



IN THIS ISSUE:
CONAN DOYLE'S GREAT SPORTING SERIAL,
"RODNEY STONE,"
AND
GRAND SCHOOL AND ADVENTURE STORIES.



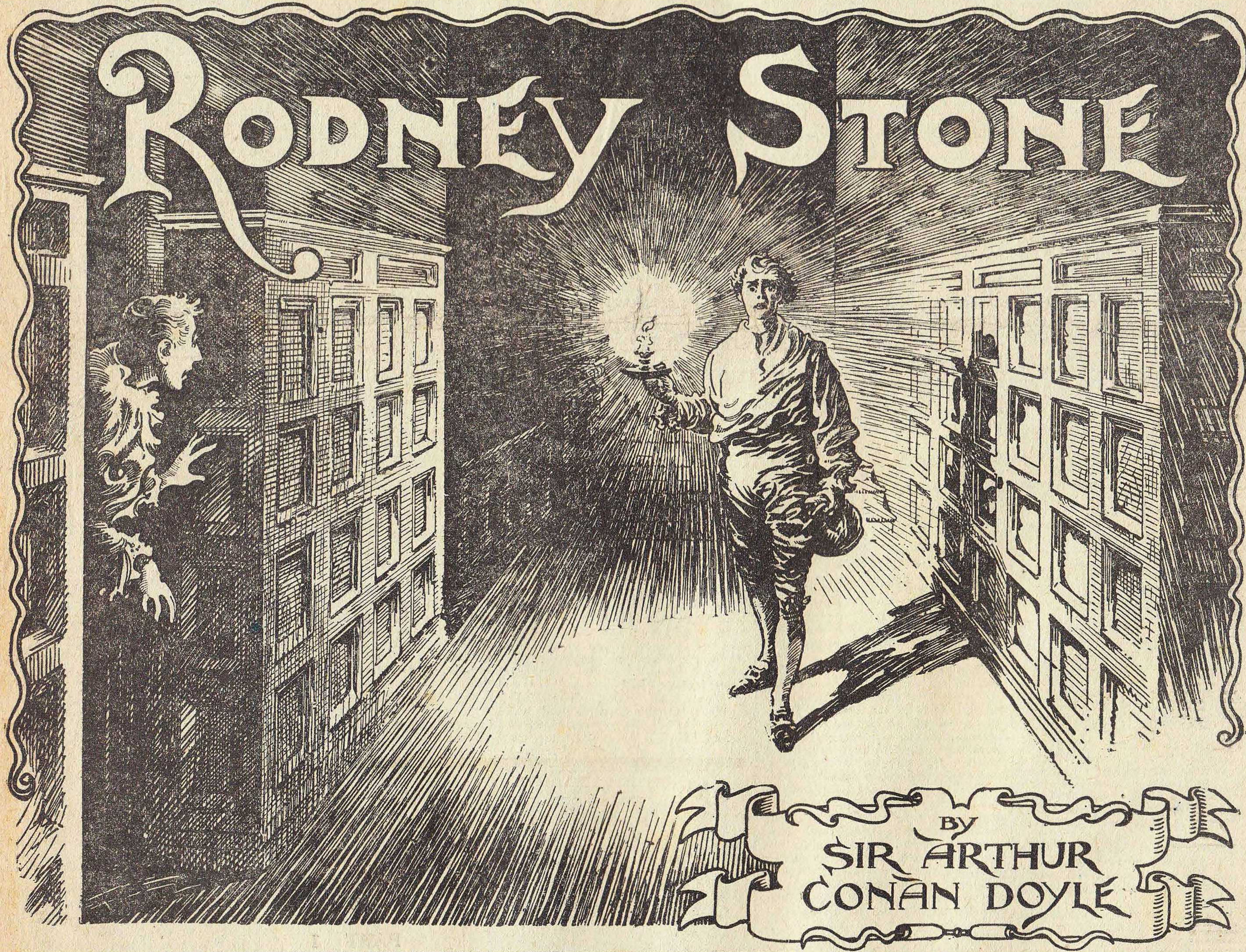
The BOYS' FRIEND

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THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending February 14th, 1920.



BY
SIR ARTHUR
CONAN DOYLE

THE MYSTERY OF CLIFFE ROYAL!

other a brown bag, which chinked as he moved. His face was all drawn and distorted, so that my question was frozen upon my lips."

"Suddenly a cry fell upon my ears, coming from Captain Barrington's room. I opened my door and peeped out, and there was Lord Avon walking towards me. In one hand he held a guttering candle and in the

(For Opening Chapters turn to next page.)

Buck Tregellis.

Now that I was in my seventeenth year, and had already some need for a razor, I had begun to weary of the

narrow life of the village, and to long to see something of the great world beyond.

The craving was all the stronger because I durst not speak openly about it, for the least hint of it brought the tears into my mother's eyes.

But now there was the less reason that I should stay at home, since my father was at her side, and so my mind was all filled by this prospect of my uncle's visit, and of the chance that he might set my feet moving at last upon the road of life.

As you may think, it was towards

my father's profession that my thoughts and my hopes turned, for from my childhood I have never seen the heave of the sea or tasted the salt upon my lips without feeling the blood of five generations of seamen thrill within my veins.

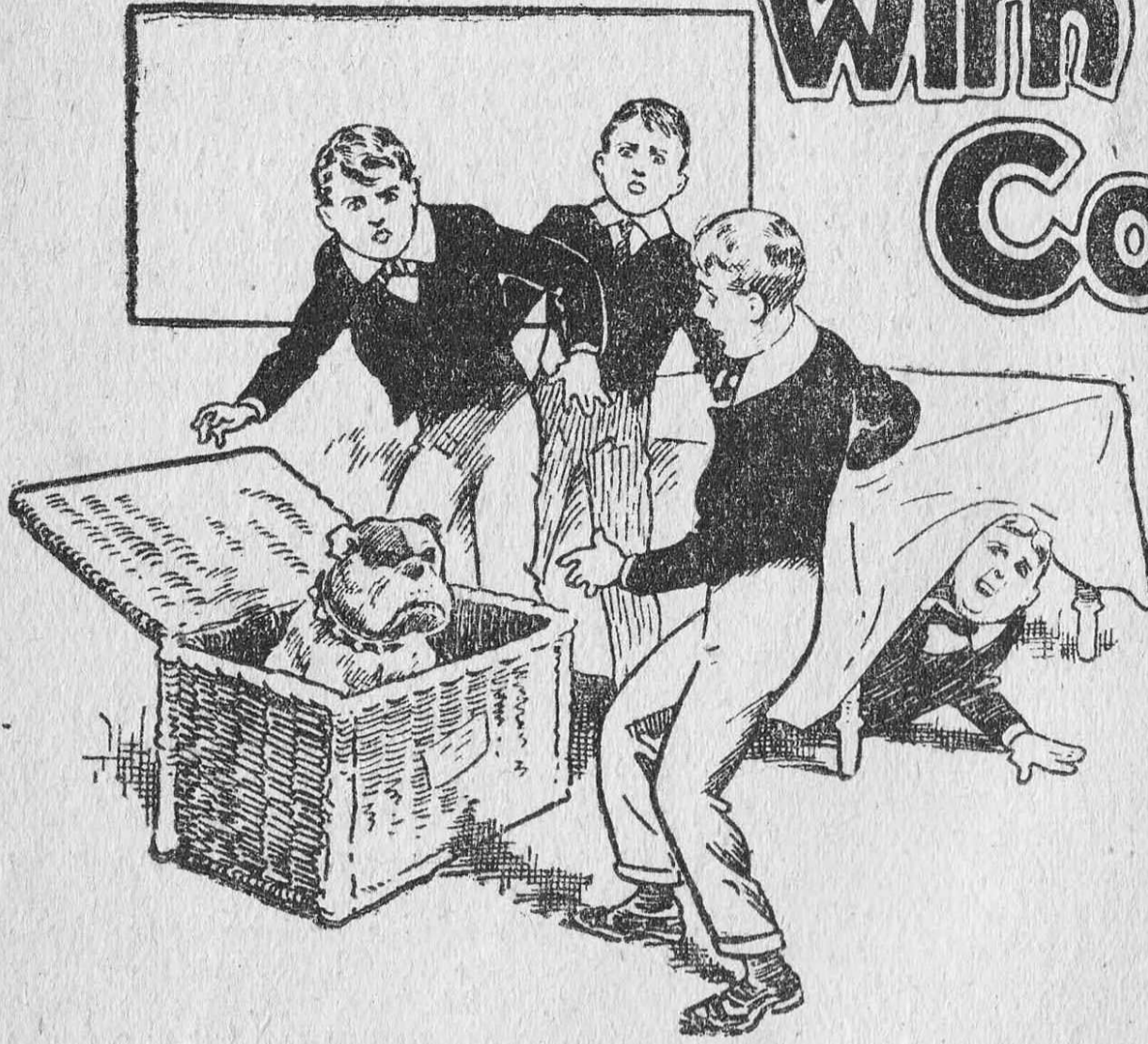
And think of the challenge which

was ever waving in those days before the eyes of a coast-living lad!

I had but to walk up to Wolstonbury in the war time to see the sails of the French chasse-marees and privateers.

Again and again I have heard the roar of the guns coming from far out

With Pankley's Compliments!



A Grand, Long, Complete
: : Story of : :
Jimmy Silver & Co. at
: : Rookwood School. : :
By OWEN CONQUEST

The 1st Chapter. Cleaning Up.

"Go it, Jimmy!"
"That's the idea!"
The end study, that famous apartment allotted to the Fistical Four at Rookwood, presented an unusually busy spectacle. Its occupants, with coats off and sleeves rolled back, were "wiring in."
This sudden burst of energy was due to the fact that Jimmy Silver was expecting a visitor, a very important visitor. His uncle had recently been demobbed, and had wired his nephew his intention of visiting the old school. Major Silver had been one of those to respond to the call at the outbreak of war, and had luckily passed through the whole campaign unscathed. Lovell, Raby, and Newcome had fallen in with Jimmy Silver's suggestion that it was up to the end study to accord Major Silver a hearty reception. And the first part of the programme was to clean the end study. Jimmy wanted to impress his worthy relative, whom he knew was a "sticker" for cleanliness.
"Put these footer boots in the locker!"
"Right-ho, old scout!"
Jimmy paused in his labour, and looked round the study approvingly. He had been engaged on black-leading the grate, and a good proportion of the black-lead had somehow or other transferred itself to his face. That was a minor detail, however, under the circumstances. Arthur Edward Lovell was wielding a mop and Raby and Newcome were dusting.
"Put those blessed books away, Raby!" said Jimmy Silver. "You always leave your rubbish all over the place!"
George Raby snorted.
"Why, you ass, they belong to you!"
"Eh?"
"Your name's Silver, ain't it?" growled Raby.
"Yes."
"Well, these blessed books have your fatheaded name scrawled all over them."
George Raby pushed the offending books under the nose of his leader for inspection.
"Oh, I—I—"
Jimmy Silver, at a loss for words, turned his attention once more to black-leading the grate.
Silence, save for the busy whirl of mop and dusters, reigned in the study. The juniors were hard at it, and already their efforts were being rewarded. Everything was in its right place—that was, as far as the eye could see, although Newcome and Raby had bundled most of the rubbish behind the old bookcase and the locker. But, as Raby wisely remarked, "What the eye doesn't see the heart doesn't grieve over." To which Newcome concurred a hearty "Hear, hear!"
"My hat!"
That interruption came from Tommy Dodd, the leader of the Modern juniors, as he halted outside the end study with blank amazement written all over his face.
"My hat!"
The Fistical Four ceased their labours as Tommy Dodd repeated that exclamation.
"Get out!" growled Lovell, grasping the mop threateningly.
"Buzz off, Tommy!"
"Eh?"
"Buzz off; we're busy!" growled Jimmy Silver.
"Is this is a new game?" asked

Tommy Dodd sweetly. "Or are you Classical chumps suddenly realising the truth of the old saying, 'Cleanliness is next to godliness?'"
"Why, you Modern rotter—"
"Naughty, naughty!" grinned Tommy Dodd, wagging an admonishing finger at the leader of the Fistical Four. "I'm glad to see that you are reforming, Jimmy."
"What?"
"You Classical chumps never do wash your little necks, and your studies always remind me of stables! I'm glad to see this change for the better," said the leader of the Moderns thoughtfully.
"Well, I'm blessed!"
"Cheeky rotter!"
"Throw him out!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell, taking a firmer grip on the handle of the mop.
"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Tommy Dodd.
"What's the giddy joke?" asked Jimmy Silver grimly.
"You are!"
"You—you cheeky beggar! Why, I'll wipe up the floor with you!" said the leader of the Fistical Four.
"Ha, ha! Your face!" chuckled Tommy Dodd.
"M-my face! What's the matter with my face?" inquired Jimmy Silver.
Lovell, Raby, and Newcome turned and looked at their leader. He certainly did look funny. Jimmy Silver's operations on the grate had had the effect of turning him into a fair imitation of a Christy minstrel. They were inclined to laugh, but they heroically refrained. Rivalry was at its height between the Moderns and Classicals, and any opinion ventured by a Modern was sure to receive contradiction from a Classical.
"Ha, ha! Ow! Yaroooh!"
Tommy Dodd's merriment changed to a note of anguish as Arthur Edward Lovell lunged at him with the mop.
Crash!
The Modern junior descended to the study carpet with a bump that shook every bone in his body. That lunge had caught him off his balance.
"Yow-ow-ow!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
The Fistical Four were laughing now. It was a case of he who laughs last laughs longest, as Arthur Edward expressed it.
"Yow-ow! Grough!"
Tommy Dodd scrambled to his feet and glared at the laughing juniors.
"I—I'll pulverise you, you—"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
The leader of the Modern juniors rolled back his cuffs, and advanced threateningly upon the Fistical Four. His left fist shot out, and Arthur Edward Lovell reeled back, clasping his nose.
"Ow-yowp!"
"Collar him!"
"Kick him out!"
Raby, Newcome, and Silver grasped the warlike Modern junior, who struggled desperately. Raby received the benefit of a punch in the ribs, but the odds were three to one, and Tommy Dodd found himself being hurried to the doorway.
"Swing him out!"
Tommy Dodd was lifted bodily, and commenced to sway backwards and forwards like a pendulum.
"One, two, three!"
Crash!
The Modern junior was swung out of the end study, and he came to earth in the passage with a resounding thump.

"Ow, you rotters! Yow!"
"Come back and have some more!" yelled Jimmy Silver temptingly.
But Tommy Dodd did not come back and have some more. He decided swiftly in his mind that discretion was the better part of valour, for the time being, and he crawled away down the staircase to the Modern quarters.
"Now we'll get on!" said Jimmy Silver, closing the door.
And the juniors were very soon hard at it again. Tommy Dodd's visit soon sank into the background under the all-important task of cleaning up the study.
"I think that will do," remarked the leader of the Fistical Four pleasantly.
"Hear, hear!"
The four juniors surveyed their handiwork with satisfied expressions. The study looked as bright as a new pin. The looking-glass over the mantelpiece gleamed as the firelight played across it.
"Good!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.
"Top-hole!"
"Nunky will be pleased!"
"Let's put the cloth on," suggested Lovell.
A brand-new tablecloth had been purchased specially for the occasion, and its ample folds, drooped over the table, gave the finishing touch.
"We'd better cut down to Coombe now. Blessed nuisance old Sergeant Kettle being laid up with rheumatism!"
Old Sergeant Kettle's tuckshop was closed for that day, owing to a severe attack of rheumatism he was suffering from. Most of the juniors had laid in their supplies from the bunshop in Coombe.
"Just do it in time, Jimmy," said Lovell, looking at his watch. "You can come along with us and order the grub; then you can meet your respected uncle while we are hurrying back."
"That's it. Have everything nicely laid out by the time we return," said Jimmy Silver. "I want to please the old buffer!"
The Fistical Four donned their caps and left the end study—a study newly swept and garnished.

The 2nd Chapter. Laying in Supplies.

Jimmy Silver & Co. passed out of the gates at Rookwood, and took the road to Coombe. It was a crisp afternoon, and the juniors stepped out briskly, their healthy young faces flushed with their exertions.
"What time does your uncle arrive?" asked Raby.
"I've told you about half a dozen times," retorted Jimmy Silver.
"It's slipped my mind," suggested Lovell. "Wonderful what it does! Old Bootles always remembers when he's given me lines."
"Oh, don't rot!" growled Raby.
"Hallo, Bagshot Bounders!" broke in Jimmy Silver, extending a finger in the direction of a forked road.
Cecil Pankley, the leader of the Bagshot Bounders—Jimmy Silver & Co.'s good-natured rivals—was walking along the lane which led into the road the Rookwood juniors were taking. The Bagshot junior had not seen Jimmy Silver & Co., as they were partly screened from view by a tall hedge.
"He's alone!"
"Let's bump him in the mud when he turns the bend."
"Hear, hear!"
The Fistical Four continued on

their way until they reached the bend which branched into the main road for Coombe.
"S'sh!" cautioned Jimmy Silver, as footsteps were heard approaching.
Cecil Pankley, unaware of the kind intentions of the Rookwooders, came round the bend.
"Collar him!"
Four sturdy juniors pounced upon the hapless Pankley, and dragged him down. His topper was jammed over his eyes, and he was bumped in the mud.
"Yaroooh! Ow! Help!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"This is where we laugh!" grinned Jimmy Silver.
"Who's top dog?"
"Rookwood!"
"Yow! Ow! Rescue! Bagshot Bounders!" yelled Pankley, struggling fiercely.
His collar reposed round the back of his neck, and his jacket was extremely muddy up the back. Cecil Pankley was beginning to wish he had accepted the company of Putter and Poole, when those two cheerful youths had offered their company.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
The Rookwooders were enjoying the fun. As Raby remarked, it wasn't often that the Bagshot Bounders were allowed out on their lonesome.
"Say we're top-dog, and we'll let you go, Pankley, old bird," said Jimmy Silver cheerfully.
"Yow! Ow! Gerroff my chest, Lovell!" howled Pankley.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Little boys should not be allowed out by themselves!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "This is where we smile, Pankley, old scout!"
The Bagshot junior scrambled to his feet, and with a wrench freed himself from the grasp of Jimmy Silver & Co. He fairly bolted down the road in the direction of Bagshot. Pankley was possessed of plenty of pluck, but four hefty juniors was a little too much for him.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
Jimmy Silver & Co. stared after his retreating figure with grins. The Bagshot junior was looking very much the worse for wear. Sitting in a puddle is not exactly conducive to the smartness of a fellow's clothes.
"Shall we follow him?" ventured Raby.
"No. Let the boulder go," said Jimmy Silver. "We've only just time to get the tuck, and I've got to meet nunky."
"Come on, then."
The Fistical Four resumed their walk to the village tuckshop. Of Cecil Pankley nothing more was seen. That worthy junior was hopping it back to Bagshot as fast as his legs would carry him.
"Here we are," said Jimmy Silver, as the four juniors halted outside the bunshop in Coombe.
"Hallo! There's a Rookwood chap here!" exclaimed Arthur Edward Lovell, peering in.
"Nothing in that, is there?" growled the leader of the Fistical Four.
"A dozen cream-puffs—large ones, please."
It was the voice of Tommy Cook that reached the ears of the juniors outside.
"Very good, Master Cook."
"A dozen jam-tarts."
"Here they are."
"That's the lot, I think," said Tommy Cook. "Will you send them along to the school? Tommy Cook, Modern Side, Rookwood, will find me."
"Yes, Master Cook. What time will suit you?" asked Mrs. Blowers, the proprietress.
"Lemme see. Say, half-past four."
"It shall be done, sir."
Tommy Cook left the counter, and reached the door just as Jimmy Silver & Co. were entering.
"Hallo, you chaps!"
"Hallo, Tommy! Laying in for a siege?" asked Jimmy Silver sweetly.
"Mind your own bizney!"
"Oh, keep your wool on!"
Tommy Cook strode past the juniors, and left the bunshop. And Jimmy Silver & Co. were very soon ordering on a lavish scale everything that the bunshop offered calculated to make a good impression on a worthy relative. Jimmy's uncle had been to tea before in the end study, and had done himself well.
"I think he likes ice-cream," said Jimmy thoughtfully.
"Well, shove some in, then."
The ice-cream was duly shoved in. A hamper was produced from under the counter, and Mrs. Blowers, with a beaming smile, packed the good things carefully.
"Shall I send them, Master Silver?" she asked.

"No, ma'am. These chaps will take it along with them."
"Very good, sir."
And the good lady handed Jimmy Silver the bill, whilst Raby, Newcome, and Arthur Edward Lovell took charge of the hamper.
"You will just be in nice time for the train, Jimmy," said Lovell, consulting his watch.
"Oh, good!"
"What time shall we expect you back with nunky?"
"Let's see, the train arrives four-twenty—walk to the school," mused the leader of the Fistical Four. "Say, a quarter to five. Have the table laid and the kettle boiling."
"Right-ho!"
Jimmy Silver took leave of his chums and walked in the direction of the station to await the train bearing his uncle. And Lovell, Raby, and Newcome sauntered off, carrying the hamper between them.

The 3rd Chapter. A Call for Help!

"This blessed hamper's heavy!" grunted Lovell.
"I'll give you a turn now," volunteered Raby, who had been walking behind Lovell and Newcome on the way back to Rookwood.
"Here you are, then!"
Raby and Lovell exchanged places, and the three juniors continued on their way, discussing the chances of victory over Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's in the forthcoming footer match.
"I think we shall whack them," said Raby thoughtfully.
"H'm!"
That ejaculation escaped from Newcome, who was not so sanguine as his chum.
"What are you grunting about?" demanded Raby.
"Tommy's crowd are hot stuff, you know," said Newcome. "It won't be a walk-over."
"Not if you're playing!"
"Eh?"
"Not if you're playing," repeated Raby.
"What do you mean?"
"Eleven men stand a better chance of beating ten men, don't they?"
"Yes; but what—"
"It's quite simple. If you play, it will be quite equal to playing with only ten men," grinned Raby.
"My hat! I'll—I'll bust you!" said Newcome, dropping the handle of the hamper.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You cheeky idiot! I was playing footer when you were having drummed into your fat head that two and two make four," growled Newcome.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Hallo! What's that?" broke in Arthur Edward Lovell.
"What's what, ass?"
"Listen. There it is again."
"What are you burbling about?"
"I heard a shout," said Arthur Edward Lovell.
"Go hon!"
"Help!"
Through the crisp afternoon air that shout was borne to the three juniors.
"Help—help!"
"Someone in difficulties," murmured Raby, listening acutely.
"Where does it come from?"
"Shut up, fathead, and listen!" growled Lovell.
"Help! Help! Help!"
The three juniors turned in the direction whence the call came. The skating pond was very near, and the cry seemed to come from that locality.
"Some idiot's fallen through the ice," said Newcome.
"Help—oh, help!"
"Come on, your chaps!" yelled Raby, starting off at a run.
"What about the hamper?" asked Lovell.
"Oh, shove it under the hedge! Come on!"
Lovell and Newcome deposited the hamper under the hedge, safe from view of any passing tramp.
By this time Raby was well ahead, and Lovell and Newcome sprinted after him. Over the ploughed field they went, collecting quite a quantity of mud in the process. For it was thawing fast.
"Help!"
The call rang out clear and loud from the direction of the skating pond.
"I knew some blessed ass would fall through sooner or later!" panted Raby, as his chums caught him up.
"The ice is much too thin for skating to-day, with this thaw on."
"There was a notice to that effect when we passed along half an hour ago," said Lovell.
"Put on a spurt!"
The juniors put on a spurt, and the

skating pond loomed up in the distance.

"I can see him!" exclaimed Raby. The pond was deserted, save for one black patch resembling the figure of a man.

"All right, we're coming!" yelled the three juniors in unison.

But no answering call came from the figure half submerged in the gap in the ice.

"He's unconscious!" panted Raby. "Hurry up!"

The juniors ran on in silence. All their breath would be needed if they were to reach the drowning man in time. They could see him distinctly now. One arm was thrown out over the surface of the ice, and the other was lost to view. The juniors could also see that the man's back was to them. Two-thirds of his body appeared to be under the surface.

The juniors dashed up the bank, and Arthur Edward Lovell seized the situation at a glance.

"Form a chain, you chaps. The ice won't bear me alone!"

Silently the three juniors formed a chain, and Lovell, stepping carefully, mounted the ice, supported by the strong arms of Raby and Newcome, who looked on with tense faces.

"A little further!" breathed Lovell.

His outstretched fingers clutched the collar of the drowning man, and at a signal, Raby and Newcome commenced to retrace their steps, hauling in their burden as they went.

Slowly but surely the body was drawn out of that ugly gap in the ice, and the three juniors reached the bank again in safety.

"Turn him over!" whispered Lovell. "Then we'll try and restore the circulation."

The figure was turned over, but the face was concealed by a felt hat that had slipped over in the struggle.

Arthur Edward Lovell whipped off the hat, and his eyes nearly bulged from his head.

"My hat!" he gasped. Then Raby and Newcome looked at the "man" they had rescued from a watery grave.

"Oh, great Scott!"

"Well, I'm blessed!" Then Lovell, recovering from his amazement somewhat, did a strange thing towards restoring the circulation of the rescued man. With a lusty kick he caught the figure fair in the middle. The man did not groan; instead, a little pile of sawdust began to trickle out of his waistcoat.

"Oh, carry me home to die!" gasped Newcome faintly. "Fancy rescuing a scarecrow!"

And he also bestowed a savage kick on the person of the scarecrow.

"It's a jape!" bellowed Lovell wrathfully. "Some rotters have been pulling our legs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Raby and Newcome were laughing now. They saw the funny side of the affair. As Raby remarked, "It wasn't every day that a scarecrow was rescued from drowning."

"Ha, ha! Oh dear!" chuckled Newcome, wiping away the tears. "Fancy being taken in like that, Lovell!"

"Why, of all the blessed cheek! You believed that it was a man, as much as I did!" roared Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Raby and Newcome.

But Arthur Edward did not join in. He was thinking of the hamper. If this was a jape on someone's part, then the hamper might be the real object of the japers. That was how he reasoned it.

"I'm going after the hamper!"

Lovell set off at a run in the direction of the hedge which concealed the hamper. Raby and Newcome paused to bestow a few more kicks on the bag of sawdust shaped as a man, then followed him.

"It's all right, you chaps!" sang out Lovell, as he reached the hedge concealing the hamper. "It's here!"

A few moments later Raby and Newcome joined him. To their great relief, the hamper was apparently just as they had left it.

"I wonder who was responsible for that rotten jape?" said Lovell thoughtfully.

"Goodness knows! Better keep mum about it up at the school, or we shall be the laughing-stock of the whole place!"

"Supposing the japer or japers belong to Rookwood?" ventured Raby.

"Oh crumbs! I never thought of that."

"Never mind about that," said Newcome. "We've got to get this grub back to the study, and then change. I'm covered in mud!"

"Same here!"

Five minutes later the gates of

Rookwood loomed up, and the three juniors, liberally splashed with mud, and none too good-tempered, passed old Mack, the porter, and entered the Classical House.

The 4th Chapter.

Exchange is no Robbery.

"Here we are!"

Arthur Edward Lovell kicked open the door of the end study, and the three juniors tramped in.

"Shove the hamper on the table!" commanded Lovell. "We can get it all laid out after we have changed."

The hamper was duly placed on the table.

"Get out!"

That command was hurled at a fat face adorning a fat body, the owner of which was Tubby Muffin. The command was lost upon Tubby. He advanced further into the study, his little, round eyes gleaming greedily as he desecrated the hamper upon the study table.

"Really, Lovell, I've come to tea," said Muffin, still eyeing the hamper and visualising its contents.

"Oh, have you? Then you had better change your mind jolly soon!" growled Lovell. "Get out!"

"But ain't I coming to tea?" howled Tubby Muffin.

"You're not!"

"Ow-yow! Leggo, you beast!"

Lovell had taken the fat junior firmly by the ear, and he was propelled into the passage. A boot hastened his departure, and Tubby Muffin crawled away disconsolately.

"That's a good riddance!" said Raby. "Now we'll wash and change."

"Good egg!"

The three juniors left the study,



A GALLANT RESCUE! "Form a chain, you chaps," said Lovell. "The ice won't bear me alone." Silently the three juniors formed a chain and Lovell, supported by the strong arms of Raby and Newcome, mounted the ice. "A little further," he breathed, as his outstretched fingers fell short of the figure in the gap.

how the scalping would go, but it was no business of his.

Raby, Lovell, and Newcome dashed out into the quad, nearly capsizing old Mack, the porter, who was carrying a hamper in the direction of the Modern House.

"My eye!"

Arthur Edward Lovell's eyes gleamed as he beheld the hamper. On the label attached he saw the inscription, "Master T. Cook." Lovell was quick-witted at all times, and swiftly his brain concocted a plan to turn the tables on Tommy Dodd & Co.

"That hamper for Cook, Mack?" he asked.

"Yes, Master Lovell, which it is!" muttered Mack, breathing hard.

"I'm just going over to see Tommy Dodd & Co.," said Lovell quite truthfully. "I'll take it over for you if you like."

Raby and Newcome saw through the plot, and their eyes widened. Honestly speaking, they hadn't quite relished the idea of raiding Tommy Dodd in his own quarters, but this idea of Lovell's would save all that trouble, and the ultimate result would be a greater achievement.

They remembered now that Tommy

spokesman. "Tea's ready, and I expect you're hungry."

"I am a little bit peckish. By Jove, this is a handsome spread!" said Jimmy Silver's uncle.

The leader of the Fistical Four was looking puzzled. Where was the ice-cream he had purchased? And what did that plate of ham and tongue mean? He did not remember ordering it.

Then his eyes fixed themselves on Arthur Edward Lovell. That worthy grinned amiably at his leader, and winked one eye.

Jimmy's uncle took his seat at the head of the table, and very soon made himself at home. His appetite was like a schoolboy's, and he sampled everything. The juniors vied with each other in supplying his needs.

"A little more ham, sir?" asked Lovell temptingly.

"Right, my boy!"

"Another cup of tea?"

"Please!"

Conversation ran the round at the table, and Raby, Newcome, and Lovell all agreed that Jimmy's uncle was a thorough sport.

The leader of the Fistical Four drew Arthur Edward on one side as he rose to fill the kettle.

Cook had met them in the tuckshop at Coombe, and they had heard him ordering the contents of the hamper.

"Which is 'ow that's verry good of you, Master Lovell," said Mack. "I'm verry busy at the present moment, thankee kindly, young gents!"

"Don't mench, Mack, old sport! It's a pleasure!" grinned Lovell.

And, receiving the hamper, he pressed into the old porter's palm a half-crown.

Old Mack mumbled his thanks, and shuffled off, and the three conspirators, waiting for him to disappear, broke into loud chuckles.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Tommy!"

"Exchange is no robbery!" grinned Lovell.

"Ha, ha! No!"

The three juniors made their way back to the end study with Tommy Cook's hamper. They passed Conroy, the Colonial junior, on the staircase, and he looked up in surprise.

"Have you done the trick?" he asked incredulously.

"We have!"

"Great snakes!"

And Conroy walked on puzzled.

The end study was reached, and the three juniors hastened to prepare tea. The kettle was boiling merrily, and the contents of the hamper were spread temptingly on the table, when footsteps sounded outside the study door.

"Here we are, uncle!"

Jimmy Silver pushed open the door, and a middle-aged man of military appearance strode in. He glanced round the study approvingly, and a smile crossed his face.

"How do you do, boys?" he said warmly, turning to Jimmy Silver's chums. "I've met you before, haven't I?"

"Very pleased to see you, I'm sure!" returned Lovell, acting as

"What does all this mean, Lovell?" he asked. "And where's that ice-cream?"

"S'sh!"

Arthur Edward lowered his head and quietly but quickly told of the events that had happened from the time of setting out for Rookwood with the hamper.

Jimmy Silver's eyes nearly started from his head as he listened.

"My hat! Then Tommy Dodd's got our feed, and we've got his—is that it?"

"That's it," grinned Lovell. "But I don't know who the japers were in connection with that rescue stunt."

"Bagshot fellows," said Jimmy.

"Never thought of that."

"Look sharp with that hot water, Lovell," said Raby.

And Arthur Edward put the kettle on, whilst Jimmy Silver resumed his place at the table, chuckling inwardly.

"Another tart, uncle?"

"No, thanks, Jimmy! I'm finished. If your mother were to see me now I should be chipped to death. But it's good to be young!"

And the worthy gentleman pulled his chair up to the fire, and began to relate the experiences of his own schooldays, to which Jimmy Silver & Co. listened attentively.

The 5th Chapter.

A Tuckless Hamper.

"This will make Jimmy Silver look small!"

Thus Tommy Dodd, the leader of the Modern juniors, to Tubby Muffin and Tommy Doyle.

"Faith an' ye've done it!" grinned Tommy Doyle.

"Yes; thanks to this fat spy!" replied Tommy Dodd, extending a finger in the direction of Tubby Muffin.

"Oh, really, Tommy!" began Muffin feebly.

"Don't you Tommy me!" growled Dodd threateningly.

"But I told you about the hamper, didn't I?" protested Tubby.

"You did. And when I've given you your whack out you go! Savvy?"

Reginald Muffin did savvy. But as long as he got his portion of grub, he didn't very much mind where he ate it.

"Did you see anyone over there?" asked Tommy Doyle.

"We ran into Conroy, but the chump didn't suspect anything. We heard footsteps outside the end study, and we waited until the coast was clear."

"Tommy, you're a broth of a boy!"

"I fancy Jimmy Silver will sit up and take notice when he finds his giddy hamper missing," grinned Tommy Dodd.

"He, he, he!" cackled Muffin.

"Well, ain't you going to open it?" he inquired peevishly.

"All in good time; Tommy Cook's not back yet," remarked the leader of the Modern juniors.

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the owner of that name pushed open the study door and walked in. He glanced up in surprise at seeing Tubby Muffin there. Muffin was a Classical, and it was forbidden for any junior to be in a rival House.

"Hallo, Tommy! What's Fatty doing here?"

"Oh, he came and told me that there was a hamper knocking around in Jimmy Silver's study, and so I went over and bagged it," said Tommy Dodd modestly.

"Talking of hampers, I'm expecting one myself. In fact, it ought to be here now," said Tommy Cook.

"You are?"

"Yes; the Head asked me to buy him some grub from Coombe, as the school tuckshop is closed. I believe he's got his young nephews visiting him this afternoon."

"First I've heard of it," said Tommy Dodd. "Did you order it?"

"Yes; and it's due here by now," said Tommy Cook, glancing at his watch.

"We'll open Jimmy's hamper now," said Tommy Dodd; "we were waiting for you."

"Good!" ejaculated Tubby Muffin, smacking his lips in anticipation.

Tommy Dodd extracted a knife from the table drawer, and cut the cord binding the hamper.

"I bet it's full of grub of the very best," he said. "This is—or was, rather—a special feed for Silver's uncle."

He pushed back the lid, and Doyle, Cook, and Tubby Muffin looked on expectantly.

Grrrrr!

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great Scott!"

Instead of a hamper full of tuck, the only thing to be seen when the lid was thrown open was a fair-sized bulldog, who sat up and bared his teeth aggressively.

Tubby Muffin bolted under the table, his fat carcass shaking like a jelly.

Grrrrr!

The Modern juniors backed away from those unwelcome growls. Their faces showed incredulous amazement. The bulldog, not liking the looks of the juniors, bared his teeth again.

"A b-b-bull-d-d-dog!" spluttered Tommy Todd. "W-where's the tuck?"

"Look out!"

The warning came from Tommy Cook. The bulldog, no doubt, fed up with his cramped quarters in the hamper, sprang out on to the table, snarling.

Grrrrr!

The three juniors backed away to the cupboard. Tommy Dodd grabbing the poker as he went.

"Help! Murder! Keep him off!" wailed Tubby Muffin.

The bulldog, after sniffing round the table, leaped to the floor, and began sniffing at Tubby Muffin's boot, which projected from underneath the table-cloth.

"Ow, ow! Help!"

Tubby Muffin's boot seemed to offer some attraction to the bulldog, for he commenced to worry it. Perhaps he thought it was a rat. Muffin, on the other hand, thought that his last hour had come.

"Help! He's killing me!" yelled the fat junior.

"Come on!" said Tommy Dodd, who had recovered from his fright. "Drive him out!"

Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle grasped a cricket-stump apiece, and the three juniors advanced upon the dog.

Grrrr-grrrrr!

There was a resounding thump as



WITH PANKLEY'S COMPLIMENTS!

(Continued from previous page.)

Tommy Dodd swiped the floor with the poker within an inch or two of the bulldog's head. That thump had the desired effect of frightening the innocent animal, for, with ears laid back and its stumpy tail in the descendant, it bolted for the door. Once in the passage, it turned to bestow a parting growl, but a threatening motion with the poker sent it scuttling along the passage.

"Yow-ow! Take him off!" howled Tubby Muffin. "He's biting me!"

"You can come out now, Tubby," said Tommy Dodd, grinning. "The blessed animal's gone!"

"Are you sure?"

Tubby Muffin poked his head out under the drooping tablecloth, and saw no sign of the bulldog. His courage returned immediately.

"Did you see me wrestling with the brute?" he asked. "I caught it a fearful whack over the head!"

"Oh, shut up!"

"You'd better follow the bulldog," growled Tommy Cook. "We've had enough of you! Buzz off!"

"But what about the feed?" demanded the fat Classical. "Ain't I going to have my share?"

"There's no blessed feed, you fat duffer! You've been hoaxing us, and you can take that for your trouble!"

"That" was a lunge with the cricket-stump, which caught the fat junior fairly in the waistcoat.

"Yow-yow! Stoppit!"

"I'll give you two seconds to clear out!" said Tommy Dodd.

Tubby Muffin did not wait for those two seconds grace. With an indignant glare he bolted to the door. He halted in the passage and shook his fat fist at the Modern trio.

"Yah, you beasts!"

Then he fled.

"Well, of all the blessed capers, this beats the band!" grunted Tommy Dodd. "I can't make it out!"

The three juniors peered into the hamper, and Doyle grabbed a sheet of paper on which was inscribed.

"With Pankley's compliments."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is Pankley's work," grinned Tommy Dodd. "How did he manage to get hold of the hamper?"

"Ask me another!" said Tommy Cook. "I'm going down to Mack's to see about that hamper for the Head."

"We'll come with you," replied the leader of the Modern trio. "We can give Jimmy Silver a look in on the way back."

"We've got lots to tell him."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

And the three Modern juniors sauntered down to the gatekeeper's lodge. Had they been three minutes earlier they would have seen their late visitor, the bulldog, bolt out of the gates in response to a shrill whistle from without, where Poole, of Bagshot, had been lurking, waiting for his pet.

The 6th Chapter.

Uncle James Squares Up.

"Where's Silver?"

Tommy Cook asked that question of Valentine Mornington as he came along the passage on the Classical side. Tommy Cook's face was boiling with rage, and Tommy Dodd and Doyle looked very serious.

"In his study, dear boy," drawled Mornington. "What's the trouble?"

"B-r-r!"

Tommy Cook did not waste any politeness on the dandy of the Fourth. Instead, he pushed past him and strode towards the end study. Voices came from within as the three Moderns halted outside.

"What will Tommy say when he finds his hamper has been scooped?"

Crash!

The occupants of the end study looked up in surprise as Tommy Dodd, Doyle, and Cook rushed into the room.

"Where's my hamper?" roared Tommy Cook, rolling back his cuffs. "Mack says you've got it!"

"Your hamper," grinned Jimmy Silver, "is there." And he pointed to the corner. "The contents are dis-

tributed amongst us. Nunky had a good whack, but he's just gone."

Tommy Cook danced with rage, and his eyes gleamed.

"You fatheaded chumps! You burbling asses!" he roared. "That hamper wasn't mine!"

"Eh?"

"It was the Head's! I went down specially to Coombe to get that grub for Dr. Chisholm, as his nephews are coming this afternoon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to laugh at! What do you think the Head will say?" howled Tommy Cook.

The Fistical Four stopped laughing. If that hamper had been purchased for the Head, then things were beginning to look very serious.

"But where's our hamper?" demanded Lovell. "You bagged ours, so I pinched yours! Exchange is no robbery, you know!"

"Your rotten hamper only contained a bull-dog!"

"A what?"

"A blessed bull-dog!" repeated Tommy Cook.

"Are you potty?" inquired Jimmy Silver.

"It's just as Tommy says," broke in Tommy Dodd. "We opened your hamper, and the only thing it contained was a bull-dog."

"A b-bull-dog?"

"Yes, and a sheet of paper," chimed in Tommy Doyle. "Faith an' here's the paper!"

And he handed Jimmy Silver Cecil Pankley's message.

"With Pankley's compliments."

"Great snakes!" roared Jimmy Silver, as a light dawned upon him.

The same light also dawned upon Lovell, Raby, and Newcome, but they remained silent.

"Lovell, you burbling chump!" growled Jimmy Silver. "This accounts for the cries for 'help' you heard. I said it was the work of Pankley & Co.!"

Arthur Edward Lovell snorted.

"How was I to know?"

"Any thumping ass but you would have seen through it!" said the leader of the Fistical Four.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were entirely in the dark, and their faces plainly expressed ignorance.

"What's all this about?" asked Tommy Dodd.

Arthur Edward Lovell condescended to explain, and the Modern juniors burst into roars of laughter as he unfolded the tale.

"Ha ha, ha!"

"Of all the blessed cheek, I think Jimmy takes the first prize!" exclaimed the leader of the Modern trio.

"Ha ha, ha!"

"Never mind about that now," in-

terrupted Jimmy Silver. "It's the Head's hamper that I'm worrying about. Pankley & Co. will keep."

"Hear, hear!"

"I don't see what can be done," said Tommy Cook miserably. "We're all stony broke, ain't we, Tommy?"

Tommy Dodd nodded in assent.

"If that's the only difficulty," said Jimmy Silver, brightening up, "I'll stand the exes."

"No fear!" growled Tommy Cook.

"Don't be an ass, Tommy! We've had your grub—or, rather, the Head's—and so I'll pay for it," said the leader of the Fistical Four. "Nunky played up trumps before he went."

"But I can't let you do that, Jimmy," faltered Cook.

"Fathead! Look here, if that hamper hadn't been bagged, poor old Nunky would have been in a fearful wax! You see, on the way back from the station I had been giving him a detailed account of the grub I had laid in."

Jimmy Silver paused for breath.

"Well, what's that got to do with it?" demanded Tommy Cook.

"Everything, you ass! Don't you see? If there hadn't been a feed, old Nunky wouldn't have left a decent tip. According to that, I am indebted to you to the extent of a feed."

Jimmy turned to Lovell, Raby, and Newcome.

"That's so, isn't it, you chaps?"

"Right on the wicket!"

"Well, if you put it like that, Jimmy, old scout, I'll accept," said Tommy Cook awkwardly.

The leader of the Fistical Four extracted a crisp currency note from his wallet, which he handed to Tommy Cook.

"You had better cut down to Coombe now," he said.

"Thanks, I will!" replied Tommy Cook.

And he grabbed for his cap and pelted down the passage as fast as his legs would carry him.

"I think he will do it in time," said Jimmy Silver.

Tommy Cook's luck seemed to be in, for in less than twenty minutes he was back in the end study.

"Hallo! Soon back!"

"I got a lift in a car each way, as luck would have it," grinned Cook cheerfully.

"Good!"

"I left the tuck with the Head and apologised for being late, but the old buffer thanked me profusely. He told me that he appreciated my good taste," said the Modern junior. "I met Tupper, the page-boy, on the stairs and saved him the trouble of bringing you this letter, Silver."

Jimmy Silver took the letter, and slitting the envelope, commenced to

read. His brow contracted in a frown as he perused the contents. It ran:

"Dear Silver.—Kindly give my apologies to Lovell for having to rescue a scarecrow from a watery grave, but it was necessary for the success of my scheme. Tell him, also, to pinch himself and wake up!"

"How did you find the bull-dog? Nice and tender?"

"Who's top-dog? Why, Bagshot, of course!—Kindest regards, I don't think!"

"CECIL PANKLEY."

"Cheeky bounder!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"We shall have to think out a plan to make him sit up!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell.

"That's so," said Jimmy Silver thoughtfully. "Only you can scrap any idea that you have in your mind."

"What do you mean?" demanded Arthur Edward warmly.

"Anything you think of is sure to be potty."

"Rot!"

"Exactly!" said Jimmy Silver.

Tommy Dodd looked at his watch. "Time for prep, you chaps!" he said.

"So it is. I'd forgotten prep," said Jimmy Silver. "See you chaps in the morning. We'll think out a wheeze to make Pankley & Co. look small."

"Right-ho, Jimmy!"

And the three Modern juniors hurried over to their own House, arriving just in time for prep. On the morrow seven heads were put together with but one object in mind, namely, to score off the Bagshot Bounders.

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY'S BOY'S FRIEND

will contain another long complete story of

JIMMY SILVER & Co.,

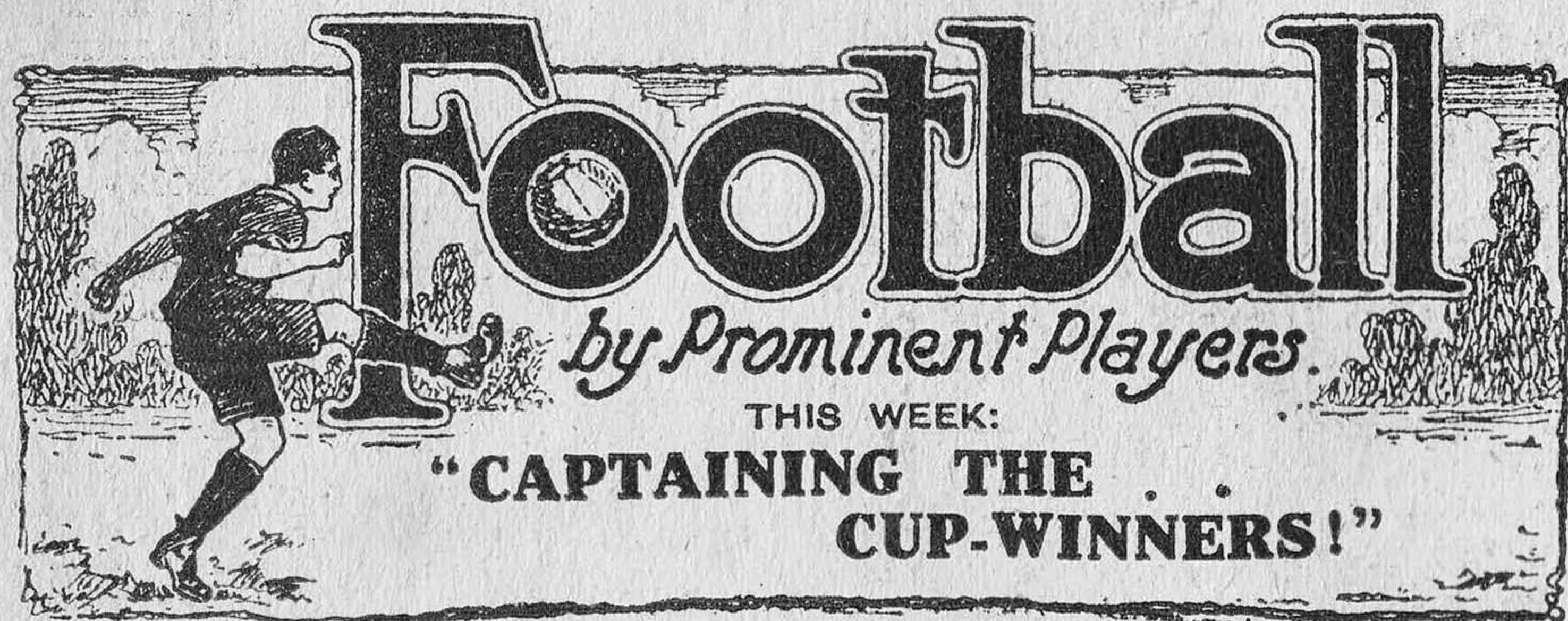
introducing their Rivals of Bagshot.

This splendid story is entitled:

"SINGING
PANKLEY'S BEARD!"

By OWEN CONQUEST.

DON'T MISS IT.



By GEORGE UTLEY.

(The Popular Half-back and Captain of Sheffield United, the last English Cup-Winners.)

When an ambitious footballer reaches anything approaching a first-class team, I take it that there are three great things of which he dreams. One is to be chosen for his country; the other to be in a side which wins the English Cup, and the third to be a member of a side which wins the championship of the First Division. I certainly had ambitions in all these directions from the time when I became a professional footballer, and I have been particularly lucky, because two of those three ambitions have been fulfilled. I have been chosen to play for my country, and my Cup experience has been particularly fortunate, for I have been in three Cup Finals, and twice have I had the pleasure of being the captain of the winning team. Whether I shall ever be a member of a side which wins the First League Championship, I don't know. But I just live in hopes.

The part which luck plays in the winning of these honours must not be overlooked, though. Some players get plenty of one sort of distinction, but strive as hard as they can, the other eludes them. Take the case of that great full-back—perhaps the

greatest full-back of my time—Bob Crompton, as a striking example. He has played in no end of international matches—well over thirty, I believe—yet in all his long career he has never had the pleasure of leading his side to victory in an English Cup Final. Neither did Steve Bloomer, that prince of goal-scourers, ever be fortunate enough to appear on the winning side in a final tie. And plenty of other instances could be quoted as showing that even the very best of players are sometimes denied the realisation of their ambitions.

However, I am out to tell you something about captaincy in the Cup from my own experience, and, incidentally, to reveal, if I can, some of the secrets of success in this great knock-out competition, in which so many clubs must be disappointed each season and only one thoroughly contented—the winners.

To captain a team which is having a good run in the Cup is a responsibility as well as an honour. There are people who imagine that a football captain is only a figure-head, who leads the team first out of the dressing-room and who tosses for choice

of ends. The captain who imagines that his duties on the field begin and end there, is not fit for the post, however, and especially in cup-ties do tactics tell.

My first experience in Cup success was with the Barnsley team, and later, as my readers are no doubt aware, I was with Sheffield United when the Cup was last won—in 1915.

Now, with both those teams we made a practice of giving a lot of thought to our forthcoming matches between the time the draw was made and the date on which the games were to be played. As far as it was possible, we decided on our policy, weighed up the strength and the weaknesses of our opponents as far as we knew them, and framed our plans accordingly. This, incidentally, is a very good plan, which I should advise all young footballing teams to copy. Think about your matches. If you lose one week, sit down and consider why and how you lost, and make up your minds that the same errors will not be repeated.

Perhaps if I give an actual instance of how this thinking over tactics operates, you will better understand just what I mean. When Barnsley had a successful run in the Cup in 1910, Everton was one of the clubs we were called upon to meet and beat. Previous to our first game with them we only knew their players by repute, as they played in a different League from ours. That first meeting ended in a drawn game, so we had to replay the match. For this second meeting, however, we knew quite a lot more about the ability of the Everton men, and we laid our plans accordingly.

One of the things we had discovered was the fact that their centre-forward, Freeman, was the player to whom the whole side seemed to look to score goals, therefore, it did not require much deep thought to come to the conclusion that he was the man

who must be stopped first of all. So our centre-half went on to the field with that object in view, and as the other very dangerous man was the outside-right, we also decided that he must have careful attention. And I am convinced that to a large extent the fact that we defeated this Ever-

GEORGE UTLEY,



The famous captain of Sheffield United, who has written this article specially for the BOYS' FRIEND.

ton side at the second meeting was due to the thought we had given to the match before the ball was kicked off.

In these talks over tactics it is obvious that the captain of the team must play his part. And when it comes to carrying them out on the field of play, the rest of the side is justified in looking to the captain for instruction. As the one great difference between Cup-ties and League matches is the fact that in the former one match lost means "exit," it fol-

lows that in Cup games it is specially important that no mistakes should be made in regard to policy. In other words, the team which most rapidly adapts itself to the existing conditions—which makes the most of its own strength and spots the weaknesses of its opponents—is the team most likely to pull through.

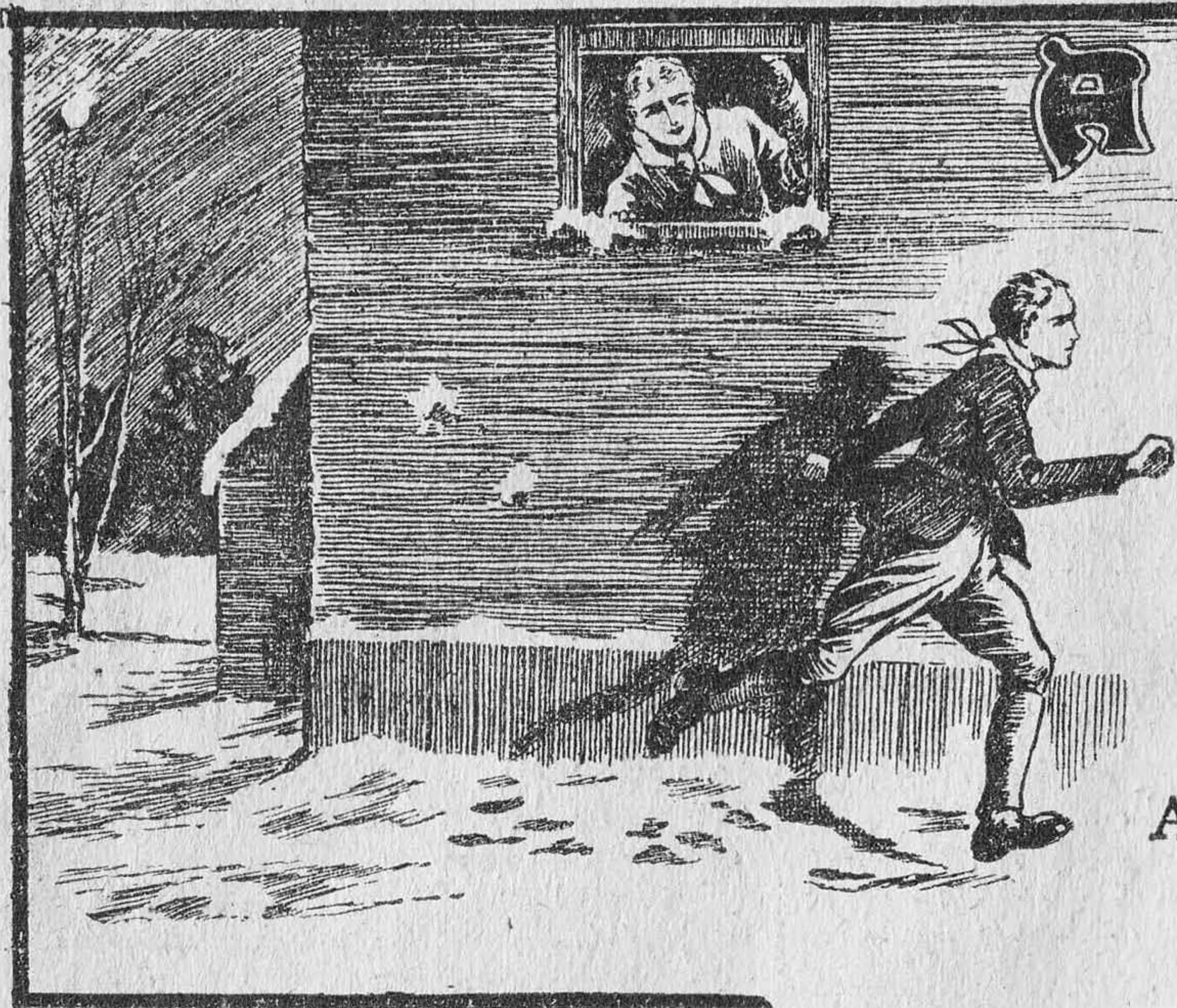
In Cup-ties especially, when excitement runs high, and everything and everybody is at fever heat, the captain should set an example of calm confidence, which will be followed by the rest of the side. If the leader loses his head, it is long odds that the rest of the team will follow suit, and to do that is about the very best way to lose a Cup-tie, or any other match, for that matter.

Mind you, it is not easy to keep calm and undisturbed, especially when the final stage of the Cup competition is reached. No member of the team can overlook the greatness of the occasion—the Press and the public see to it that the subject is kept well in the forefront. And the captain of the side is constantly reminded of the coming struggle by the receipt of messages of good-will from anywhere and everywhere.

And, finally, when the Cup has been lifted, there is what must be to most football captains about the most trying experience of all—speeches to be made when the Cup is handed over immediately after the match—just when you are all thrilled and excited at having been successful.

Yes, the captain of a Cup team has his responsibilities, but the compensations of winning—the feeling of something attempted, something done—outweigh everything else.

G. Utley



A FRIEND IN NEED.

A Long, Complete Story of Frank Richards' Boyhood at Cedar Creek.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The 1st Chapter. Called Over the Coals!

"Richards, Lawless, Beauclerc!" Mr. Slimmey called out the names from the porch of the lumber schoolhouse at Cedar Creek. "Hallo! What's the trouble now?" murmured Bob Lawless. There was a snowfight going on in the playground of Cedar Creek School. Frank Richards & Co. left the crowd of merry schoolboys, and hurried to the porch. They assumed their meekest expressions as they came up to Mr. Slimmey. "You called us, sir?" said Frank Richards. Mr. Slimmey blinked at them over his gold-rimmed spectacles. "Miss Meadows wishes to see you three boys," he said. "You are to go in at once!" "Ahem! Is anything the matter, sir?" murmured Beauclerc. "I think there has been some complaint from Mr. Peckover, at Hillcrest," answered the young master, and he motioned to the trio to go in. Frank Richards & Co. entered the schoolhouse, and proceeded slowly and reluctantly to Miss Meadows' sitting-room.

"Peckover again!" grunted Bob Lawless. "That galoot is always making trouble!" "Bother him!" growled Frank. "I suppose we oughtn't to have gone over to Hillcrest yesterday," remarked Vere Beauclerc, with a smile. "We only went to snowball Dicky Bird," said Bob. "It was a sheer accident that a snowball landed on Peckover when he put his silly head out of the window." Frank Richards tapped at Miss Meadows' door, and the three schoolboys entered the headmistress' room, trying to look as if butter would not melt in their mouths. But Miss Meadows' brow was stern. A letter lay on the table before her, apparently a communication from Mr. Peckover, the headmaster of Hillcrest School. "I have sent for you three boys—" she began severely. "Yes, ma'am!" murmured Bob. "You visited Hillcrest School yesterday?" "Ahem! Yes." "And threw a snowball at Mr. Peckover?" "Oh, no, ma'am!" "Mr. Peckover complains that he was snowballed at his own window," said Miss Meadows sternly. "It was an accident, ma'am," said Bob. "I chucked—" "What?" "I mean, I threw the snowball at Dicky Bird. The silly galoot ducked his head and it caught old Peckover—I—I mean, Mr. Peckover, in the eye! I—I couldn't foresee that, could I, Miss Meadows?" "Sheer accident, Miss Meadows," murmured Frank.

"Accidents of that kind must not be allowed to happen," said Miss Meadows. "I believe your explanation, but Mr. Peckover is very angry. I have forbidden you to quarrel with the Hillcrest boys—" "We weren't quarrelling, ma'am," said Bob eagerly. "Only just making them sit up a little!" "You will be detained for one hour after lessons to-day!" said Miss Meadows. The three chums looked relieved. The matter did not seem so serious as they had anticipated. But the Canadian schoolmistress was not finished yet. "Mr. Peckover strongly disapproves of your disputes with his boys," she went on. "I am aware that you mean no harm; but Mr. Peckover's views must be respected. You must not visit Hillcrest School again."

"But, ma'am—" "On any pretext whatever!" said Miss Meadows sternly. "Something of this kind always seems to occur. Remember, you are forbidden to go near the school!" "But—" "If this order is disregarded," said Miss Meadows, "I shall take the most severe measures!" "But—" stammered Bob. "Kindly do not argue with me, Lawless!" exclaimed Miss Meadows. "You have heard my command." "But—" murmured Frank Richards. Miss Meadows raised her hand. "If I hear that any one of you has been to Hillcrest again I shall make a complaint to your parents!" she said. "Oh dear!" "Bear that in mind. You may go!" "But—" "You may go!" repeated Miss

obstinately. "I'll tell her we've got an engagement to meet Bird—" "Better not—" But Bob Lawless was already tapping at the sitting-room door again. "Come in!" came Miss Meadows' voice. The rancher's son entered. Frank Richards and Beauclerc waited in the passage for him, rather anxiously. They had cause for anxiety. There was a murmur of voices from the room, and then a sudden sharp sound. Swish! Bob Lawless came out again, with his right hand tucked under his arm, and a wry expression on his face. "Ow!" was his remark. And Bob said "Ow!" several times emphatically as the chums returned to the playground. It was evident that it was useless to attempt to explain the situation to Miss Meadows. The headmistress of Cedar Creek was in no mood for explanations from Frank Richards & Co.



A SURPRISE FOR KENO KIT! Another second and the savage blow would have descended. But Frank Richards came up with a breathless rush and without stopping to think, he crashed his fist full upon the ruffian's bulldog jaw. Keno Kit uttered a howl of surprise and pain as he reeled off his victim.

The 2nd Chapter. Kept In!

Frank Richards & Co. were feeling rather worried during afternoon lessons at Cedar Creek that day. They were thinking of the appointment with Master Richard Bird, the leader of the Hillcrest fellows. The Cedar Creek Co. had solemnly engaged to turn up at Hillcrest and snowball Master Richard, and if they did not keep, their engagement they laid themselves open to the accusation of "cold feet." That was a matter with which Miss Meadows would hardly have sympathised, but it was a very important matter to the chums of Cedar Creek. As Bob Lawless remarked emphatically, they could not have the Hillcrest "galoots" crowing over Cedar Creek. That idea was not to be entertained for a moment.

Meadows, raising her voice slightly. The chums of Cedar Creek looked at one another. No further argument was possible, and they quitted the room slowly, and Frank drew the door shut. In the passage outside they looked at one another again. "Here's a go!" muttered Bob Lawless. "Fancy Miss Meadows getting her rag out like that. And we told Dicky Bird—" "That we'd wait for him outside Hillcrest gates after lessons and snowball him!" said Beauclerc. "And if we don't turn up he will think we are funky." "We've got to turn up!" growled Bob. "Look here, I'll try to explain to Miss Meadows that—that—" "Better not," said Frank. "Schoolmistresses don't understand these matters." "I guess I'll try," said Bob

But with an hour's detention to follow lessons, and a severe prohibition to visit Hillcrest at all, the chums were in a difficult position. Miss Meadows did not see the difficulty; but it was there all the same. The schoolmistress did not see eye to eye with her hopeful pupils.

Greatly as the chums respected the headmistress of Cedar Creek, they felt that in this matter they were bound to follow their own judgment. But that was a matter requiring great care.

For it was certain that if they visited Hillcrest after what Miss Meadows had said, there would be a storm in the event of the escapade being discovered. And it was not a light matter for a formal complaint to be made to their parents by the schoolmistress.

So that afternoon, Frank Richards & Co. had plenty of food for thought, apart from the geography and grammar to which they were supposed just then to be devoting their attention.

When the school was dismissed, the three chums were left by themselves. Chunky Todgers paused to speak to them as the other fellows went out; and Beauclerc's cousin, Algy, lingered for a few moments.

"Hard lines, old fellows!" said Chunky Todgers. "You oughtn't to get found out, you know. Now, if I'd been with you, I guess I'd have managed better."

"Rats!" grunted Frank Richards. "Another time," said the fat and self-satisfied Chunky—"another time, I guess I'll come along with you and see you through. Too late this time. Sorry."

And Chunky Todgers rolled away, just in time to escape an English Grammar which Bob Lawless had picked up to smite him with.

"I'll wait for you fellows," Algernon Beauclerc remarked, smil-

The Canadian schoolmistress walked out, evidently in an uncompromising mood.

Bob Lawless gave a dismal groan. "Nice, ain't it?" "Rotten!" said Frank. "It won't do! We're landed here for an hour; and all the time Dicky Bird is waiting for us, and he will think we're afraid to keep our word."

"We could hardly go, anyway, after what Miss Meadows has said!" remarked Vere Beauclerc hesitatingly.

Bob Lawless gave a snort. "We're bound to go. Miss Meadows won't hear of it."

"She might—" "I guess we shall have to chance it, then. We're not having Hillcrest crow over Cedar Creek."

"Better get some work done," said Frank.

"Oh dear!" The chums settled down to work for ten minutes or so. But English Grammar, interesting as the subject was, soon palled upon them.

Frank Richards was the first to look up.

"I've got an idea," he remarked.

"About the conjugations?" asked Bob, with a faint grin.

"Blow the conjugations! About Hillcrest, I mean!" said Frank. "We can't have a shindy with Dicky Bird & Co. after what Miss Meadows has said. We're bound to obey her orders. But we've got to let Bird know how the matter stands. He will be waiting at Hillcrest, but he won't wait an hour."

"Nope!"

"We've got to get word to him that we're detained, and barred from Hillcrest," said Frank. "That's the way out. See?"

"What a brain!" grunted Bob Lawless. "You might have thought of that before, and Chunky or Algy could have taken the message. Now it can't be done!"

"There may be a chap still in the playground—"

"Not likely!"

"I'll look."

After a glance at the door to make sure that it was shut, Frank Richards mounted on a desk, and looked out of the window.

Outside, the dusk was settling on the playground and the palisade, and the creek and the woods beyond.

There was no sign of a Cedar Creek fellow to be seen. Nobody had lingered about the school in the bitter winter evening, save the three unlucky youths who had no choice in the matter.

"Well?" grunted Bob, as Frank stepped down.

Frank shook his head.

"I guess I could have told you so. Get on with your pesky strong and weak verbs," growled the rancher's son.

But Frank Richards did not sit at his desk again. There was a determined expression upon his handsome face.

"I'm going over to Hillcrest," he said. "I want to catch Dicky Bird before he goes, and tell him."

"Aren't you detained, fathead? If you mosey out of the school-room, Miss Meadows will see you go."

"There's the window."

"Oh!" said Bob.

"Miss Meadows won't be in here again till the hour's up," said Frank, who had thought it out. "I can be back by then, and she will see me here all right. I can get over to Hillcrest and back in the time."

"You can't get your geegee out without being seen."

"I shall hoof it."

"Then you won't do it in the time."

"Yes, I shall! I can sprint," said Frank.

"I'll keep up speed all the way, and the same back. I can manage it. Give me a bunk up to the window."

"Slimmey may see you, from his cabin," said Beauclerc doubtfully.

"It's too dusky now."

"Well, I guess you can try," said Bob. "No good all of us going; some of us would be bound to be spotted. And we can't have a shindy over there, after what Miss Meadows has said. Dicky Bird will understand, if you tell him how we're fixed. Tell him, too, that some day we'll drop in and scalp that pesky headmaster of his!"

Frank Richards laughed.

"Give me a bunk!" he said.

"What about your hat? It's in the lobby, and Miss Meadows will hear you if—"

"Never mind my hat! It's not snowing now!"

"All right."

Bob Lawless helped his cousin up to the window, and Frank climbed out. He dropped lightly to the ground outside.

"That will do!"

"Vamoose, quick!" murmured Bob, from the window.

"Ta-ta!" Frank Richards ran off at once, keeping close to the lumber building in the gathering shadows.

Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc returned to their tasks. And occasionally they shifted their boots noisily on the plank floor, so that anyone passing the school-room door would hear them, and would know that the detained schoolboys were still there. But one of the detained trio was already far away.

The 3rd Chapter. Too Late!

Frank Richards kept close to the schoolhouse wall, skirting the building, towards the rear of the school enclosure. There, out of sight of the two masters' cabins, and of the schoolhouse windows, he climbed the fence and dropped outside.

He had succeeded in making his way out of the school enclosure unseen; and the open timber lay before him.

A few minutes more, and he was speeding among the leafless trees, en route for Hillcrest.

There was plenty of snow among the timber, and the straggling, leafless underwood was caked with it. Frank brushed it off in clouds as he ran on. Well out of sight of the school, he ventured from the timber into the open trail, and ran on at renewed speed. The shadows settled deeper and deeper over the forest as he sped on tirelessly.

He was close by the spot where the path to Hillcrest branched off the Thompson trail, when heavy footsteps fell upon his ears, coming from the direction of the town.

Frank Richards halted at once.

He did not want to be seen there by anyone who might mention the fact to Miss Meadows at a moment when he was supposed to be detained in the school-room at Cedar Creek.

In a moment he had darted from the trail into the cover of the frosty trees.

From his cover he looked out, waiting for the pedestrian to pass before he resumed his way.

A burly form loomed up in the dusk.

As it came closer, Frank Richards recognised Keno Kit, a member of the rough gang that had its headquarters at the Red Dog saloon in Thompson.

Keno Kit was not exactly the fellow one would have chosen to meet on a dark and lonely trail at nightfall, and Frank was glad that he had taken cover as his eyes fell on the lowering, bulldog face of the ruffian.

He waited for the man to pass, but to his surprise Keno Kit came to a halt almost opposite the big tree behind which Frank was in cover.

For a moment Frank imagined that the ruffian had seen him, but Keno Kit was not looking in his direction.

He turned in his tracks and stared back along the dusky trail towards Thompson, where lights were twinkling in the gloom.

For a minute or two Keno Kit stood motionless, staring towards the town, as if in expectation of seeing someone appear on the trail. But no footstep broke the silence.

The ruffian moved at last, but he did not resume his way.

He plunged into the timber a dozen yards from the spot where the amazed schoolboy stood behind the tree with bated breath.

There was a crashing and a rustling as the ruffian forced his way in the underbrush.

He stopped at last, and Frank, who had listened intently, realised that Keno Kit, like himself, had been taking cover in the timber. The ruffian was hidden in the underwoods, at the point where the Hillcrest path branched off from the main trail.

What his object could possibly be in hiding himself there, Frank Richards could not even guess.

Undoubtedly, he was watching for someone to pass, but why, was a mystery.

At all events, it was evident that he was settled there for the present, and did not intend to move, and that Frank Richards could not follow the Hillcrest path without passing under his watchful eyes. At present Keno Kit had no knowledge of his proximity, but if he came out into the path, the ruffian was certain to see him at once.

Frank Richards stirred at last, but he did not emerge into the path. He had no desire to come into closer acquaintance with the most ruffianly member of the Red Dog crowd.

He trod softly and silently away through the wood, avoiding the path,

and approaching Hillcrest through the timber.

Not till he was a good distance from the fork of the trail did he leave the trees behind and come out into the path by the gates of Hillcrest School.

There he halted, with a muttered exclamation of disappointment.

The school gates were closed for the night, and a column of smoke rising from a chimney was the only sign of life about the place.

Dicky Bird & Co. evidently were gone.

Probably Master Richard Bird had waited for some time for the Cedar Creek chums to arrive and make good their challenge, but he had tired of waiting and gone home with his friends.

Frank Richards had arrived too late.

"Rotten!" grunted Frank, as he stood in the snow and stared at the closed gates.

He looked up and down the trail, but it was silent and deserted. If Dicky Bird & Co. had waited, they would have been in sight somewhere, but there was no sign of anyone near the school.

The Hillcrest fellows had doubtless concluded that Frank Richards & Co. had failed to come up to the scratch, and had gone their way chuckling, which was a very exasperating reflection to Frank.

However, there was nothing to be done, and it was necessary to lose no time in returning to Cedar Creek.

Frank Richards turned his back on the closed gates, and started down the trail.

It was now quite dark, and only the glimmer of snow broke through the gloom that hung over the silent timber.

As he neared the fork of the trail, Frank paused, remembering the ruffian whom he had seen ensconce himself in cover there.

It was only prudent to keep out of the way of the lawless "bulldozer," and Frank determined to strike through the timber again, and get out into the Thompson trail lower down.

But as he turned from the path there came a sudden sound from the trail ahead, at the fork.

There was the sound of a fall, and a terrified yell, and then a voice, which Frank recognised as that of Mr. Peckover, the headmaster of Hillcrest.

"Help! Help! Help!"

The 4th Chapter.

Frank Richards to the Rescue!

"Help!"

Frank Richards jumped. He knew Mr. Peckover's voice well enough, loud and shrill and terrified as it was at the present moment.

He had supposed that the Hillcrest master was in his house, but it was clear now that Mr. Peckover had been down to Thompson Town, and that trouble had befallen him on the way home.

And in a flash Frank realised the meaning of Keno Kit's mysterious movements.

The ruffian had seen Mr. Peckover leave Thompson for home, and had hurried ahead of him on the trail and ambushed him where the path turned off to Hillcrest.

Keno Kit's object, of course, was robbery. Probably his last dollar had gone on "fire-water" at the Red Dog, and he had adopted this method of replenishing the exchequer—not for the first time, it was certain.

And in case of resistance on the part of his victim, Keno Kit was not likely to be gentle in his methods. Robbery with violence was little to him, and he was prepared to use all the violence that was needed.

For a moment or two Frank Richards stood still, while the terrified cries of Ephraim Peckover rang in his ears from the darkness.

He had no love for the Hillcrest master. The bitter, suspicious man had caused him and his friends trouble more than once. But much as he disliked Mr. Peckover, he could not think of leaving him unaided in the grasp of a lawless ruffian. What made him hesitate chiefly was the thought that if Mr. Peckover recognised him, the facts would come to Miss Meadows' knowledge—and she would know that he had broken detention and visited Hillcrest so soon after receiving her strict orders to keep away from the place.

But as the sounds of a struggle came to his ears, Frank Richards could not hesitate longer. He ran quickly down the path towards the scene.

In the dimness he made out faintly the two struggling forms.

Keno Kit had leaped from his ambush on the Hillcrest master, and

borne him to the ground. Mr. Peckover was not a hero by any means, but he was struggling fiercely in the ruffian's grasp. It was the thought of being robbed that nerved him to resistance. Mr. Peckover did not like parting with money under any circumstances whatever.

"Quiet, you old fool!" came Keno Kit's savage voice, as he planted a knee on the struggling man's chest and crushed him into the snow.

"Help! Help!"

"I guess—"

"Help!"

"By Jehosaphat, I'll make you quiet, if you don't let up!" growled the ruffian. "Pony up your dollars, you old idiot, and you won't get hurt!"

"Help! Help!"

Mr. Peckover still struggled and yelled.

Keno Kit drew a revolver from his belt and grasped it by the barrel. He raised it, clubbed, over his victim's terrified eyes.

"Now let up!" he snarled. "Another howl, and I guess your silly skull will be cracked!"

"Help!"

"I guess you'll have it, then!"

Another second and the savage blow would have descended, and Mr. Peckover would have lain stunned in the snow.

But Frank Richards had reached the spot by that time.

In the noise and excitement of the struggle, neither the footpad nor his victim had heard Frank's footsteps on the snowy trail. His arrival was quite unexpected.

It was fortunate for Frank; for the ruffian would certainly not have hesitated to turn the revolver on him, rather than be balked of his prey.

Frank came up with a breathless rush, as Keno Kit's arm was descending. Without stopping to think, he crashed his fist full upon the ruffian's bulldog jaw.

Keno Kit uttered a howl of surprise and pain as he reeled off his victim, and lurched into the snow beside him.

If Frank had given him a moment to recover, it would have gone hard with the plucky schoolboy. But he did not. As Keno Kit lurched over, Frank Richards piled on him, hitting out with all his strength. One fist crashed into the ruffian's eyes—the other followed it up, landing under the ear—and Keno Kit rolled in the snow, the revolver flying from his hand.

Frank caught the glint of it as it rolled, and sprang at it. A second, and it was in his grasp.

Mr. Peckover lay sprawling on his back in the snow, gasping for breath, too bewildered to know, for the time, quite what was happening. There was no help from him.

But Frank Richards did not need it.

The moment the revolver was in his hand his finger sought the trigger, and he fired.

The bullet crashed into the ground a foot from Keno Kit as he sprawled and gasped and cursed.

Frank Richards did not aim at the ruffian; he wanted to avoid wounding him if he could, and his object was to scare him off.

Crack, crack!

The flashing of the revolver, and the bullets pattering round him, were enough for Keno Kit.

The ruffian squirmed away in the snow, howling:

"Let up! Let up! Don't shoot! I give in! Let up!"

Crack!

Frank fired again as the ruffian scrambled to his feet, six or seven yards away.

The bullet grazed Keno Kit's arm, tearing the sleeve, but missing him, as Frank intended that it should.

But it had come too close for the ruffian's taste; he had not the remotest idea that the marksman was intentionally missing him.

With a gasp, he took to his heels.

His heavy footsteps pounded away down the trail, and Frank Richards sent another bullet over his head as he ran.

The last cartridge in the six-shooter he kept, for more serious use if the ruffian should return.

But Keno Kit was not thinking of returning.

The shooting at close quarters had been more than enough for him, and he was fleeing as fast as he could go, and his running footsteps died away in the distance.

Frank Richards, revolver in hand, watched the direction in which he had gone, and listened.

A few yards from him, Mr. Peckover was sitting up in the snow, pumping in breath.

In the darkness, he could only dimly make out the figure of the schoolboy, whose back was to him.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Peckover. "Is—is he gone?"

Frank Richards was about to reply reassuringly, but he checked himself. Mr. Peckover would have recognised his voice.

Instead of answering, the Cedar Creek schoolboy moved further off in the darkness, still keeping his back to the gasping man.

Certainly, after what had happened, Frank Richards ought to have been able to count upon the gratitude of Ephraim Peckover; but he thought he knew the man too well for that. Mr. Peckover had never given him the impression of being capable of anything in the nature of kindly feelings; and Frank's only idea was to keep his identity unknown. He did not want Mr. Peckover's thanks, if thanks were intended, but he very much wanted to make sure that Miss Meadows would never learn that he had been to Hillcrest that evening.

"Who are you?" gasped Mr. Peckover, as he struggled slowly and painfully to his feet.

Frank Richards did not speak.

Without turning his head, he moved further off down the path into the open trail.

The Hillcrest master stared after him, not understanding his action. He knew that the dimly-seen schoolboy had saved him from robbery and serious injury, and for the moment, at least, he was feeling thankful and grateful; though possibly his feelings would have been modified if he had recognised in his rescuer the Cedar Creek fellow whom he especially disliked.

"Do you hear me?" he called out, in amazement. "You have saved my life—My dear boy, come here!"

Frank Richards grinned in the darkness.

He had never expected to hear Mr. Ephraim Peckover address him as a dear boy.

He did not turn back, however.

Keno Kit was clean gone, and it was safe enough to leave Mr. Peckover alone; and Frank Richards started down the trail at a run in the direction of Cedar Creek School.

The astonished Hillcrest master called after him several times; but Frank did not heed. In a few minutes, Mr. Peckover's voice died away behind.

In a state of great astonishment, Mr. Peckover turned from the spot and hurried on to Hillcrest. His rescuer was gone; and he was in a hurry to get into the shelter of his own walls.

The 5th Chapter. All Serene!

Frank Richards ran down the trail at top speed.

He paused only a moment, to toss Keno Kit's revolver into the trees, and then ran on again.

There was no time to lose if he was to get back into the Cedar Creek school-room before the hour of detention was up.

His mission had been a failure; he had not succeeded in seeing Dicky Bird & Co. before they left for home. But he was not sorry, that he had come. Unpleasant as Mr. Peckover was, Frank was glad that he had been at hand to render him aid in the hour of danger.

His only thought now was to get back to Cedar Creek, and to keep the whole occurrence a dead secret.

His feet seemed scarcely to touch the snowy ground as he raced on.

Cedar Creek loomed up in the darkness at last; and Frank skirted the palisade, and climbed over it at the back. He dropped breathlessly into the playground.

Without pausing a moment, he hurried on to the schoolhouse.

From the window, lamplight was glimmering, and against the lighted window he made out the outlines of two heads. Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc were watching for his return—anxious for him, as the last minutes of the hour ticked away on the school-room clock.

"Here he is, by gum!" came in a mutter from Bob Lawless, as he heard Frank's panting breath below.

"Good!" muttered Beauclerc.

"Just in time, Frank!"

"Help me in!" gasped Frank Richards.

"Here you are!"

His chums grasped his hands from above and dragged him up.

Frank Richards sprawled through the window, and it was closed after him. He stood pumping in breath after he was safely landed in the school-room.

"Sit down!" muttered Bob anxiously. "You're only just in time, old scout. There's only two minutes more."

"My hat!" murmured Frank.

He dropped into his seat at his desk, and took up a pen.

He had been successful; but it had been a narrow escape. Five minutes more would have been too late.

But when the school-room door opened, and Miss Meadows came in, she found three schoolboys bending over their tasks, industriously at work.

Frank Richards & Co. rose respectfully to their feet as the Canadian schoolmistress came up the long school-room.

"You may go now, my boys," said Miss Meadows gently.

"Thank you, ma'am!" said Bob Lawless demurely.

"I am sorry to have detained you," said Miss Meadows. "I am sure that you will realise that it was by your own fault."

"Oh, yes, Miss Meadows!" said the three schoolboys together, in a dutiful chorus.

"Good-night, my boys!"

"Good-night, ma'am!"

Frank Richards & Co. left the school-room. They took their hats from the lobby, and started across the playground to the corral for their horses.

"By gum!" murmured Bob Lawless. "I wonder what Miss Meadows would say if she knew?"

"I wonder!" said Frank, laughing.

"Did you see Dicky Bird?"

"No. The fellows were all gone," answered Frank.

Bob gave a grunt.

"Rotten! All the trouble and risk for nothing, then! I guess I'll look for Dicky in Thompson on Saturday; and I'll explain to him."

The chums of Cedar Creek led out their horses, and Black Sam closed the school gates after them. They mounted in the trail, and started for home.

"You were a jolly long time gone, if Dicky Bird wasn't there, Frank," said Beauclerc, as they trotted away on the shadowy trail.

"What did you hang it out for like that?"

"Couldn't be helped," said Frank. "I didn't see any of the Hillcrest fellows, but I landed into trouble."

"Not Peckover?" exclaimed Bob Lawless, in dismay.

"I've seen him."

"Oh, Jerusalem! Then he'll be over at Cedar Creek in the morning, to tell Miss Meadows you've been round Hillcrest again, and all the fat will be in the fire!"

"It's all right; he didn't recognise me," said Frank reassuringly. "I was jolly careful not to let him see my chivvy."

"Sure of that?"

"Yes."

"All O.K., then," said Bob, in great relief. "Miss Meadows would be as mad as a hatter if she knew. It would make no end of trouble if she sent a complaint to popper. He would think we were to blame."

"Ha, ha! I think he would!"

"But what happened at Hillcrest, then?" asked Beauclerc.

Frank Richards explained.

Bob gave a whistle as he concluded, "Well, you're always landing into trouble of some sort, and no mistake!" he said. "I suppose it wouldn't have mattered very much if you'd left that bulldozer to knock Peckover on the head. Still, I guess you had to chip in. Lucky he didn't recognise you."

"Even Peckover wouldn't have made trouble, after Frankly pulled him out of a footpad's claws like that," said Beauclerc.

"Rot! Peckover was born to make trouble. He wouldn't care what Frankly had done for him," grunted Bob.

"It would be rotten—"

"Well, Peckover is always doing something rotten, isn't he?"

"Well, yes, that's so," admitted Beauclerc. "It's just as well that he didn't recognise Frank."

"I was careful of that," said Frank Richards reassuringly. "He has no idea who came to his help. He saw only my back—in the dark, too—and I think he was too scared to see anything very clearly, too. I dare say he will think it was one of his own boys, if he thinks about it at all. I don't suppose he was thinking about anything but his own precious skin!"

"You bet!" said Bob.

And the chums of Cedar Creek rode homeward, with the happy conviction that nothing more would be heard of the affair. But for once Frank Richards and Co. had not quite done Mr. Peckover justice. Sour and suspicious as he was, that unpleasant gentleman was not wholly incapable of grateful feelings; and Mr. Peckover's unexpected gratitude for services rendered was destined to have results not in the least anticipated at present by the chums of Cedar Creek.

THE END.