleasant voice. Jimmy Silver did not trouble to look at Leggett; he went on to the Head's study for the cane. A sound of scuffling and gurgling followed him, however. Arthur Edward Lovell was busily engaged in rubbing Leggett's features on the quadrangle. Jimmy found the cane, and took it out to the Head, waiting for him on the gravel path. Dr. Chisholm took the cane from him, and Jimmy rubbed his hands apprehensively. The interval of a few minutes, however, had somewhat calmed the headmaster's wrath, and he was no longer in a thunderous mood. "Silver, you have acted very recklessly and foolishly," he said. "I shall punish you as a warning for the future. Hold out your hand." Swish! Swish! "Oh! Ow!" "You may take the cane back, Silver." "Yes, sir," mumbled Jimmy. Dr. Chisholm walked on to the gates, and disappeared in the mist. Jimmy Silver returned to the study with the cane, feeling that he had got off pretty cheaply on the whole. Had the cane been at hand when the collision took place, certainly the delinquent would not have escaped with two cuts. "Not so bad," said Jimmy, when his chums met him with chummy inquiries. "Only two goes! The old bird isn't such a ruffian, after all, you know."

Mr. Bootles rushed down the passage with whisking gown, greatly concerned, with the French master at his heels. All was dark in the Head's study, as they arrived breathless in the doorway. "Dr. Chisholm!" "Pray be careful how you enter!" It was a grinding voice from the darkness within. "There is a cord stretched across the room. I have had a severe fall." "Good heavens!" stammered Mr. Bootles. "Mon Dieu!" gasped Mossoo, almost dazed at the bare thought of such an outrage in such a quarter. "Pray obtain a light, Mr. Bootles!" "Certainly, sir—certainly! Bless my soul! But the electric light—" "It will not work. I presume it has been tampered with. Pray get a lamp from somewhere!" "Certainly, sir!" Mr. Bootles rushed away. Monsieur Monceau remained in the doorway, blinking into the shadowed study, in great concern and distress. From the darkness within came a sound of hard breathing. The Head had been hurt; but after his first startled cry he gave no vocal indication of it. Mr. Bootles returned in a few minutes with a lighted lamp. The light gleamed into the study. Dr. Chisholm was standing upright, just where he had picked himself up after his fall, not caring to move again, lest he should fall into another trap. Across the study, fastened to screws driven into the wainscot, was stretched a taut cord, a few inches from the floor. It was that into which the unsuspecting Head had walked—with the result of a startling and painful fall. Dr. Chisholm's hands were bruised where they had struck the floor, and he was very much shaken. "You—you are hurt, sir?" stammered Mr. Bootles. "Not very severely. I am glad to say," said the Head calmly, though his eyes were glittering. He moved to the door, and examined the light switch.

fasten the cord. He would scarcely dare show a light here, so he must have worked in the dark—the dusk, at least—and so did not observe that he had dropped the pencil-case." Mr. Bootles nodded dumbly. It seemed clear enough. "As it happens, I had occasion to punish Silver only a short time ago," said the Head, setting his lips. "This, doubtless, is his revenge for that punishment." "But—but," stammered Mr. Bootles. "I can scarcely believe that—that Silver would—" "You can see the evidence with your own eyes, Mr. Bootles," said Dr. Chisholm coldly. "I could never have believed that he was a revengeful boy, sir, or that he was capable of this disrespectful—" "You must believe it now, Mr. Bootles, since it is manifestly the case. Will you have the goodness to call Silver here?" "Oh, yes, certainly!" Mr. Bootles, in a very agitated frame of mind, left the study, and the Head waited grimly for the arrival of Jimmy Silver.

**The 7th Chapter. Sentenced!**

Crash! Smash! "Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Bootles, as he approached the end study and heard that sound of havoc and disaster. Jimmy Silver's voice followed. "You ass, Lovell! There goes the clock!" "Well, clocks were made to go, old chap," answered Arthur Edward, "and that one hadn't gone for weeks." "It's gone now, and no mistake!" Mr. Bootles tapped on the door, and opened it. Four juniors, in their shirt-sleeves, with wooden foils in their hands, were in the end study, which wore rather a dishevelled look. The clock was in the fender, in a dozen pieces, and two or three pictures hung

chums as he followed Mr. Bootles, who did not speak a word on the way to the Head's study. It was pretty clear that the matter, whatever it was, was serious. Mr. Bootles' expression was simply portentous. "Here is Silver, sir!" said Mr. Bootles, as he entered Dr. Chisholm's study, and Jimmy followed him in. Jimmy started as he saw the cord stretched across the floor, and an overturned chair, which had been knocked over by the doctor in his fall. He turned his startled eyes on the grim face of the Head. "Silver!" The Head's voice was very deep. "Is this your property?" He held out the pencil-case. "Yes, sir," said Jimmy blankly. "How did it come in my study, Silver?" "In—in your study, sir?" stammered Jimmy Silver. "In my study!" repeated the Head grimly. "I—I don't know, sir!" "Indeed? I can enlighten you, then!" said the Head, with grim sarcasm. "You dropped it here, Silver, when you were fastening that cord for me to stumble over!" Jimmy Silver jumped. "I—I did, sir?" he stammered. "Do you deny it, Silver?" "Certainly I do!" exclaimed Jimmy hotly. "I haven't been in the study before—at least, not since—" He remembered. "Since when, Silver?" "Since you sent me here for your cane, sir, about an hour ago," answered Jimmy. "I haven't been near the room since I brought the cane back." "Possibly!" said the Head. "When you brought the cane back, doubtless, you laid this cowardly trap for your Head-master!" "I—I did not—" "Your pencil-case was found close by the cord where it is fastened to the wainscot, Silver." "I—I don't understand—" "Silver may have dropped it here when he came for the cane, sir," murmured Mr. Bootles feebly. The Head gave him a glance. "Silver had to take the cane from my desk. There was no reason why he should go near that wall," he answered. "Moreover, he could scarcely have dropped the pencil-case from his pocket unless he was stooping down to the floor." Mr. Bootles was dumb. "It will not serve you to utter falsehoods, Silver," resumed the Head. "You have been guilty of a deliberate and wicked outrage upon your headmaster—in revenge, I presume, for the punishment I inflicted upon you a short time ago. I am shocked at this, Silver—shocked and grieved!" "But—but I did not do it, sir!" gasped Jimmy. "I—I never dropped the pencil-case here! I didn't know it was here! I left it in my study, I think—I believe—" "That will do, Silver! I have said that it is useless to utter falsehoods. But for your previous good character, Silver, I should expel you from the school for this act of revengeful rascality!" "But, sir, I—I—" "Taking your previous good character into consideration, Silver, and considering that this action was possibly the outcome of an impulse after your punishment, I shall not expel you. You will receive a very severe flogging in public before all Rookwood." Jimmy Silver stared dazedly at the Head. He felt as if his head were swimming. "To-morrow morning," said the Head quietly, "you will be flogged before the whole school, Silver. You may go now." Jimmy Silver stood rooted to the floor. "But, sir—" he gasped. Dr. Chisholm waved his hand to the door. "That is enough, boy! You may go!" "But—" "Go!" thundered the Head angrily. "How dare you bandy words with me, boy? Leave my study!" "But I did not do it, sir!" panted Jimmy. "I swear—" "Mr. Bootles, kindly take that boy from my study!" said the Head. The Form-master's hand dropped on Jimmy Silver's shoulder. "Come!" he said quietly. "Mr. Bootles, I—I swear I did not—" "Come!" said the Fourth Form master again. And he led the dazed junior from the study. Jimmy Silver went like a fellow in a dream. But it was no dream. The sentence had been pronounced, and on the morrow he was to be flogged in public—a spectacle of pity and derision to all Rookwood!



**WILL JIMMY SILVER COLLIDE WITH THE HEAD?**

"Are we going on with the game?" asked Raby. "Fathead!" was Jimmy Silver's reply to that. Jimmy had had enough of leap-frog in the mist, and so had his chums, on reflection. They repaired to the end study, where a four-handed fencing-match proved exciting enough to culiven them till tea-time; and did no harm, excepting to the study furniture.

**The 6th Chapter. The Culprit!**

"Pah!" Dr. Chisholm uttered that low exclamation, in tones of intense annoyance. The Head had returned from Coombe, and was entering his study in the School House. As usual, he put his hand inside the door, after opening it, to switch on the electric light before entering. But the light did not switch on. He pressed the button hard, but there was no answering flash from the electric lamps in the study. Something evidently was wrong with the switch. After expressing his feelings by that ejaculation, the Head entered the dark study, to feel his way across to his desk, where there was another lighting switch. Then two or three persons who were within hearing of the Head's study were suddenly startled. Crash! "Oh!" It was the sound of a heavy fall, followed by a sharp, loud cry. "Oh! Ah! Oh! Good gad! Oh!" Mr. Bootles was at the end of the corridor, chatting with Monsieur Monceau, the French master. At those startling sounds from the sacred precincts of the Head's study, Mr. Bootles spun round in alarm. "Bless my soul! What has happened?" he exclaimed. "What—what?" "Ze doctair he fall down viz himself," said Monsieur Monceau. "Bless my soul!"

As he expected, he found the wire nipped through, to put it out of action. "This was deliberate, Mr. Bootles," he said. "Whoever set this trap for my feet deliberately disconnected the electric light, so that I should enter in the darkness." "Who—who—who could have done such a thing?" gasped Mr. Bootles. "It is—is—is incredible!" The Head walked to his desk, where he found the lighting-switch in order, and switched on the electric light. His face was very calm; but the glitter in his eyes told of the wrath within, and boded ill to the practical joker if he was discovered. "Some—some foolish junior," stammered Mr. Bootles. "He will be discovered," said the Head quietly. "I shall make an example of him, Mr. Bootles. It may be difficult, but I shall certainly discover him. Pray help me search the study; the rascal may have left some trace behind of his presence here." "Certainly, sir—certainly!" "Mon Dieu! Vat is zat?" exclaimed Monsieur Monceau, suddenly, pointing to a little object that glistened in the light near one end of the stretched cord. "A pencil-case," said Mr. Bootles. He picked it up, and passed it to the Head. It was a small silver pencil-case, and there was a monogram engraved on it, which the Head noted at once. "I—I have seen that pencil-case before, sir," said Mr. Bootles, in very agitated tones. "It belongs to a boy in my Form. But surely—" He broke off, in dismay. "There is a monogram on the case," said the Head quietly. "The initials are 'J. S.' They are the initials of a boy in your Form, Mr. Bootles?" "Silver, sir—the head boy in my Form." "This pencil-case, then, belongs to him?" "I—I have seen it in his possession." "I think that settles the matter," said the Head. "Doubtless it slipped from his pocket while he was stooping to

awry on the walls—which also showed signs of damage. "Hallo, who's that? Don't come in, fathead!" said Lovell, without turning his head, as the door opened. "Ahem!" "Oh, my hat!" Lovell spun round, with a crimson face, as he heard his Form-master's well-known cough. "Oh! You, sir!" stammered Arthur Edward. Mr. Bootles, however, did not bestow any attention on the confused Lovell. He fixed his eyes on the captain of the Fourth. "Silver!" "Yes, sir?" said Jimmy, surprised by the Fourth Form-master's grave look and tone. "The Head requires your presence in his study, Silver. You will follow me at once!" "Certainly, sir!" Jimmy Silver laid down his foil, and picked up his jacket to put it on. He could not present himself before the Head in his shirt-sleeves. "I—I say, sir," ventured Raby. "We—we were only fencing, sir—not doing any harm, sir!" "Only an old clock, too, sir," said Lovell. "You should not make so much noise in the study, my boys. But it was not in reference to this that the Head wishes to see Silver," said Mr. Bootles. "It is a very different and much more serious matter!" "Oh!" ejaculated Lovell. "Are you ready, Silver?" "Yes, sir." Jimmy Silver, surprised and a little alarmed, followed the master of the Fourth from the study. His chums looked at one another. They were grave enough now. "What on earth's the row?" muttered Lovell. Raby and Newcome shook their heads. The answer to that question was beyond them. Jimmy Silver was as perplexed as his

THE END.

**NEXT MONDAY.**

**"DISMISSED FROM ROOKWOOD!"**

By OWEN CONQUEST.

DON'T MISS IT!



# BARKER, THE BOUNDER!

(Continued from the previous page.)

"I won't—"  
 "Then you've got to eat your blessed words!" said Mason. "Force his mouth open, you fellows!"  
 Mason stood before Bob Travers, waiting for his jaws to be forced apart. But the juniors' scheme was not to meet with the success they had expected. Ere Bob's jaws could be forced apart there came a sharp command from the doorway.  
 "What is the meaning of this?"  
 The juniors looked round, to find the stalwart form of Harcourt, the captain of the school, in the doorway.  
 There was a very grim and angry look on the captain's face that prompted the juniors to drop Bob Travers as though he were a live coal.  
 "You young rascals!" exclaimed Harcourt sternly, as he strode into the study. "I suppose this is your way of expressing

your objections to Travers' action in suspending you from the team!"  
 "It serves him right!" snapped Mason. Harcourt glared at Mason grimly.  
 "Oh, does it?" he said. "I suppose you were the ringleader in this. I heard you say something about compelling Travers to eat his words. You were going to force this notice down his throat, I presume?"  
 The juniors did not answer.  
 Mason shifted uncomfortably from one foot to the other under the steady glance which the captain gave him.  
 "Answer me at once!" exclaimed Harcourt sternly.  
 Still there was no reply.  
 "Very well," said the captain; "you juniors will all return to your own studies and do me a hundred lines! Mason, you will follow me!"  
 "Me?" cried Mason in surprise.

"Your name is Mason, I presume?" said Harcourt coldly. "Follow me immediately! Now, you kids, get a move on!"  
 The rest of the juniors took their departure willingly enough, only too glad to escape further punishment from the angry captain of the school.  
 Mason followed Harcourt to the latter's study.  
 The captain picked up a cane from the table.  
 "Now, hold out your hand!" he said sternly. "I am going to punish you for bullying."  
 Mason glared rebelliously at the captain.  
 "Why should you punish me?" he said curiously. "You had no right to interfere; and, besides, it was nothing to do with you whether—"  
 "Hold out your hand!" exclaimed the captain impatiently.  
 "I—I—" Mason stammered.  
 "Hold out your hand immediately!" cried Harcourt. "If you don't obey me this time I shall take you straight to your headmaster, and— Ah! I thought you'd think better of it."

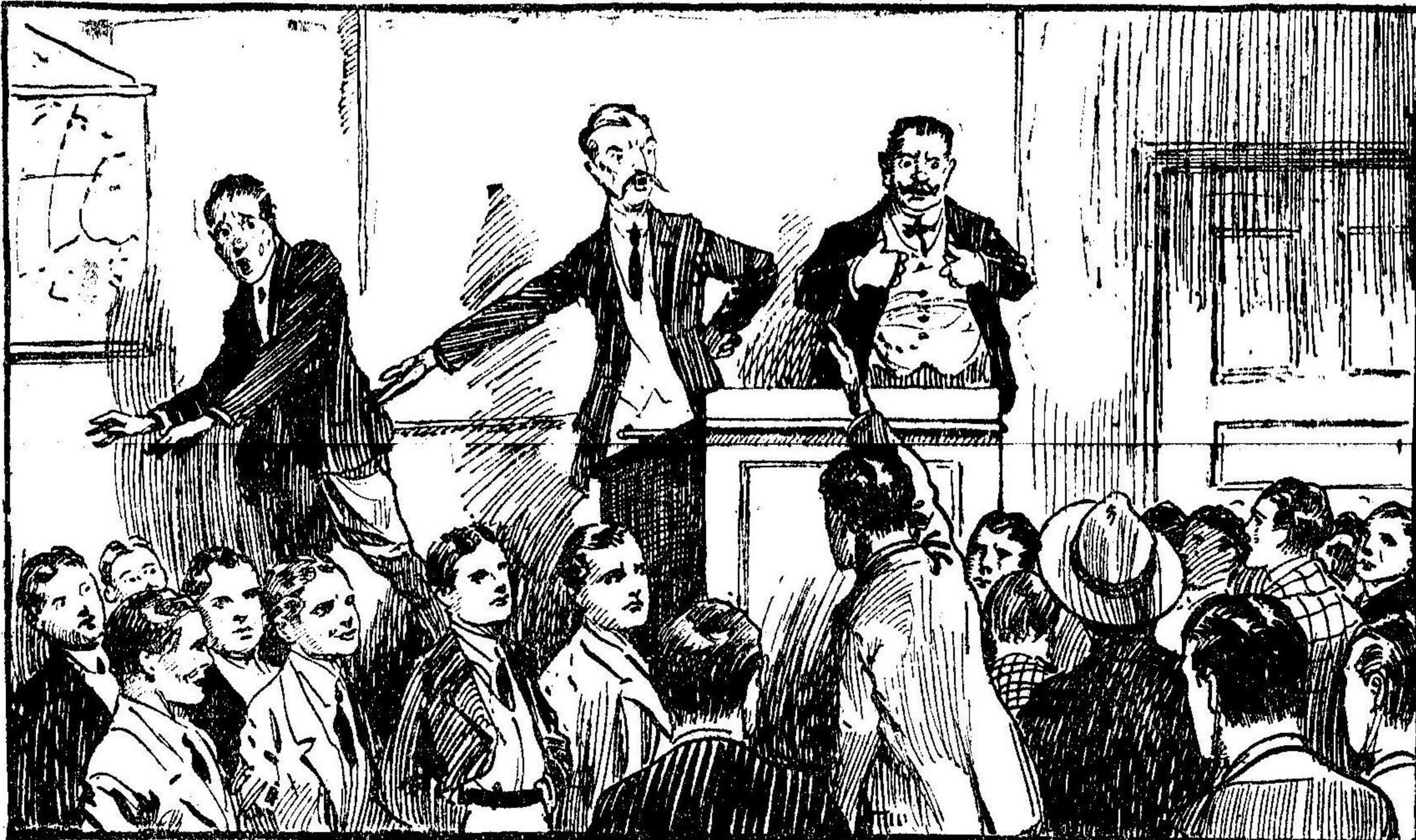
The captain's threat was sufficient for Mason.  
 He held out his hand, and received a terrific swish of the cane.  
 "Again!" said Harcourt grimly.  
 Two on each hand the bully received, and they were laid on with all the strength that the captain could summon.  
 "Now," said Harcourt, flinging his cane aside, and staring hard at the bully, "I hope this will be a lesson to you. You are not a member of the junior eleven, and I should advise you not to interfere in affairs which do not concern you. Leave the members of the team to settle their differences themselves; they are no concern of yours. You may go."  
 Mason went, and made his way to his own study.  
 He was in a very disagreeable mood, and the angry scowl on his face caused Barker to chuckle when he entered Study No. 2.  
 "Got it again—eh?" asked the bouncer. "I should have thought you would have been—"

"It's nothing to do with you!" snapped Mason.  
 "Go on!" chortled the bouncer. "But I say, you didn't get much change out of kicking against Travers. Funny Harcourt should have popped in just as you—"  
 "By gad!" muttered Mason. "I'll make him suffer for this! I'll—"  
 "Who?"  
 "That interfering rat, Harcourt, of course!" said Mason. "I'll nuck up his study, I'll smash his cricket-bats, and his footer-boots, and—"  
 "Better be careful," advised the bouncer.  
 "Oh, rats!" snapped the bully. "I'll do just what I like!"  
 And so it happened that when at length the Fourth-Form juniors trooped off to their dormitory there was a firm intention fixed in Mason's mind to obtain his revenge on Harcourt, the captain of the school.  
 (Another magnificent long instalment of this splendid new 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.)

# THE HERO OF HILLCREST!

A Magnificent New Story, Dealing with the Adventures of Frank Richards & Co., the Chums of the School in the Backwoods.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



## BOB LAWLESS DENOUNCES THE "HERO."

### The 1st Chapter. Surprising News!

"Lawless!"  
 "Yes, Miss Meadows?"  
 Lessons were over at Cedar Creek, and the school was being dismissed.  
 Bob Lawless stepped on his way to the door as the schoolmistress called to him. "Wait for me, Cherub!" he murmured.  
 Vere Beauclerc nodded, and Bob hurried to the schoolmistress' desk.  
 The rest of the fellows filed out, and Beauclerc waited in the doorway.  
 Bob Lawless' sunburnt face assumed its meekest expression as he stopped at Miss Meadows' desk.  
 His chum, Frank Richards, had been in hot water that day, and Bob wondered whether there was a little left over for him, so to speak.  
 So he endeavoured to look as if butter would not melt in his mouth as he met Miss Meadows' dark eyes.  
 The schoolmistress was looking severe. "Lawless, I sent your cousin, Richards, home this afternoon for coming into the school with a black eye."  
 "It wasn't Frank's fault, ma'am," said Bob meekly. "It really wasn't, Miss Meadows. He—he didn't ask for it."  
 "He had been fighting with some boy outside the school, Lawless. It has occurred to me since that it was probably one of the Hillcrest boys. Is this the case?"  
 "Ahem! Yes, ma'am."  
 "I thought so. I am sorry, Lawless, to see that you are on ill terms with Mr. Peckover's boys."  
 "Not at all, ma'am," said Bob eagerly. "We like them all right, only—"  
 "But that does not prevent fighting between you."  
 "You—you see, it was a mistake," stammered Bob. "Dicky Bird—ahem!—I mean the chap Frank had a scrap with, came over because—because—"  
 "Well?"  
 "Because an awful rotter had been stuffing him up, ma'am—I—I mean taking him in—that is to say—"  
 Bob gasped a little. "I mean, he was mistaken about Frank. A fellow had been pitching him a yarn. But it was all explained afterwards."  
 "Oh!" said Miss Meadows. "In that case, Richards was not so much to blame

as I supposed. You may tell him, Lawless, that he may come to school as usual to-morrow morning."  
 "Thank you, ma'am!"  
 "I shall speak to both of you on this subject to-morrow," said Miss Meadows. "I must stop this trouble with the Hillcrest boys. You may go now, Lawless."  
 "Yes, ma'am."  
 Bob Lawless joined his chum, and they left the lumber school together.  
 "We're in for it, Cherub," groaned Bob, as they went towards the corral. "I suppose Miss Meadows has been getting complaints from Peckover. We're to stop ragging with the Hillcrest chaps, and we're going to have a lecture to-morrow. Oh, dear!"  
 Beauclerc laughed.  
 "Well, it's chiefly due to Gunten making mischief," he said.  
 "Only we can't explain that to Miss Meadows."  
 "No; but Gunten can be shut up," remarked Beauclerc.  
 Bob Lawless chuckled.  
 "I wonder what Miss Meadows would have said if she'd known that Frank hadn't gone home, but has gone to meet Kern Gunten instead?" he remarked.  
 "By gum, I hope he won't come back to-morrow with two black eyes instead of one! That would give it away."  
 "Ha, ha! It would! But Gunten isn't likely to give Frank a black eye," said Beauclerc, laughing. "More likely to collect two himself than to give Frank one."  
 "That's so," agreed Bob.  
 The chums of Cedar Creek led out their horses, and mounted in the trail.  
 The dusk was falling as they rode along the timber trail to the south, on the way to the Lawless Ranch.  
 They were thinking of Frank Richards as they rode, and wondering how he had fared that afternoon.  
 Frank had been sent home in disgrace, owing to the discoloured eye which had resulted from his fight with Dicky Bird of Hillcrest, and his chums knew that it was his intention to wait for Kern Gunten, who was driving the post-waggon that afternoon from Thompson to Silver Creek.  
 It was Gunten's mischief-making that had caused the row, and it had seemed just—and eminently satisfactory—to the

Cedar Creek chums for punishment to be visited on Gunten's head.  
 "Hallo, there's Franky!" exclaimed Bob Lawless suddenly, as the two schoolboys came in sight of the fork in the trail, where Beauclerc was accustomed to turn off for his home.  
 Frank Richards came round the bend at a trot, and rode on to meet his chums.  
 They stopped in the trail as they met.  
 "Here you are," said Frank. "I thought I should catch you on your way home."  
 "Good man!" said Bob. "You met Gunten?"  
 "Yes; he came along in the post-waggon, near Cedar Camp."  
 "You've whopped him?"  
 "No."  
 "Not whopped him?" exclaimed Bob. Frank Richards shook his head, with a smile.  
 "You don't mean to say that he whopped you?" shouted Bob Lawless, in astonishment and consternation.  
 "Ha, ha! No fear!"  
 "Then what's happened?" asked Beauclerc. "Did you let him off, after all?"  
 "Well, you see—"  
 "You blessed jay!" exclaimed Bob, in disgust. "Didn't you ride out there on purpose to wait for the post-waggon?"  
 "Yes; but—"  
 "Didn't you go there specially to lambaste that Swiss rotter?"  
 "Yes; but—"  
 "Didn't he land you with a scrap with Dicky Bird by telling Bird beastly crammers?" exclaimed Bob indignantly.  
 "He did. But—"  
 "And you haven't walloped him?"  
 "No. You see—"  
 "I guess I don't see," said Bob obstinately. "You've got a purple eye, and Gunten has the grin of you. And we're all going to be jawed to-morrow about scrapping with the Hillcrest galoofs. And you've let Gunten off! You're a jay, Frank Richards!"  
 "But—"  
 "You're an ass, old chap. It's no good talking; you're a jay from Jaysville!" said Bob crossly.  
 "Let Frank have a word," said Beauclerc, laughing. "Something's happened to prevent him."

"Oh!" said Bob. "In that case— Why the dickens can't you tell us what's happened, Frank?"  
 "Are you giving me a chance?" exclaimed Frank warmly. "If you'll use your ears instead of your chin for a minute or two—"  
 "Go ahead! What's happened?"  
 "The post-waggon came along," said Frank. "It was held up on the prairie trail by two rustlers."  
 "What?" yelled Bob.  
 "Fact! Two chaps with cloth tied over their faces—regular road-agent style," said Frank. "They stopped the post-waggon, and started to rob it."  
 "Gammon!" said Bob incredulously. "Road-agents in the Thompson Valley! Draw it mild!"  
 "Honest Injun!"  
 "Well, carry me home to die!" ejaculated Bob. "That's something now. Must be some bulldozers from over the line."  
 "I thought so at first, but I don't think so now," answered Frank. "They knew all about the post-waggon coming along from Cedar Creek on Wednesday afternoon, and when and where to wait for it. That doesn't look like strangers in the section."  
 "By gum!" said Bob. "It doesn't! But what happened? Did they rob the waggon?"  
 "No."  
 "Somebody came along and chipped in?" asked Bob.  
 "You've hit it!" said Frank, smiling. "Who was it?"  
 "Little me."  
 "You!" yelled Bob.  
 "Exactly."  
 "Make it a little milder, old scout," urged Bob Lawless. "Take off fifty per cent., and begin again."  
 Frank Richards laughed.  
 "But I'm telling you the facts, father!" he said.  
 "You rounded up two road-agents?" grinned Bob. "Have you got them in your trousers' pockets now?"  
 "I didn't round them up. I rode them down," answered Frank. "I made believe I had a lot of chaps with me, and shouted like thunder. And they thought they were surprised by a party, and ran for it. If they hadn't it would have gone hard for me. But I thought they would; and they did."

"Scared them off—eh?" said Bob.  
 "Yes. They were taken by surprise, and bolted without stopping to think. The best thing they could have done, if it had happened to be Sheriff Henderson and his men—as it might have been, you know. As it happened, it was only me," said Frank, with a laugh. "I went with Gunten as far as Silver Creek to see him safe. After what had happened I didn't feel inclined to pitch into him."  
 "Well, my word!" said Bob. "I say, there's usually a lot of dust in the post-waggon. You've saved some of the Thompson miners from losing their pile."  
 "I'm jolly glad!" said Frank. "Besides, Gunten spoke quite decently after it. He said he would own up to Dicky Bird that he had been pulling his leg."  
 "Catch him!" said Bob. "I'll believe he'll do that when I hear he's done it. Still, it was mighty lucky you were there, Franky. What do you think, Chernb?"  
 "Vere Beauclerc was sitting his horse in silence. He had not spoken a word since Frank began his explanation.  
 His chums glanced at him in some surprise. Beauclerc's handsome face was pale and troubled.  
 He started and flushed as he met their glances.  
 "Eh? Yes—oh, yes!" he said confusedly. "Did—did you say you saw their faces, Frank?"  
 "Whose—the road-agents?" asked Frank.  
 "Yes, yes!" said Beauclerc, with a feverish eagerness that surprised his chums still further. "What were they like?"  
 "I didn't see their faces."  
 "Oh!" exclaimed Beauclerc, with a deep breath.  
 "They were masked, in a way—they had cloth or canvas, or something, tied across their faces, with holes cut for the eyes," said Frank.  
 "Regular road-agent style!" said Bob Lawless, with a chuckle. "I guess they won't find the game pay. Sheriff Henderson will have them in the calaboose in two shakes of a heaver's tail, I reckon."  
 "I hope so," said Frank.  
 "Did you notice their horses?" asked Beauclerc.  
 "Their horses?" repeated Frank in surprise.  
 "Yes. If they belong to this section you may have seen their horses before."  
 "Never thought of it!" confessed Frank. "I remember they were dark horses with white patches, that's all; quite commonplace looking."

"I guess that's nothing," commented Bob Lawless. "If they know their business they'd disguise their horses. A few dabs of paint would do it. Well, we'd better get on, Franky. You must tell poppa all this, and he'll send word to the sheriff."  
 "I expect Gunten will do that," answered Frank.  
 "Good-night, you fellows!" said Beauclerc abruptly.  
 Hardly waiting for their response, Beauclerc gave his horse a touch, and dashed away round the bend in the trail.  
 Frank and Bob rode on towards the Lawless Ranch.  
 "What's up with Beau?" asked Frank, as they trotted along under the big, leafless branches.  
 Bob shook his head.  
 "Blest if I know. Your yarn seems to have upset him somehow. Blest if I see why it should."  
 "Same here!" said Frank, puzzled.  
 Neither of the two chums, as they trotted along in the dusk, was near guessing the dark and scaring thoughts that were in the mind of the remittance man's son as he rode homeward at a gallop by the timber trail.

### The 2nd Chapter. Saved from Himself.

"Father!"  
 Vere Beauclerc gasped, rather than spoke the word, as he jumped down from his horse before the shack on the bank of the creek.  
 The door was opened, and the firelight glowed within, but there was no other light.  
 In the ruddy glow of the fire Lascelles Beauclerc was seated upon a pine bench, his arms folded across his broad chest, his brows knitted, his gaze intently fixed on the flames.  
 He started and glanced over his shoulder as his son appeared in the doorway.  
 Even in the firelight Beauclerc could see that his father's face was pale.  
 "You, Vere!" muttered the remittance-man.  
 "Yes, father."  
 There was relief in Beauclerc's voice, as if it lifted a weight from his heart to find that his father was at home.  
 "I—I was not expecting you so soon, Vere. You are early."  
 "It's the usual time, father."  
 "Is it? I—I have been thinking, and I suppose I lost count of the time," said the remittance-man in an unsteady voice. He rose to his feet. "Put up your horse, my boy, and we will have supper."  
 "Has—has anything happened, father?"  
 "What should happen here?" said Mr. Beauclerc in a harsh tone. "What a strange question, Vere! Take your horse to the shed!"  
 "Yes, father."  
 The schoolboy led away his horse, his face downcast and his heart throbbing strangely.  
 He hardly dared to name the fear that had sprung up in his breast as he listened to Frank Richards' story on the timber trail.  
 He knew that of late his father had been in company with Poker Pete, and the other shady characters who had once been his associates, and whom he had dropped, as Vere had hoped, for ever.  
 Late hours and sullen moods had warned the boy that his father was falling into his old ways, with the inevitable result of want of money.  
 The remittances from the Old Country were quite sufficient to support father and son in comfort in the simple life of the Canadian West, but they did not suffice for poker games at the Occidental and fare at the Red Dog Saloon.  
 And once before, as Beauclerc knew, his father had almost yielded to the voice of the tempter.  
 With a heavy heart, though he would not admit to himself the fear that was in his breast, Beauclerc led his horse away to the shed behind the shack.  
 He lighted a lantern there, to see to rub down the animal and give it its feed.  
 There was another horse already in the shed—his father's.  
 Bob Lawless' words were ringing in Beauclerc's ears, but he would not look at his father's horse, perhaps for fear of confirmation of his suspicions.  
 There was a quick step outside the shed.  
 "Vere?"  
 "Yes, father."  
 "Don't trouble about my horse. I will attend to him presently."  
 The boy's heart beat with a sudden pain.  
 As if his father's words had fixed his determination, he took the lantern and bent over the horse that was lying in the straw.



## THE HERO OF HILLCREST!

(Continued from the previous page.)

There was a clatter of horse's hoofs in the darkness without.

A horseman halted at the door of the shack.

"Beaulere!" called out a husky voice. Lascelles Beaulere took a red brand from the fire, and stepped out of the shack, followed by his son.

Poker Pete, breathless, looked down at him from his steaming horse in the light of the brand.

"Safe, then!" he exclaimed.

"As you see," answered Mr. Beaulere quietly.

"By gad! It was a close call!" said Poker Pete, with a deep breath.

"Not so close as you think," said the remittance-man, with a curl of the lip. "We were scared away by a schoolboy—alone!"

Poker Pete swore a furious oath.

"That whelp, Richards! It was Richards—"

"Yea."

"And he struck me! I'll remember him! I'll—I'll—"

The sport of Thompson ground his teeth.

"You will not seek to harm Frank Richards," said the remittance-man quietly.

"You will reckon with me if you do, Poker Pete! You need not dismount; you will not enter here!"

"What?"

"There lies your road," said Lascelles Beaulere.

"I was a madman to have a single word with you. I will not have another! You are finished here. Go your way, and leave me to go mine!"

The sport looked down at him under lowering brows; and then, with a curse, he wheeled his horse and rode away.

The clattering hoof-beats died away in the night.

The remittance-man turned to his son.

"Are you satisfied now, Vere?"

And Vere Beaulere's look of gratitude and happiness was answer enough.

## The 3rd Chapter.

## An Invitation to Hillcrest.

Frank Richards and Bob Lawless started for school in cheery spirits on the following morning.

Frank's eye was still a beautiful purple, and it still caused him some discomfort, but Bob's message from Miss Meadows had comforted him.

He was not to stay at home in disgrace until the black eye had disappeared.

And it was difficult for healthy youth not to be cheerful on that bright, frosty morning.

The two boys trotted along happily to the fork in the trail, where Vere Beaulere met them as usual.

Beaulere was looking his usual self, though there was a thoughtful expression on his handsome face.

He hardly spoke during the ride to Cedar Creek.

He was thinking of the scene in the shack the previous evening, but his heart was no longer heavy.

The attempt on the post-wagon had failed; that mad, reckless act had never been carried into effect.

For that the remittance-man's son was devoutly thankful, and he knew that his father was thankful, too.

The incident was closed; his father had been saved, in spite of himself. He had broken with Poker Pete, and, as was usual with the unhappy wretch when the mood of repentance was on, Lascelles Beaulere had turned to work that morning with great energy, instead of riding away to the Occidental Hotel to join a morning poker-party.

There was great comfort in that for Vere Beaulere, and he could only pray that the identity of the attempted robbers would never transpire.

There was little chance of that.

Their faces had not been seen, and the mask and the paint on the horses had vanished, leaving no clue to connect Poker Pete and the remittance-man with the two road-agents.

Frank and Bob, oblivious of what was in their chum's mind, discussed the affair of the post-wagon as they trotted along to school.

The trio arrived at Cedar Creek cheerily enough, and Chunky Todgers met them at the gates.

"You're in for it, you three!" he said, wagging a fat forefinger at the three chums.

"What's the row?" asked Bob.

"Miss Meadows told me to tell you to go in as soon as you came," grinned Chunky. "You're in for a jaw! My word! What an eye you've got this morning, Frank Richards! All the colours of the rainbow! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you want one like it?" demanded Frank wrathfully; and Chunky retreated promptly, to indulge his merriment at a safer distance.

The Co. presented themselves in Miss Meadows' sitting-room before lessons.

They found the Canadian schoolmistress looking very severe.

All three looked as meek as possible as Miss Meadows delivered her little lecture.

It lasted exactly five minutes, as Bob Lawless remarked afterwards. He had timed it by the clock over Miss Meadows' head.

Miss Meadows certainly was not aware of that as she impressed upon the three schoolboys the necessity of living in peace and concord with the Hillcrest boys.

Having reduced the three to a proper state of seriousness, and warned them that further "rows" with Hillcrest would be followed by severe measures, Miss Meadows dismissed them.

"Cheap, I call it!" remarked Bob, when they were out of hearing of the school-

mistress. "If it had been old Peckover it would have been the same. Miss Meadows is a brick. And look here! We'll try our very hardest not to row with Dicky Bird for a week or two."

"We will!" agreed Frank. "He's a good sort, and so are the others, excepting Gunten and Keller. And we can give those two worms a wide berth."

With which excellent resolution for the future Frank Richards & Co. went in to class.

But the best-laid schemes of mice and men do not always turn out as intended; and so it was with those good resolutions, as it was destined to prove.

Frank's darkened eye was the cause of a good many glances and smiles in class that morning, and at the dinner-table afterwards.

Even Molly Lawrence seemed to find something amusing in it, which somehow did not please Frank.

After dinner, as the chums were coming out into the playground, there was a clatter of hoofs, and Fisher, of Hillcrest School, rode up.

True to their resolve, Frank Richards & Co. saluted the Hillcrest fellow with elaborate civility, and Fisher grinned cheerily in response.

"Miss Meadows about?" he asked.

"I've got a note for her from old Peckover."

Miss Meadows stepped into the porch and took the note.

"Please, I'm to take back an answer, ma'am," said Fisher.

"Very well; wait a moment!"

Miss Meadows read the note, and raised her eyebrows a little.

"Very good," she said. "Tell Mr. Peckover that I shall be very pleased to do as he wishes, Fisher."

"Yes, Miss Meadows."

Fisher rode away.

Frank Richards & Co. could not help wondering what it was about.

They were aware that there was no love between Miss Meadows and the headmaster of Hillcrest.

As soon as the school was assembled for afternoon classes they learned what was "on."

Instead of commencing lessons as usual Miss Meadows addressed her class.

"I have had a note from Mr. Peckover, of Hillcrest," she said. "You will be pleased to hear, my boys, that Kern Gunten, who used to be at this school, has performed an act of great bravery."

"Great gophers!" ejaculated Bob Lawless involuntarily.

"Kindly be silent, Lawless!"

"Yee-es, ma'am!"

"Gunten has distinguished himself by an act of great courage, so Mr. Peckover tells me," resumed Miss Meadows. "This action is to be recognised in public at Hillcrest this afternoon. As Gunten used to be at this school, Mr. Peckover thinks it is fitting that the ceremony should be witnessed by some of the Cedar Creek boys. He thinks it will give you pleasure to be present."

"Oh!" murmured Frank Richards.

"Mr. Peckover therefore requests me to let a number of my pupils go over to Hillcrest this afternoon," said Miss Meadows. "I shall be very pleased to do so. Of course, I cannot let you all go; but I am sure it will please Gunten to have some of his old schoolfellows present on such a gratifying occasion. I will call out the names of those I have decided to send, if they care to go."

There was not much doubt that they would care to go.

"Lawless, Beaulere, Lawrence, Hopkins, Dawson, Richards, Molly Lawrence, and Kate Dawson," said Miss Meadows. "You may all go if you wish."

"Oh, thank you, Miss Meadows!"

And the lucky eight left the school-room at once.

"I—I say, Miss Meadows!" exclaimed Chunky Todgers. "Can't I go?"

"I have sent my best pupils," said Miss Meadows. "They are not likely to miss an afternoon's lesson, so much as the rest. It is a reward for attending to work."

"But—but ain't I one of the best pupils, ma'am?" ventured Chunky.

"No, Todgers; you are one of the worst!"

"Oh!" mumbled Chunky, quite crushed.

Frank Richards and his companions went cheerily for their horses.

They were feeling rather excited and interested.

How Gunten, who had been known at Cedar Creek as little better than a funk, had performed such an act of bravery as to call for public recognition was a mystery to them.

"Isn't it surprising?" exclaimed Molly Lawrence, as they rode out of Cedar Creek in a cheery crowd.

"I guess so," said Bob Lawless drily.

"But it must be true!" said Molly.

"Must be if Peckover says so!" grinned Bob. "I'm blest if I can make it out! Can you, Franky?"

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"Ask me another!" was Frank's reply.

"Well, I guess, on second thoughts, that I can make it out a bit," said Bob reflectively. "Old Man Gunten has a stake in Hillcrest School. It's no secret that he put up most of the dollars to start the place. Gunten is old Peckover's favourite for that reason. Peckover has got up this little affair to stroke Old Man Gunten the right way."

"But there must be something in it," said Beaulere. "He couldn't get up a scene without something to go on."

"That's so. But—" Bob looked very sceptical. "Some silly trifle they're making into a big thing—a mountain out of a molehill, I guess. Anyhow, if Gunten has done anything plucky, we've been jolly well mistaken about him."

"Well, we'll see what we'll see!" said Bob, unconvinced.

And about that, at least, there could be no doubt.

The 4th Chapter.  
A Hapless Hero.

Dicky Bird & Co., of Hillcrest, met the Cedar Creek party when they arrived at the new school.

Apparently lessons were not going on at Hillcrest that afternoon.

"Hallo! You're just in time for the circus!" said Dicky Bird, with a grin.

"Have you come over for it?"

"Yes," answered Frank, noting, with a grin, that both Dicky's eyes were purple.

"When does it start?"

"Three sharp. No end of a circus!" yawned Fisher. "Old Man Gunten is here, looking as pleased as Punch. And Kern Gunten looks as if he wants a larger size in hats."

"But what's he done?" asked Bob.

"Haven't you heard?"

"Nops! We only heard there's to be a merry ceremony," and Mr. Peckover asked our schoolmistress to let some of us come over for it."

Dicky Bird chuckled.

"Gunten's Peckover's favourite," he said. "Old Man Gunten is no end of a big gun in this show. It's going to be a regular ceremony. Gunten's to be presented with a new rifle as a memento. My belief is that Old Man Gunten is standing the rifle, though it's supposed to come from Peckover."

"But what the thump—"

"It's the talk of Thompson," said Dicky Bird. "I wonder you haven't heard. It seems that when Gunten was driving the post-wagon yesterday—hallo! Here's old Peckover!"

The headmaster of Hillcrest came out. "All boys march into the school-room!" he called out. And the Hillcrest fellows obediently marched in.

Mr. Peckover greeted the Cedar Creek party with a rather dry politeness, and showed them where to tether their horses.

They were ushered into the big school-room.

Frank Richards & Co. took their places along with the Hillcrest fellows in a state of wondering anticipation.

Mr. Peckover went to his high desk.

Beside the desk Mr. Gunten, the rich storekeeper of Thompson, was standing.

The fat Swiss was looking, as Fisher had remarked, as pleased as Punch.

Gunten was standing in his place among the Hillcrest fellows, and the start he gave at the sight of Frank Richards & Co. showed that he at least had had no hand in the invitation.

In fact, his jaw dropped as he saw them, and he looked the picture of dismay.

"That lot here," he muttered to his chum Keller.

"I suppose Peckover's asked them," said Keller. "What does it matter? Rather a good effect, I guess."

"Oh!" muttered Gunten.

Keller looked at him rather oddly.

"I say, Gunten, is there anything fishy about it?" he whispered. "Did you really—"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Gunten.

Keller shut up, but he was looking very curious.

"Silence, please!" came from Mr. Peckover.

There was silence in the school-room.

Mr. Peckover rose to his feet, and surveyed the attentive crowd over his desk.

"My boys," he said, after clearing his throat with a little preliminary cough, "you are gathered together to do honour to your schoolmate, who has distinguished himself by an act of great courage and devotion."

There was a murmur of applause as Mr. Peckover paused. He seemed to expect it, so it was given.

"Gunten, please stand out!"

Kern Gunten advanced with a faltering step.

Only a few minutes before he had had a lofty, not to say swanky, look. But since Frank Richards & Co. had arrived the starch seemed to have gone out of Kern Gunten somehow.

Certainly, at the present moment he looked like anything but a hero.

"Come on, my boy!" said Mr. Gunten encouragingly. "You have deserved well of your school, Kern, and your headmaster is about to recognise it in a fitting manner."

Gunten dragged himself forward, with the corner of his eye, as it were, on the Cedar Creek group.

"Boys," resumed Mr. Peckover, "some of you may not be aware of the splendid act performed by your schoolfellow Gunten—especially those who are strangers within our gates. You are doubtless aware that on Wednesday's Kern Gunten drives the post-wagon for his father, Mr. Gunten, one of our most prominent citizens, who holds the honourable post of postmaster in Thompson. Yesterday, as Gunten was driving the post-wagon from Cedar Camp to Silver Creek he was stopped on the trail by armed ruffians."

Mr. Peckover paused to give due effect to this announcement.

Gunten shifted uncomfortably from one leg to the other.

All the Hillcrest fellows noted how his "gas" seemed suddenly to have evaporated, and they wondered why.

They were soon to learn.

"The post-wagon," went on Mr. Peckover, after an impressive pause, "was stopped by these armed ruffians, who cut open the post sacks. A considerable quantity of gold-dust, the fruits of the labour of the Thompson miners, lay at the mercy of the thieves. Gunten was alone and unarmed. But he felt that it was his duty to risk his life, if need were, in defence of the property entrusted to his charge."

Frank Richards' eyes opened wide.

He remembered Kern Gunten cowering on the trail with knocking knees, and he was astounded.

"Then," went on Mr. Peckover impressively, "Gunten seized his opportunity. While one robber was busy with the post sacks Gunten sprang upon him and hurled him from the wagon."

"Great Scott!" gasped Frank Richards.

"The other robber was holding the horses, but Gunten lashed them into a gallop, and the man was hurled aside and—"

"Hurled aside!" stuttered Frank Richards. "The—the man was hurled aside! Was he? Oh, my hat!"

"Then Gunten drove on the post-wagon at full speed, with the robbers riding in pursuit and firing after him," said Mr. Peckover.

Bob Lawless pinched Frank's arm.

"Franky, am I awake?" he gasped.

"Blest if I know! Oh, crumbs!"

"Fortunately, Gunten was not bit, though one bullet went through his hat," said Mr. Peckover. "The robbers gave up the chase, and he brought the post-wagon safe to Silver Creek. By his courage and resource he saved over a thousand dollars' worth of property, and defeated the design of the lawless ruffians. For that splendid act, my boys, we are met together to do honour to Kern Gunten! I pause for a cheer for this brave lad."

"Hurrah!" roared all Hillcrest.

"Bravo, Gunten!"

"As a memento of this occasion," continued Mr. Peckover, when there was silence, "I have pleasure and pride in presenting Kern Gunten with this rifle, and I trust—Bless my soul! What—what is—"

Bob Lawless, unable to restrain his wrath and disgust, rushed forward.

Gunten seemed to shrink a size smaller as the wrathful Bob rushed up to the master's desk, his face ablaze.

There was an angry exclamation from Old Man Gunten:

"Stand back, Lawless!"

An excited murmur rose.

"It's not true!" roared Bob Lawless. "If Gunten told them that at Silver Creek he told them that—it was Frank Richards who chipped in and drove off the road-agents; and he's here to prove it!"

"What?" thundered Mr. Peckover.

"Boy! How dare you!" shrieked Old Man Gunten furiously.

Bob's eyes blazed at the miserable hero of Hillcrest.

"I'm telling the truth!" he shouted.

"Frank Richards did it, and he can tell you so himself! He's here! Come and tell them, Franky!"

The murmur grew to a roar.

This was news to Hillcrest, and, knowing Gunten as they did, they believed it much more easily than they had believed the story of Gunten's heroism.

"So that's it!" chuckled Dicky Bird. "I knew it was fishy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come and tell them, Franky!" roared Bob Lawless. "Come and show up that lying skunk!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Peckover's eyes met Mr. Gunten's.

Probably both of them realised that the indignant Bob was stating the facts. But if they did they certainly did not intend to acknowledge it.

Mr. Gunten strode forward.

"Leave this school!" he thundered. "Outside—at once! How dare you make a disturbance here? Go! Peckover, have them put out if they will not go!"

"Oh, we'll go fast enough!" said Bob disdainfully. "I've told you the truth! Look at that worm, and you can see whether he was lying!"

"Put them out!" roared Mr. Gunten.

"Boys of Hillcrest, will you see your headmaster insulted? Put them out!"

The Hillcrest fellows probably did not care much for their respected headmaster, but they were ready for a row with Cedar Creek, anyhow.

There was a rush and a scuffle.

Dicky Bird and Fisher, however, escorted Molly and Kate with great politeness from the school-room.

"Ta-ta, you fellows!" sang out Dicky Bird, as the Cedar Creek party mounted.

"We know it's true, Lawless—ha, ha! Old Man Gunten won't own it, but we know! We'll take ten cents for our hero!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank Richards & Co. rode away, most of them laughing, but Bob still indignant. Dicky Bird and the rest returned to the school-room for the conclusion of the somewhat impaired ceremony in recognition of the no longer admired hero of Hillcrest.

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY.

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