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# THE RETURN OF FIVE-HUNDRED-DOLLAR JONES!

(See Inside.)

# The BOYS' FRIEND

TWELVE PAGES! TWENTY-SIXTH YEAR!

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THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending June 5th, 1920.]

## Saving A Scamp!



**IN SUSPENSE!** Half a minute earlier and Larry Tigg would have been in full view of Mr. Bootles. But all the Form-master saw was the tea-table, with its half-finished meal, and five juniors on their feet. "Dear me!" said Mr. Bootles. "It is very extraordinary! A man's been seen in the house!" "Indeed, sir!" murmured Jimmy. He could only hope that Mr. Tigg would keep quiet under the table.

### The 1st Chapter.

#### Nice for Jimmy!

"Trouble for somebody!" murmured Mornington of the Fourth, with a grin, as Mr. Bootles came into the Form-room.

Morny was the only fellow who grinned; all the rest of the Rookwood Fourth looked very serious.

It was, in fact, a time to be serious. Mr. Bootles, generally the best-tempered of Form-masters, had a thunderous expression on his face. His brows were knitted in a deep line, and his eyes almost glittered over his spectacles.

The Rookwood Fourth did not need telling that there was trouble in store for somebody. It was only too clear.

Tubby Muffin glanced at Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth, with a warning look.

"You're in for it, Jimmy!" he whispered.

"Fathead!" was Jimmy's reply. "You're found out, you know!" murmured Tubby. "I'm sorry, old

chap! Still, it serves you right, you know. You must admit that!"

"Silence!" Mr. Bootles' voice rumbled through the Form-room, and Tubby Muffin gave a gasp and was silent. He did not want to draw Mr. Bootles' attention specially to himself just then.

Jimmy Silver was looking a little grim. Mr. Bootles was some minutes late for class; a very unusual circumstance. And he had been seen lingering in the corridor and speaking to the Head, and the Head had been looking very grave. Something very unusual was on the tapes, and Jimmy wondered a little whether it was connected with himself.

Mr. Bootles took off his spectacles and wiped them, and replaced them on his nose. Then he coughed. These preliminaries having been gone through, he spoke.

"Silver!"

"Oh, it's you, Jimmy!" gasped Lovell.

"Silence! Silver!"

"Yes, sir," answered Jimmy Silver quietly.

"Come here!"

Jimmy Silver went off before the class. All eyes were upon him, and the colour flushed in his cheeks as he stood before Mr. Bootles. Lovell and Raby and Newcome exchanged dismayed glances. It was upon their chin that the storm was to burst, evidently.

There was one fellow, at the back of the class, who looked relieved. It was Cyril Peele. The cad of the Fourth drew a deep, deep breath of relief when Mr. Bootles called Jimmy Silver out before the class. It was his own name he had dreaded to hear.

Mr. Bootles looked over his spectacles at Jimmy, who met his glance fearlessly. Unlike Peele, Jimmy had a clear conscience, which was a valuable asset in time of trouble.

"Silver, I have a very serious question to put to you," rumbled Mr. Bootles.

"Yes, sir."

"Look at this, Silver!"

Mr. Bootles held up a postcard.

Jimmy could only see the superscrip-

tion on the front of it, which ran: "Mister J. Silver, Fourth Form, Rookwood Skool." The card had apparently been addressed to Jimmy by some individual whose education had been neglected.

"You see this, Silver? It is addressed to you, and was delivered here this morning," said Mr. Bootles.

"I have not seen it before this moment, sir."

"Quite so. A communication of this kind would naturally not be handed to you without investigation, Silver."

Jimmy was silent. He was wondering what the mysterious missive was that had caused so much commotion. He had never seen the handwriting before that he could remember.

"You may read this card in my presence, Silver," continued Mr. Bootles. "You will then explain it to me."

"Certainly, sir."

"Very well!"

Mr. Bootles handed the postcard to the junior.

There was a breathless hush in the class.

Jimmy looked at the card calmly, and read through the message written on the back. It was a remarkable message enough. Scrawled in a crabbed hand was the following:

"Bird-in-Hand Inn. "Mister Silver,—This ere is to warn you that if you don't stub up the two quids you howe me I'm comin to your eadmaster to tork to inn about it."

"LARRY TIGG."

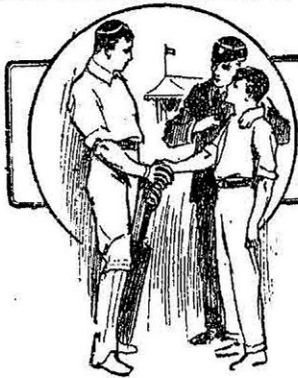
Jimmy Silver compressed his lips. There was a short silence, while Mr. Bootles looked grimly and frowningly at the junior's flushed face.

"Well, Silver," he rumbled at last, "what explanation have you to make? Who is this man Tigg?"

"I believe he is a stablesman at the inn outside Coombe, sir," answered Jimmy Silver.

"A place that is strictly out of bounds for all Rookwood boys," said Mr. Bootles. "You are aware of that, Silver?"





SAVING A SCAMP!

(Continued from the previous page.)

"Quite, sir." "Then explain what is your connection with this man." "None at all, sir." "What?" "I haven't any connection with the man at all, sir," answered Jimmy Silver steadily. "He states that you owe him the sum of two pounds." "It isn't true." "Then why has he written to you demanding the money?" Jimmy hesitated. "You may either explain to me or to Dr. Chisholm, Silver," said Mr. Bootles severely. "Come! Where have you seen this man?" "I saw him yesterday afternoon, sir," said Jimmy at last. "He had been trying to get money out of me, and I gave him a walloping—"

classes. The Fistical Four went out into the sunny quadrangle together, followed by many curious glances from the other fellows. Cyril Peele came out with Lattrey and Gower, but, after a time, he left his chums, and joined Jimmy Silver & Co., met by rather grim looks as he did so. Peele's face was pale and troubled. "Just a word with you, Silver," he said, detaining the captain of the Fourth, as Jimmy would have passed him. "Well?" said Jimmy laconically. "Do you think that man is really coming to see the Head?" "He said so on the postcard." "You're not afraid?" "Why should I be afraid?" asked Jimmy Silver, looking steadily at the black sheep of the Fourth. "Peele's lips twitched uneasily. "Well, it seems that he caught you out of bounds, and if he proves that to the Head—"

don't see what he's in such a blue funk about. He can easily keep out of sight if the man comes here." "He mayn't be able to," said Jimmy thoughtfully. "If the Head believes Tigg's yarn he will be awfully keen to learn who was out of bounds close on midnight. He will want to make an example of the bounder. He might make Tigg point the fellow out before he hands him over to the bobby. Tigg didn't see him very clearly in the dark, but he might be able to spot him if he saw him again at close quarters. That's what Peele's afraid of." "Serve him right!" said Newcome. "Yes, rather!" said Lovell emphatically. "It's about time Peele was bowled out and brought to book. Anyhow, you'll come out of it all right, Jimmy, as you're not the man. Even if Tigg swears to you the Head wouldn't dream of taking his word against yours!" "I hope not," said Jimmy. "When the Fistical Four went in to dinner there had been no visit from Mr. Tigg. After dinner quite a number of the Fourth loafed round the gates, looking for the expected visitor. The prospect of seeing Mr. Tigg marched off by Police-constable Boggs, of Coombe, was rather exciting. But Mr. Tigg had not arrived when the time came for afternoon classes. "He won't be able to come till his work's done, very likely," Lovell remarked, as the juniors headed for the Form-room. "We'll see him later, if he has the nerve to come at all. I can't quite imagine a man like that facing the Head."

any more tanners—what?" asked Raby sarcastically. "Of course, I wasn't thinking of that, Raby. Look here, Jimmy—Yaroooh!" The cricket-ball rapped gently on Tubby Muffin's head, and he gave a howl. Jimmy was "fed" with Tubby's friendly advice. The juniors walked on towards the cricket-ground, leaving Reginald Muffin rubbing his head and glaring. "Ow!" gasped Tubby. "Why, you awful rotter—ow—I jolly well hope you will be sacked now—wow-wow! D'ye hear, Jimmy Silver? I'm shocked at you, and I hope you'll get the boot! Yah!" Jimmy Silver turned, and made a motion of hurling the cricket-ball. Tubby did not wait to see whether he was in earnest. He fled. "The 3rd Chapter. The Diplomacy of Muffin!" "No merry visitors yet!" grinned Lovell, as the Fistical Four came into the end study to tea, after cricket practice. Jimmy Silver nodded, feeling rather relieved. Although he felt security in his own innocence, he naturally did not feel any pleasure in the prospect of facing the Head, and going through a severe course of questioning by that rather fearsome personage. He was just a trifle concerned for Peele, too. He did not like Peele at all, and despised him very thoroughly; but Jimmy had a kind heart, and he could feel compassion for a fellow who was in a state of trepidation and anxious foreboding, though it was entirely his own fault. Peele was a thorough black sheep, and probably Rookwood School would have been much better without him; but the "sack" was a crushing sentence, and even when it was deserved, a certain amount of compassion was due to the hapless victim. And if Peele's escapade was discovered and proved, there could not be much doubt but that he would be turned out of Rookwood. "The rotter hasn't nerve enough to face the Head, that's it," went on Arthur Edward Lovell. "That card was simply bluff, Jimmy. The Head's too terrific an old beak for Tigg to want to interview him if he can help it!" "All the better!" said Jimmy. "Peele's looking awfully sick," remarked Raby. "I noticed him at his study-window—watching. I don't envy the poor beast."

Silver!" exclaimed Tubby. "You're just asking for trouble. But I'm not going to see you sacked if I can help it. I'm going to see you through." "Ass!" Tubby Muffin scolded away. Apparently the fat Classical had forgiven the incident of the cricket-ball; and he was quite anxious about Jimmy Silver—whether with a view to future little louns, or not. "What are you going to do, Jimmy?" asked Newcome. "Have my tea," answered Jimmy. And he sat down to tea undisturbed. But tea in the end study was soon interrupted. The door opened quietly and Cyril Peele's troubled face peered in. He glanced at the Fistical Four hesitatingly; and then stepped into the study and closed the door behind him. Jimmy Silver & Co. regarded him in silence. It was plain that Peele was in what Lovell called a "blue funk." "You—you fellows know—" stammered Peele. "We know Tigg's come; Muffin says so, at least," answered Jimmy Silver curtly. "I—I saw Muffin speaking to him," muttered Peele. "I—I've come here to—to—" He paused. "You—you think it was I that Tigg saw that night, Silver—" "I'm pretty certain it was!" "Are you going to tell the Head that? You're sure to be called before the Head?" "I'm not going to tell the Head anything," replied Jimmy Silver, with a curl of the lip. "It's not my bizney to give away your shady secrets; I'm not a sneak." "Suppose—suppose the Head believes Tigg—" "He will take my word, I think." "I—I mean, he's bound to believe that Tigg saw somebody that night—" "I suppose so." "He may parade the fellows in Hall for Tigg to pick the chap out if he can, if he doesn't think you're the right man." "Likely enough!" Peele breathed hard. "You think it's likely?" he muttered. "Very likely, I think." "Oh! But, after all, Tigg thinks it was you," said Peele. "No reason why—why anybody should think of me, if my name's not mentioned. He didn't see me plainly that night—I kept my face in the dark on purpose—" "You're owning up!" grinned Lovell. Peele did not heed him. It did not matter very much whether he owned up or not now; the facts were clear enough. "And you were cad enough to give him my name!" said Jimmy Silver. "He had hold of me—he knew it was pretty serious for a Rookwood chap to be climbing in at near midnight. He wouldn't let me go till I gave him my name—but I wasn't fool enough to give him my own. I—I thought it wouldn't hurt you, Silver—you've got a good name in the school; they wouldn't believe things against you without proof; but with me it's different—I'm a dog with a bad name. Besides, I—I meant to square the cad, if I could raise some money; but I was stony—" Peele's voice trailed away miserably. "You didn't care whether it hurt me or not, so long as you kept clear," said Jimmy scornfully. "And it's just as well for you you never gave that rogue any money. It would only have made him ask for more." "You gave Jimmy's name, and left Jimmy to stand the racket, if there was trouble," broke out Arthur Edward Lovell. "Now it's come, you've got no nerve, and you've come to Jimmy to whine. Peele, get out of this study, for goodness' sake; you give a chap a bad taste in the mouth." "If you won't mention my name, Silver, I may get through all right. Even if the Head asks him to pick the fellow out, he mayn't happen on me—no reason why he should—" "He will, if you look as scared as you're looking now!" growled Lovell. "You haven't nerve enough to be a rascal, Peele; why don't you reform? Why, every time you sneak down to the Bird-in-Hand you might be seen by some rotter like Tigg, and given away!" "I'm too jolly careful for that; I wasn't seen there. It was when I was getting in afterwards—" Peele broke off, as a knock came at the study door. Jimmy Silver rose to his feet. He supposed that it was the summons to the presence of the Head, and he was prepared for the ordeal. The door opened, and Tubby Muffin looked in, with a red, excited face. "Jimmy—" he began breathlessly.

The 2nd Chapter. Expecting a Visitor!

The Fourth Form came out in a buzz of excitement after morning



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"The Head wants me?" asked Jimmy.

"Eh? No! Not that I know of. I say, he's here!"

"The Head?" ejaculated Lovell.

"No, you ass; Larry Tigg!"

"What?" howled Jimmy Silver.

Tubby Muffin winked at the astounded captain of the Fourth.

"I wasn't going to let you make an ass of yourself, Jimmy," he said. "You can't stuff the Head, you know; no good trying. Get in, Tigg, quick! Some of the fellows have seen you already."

The door opened wider, and a squat, stubby man with a red face shambled into the study. It was Larry Tigg, and the five juniors there stared at him as if he had been his own ghost. Without removing the battered bowler from his head, Larry Tigg stood with his hands in his pockets and stared back insolently at Jimmy Silver & Co. Tubby Muffin, at the door, grinned with satisfaction, in the happy consciousness of having brought off a master-stroke of diplomacy.

"I got him round by the back gate," Tubby explained cheerily. "Sneaked him in at the tradesman's entrance, you know, and brought him up here by the back stairs. Nobody's seen him except some of the Fourth, and they won't peach. You're all right, Jimmy!"

"You—you born idiot!" stuttered Jimmy Silver.

"Draw it mild, old chap! I've done it to save your bacon," said Tubby Muffin warmly. "I wasn't going to leave you in the lurch. Not an old pal like you, Jimmy. You see, you can't face it out with the Head. He would spot you at once if you told him whoppers."

"You thundering ass, do you think I was going to tell the Head lies?" howled Jimmy Silver.

Tubby winked.

"You weren't going to own up, I suppose?"

"Fathead! There was nothing for me to own up to."

"Oh, pile it on," said Muffin resignedly. "What's the good of keeping that up among friends, old chap? Now I've saved your bacon, you make terms with the man and get rid of him quietly. You'll come to me and thank me for this presently."

And Tubby Muffin withdrew, and closed the door after him.

**The 4th Chapter.**  
**In the End Study.**

"Great pip!" muttered Lovell helplessly.

The Fistical Four stood simply aghast, still staring at Larry Tigg, who took a seat without waiting to be asked. Cyril Peele's face was quite white. Utterly unexpectedly he found himself face to face with the man whose scrutiny he dreaded, owing to Tubby Muffin's diplomacy.

Reginald Muffin had meant well. Quite convinced that Jimmy Silver had a shady secret to keep, and aware from old experience that it was futile to "tell whoppers" to the Head, Tubby had done his best. Certainly, if Jimmy had been a guilty party it would have behaved him to make terms with the blackmailer and keep the Head out of the affair. Tubby Muffin had only taken a little too much for granted.

But the result was likely to be disastrous to the victim of his hapless diplomacy. Larry Tigg, the disreputable loafer of the Bird-in-Hand, had been secretly introduced into Jimmy Silver's study, and if he was discovered there—

Jimmy's head almost swam at the thought. What use would all his denial be if Larry Tigg was discovered in his own study, smuggled there secretly to keep him away from the Head?

For once Jimmy Silver was quite dismayed, and he did not know what to do.

His chums were equally at a loss. They could only stare helplessly at Larry Tigg, who was grinning.

The evident consternation in the study was encouraging to Mr. Tigg. It made him feel that he was master of the situation.

It was Mr. Tigg who broke the silence. He crossed one leg over the other, and stretched himself in the armchair comfortably, and took a short black pipe from his pocket.

"Give a bloke a light!" was his remark.

"Don't light that here!" snapped Lovell.

"You—you rascal!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, finding his voice at last. "How dare you come here!"

The ruffian leered.

"I told you I'd come if you didn't stub up," he answered. "Well, you ain't stubbed up, 'ave you?"

"I gave you a thrashing with a cricket-stump yesterday for asking me

for money," said Jimmy, breathing hard.

"I ain't forgot that," answered Mr. Tigg significantly. "I'm puttin' on the price for that. I'm 'ere now, and I ain't going under five quids. Got that?"

"Quiet!" muttered Newcome un- easily, for the ruffian's voice was loud, and could be heard beyond the door of the end study.

Larry Tigg grinned.

"Oh, you're askin' me to be quiet now, are you?" he jeered. "Pr'aps you'd like to pitch into me agin with a cricket-stump? I can tell yer I'd be 'eard all over Rookwood, from end to end."

Cyril Peele was moving quietly towards the door. The ruffian's attention had not turned upon him specially, and it was clear that Tigg did not, as yet at least, recognise him. Peele was very anxious to escape a closer scrutiny. But as he reached the door Lovell jumped quickly to it and put his back against it.

"Don't open the door, you fool!" he snapped.

"I—I want to get out!" breathed Peele.

"Do you want all Rookwood to see that ruffian? There's a dozen fellows in the passage now. This door stays shut."

Peele clenched his hands helplessly. It was useless to enter into an altercation with Lovell, and he had to remain. There was no doubt that there were a good many fellows in the passage now. A murmur of voices could be heard outside. Two

there's a row all Rookwood will be on the scene in a minute or two. He's got to go quietly."

"He won't get any money here."

"I ain't going without it," said Larry Tigg, "and if I don't get it soon there's going to be trouble. 'Owd you like me to start smashin' the furniture?"

"You'll get smashed pretty quick yourself if you begin!" growled Lovell. "You'll keep quiet if you know what's good for you!"

"Jimmy—" began Newcome.

Jimmy Silver set his teeth.

"Will you go quietly, Tigg, the way you came, without making a fuss?" he asked.

"No, I won't!"

"Very well, then, you'll go to the police-station when you leave here," said Jimmy Silver. "You fellows are all witnesses that he's tried to extort money with threats. Keep him here while I go to Mr. Bootles and ask him to telephone for a policeman."

For the last minute or two Larry Tigg had been looking at Peele, with a very curious expression. The black sheep of the Fourth had not failed to note it, and he was terrified by the first sign of recognition.

"Old on," said Larry Tigg, suddenly, his eyes fixed on Peele. "Look 'ere, Mister Silver! You say as it wasn't you I nabbed a-climbing the school wall on Monday night?"

"I've told you so."

"The bloke give me your name," said Tigg. "I never reckoned as he was pulling my leg. But I've been thinking it over, I 'ave. I never saw

"I ain't going without a fiver," he said. "If you don't like that, your 'eadmaster is going to 'ave a 'and in the game. Don't talk to me about perlicemen. You don't dare do nothing of the sort."

"You will see!" answered Jimmy. "Keep him here, you fellows."

"You bet!" answered Lovell. "It's the only way out now, and the sooner the better."

Peele gave a cry.

"Silver—stop—!" He caught Jimmy by the arm. "You—you fool, if the man is arrested—"

"He's going to be arrested," answered Jimmy.

"And we're all going to be witnesses," said Lovell, with a grim look at Mr. Tigg. "We'll get him six months, too."

"Stop!" panted Peele. "I tell you I—"

"You needn't tell me anything," said Jimmy. "Let go my arm, Peele; I'm going to Mr. Bootles."

He jerked his arm away from Peele's grasp. The wretched junior staggered back and leaned heavily on the table.

"It's all up with me, then," he muttered. "You want me to be sacked—you've always been down on me. Now you're going to have your way."

Jimmy Silver paused, irresolutely. There was a tap at the door again and Mornington's voice was heard.

"Silver!"

"Oh, go away!" broke out Lovell irritably.

"I'm warnin' you," came Morny's

Jimmy uncomfortably. "You knew you were risking that. And that rascal will be sent to prison, as he deserves. He ought to be in prison."

"It'll be more than a flogging," muttered Peele. "I've been close to it before, and it'll be the sack this time."

"You'll have the satisfaction of knowing that Tigg is doing time," growled Lovell.

"Dark!" whispered Raby.

Mr. Bootles' voice was heard in the passage without.

"A man has been seen—a very disreputable character. He was seen on the back stairs!" came Mr. Bootles' booming voice. "Mornington—Erroll—Courroy—have you seen him here?"

"We haven't seen him, sir."

"He must be about here somewhere—perhaps in one of the studies. He must be detained until the constable arrives. Mornington, go at once and call Malkeley and Neville and Carthew. I may need help in dealing with him before the constable arrives. Tell any Sixth-Form boy you see that he is to come here at once."

"Oh, gad! I—I mean, yes, sir!"

The grin faded off Larry Tigg's stubby face.

Apparently it had not dawned upon the ruffian, hitherto, that he was placing himself within the reach of the law by his attempt to extort money.

It dawned upon him now very clearly.

He rose to his feet.

"Eve, I'm goin' out of this!" he muttered.

"Without your fiver?" grinned Lovell. "You're changing your tune rather suddenly."

The ruffian shambled to the door. But he stopped. The voice of Mr. Bootles was heard again.

"Look in all the studies, please. Call out to me if you see the man. Look in every study, my boys, while I wait here."

"Yes, sir," answered several voices.

Larry Tigg stood rooted to the door. There was a pattering of feet in the passage.

Mr. Bootles was standing on guard there, while the juniors looked in the studies for the supposed visitor.

Mr. Tigg was cornered.

He was likely to pay dear for his visit to Rookwood now, whatever happened to Peele.

He backed away from the door with a scared look, and peered from the window. But the drop from the window was too discouraging. He turned away from the window again.

Lovell & Co. watched him with a grin. From a threatening ruffian, Larry Tigg had suddenly turned into something like a frightened rabbit. The thought of the cell at the police-station, and "coming up" before a grim-browed magistrate the next day, had taken all the insolence out of Mr. Tigg. Probably his relations with the police had never been very friendly, and the last person in the world that he wished to meet just then was Police-constable Boggs, of Coombe.

"Oh, lor!" muttered Mr. Tigg. "This 'ere is a go! Look 'ere, young gents, I—I don't mind lettin' you off that fiver! I—I was only joking about that fiver—truly, I was! Straight now. I wouldn't take your money off you, not if you offered it to me. Straight!"

The door of the study opened and Putty Grace came in.

"You fellows seen—" he began.

Then he stopped dead, staring blankly at Larry Tigg.

Jimmy Silver caught him by the arm.

"Not a word!" he whispered.

"Oh, crickey!" gasped Putty.

"Mum's the word!"

"Oh, all right!"

Putty Grace backed out of the study and slammed the door after him. He was utterly astonished, but the secret was safe with him. Jimmy Silver turned to Mr. Tigg.

"I suppose you understand that you're in a scrape now, you fool?" he said roughly.

"Guv'nor, I beg pardon all round," whined Mr. Tigg. "I never meant any 'arm, really. I don't want any money! Crimes! If I was only back in the stables at the Bird-in-Hand!"

"Keep quiet!" said Jimmy.

"We'll let you get out if we can. Not for your own sake, you rotter!"

"Somebody's coming," muttered Lovell, who was at the door. "My hat! It's Bootles! I know his tread!"

Peele had flung himself into a chair, twittering with terror. He was quite useless in the present emergency. Fortunately, Jimmy Silver had more presence of mind. He had resolved to save the wretched cad of the Fourth if he could. The question was whether he could.

"Under the table—quick!" he mut-



**MUFFIN'S DIPLOMACY!** The door opened wide and a squat, stubby man with a red face shambled into the study. It was Larry Tigg, and he stared insolently at the astonished juniors, with his hands stuck in his pockets. Tubby Muffin grinned with satisfaction in the happy consciousness of having brought off a masterpiece of diplomacy. "I got him round by the back gate," he explained. "Nobody's seen him!" "You—you born idiot!" stuttered Jimmy Silver. "Draw it mild, old chap!" protested Muffin. "I wasn't going to leave you in the lurch. Not an old pal like you, Jimmy!"

or three of the Fourth at least had seen Tubby Muffin piloting the ruffian to the end study, and the news quickly spread along the passage.

Even as Lovell was speaking there came a tap at the door. Lovell set his heel hard against it.

"Who's there?" he called out.

"Little me, old nut," answered the voice of Mornington. "Can I come in?"

"Not just now."

"I've seen your visitor already, old top," went on Morny's mocking voice. "You needn't mind me."

"Oh, clear off!"

Jimmy Silver clenched his hands.

"It will be all over Rookwood soon," he muttered. "We've got to get rid of the brute. I—I suppose he can be got out quietly?"

"Not without the cash," interrupted Mr. Tigg. "I ain't going out of this 'ere without five pounds, so I tell yer."

Jimmy Silver's eyes glittered at him.

"You won't get a sixpence out of me," he said.

"Then I'm staying, and I'm going to see your 'eadmaster, too," said Mr. Tigg. "Don't you scowl at me. I ain't going! I'm going to shout for your 'ead-master to come 'ere, that's what I'm a-going to do!"

"We could handle him easily enough," muttered Lovell, with a savage look at Mr. Tigg.

"You fool!" muttered Peele. "If

the bloke's face clear, in the dark, but I sorter thought he had a longer nose than yourn, pointed-like—like this 'ere young gentleman's. The voice didn't seem quite the same when you spoke to me yesterday, too; but this young gent's voice, I've 'eard it before, I know."

"You—you're mistaken," panted Peele. "Nothing of the kind! I've never seen you before!"

"I reckon you 'ave seen me before," said Mr. Tigg deliberately. "I reckon you was the cove I nabbed on the school wall, and held by the ankle till you give me your name. Why, I knows you now as well as anything. Your voice was jest the same—you was spluttering like a scared rabbit, then, jest as you are now. You're the cove. I'd begun to 'ave my doubts, 'cause I reckoned young Silver wouldn't 'ave dared to lay into me with a cricket-stump if he was reely the cove. You're the bloke what owes me five quids. That's what you are."

Peele did not answer.

The terror in his face was enough to confirm the ruffian's suspicion, even if he had been doubtful otherwise.

Jimmy Silver broke in.

"Nobody here is going to give you any money, Larry Tigg," he said. "I offer you the chance, for the last time, of getting out quietly."

Larry Tigg brought down his hand with an emphatic slap on his knee.

voice through the keyhole. "Your merry visitor has been seen."

"What!"

"Mr. Bootles is comin' upstairs now."

Mornington's footsteps were heard retreating. Peele gave a groan of despair, and covered his face with his hands.

**The 5th Chapter.**  
**The Search.**

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

He glanced at Mr. Tigg, grinning in the armchair, and then at Peele—the latter in a state of utter collapse.

The nerve of the black sheep had quite failed him now.

Rascal as Peele undoubtedly was, and richly as he deserved punishment, Jimmy Silver could not feel "down" on him at that moment. His natural instinct was to help the wretched fellow out of his scrape, if he could. But there seemed nothing to be done. Tubby Muffin, with all his wonderful diplomacy, had not succeeded in introducing Mr. Tigg into the house un- seen, after all. It would have been extraordinary if he had. And now Mr. Bootles was coming to inquire if—

"There's nothing to be done, Peele," said Jimmy, at last. "If Bootles knows he's here—"

Peele only groaned.

"You'll get a flogging," said

Jimmy Silver. "You see, you can't face it out with the Head. He would spot you at once if you told him whoppers."

"You thundering ass, do you think I was going to tell the Head lies?" howled Jimmy Silver.

Tubby winked.

"You weren't going to own up, I suppose?"

"Fathead! There was nothing for me to own up to."

"Oh, pile it on," said Muffin resignedly. "What's the good of keeping that up among friends, old chap? Now I've saved your bacon, you make terms with the man and get rid of him quietly. You'll come to me and thank me for this presently."

And Tubby Muffin withdrew, and closed the door after him.

The door of the study opened and Putty Grace came in.

"You fellows seen—" he began.

Then he stopped dead, staring blankly at Larry Tigg.

Jimmy Silver caught him by the arm.

"Not a word!" he whispered.

"Oh, crickey!" gasped Putty.

"Mum's the word!"

"Oh, all right!"

Putty Grace backed out of the study and slammed the door after him. He was utterly astonished, but the secret was safe with him. Jimmy Silver turned to Mr. Tigg.

"I suppose you understand that you're in a scrape now, you fool?" he said roughly.

"Guv'nor, I beg pardon all round," whined Mr. Tigg. "I never meant any 'arm, really. I don't want any money! Crimes! If I was only back in the stables at the Bird-in-Hand!"

"Keep quiet!" said Jimmy.

"We'll let you get out if we can. Not for your own sake, you rotter!"

"Somebody's coming," muttered Lovell, who was at the door. "My hat! It's Bootles! I know his tread!"

Peele had flung himself into a chair, twittering with terror. He was quite useless in the present emergency. Fortunately, Jimmy Silver had more presence of mind. He had resolved to save the wretched cad of the Fourth if he could. The question was whether he could.

"Under the table—quick!" he mut-



tered. "Quick, you fool—do you want to be caught?"

He dragged Larry Tigg towards the tea-table.

The ruffian's stolid brain did not work quickly. Jimmy shook him with savage impatience.

"You fool—quick! Can't you understand? Quick!" he panted.

"Oh, crimes!" mumbled Mr. Tigg.

He plunged under the table, and Jimmy Silver hastily arranged the cloth to conceal him so far as possible. The Fistical Four grouped themselves round the table as the door opened. Larry Tigg had taken cover only just in time.

Mr. Bootles rustled into the end study.

#### The 6th Chapter. In Suspense.

Mr. Bootles glanced round the study over his spectacles.

Half a minute earlier, and Larry Tigg would have been in the full view of the Fourth Form-master. But now all that Mr. Bootles saw was the tea-table, with its half-finished meal, and five juniors on their feet.

Peele kept his face turned away from the Form-master. His heart was beating almost to suffocation, and he was fearful of betraying himself. But the Fistical Four looked at Mr. Bootles with respectful inquiry. Their hearts were thumping, too, but their nerve was better.

Mr. Bootles seemed relieved at finding only the juniors present. Possibly his suspicions had turned on the end study owing to the card Jimmy Silver had received that morning from Larry Tigg.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Bootles. "It is very extraordinary! A man has been seen in the house. Tupper, who saw him, informs me that it is the man Tigg, the reprehensible character who wrote to you, Silver!"

"Indeed, sir!" murmured Jimmy.

"He must still be in the house," said Mr. Bootles. "Undoubtedly he came to see someone—doubtless the wretched boy from whom he was attempting to extort money. Where he has disappeared to is a mystery. All the studies have been looked into. It is most extraordinary! I shall be very much annoyed if he escapes. The policeman is already on his way to Rookwood to take him into custody."

There was a slight sound under the table. Jimmy Silver coughed loudly. Mr. Bootles glanced from the doorway.

"Have you seen anything of him, Bulkeley?"

"Not yet, sir," answered the deep voice of the captain of Rookwood. "If he's here, sir, he can't get away. There's three of the Sixth on the back stairs, and he won't get past them."

"Very good! Pray use no violence if it can be avoided, Bulkeley, when you find him, but—"

"He won't get away, sir," answered Bulkeley. "I'll go through the box-room. He may have sneaked in there."

"Yes, yes, please do!" Mr. Bootles sat down in Jimmy Silver's armchair—tenanted a few minutes earlier by the man of whom he was in search. Fortunately, Mr. Bootles had no suspicion of that. The little Form-master was very excited and flustered and breathless.

"Go and help Bulkeley in his search, my boys!" he said. "Never mind your tea now!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Jimmy. There was no help for it. Mr. Bootles had to be left alone in the study with Larry Tigg. Jimmy could only hope that Mr. Tigg would have sense enough to keep quiet in his hiding-place.

The tablecloth, luckily, was a large one, and the chairs standing round the table made a screen.

If Mr. Bootles had thought of peering through the legs of the chairs he would have discerned a large pair of muddy boots and a portion of a pair of trousers. But he did not think of it. He remained puffing and blowing in the armchair, while Jimmy Silver and Co. joined Bulkeley in the box-room.

Cyril Peele limped away to his own study—a prey to gnawing apprehension. His only hope of escaping the punishment of his sins was that Larry Tigg would remain undiscovered, and the discovery might be made at any moment.

In his study, Peele listened, and quaked, and listened—in terror every moment of hearing sounds that would announce that the hidden ruffian had been found.

But, as a matter of fact, Larry Tigg was in the safest possible place, so long as he kept quiet. Nobody would have thought of searching for him in the end study, where Mr. Bootles was seated in state in Jimmy Silver's armchair.

The box-room was drawn blank, and Jimmy Silver & Co. came back into their study. Bulkeley looked in.

"He doesn't seem to be anywhere about, sir," said the Sixth-Former. "Is it possible that Tupper was mistaken about seeing him—?"

"It is hardly likely, Bulkeley."

"Then he must have bolted, sir. We've searched the place pretty thoroughly, and we can't find a trace of him."

"It is possible that he may have escaped before I arrived on the scene," said Mr. Bootles. "It is most annoying. The Head is very anxious that he should be taken into custody, and also to learn the truth regarding the Rookwood boy who was out of bounds on Monday night. It is very annoying indeed. The constable will have had the trouble of coming to Rookwood for nothing. It is really quite exasperating!"

"The policeman's downstairs now, sir," said Neville of the Sixth, looking into the end study.

Mr. Bootles rose.

"I will come down and speak to him. I shall be obliged, Bulkeley, if you will remain on the watch a little longer. It is barely possible that the rascal is still within the walls of Rookwood."

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Bootles left the end study, and puffed away towards the staircase. The two prefects followed him. Jimmy Silver quietly shut the door of the study.

Then the Fistical Four looked at one another.

"Well!" murmured Lovell. "What a go!" said Raby. "If Bootles only knew!"

"Flogging all round!" grinned Lovell. "Fancy Bootles sitting there while—Ha, ha, ha!"

"It wouldn't be a laughing matter if it came out!" said Jimmy. "Hallo! What do you want?"

That question was addressed to Larry Tigg, who put a distressed face out under the tablecloth.

"Is it all right now, sir?" gasped Tigg.

"No, it isn't!"

"I'm getting 'orrid cramped 'ere!" "You can come out—if you like the police-station better than the cram!" answered Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, lor!"

Mr. Tigg's head promptly disappeared.

The Fistical Four finished their tea—not in an easy mood. Mr. Tigg grunted and mumbled under the table, still more uneasy. It was necessary to wait until the coast was clear before an attempt was made to get the ruffian out of the school.

During that weary wait Larry Tigg had plenty of time to reflect upon his sins, and probably to repent of his hapless attempt at blackmail. Cer-

tainly he was getting a lesson that he was not likely to forget in a hurry.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had finished tea when Tubby Muffin put a scared face into the study.

"I say, Jimmy, where is he?" breathed Tubby. "Didn't Bootles find him? I say, I've been feeling awfully anxious. I—Yoooop!"

Tubby Muffin was interrupted by Jimmy taking a grip on his collar. The fat Classical was twisted round, and then Jimmy Silver's boot smote him hard.

Tubby went into the passage at great speed under the propulsion, Jimmy slammed the door after him.

"So much for Tubby!" he said. "He will think twice before he brings a visitor to my study again."

It was two hours later, when all had long been quiet again, that Mr. Tigg made his exit. Even then he did not venture down the stairs. Jimmy Silver helped him from the box-room window on to the leads under cover of darkness, and Mr. Tigg scrambled down to the ground, and took to flight.

Jimmy walked along to Peele's study when he was gone. Cyril Peele turned a chalky face to him as he looked in.

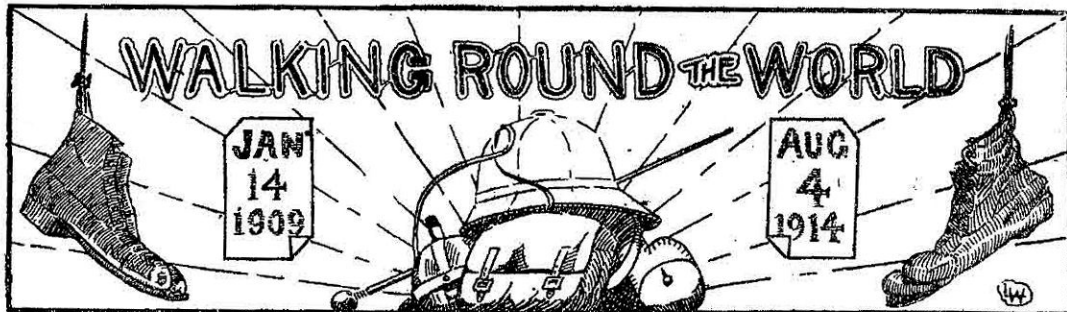
"He's gone," said Jimmy curtly. "I don't think you'll hear of him again. He was jolly nearly as frightened as you were. If you've got the sense of a bunny-rabbit, Peele, you'll give up playing the goat after this."

"I—I'm going to!" gasped Peele. "I—I wouldn't have this over again for anything!"

And Jimmy Silver could only hope that Peele would keep to his word, though he had his doubts.

THE END.

(There will be another splendid complete story of Rookwood School next Monday, entitled "French Leave!" By Owen Conquest. Don't miss it!)



By LESLIE WILSON.

(The Concluding Narrative of a Splendid Series of Articles dealing with the Author's Experiences in Different Parts of the World.)

Coming down south over the Kalahari, near to the borders of what was then called German West Africa, I had a real taste of bad luck.

I had at the time three carriers, bush-bred boys, short in stature, but very powerful fellows, and tireless when not in a lazy mood. I may mention here that any native employed by a white man in Africa is called a "boy," irrespective of age; therefore, although speaking of a boy, the native may be a man of sixty years or more in age, and some boys are doddering old idiots. My three boys were all older than I, and, up to the time my story begins had been in my employ ten days.

There was no doubt that we were having a rather trying time on this stretch of the desert, for the game that is quite plentiful there during the rains had all disappeared, having followed the water-courses as they dried up in the early part of the dry season.

We consequently found it a hard job to replenish our larder with fresh meat, and this made my boys restless. And on the top of this, and the ordinary hardships, and their great objection to walk every day in succession, they were becoming very nervous of our surroundings, for by now we had struck a district peopled by a very low order of native, who, during the dry spells, like the one we were then experiencing, turned to cannibalism.

As we came nearer this particular district my boys showed by unmistakable signs that they wished to go no farther, but though I had occasion to correct two of them for a series of careless mistakes and laziness, they did not openly rebel until towards the evening of the tenth day, when they suddenly threw down their bags and threatened to leave me unless I turned back.

When I told them that we were going straight on, and ordered them to pick up their packs, they threat-

oned me with physical violence, so I naturally made them obey orders under the threat of my revolver. They had already seen that weapon used—I am fortunately an expert shot with this firearm—and so for the time being they gave in.

That evening as usual they made my camp, and got a big fire going, and, after making myself as comfortable as possible and doing all I could to guard against treachery, I lay down and at once fell asleep.

In the early morning, before the sun was up and while the stars still twinkled brightly in the heavens, I sat up, shivering violently with the cold. All around was dark and still, even the bush noises had ceased, and directly my eyes opened I knew that things were not normal. The first thing I noticed was that my blankets had disappeared, and the fire was out.

I instantly called to my boys, but received no answer. My premonition that something out of the ordinary had happened grew stronger and stronger each passing moment, and it was not long before I understood that my carriers had run away from me.

It was too dark to think of looking for my boys then, and after calling for some little time I settled down to physical exercise as well as I was able in the darkness, to enable me to keep warm until the sun arose and I could determine my position. The bag that held my store of matches was not to be found, and consequently I was unable to make a fire; but worse news awaited me with the daylight, for I discovered then that my carriers had not only run away, but they had taken with them all my food, water, matches, and other articles, and had removed the very blankets from off my person while I slept. The only things they had not touched were what I actually had on my person, and the small bag that I used for a pillow, and which I always carried myself.

Fortunately, I had turned in all standing that night, and still possessed my revolver and ammunition—at least, I thought I was fortunate then in saving the weapon; but later, during my terrible march to civilization, it was an encumbrance, and the only wonder is that I did not throw it away on the desert.

Upon discovering how my boys had left me, and the number of things



"On my return to England I was confronted by this startling news!"

they had stolen, I could not decide for some time what to do—whether it would be wise to chase the thieves and recover my baggage, or whether I should try and reach the nearest point on the railway before my strength gave out. After an hour's thought I decided to try and catch up with the thieves, and as it was light enough then for my purpose, I began to follow the spoor of the natives through the bush.

I kept to the trail for half that day, until about noon, when I came to the conclusion, by the condition of the spoor, that my fleeing carriers were too far ahead for me to catch up with them without the aid of supplies of food and drink.

I reluctantly decided that my only chance now—and a very small one—was to try and cross the desert to the nearest point on the railway.

I passed through a number of adventures on that terrible journey, the last part of which was done mechanically; for my reason wandered during the last stage of that walk, and to this day I do not know how long the journey took. In a way, it was just as well my reason left me near the last, for I was mercifully saved the knowledge of a great deal of the agony of torture I must have suffered.

I starved, and literally went mad through want of water, my tongue became black and cracked, and hung out of my mouth like that of a thirsty dog.

One early morning the driver of the weekly freight train, returning from the north, happened to see me lying alongside the rail.

The train was stopped, and I was picked up, though the train people could not tell whether I was alive or dead. I was carried on the train into Wankie, the only coal-mining centre in Southern Rhodesia, and was here handed over to the care of the medical man in charge of that district, who took me in hand and nursed me himself for some weeks until I was well and strong enough to set out on the trail once more. I did not do much walking in Africa after that illness, for at Wankie it was found that I was suffering from black-water fever on the top of my breakdown, and when I was picked up by the railway-track I was but dried up skin and bone, and burnt almost as dark as a negro.

The only things that pulled me through that bad time were the tender nursing and unceasing devotion of the doctor, and a naturally strong constitution that I was blessed with.

A big surprise awaited me when I came to myself again after the terrible adventures on the Kalahari. Not only was it a wonder to find myself alive and actually lying in a clean, sweet bed, but, strangest of all, was to find in the doctor who nursed me in that lonely spot an old friend of mine.

I had a very strange adventure in Las Palmas. I was being shown around the island by a Portuguese guide—a big, swarthy fellow, who kept chewing tobacco the whole day long.

We had just looked over an old cathedral, and had come out on to the front steps, when my guide took out of his pocket a plug of tobacco and a

large clasp-knife, and commenced to cut himself a generous chew.

Putting the cut tobacco into his mouth, he, in carelessly closing the knife, cut his finger, dropping the knife to the pavement.

I stooped down and picked up the knife, which somehow seemed strangely familiar to me, and, on looking closer, I was startled to see my own name scratched crudely, but deeply, into the handle.

To say I was startled is putting it very mildly, but almost at once a great light broke on me, and I recognised the knife as my own property which I had missed while on a voyage from St. John's, Newfoundland, to Melbourne, in Australia, on a sailing-ship, over seven years before. And, more strange still, I now recognised in my companion one of the able-seamen whom we had on that voyage, named Pedro.

Pedro soon remembered me when I jogged his memory, and he became so excited that he even shed tears of joy. He was not a bad sort in his way, though, I verily believe, the greatest thief unhung. He had taken a great liking to me on that voyage, and had taught me seamanship and the lore of the sea; and when I taxed him with stealing my knife, he said, "I only took him to have something you belong to, to remember so you by." Of course, I forgave him, and would not take the knife back, though he pressed me to accept it; but I found it a hard job to forgive him for getting drunk for the next five days in honour of meeting me again.

I told you the date I started my world tour to travel through Australia, Tasmania, Borneo, New Guinea, India, Ceylon, Africa, Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, America, and the British Isles. I commenced my actual tour on January 14th, 1909, and crossed the seas and tramped across country for five years and seven months, ending my tour on the outbreak of the war, 1914. During this period my guaranteed measured walking totalled over 24,200 miles, though actually I tramped over 800 miles farther than the distance given. Now for a few facts concerning myself. I have always been fond of physical prowess, and take a great deal of interest in all manly sports. My favourite sports have been boxing, walking, swimming, and rowing; and since the visit of Sandow to Australia, a good many years ago now, I have always kept myself physically fit by constant exercise, for it was the visit of that strong man to my country that gave me, as a boy, an ideal to strive after.

I am not narrow-minded, and believe in letting other people live their lives in their own way, but I would like to tell my readers here that during the whole of my long walk that I was a total abstainer and



## A THRILLING STORY OF THE CEDAR CREEK CHUMS!



## The 1st Chapter.

## Missing.

"Anything up?" Frank Richards asked that question as he arrived at Cedar Creek School in the sunny June morning with his chums.

The question was really rather superfluous; it was evident that something was "up."

A group of the Cedar Creek fellows stood about the gateway in excited discussion. In the playground within more groups could be seen, and they were all deep in discussion. Frank Richards & Co. jumped off their horses and joined the group in the gateway.

"Have you seen him?" called out Chunky Todgers, as they came up.

"Seen whom?" asked Frank.

"Sam."

"I guess not," said Bob Lawless.

"What's the matter with Sam?"

"He's gone!"

"Black Sam, the stableman?" asked Beauclerc.

"Yep. There isn't any other Sam that I know of," said Chunky Todgers.

"Miss Meadows has been asking all the fellows if they've seen anything of him. He hasn't come home."

"I hope nothing's happened to him," said Frank Richards, with some concern.

All the Cedar Creek fellows liked Black Sam, whose grinning, ebony face was one of the most familiar sights at the backwoods school. The negro was stableman, porter, man-of-all-work, and several other things at Cedar Creek School, and he lived in a little log cabin by the stable, and seldom went far beyond the walls of Cedar Creek. Only on rare occasions, when his wages accumulated into a round sum, did Samuel Wellington Washington betake himself to the Red Dog Saloon at Thompson, and expend his dollars in a glorious "jamboree."

"Something must have happened to him, I guess," said Chunky Todgers, with a grin. "He went off to Thompson last evening, and he ought to have been back last night, but—"

"But he didn't come back?" asked Frank.

"Nope."

"Sleeping it off in a barn, I guess," said Eben Hacke. "He will turn up all right when he's sober."

"But he's never stayed out the night before, and Miss Meadows is anxious," said Chunky Todgers.

"There's a rough crowd at the Red Dog, and as Sam was full of dollars—"

"Full of tanglefoot, too, most likely," said Hacke.

"Hallo there's the bell!"

Frank Richards & Co. led in their horses to the corral, and then joined the crowd of fellows heading for the lumber schoolhouse.

Miss Meadows was in the porch, with an unusually grave expression on her face. She called to the chums of Cedar Creek as they came in.

"Have you seen anything of Sam?"

"Nothing, Miss Meadows," answered Frank Richards.

"Would you like us to ride over to Thompson and inquire, ma'am?" asked Bob Lawless meekly.

Miss Meadows smiled slightly.

Bob's kind offer meant a ride through the woods instead of morning lessons, if it was accepted. But the

Cedar Creek schoolmistress shook her head.

"You need not trouble, Lawless. But I am rather anxious about Washington. I am afraid—"

Miss Meadows checked herself. "You may go into the school-room."

The Cedar Creek fellows went in.

Miss Meadows walked down to the gates and looked along the trail, but it was deserted. There was no sign of Samuel Wellington Washington there.

The schoolmistress knitted her brows as she returned to the lumber schoolhouse.

out" at the Red Dog in Thompson.

Miss Meadows entered the school-room, and lessons began; but a good many of the fellows were thinking more of Black Sam than of lessons.

It was quite possible that he had been overcome by the fire-water, and was "sleeping it off" in a thicket, as Eben Hacke suggested, but it was more probable that something had happened to him. During the morning most of the fellows were listening for some sound of him outside, but nothing was heard. He had not returned by the time Miss Meadows dismissed the school.

Miss Meadows knitted her brows as she returned to the lumber schoolhouse.



**HELD UP!** Hank whipped up the horses a little faster, but in the middle of the timber belt he suddenly gripped his reins hard, with a sharp exclamation. From the trees ahead a horseman pushed out of the thicket into the trail, and a hand was raised. "Halt!" "Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones!" murmured Hank, and he pulled his horses in with prompt obedience.

Black Sam was a faithful servant, and Miss Meadows tolerated his little weaknesses. He had a right to do as he liked when he was off duty, and it was only once in two or three months that he paid his visit to the Red Dog and came zigzagging down the trail in the small hours afterwards, filled to the chin with the potent fire-water. On such occasions Black Sam would creep in very quietly and go to bed, and turn up for duty in the morning with a worn and aged look, which lasted for two or three days. Then, as often as not, he would pay a visit to Mr. Smiley at the Mission, and "swear off" and remain a model character until the time for the next "jamboree" came round.

Never before had he failed to turn up after one of his excursions, and Miss Meadows was sorely afraid that something had happened to the hapless African. She was aware that an exceedingly rough crowd "hung

As Cedar Creek came out of the school-room Miss Meadows paused to speak to Mr. Slimmy, the second master. Chunky Todgers joined Frank Richards & Co. in the playground.

"Slimmy's going to ride over to Thompson and inquire after Sam," he said. "Miss Meadows is asking him."

"I offered to do that this morning," grunted Bob Lawless.

Chunky grinned.

"You'd have to inquire at the Red Dog, and Miss Meadows wouldn't let you go there," he said. "I—"

"Hallo! Great gophers! There's Sam!"

"Here's Sam!" came a shout from the gates.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Frank Richards.

All eyes were turned on the gates.

A man came tramping in from the trail, carrying a helpless figure that hung over his shoulder.

He was an old-looking man, with a thick grey beard and eyebrows, and a dark, wrinkled skin. Old as he looked, however, he was evidently sturdy enough, for he was carrying Black Sam with ease, and the negro was not a light weight.

He tramped into the playground amid a buzzing, excited crowd, and came towards the school-house.

"This yer Cedar Creek School?" he called out.

"Right!" answered Frank Richards.

"Then I guess this galoot belongs here?"

"Yes, rather! It's Sam!"

The long-bearded pilgrim lowered Black Sam to the ground, Frank Richards & Co. lending a hand. At the same moment Miss Meadows came out of the house.

## The 2nd Chapter.

## The New Man.

"Mornin', mum!"

The grey-bearded pilgrim touched his ragged Stetson hat respectfully to Miss Meadows.

The school-mistress glanced at him, and then at the negro on the ground. Black Sam was insensible.

"What has happened?" exclaimed Miss Meadows breathlessly.

"I guess I dunno, mum," answered the stranger. "I found this yer galoot on the trail, and toted him home. He couldn't talk much, but he told me he belonged to this yer show, and I brought him in. Jake Hooker, mum—that's me—at your service!"

"Thank you very much!"

Miss Meadows knelt beside the unfortunate negro. His eyes opened and blinked at her, but he did not speak. There was a big bruise under Black Sam's wool, showing that he had received a very severe blow on the head.

"Help me with him to his cabin," said Miss Meadows quietly.

Mr. Slimmy and Mr. Shepherd came up quickly, and Black Sam was carried away to his cabin by the

robbed. He lay in the wood, unable to move, till this gentleman came along and found him." She turned to the grey-bearded pilgrim. "I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Hooker."

"Not at all, mum!" answered Jake Hooker. "Not at all! Only too glad I kem along when I did. I heered a groan in the timber as I kem along the trail, and found the nigger, and I calculated I'd tote him home."

"You will allow me to reward you?" said Miss Meadows, taking out her purse.

The grey-bearded pilgrim shook his head.

"I don't want nothing, mum. If only you could put me in the way of finding a job—"

"You are looking for work?" asked Miss Meadows.

"Yes, mum; I've tramped up the valley from the railway looking for a job, but there's nothing doing on the ranches. P'raps you might know somebody in Thompson that wants a man—I can look after horses, saw wood, sweep, and clean—anything that's wanted."

Miss Meadows looked thoughtful for a moment.

"I shall want a man here until Sam recovers," she said. "If you would like to take his place for a few weeks while—"

"Just the thing, mum!" said Mr. Hooker. "If you'd give me a few weeks' work, I guess I could find something else when you don't want me any longer. I'm a very handy man."

"Very well; please step into my sitting-room and we will make an arrangement," said Miss Meadows.

"Thank you, mum!"

The grey-bearded pilgrim, with his ragged hat in his hand, followed Miss Meadows into the house.

Frank Richards & Co. and the rest of the fellows, moved off from the porch. Frank had a thoughtful look.

"That's jolly good!" said Bob Lawless. "I'm glad we're able to do something for the galoot, after what he's done for poor old Sam."

"He seems a decent sort," remarked Beauclerc.

Frank Richards did not speak.

"What's up, Frank?" asked Bob, looking at his chum. "What are you scowling about, old scout?"

"Have you fellows seen him before, anywhere?" asked Frank.

"Him! That old galoot, do you mean?" asked Bob, in surprise.

"Yes."

"Not that I know of."

"He's a stranger to me," said Beauclerc. "He says he's tramped up the valley from the railway, so you can hardly have seen him, Frank."

"I—I suppose not. But—"

Frank paused.

"But what?" asked Bob.

"I believe I've seen him before somewhere," said Frank. "It struck me that he's seen me, too. He looked at us as he was sitting in the porch, and—perhaps it was fancy; but I thought that he looked as if he knew us from the rest, and remembered us."

"I guess he would have said so."

"I—I suppose so—but—"

"Dash it all, Frank!" exclaimed Bob Lawless in astonishment. "You haven't taken a dislike to an old chap you've never seen before, who's tramped a mile or more with our Sam on his shoulder?"

Frank coloured.

"No; but—"

"Well, what then?"

"I believe I've seen him before, and that he knows me, and I don't like the look in his eyes," said Frank.

"His face isn't familiar, but I'd almost swear I'd seen his eyes before—they've a queer, sharp look 'n' them that I remember in somebody."

"Fancy, old chap!"

"He must be a good sort," said Beauclerc. "He's poor, tramping to look for a job, and he went a mile out of his way to carry home a man he didn't know. That's jolly decent!"

"He's got a job by doing it," said Frank.

"But he couldn't have known it when—"

"I—I suppose he couldn't," Frank hesitated.

"Look here! What have you got in your noddle?" asked Bob seriously.

"Well, if he knew Black Sam, and knew where he was employed, he would know that Miss Meadows would have to have a new man, with Sam knocked up. So that was his chance. And—if he was a rascal, he might have given Sam that knock on the head from behind, in the first place—"

"Frank!"

Frank Richards crimsoned.

"I'm not saying he did! Only—"



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"You're dreaming!" said Bob. "For goodness' sake, don't suggest such a thing where the fellows could hear you. It sounds horrid!"

"I know it does. But—but suppose it was so?"

"Utter rot!" said Bob decisively. "The job of man-of-all-work at this place isn't worth much—a chap wouldn't play such a villainous trick to become odd-job-man at a backwoods school? Four dollars a week and his grub ain't worth it!"

"Well, that's so, of course!" said Frank. "And there's no reason why he should want to get fixed up here, excepting for the job."

"Of course there isn't."

"It's not like you to be suspicious in this way, Frank," said Beauclerc, in wonder. "I think you'd better put the idea right out of your head."

Frank Richards nodded.

"Well, it's not my bizney, I suppose," he said.

And the subject was dropped.

But the chums of Cedar Creek had reason to remember it—afterwards.

**The 3rd Chapter.  
Startling News!**

"Guess we'll go home in the post-waggon, Frank."

It was Saturday; a free day for the Cedar Creek School. But though there was no school on Saturday at Cedar Creek, there was very often something else for the fellows to do. Idle hands were rare in the Canadian West. Frank Richards and Bob Lawless had been busy that morning.

They had ridden over from the ranch to Silver Creek, some miles to the south on the trail towards Kamloops, on a message from Bob's father to a Silver Creek rancher. They lunched at the log hotel in Silver Creek, and they had finished the meal when the post-waggon came bumping up the rugged street and stopped outside.

"Good idea!" assented Frank. "It will be a change; the horses can follow on. Let's get out!"

The two schoolboys quitted the log hotel, and found the post-driver surrounded by a little crowd in the street. Hank Hoskins was telling news, between gulps from a big tankard.

"Frozen truth, pard!" he said, as Frank and Bob came up. "True as I'm standing here! Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones is out!"

"My hat!" murmured Frank.

There was a buzz from the cattlemen standing round the post-driver. The news was exciting enough.

"How'd yer know, Hank?"

"Where did yer hear of it?"

Hank Hoskins jerked his thumb to the south.

"All the way up the valley," he answered. "It was talked about in Kamloops that Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones had broke out of prison; but they didn't reckon he would show up in this section agin. But he has. He's showed up at Lone Pine."

Frank and Bob exchanged a glance.

Well they remembered Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones, the reckless outlaw who for some weeks had terrorised the Thompson valley. He had been brought to book by "Old Man Beauclerc," Vere Beauclerc's father, and had been taken away by the Mounted Police to trial and sentence. And now, if Hank's tale was true, the celebrated outlaw was loose again, and had come back to the scene of his old exploits.

There was a buzz of questioning.

"What did he do at Lone Pine, Hank?"

Hank finished his tankard before he answered. He was thirsty after a drive across the dusty plain.

"The post-office was held up," he answered.

"Phew!"

"Two thousand dollars took," continued Hank, evidently pleased by the impression he was making on the audience. "Postmaster held up with the muzzle of a Colt under his nose, and he handed out the paper when he found he was talking to Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones, you bet!"

"But was it Jones?" asked the landlord of the log hotel. "Might be some other bulldozer from across the border."

"He gave his name."

"But—"

"Oh, I guess you galoots won't believe in him till you see him with your own eyes!" ejaculated Hank scornfully. "I tell you, the postmaster knew him by sight; he was present when the rustler was tried and sent to pen for life."

"What on earth's pen, Bob?" whispered Frank Richards. It was a new word to him, though Frank was,

by this time, fairly well up in Western parlance.

Bob Lawless grinned.

"Penitentiary," he answered. "What you call prison, fathead!"

"Oh, I see!"

"And he's sure he reckernised the galoot, Hank?"

"Sure! Who wouldn't know Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones?" said Hank Hoskins. "His picter's been printed often enough. Galoot clean-shaven, without a hair on his face, and sharp eyes like a rat. I guess I'd know him if I met him in a deep-level mine at midnight."

"He used to sport a red beard and whiskers when he was cavortin' round these parts."

"They came off when he was roped in," grinned Hank. "He used to put them on when he went on the trail. Now his face is known, he don't take no trouble to cover it up. He jest walked into the post-house at Lone Pine, leaving his critter hitched outside, as cool as you please. And the postmaster 'passed,' you bet! He wasted raising his blind; Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones jest put up his ante and took the pot."

There was a laugh at this; though Hank's picturesque similes, drawn from the game of poker, were rather puzzling to Frank Richards.

"When did it happen, Hank?"

"Four days ago."

"Hain't he been seen since?"

"Not that I know of. But you can bet your bottom dollar that he will be seen, agin," said Hank Hoskins. "I only hope he ain't come this far up the valley yet, considering what I've got aboard the waggon for the bank in Thompson."

"Oh, I guess you won't see him 'twixt hyer and Thompson. You've got your gun?"

Hank Hoskins ejected a stream of tobacco-juice in an emphatic way.

"I've got my gun in the hearse," he answered; "and if any boozy Injun or gol-darned greaser plays any games on the trail, that there gun is ready for him. But if Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones shows up, that gun stays where it is—safe. Jones can hit a mosquito at a hundred yards, I reckon, and he ain't going to make a target of my weskit-buttons—not if this hyer galoot knows anything, and he reckons he do!"

Hank turned back to his horses, leaving the crowd of Silver Creek men in a buzz.

"Room for us, Hank?" called out Bob Lawless.

The post-driver glanced round.

"I guess so. Hop in!"

"You bet!"

Frank and Bob tied their trail-ropes behind the waggon, to lead the horses behind, and jumped in under the tilt. The canvas cover of the vehicle was a welcome shelter from the hot spring sunshine. Hank climbed into his seat and gathered up his reins.

The Silver Creek crowd watched the post-waggon out of the town, and then adjourned to the interior of the log hotel—further to discuss the remarkable reappearance of Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones, over liberal potations of "fire-water."

Frank and Bob shared the excitement caused by Hank Hoskins' news.

During the depredations of Mr. Jones in the Thompson Valley, they had come into contact with the ruffian, and they remembered him very well; though they had, as a matter of fact, almost forgotten his existence till he was thus recalled to their minds.

The prison doors had closed on the outlaw, and they had never expected to hear of him again.

"If that awful rascal has come back, there'll be exciting times in the valley, Frank," Bob Lawless remarked, as the waggon rumbled out of Silver Creek, and took the trail across the plain to the north.

"He really ought to have been hanged," said Frank. "He deserved it!"

"He had a life sentence," said Bob. "I wonder how he got away? As a matter of fact, I don't feel quite sure."

"But if the man at Lone Pine recognised him—"

"I guess he was thinking more of the shadow than of the face behind it," said Bob, laughing. "Anyhow, I sha'n't believe in Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones till I see him."

"I certainly hope we sha'n't see him."

"Same here; but—"

Hank Hoskins looked over his shoulder.

"It's right enough," he said. "And I guess Jones will come up the valley. He's got a spite agin this section, because he was roped in hyer. I guess he's going to clean up this valley afore he goes back to the States, where he belongs. Arter this

trip I reckon they'll have to send a guard when there's vallybles on board the hearse."

"You've got valuables on board now?" asked Bob.

"Sure; there's a packet for the bank at Thompson, under my seat. I reckon we shall get through this time, though."

"If the Jones man know—"

"I shouldn't be surprised if he knew," said Hank, who evidently had a very high opinion of the resourcefulness of the famous outlaw. "He used to get to know, in one way or another. Last time he was hyer, he was living in Thompson jest like any other galoot, and nobody knowed he was Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones till Old Man Beauclerc roped him in at the Occidental. I shouldn't wonder if he played the same game agin."

"But he's jolly well known by sight now," said Frank.

Hank sniffed.

"I guess Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones wouldn't worry about that; he can make himself look like what he chooses," he answered.

"The reward will be out agin, Hank," grinned Bob Lawless.

"Chance for you to earn five hundred dollars."

"Not for five thousand!" said Hank emphatically. "Too much like sudden death for me!"

The post-waggon rattled on, Frank and Bob keeping their eyes on the plain from under the canvas tilt. The possibility of the outlaw "showing up" on the trail was rather exciting. It was half-way to Thompson that the trail ran through a belt of cedars and larches, and as the waggon entered the shady stretch, the two schoolboys grew more watchful. If Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones was on the warpath that day, this was exactly the place he would choose for a "hold-up."

That thought was in the minds of all three aboard the waggon; and it was prophetic. Hank whipped up his horses a little faster; but in the middle of the timber belt he suddenly gripped his reins hard, with a sharp exclamation.

From the trees ahead, a horseman pushed out of the thickets into the trail, and a hand was raised. The sunrays, filtering through the cedar-branches, glistened on the levelled barrel of a revolver.

"Halt!"

**The 4th Chapter.  
Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones Again!**

"Halt!"

"Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones!" murmured Hank, as he pulled in his horses with prompt obedience.

As he would have said—indeed, as he did say later in the bar-room of the Occidental Hotel at Thompson—Hank Hoskins was employed to drive the post-waggon, not to "buck" against Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones and his shooting-iron.

Frank Richards felt his heart thump.

"By gum! It's the man!" muttered Bob Lawless, with a catch of the breath.

He gave a glance towards Hank Hoskins' "gun"—a big Navy revolver, that lay behind the driver's seat, ready for use.

Hank was quite ready to use it against any reckless Redskin or desperate hobo who might have attempted to hold up the post-waggon, but he was not going to argue the point with a character like Mr. Jones of "Frisco."

Frank caught his chum's glance, and laid a hand on his arm.

"Chuck it!" he whispered.

"But—"

"Don't be an ass, Bob!"

The horseman rode up to the halted waggon.

His face was not masked, and the red beard and hair that he had once worn as a disguise was absent now. The face was clean-shaven, the features strongly-marked, the eyes sharp and glittering.

"Artemoon!" said Hank Hoskins coolly.

The outlaw grinned.

"I guess you know me," he said.

"I guess so."

"All the better for you!" said the outlaw. "Any passengers?"

"Only a couple of schoolboys."

"Step out into the trail!"

That sharp command was addressed to Frank and Bob, whom the outlaw had not yet seen.

For a moment they hesitated.

The temptation was strong upon Bob to seize Hank's gun and try conclusions with the rascal.

But he restrained the impulse. A shooting-match with a desperado who was known to be a dead-shot was rather too reckless.

"Better get out!" muttered Frank. Crack!

A bullet tore through the canvas tilt, overhead of the two schoolboys.

"Get a move on!" snapped the outlaw.

The shot was a warning. Frank and Bob scrambled up.

"Git out, you young idjits!" exclaimed Hank breathlessly. "It's Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones what's talking! Hustle, now!"

Frank Richards and his chum jumped into the trail.

The outlaw started slightly as he saw them.

For a moment his eyes rested on them keenly, and then he motioned them, with the revolver, to stand back from the trail. The schoolboys obeyed quietly.

"What have you got aboard this journey, Hank?" asked Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones in a cool, matter-of-fact way, as if he were transacting a quite ordinary business affair.

"Goods for Gunten's Store in Thompson," said Hank carelessly; "that's what it is mostly."

"Anything else?"

"Soap in a box for the Chink laundry, and a case of whisky for the Red Dog, and— Great gophers, what are you doing with that there shooter?" yelled Hank, in sudden alarm.

Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones was pressing the trigger, and the hammer rose a little, to the consternation of the post-driver. The outlaw's eyes glittered over the weapon.

"You had better not be funny with me, pard," he said. "This shooter is liable to go off sudden."

"Turn it another way, old man!" urged Hank Hoskins. "Ain't I as quiet as a Chink in an opium dive?"

"Hand out the parcel for the bank, and stop chewing the rag, then!" snapped the outlaw.

Hank's face fell.

He had had a hope that the parcel for the bank, the only thing aboard that was in Mr. Jones' "line," would escape attention. But it was clear that Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones was well informed.

Hank Hoskins lifted the parcel from under his seat, and handed it over to the outlaw without another word.

Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones examined it attentively, and then slipped it into a saddle-bag.

"I guess that's O.K.," he said. "You can light out. Take a message from me to the sheriff of Thompson, Hank."

"Sure!"

"Tell him that Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones is on the war-path again, and that if he cares to follow me into the Thompson Hills I'll be glad to see him there."

"Yep. Anything else?"

"That's all. Git!"

"All aboard!" sang out Hank Hoskins, as he gathered up his reins.

Frank Richards and Bob Lawless climbed back into the post-waggon.

Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones sat his horse by the trail, the revolver still in his hand, as the waggon started, with the led horses trotting behind it.

"Won't this cause a howl in Thompson? The sheriff will be out with his men as soon as we get in," said Bob Lawless.

"And he will know where to follow the rascal," said Frank. "He must be a reckless ass to tell us where he hides!"

Bob chuckled.

"I reckon not!"

"He said if the sheriff followed him into the Thompson Hills—"

"I know he did, and I guess it means that he's in hiding anywhere but in the Thompson Hills," said Bob. "I guess if I was the sheriff I should look in another direction, anyhow."

"Oh, very likely, now I come to think of it."

"Most likely he's playing the same game he did before. I shouldn't wonder if he's staked out a claim up the river, or got a job on a ranch," said Bob. "I reckon he's not camping out in the woods like a Texas bushwhacker."

"He would have to make himself look a bit different to do that."

"He can do that; he did it before. Hallo, we get down here."

"Pull in, Hank!"

Hank Hoskins pulled in his horses, and the schoolboys jumped from the waggon and unhitched their steeds.

"Thanks for the lift, Hank!"

"All O.K.," said Hank, and he drove on towards Thompson, full of exciting news, and perhaps not wholly sorry that he had been stopped on the trail by Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones. That evening Hank Hoskins was destined to be a great man in the bar-rooms of Thompson town.

**The 5th Chapter.  
A Meeting on the Trail.**

"I guess we'll drop in at Cedar Creek, Franky," Bob Lawless remarked, as the chums trotted away over the plain. "It won't take us very far out of our way."

"What are we going to Cedar Creek for?" asked Frank.

"Might as well warn Miss Meadows that that bulldozer is in the section, so that the place can be kept locked up."

"Good!"

The chums put their horses to the gallop. The day was growing old now, and the red light of the sunset streamed across the grass. The dusk was thick when they drew in their horses outside the backwoods school.

"Closed!" said Frank.

"I guess Hooker's there somewhere about."

Bob Lawless rapped on the gates with the butt of his riding-whip. The school gates were closed and locked for the night. The knock was not answered, and Bob was still rapping away when a voice came from within the gates.

"Who's there?"

It was Mr. Slimmey's voice.

"Me, sir—Bob Lawless!" called out the rancher's son.

"Dear me! What do you want here on Saturday, Lawless?"

Mr. Slimmey unfastened the gate and opened it, and looked in surprise at the two riders outside.

"Sorry to disturb you, sir!" said Bob Lawless. "I thought Hooker would come and open the gate."

"Hooker is away," explained Mr. Slimmey. "Miss Meadows has given him leave for the afternoon. But what do you want?"

Bob Lawless explained.

Mr. Slimmey uttered a startled exclamation at the mention of the name of Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones.

"Thank you very much for coming, Lawless," he said, when Bob had finished. "I will tell Miss Meadows at once. Now, you had better ride home as fast as you can. It is nearly dark."

"Good-night, sir!"

"Good-night!"

Mr. Slimmey closed and barred the gate, and Frank Richards and his Canadian cousin rode away. They trotted in the dusk by the trail through the timber, the way they were accustomed to ride home from school. They had almost reached the end of the timber when a dim figure on foot loomed up in the gloom.

"Hallo, there's somebody on the trail!" exclaimed Frank Richards, checking his horse.

"Hooker!" said Bob, peering through the gloom and recognising a grey beard and shaggy grey eyebrows. "Hallo, Hooker!"

The greybearded pilgrim peered up at him.

"Is that young Lawless?" he asked.

"Sure! You want to keep your eyes peeled, Hooker," said Bob. "Have you ever heard of Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones?"

The man blinked at him.

"Never," he answered. "Who is he?"

"The biggest rustler in the West," said Bob Lawless impressively. "He's cavorting round these parts again, and you want to keep your eyes peeled for him, old scout. If you've got any money about you, I guess he's the man to save you the trouble of taking care of it. Savvy?"

"Then I reckon I'd better mosey on," said Jake Hooker, and he tramped on into the dusk.

The schoolboys trotted on into the open plain. Frank Richards spoke suddenly.

"Bob!"

"Hallo!"

"Where on earth could that fellow have been coming from?"

"What fellow?" asked Bob.

"Jake Hooker."

"Blessed if I know! What does it matter?" asked Bob, in astonishment.

"I don't know that it matters, but it's queer. When Slimmey said he was off for the afternoon I supposed he'd gone to Thompson. But this isn't the Thompson trail; he couldn't have come from Thompson this way. This leads out on the plains, and he was on foot."

"He hasn't a horse," said Bob.

"I know, but it's odd. If he was going out on the prairie he would borrow a horse. I should think."

"I should think so, too, but it seems he hasn't. You're jolly suspicious about poor old Jake," said Bob, laughing. "What do you think he's been up to? Not fruit-poaching—the fruit's not out yet."

"It's queer!" said Frank.

"So it is. But what does it matter? What on earth have you got into your head now, Frank?"

Frank Richards did not answer that question, but his brow was very thoughtful as he rode on with his chum to the ranch.

THE END.

(Next Monday's long complete story of Cedar Creek is entitled "Unmasked!" By Martin Clifford. Don't miss it!)