

Special—"MY CRICKET CAREER!" By J. W. Hearne (Middlesex and England) In This Issue!

The BOYS' FRIEND 2d

SIXTEEN BIG PAGES!

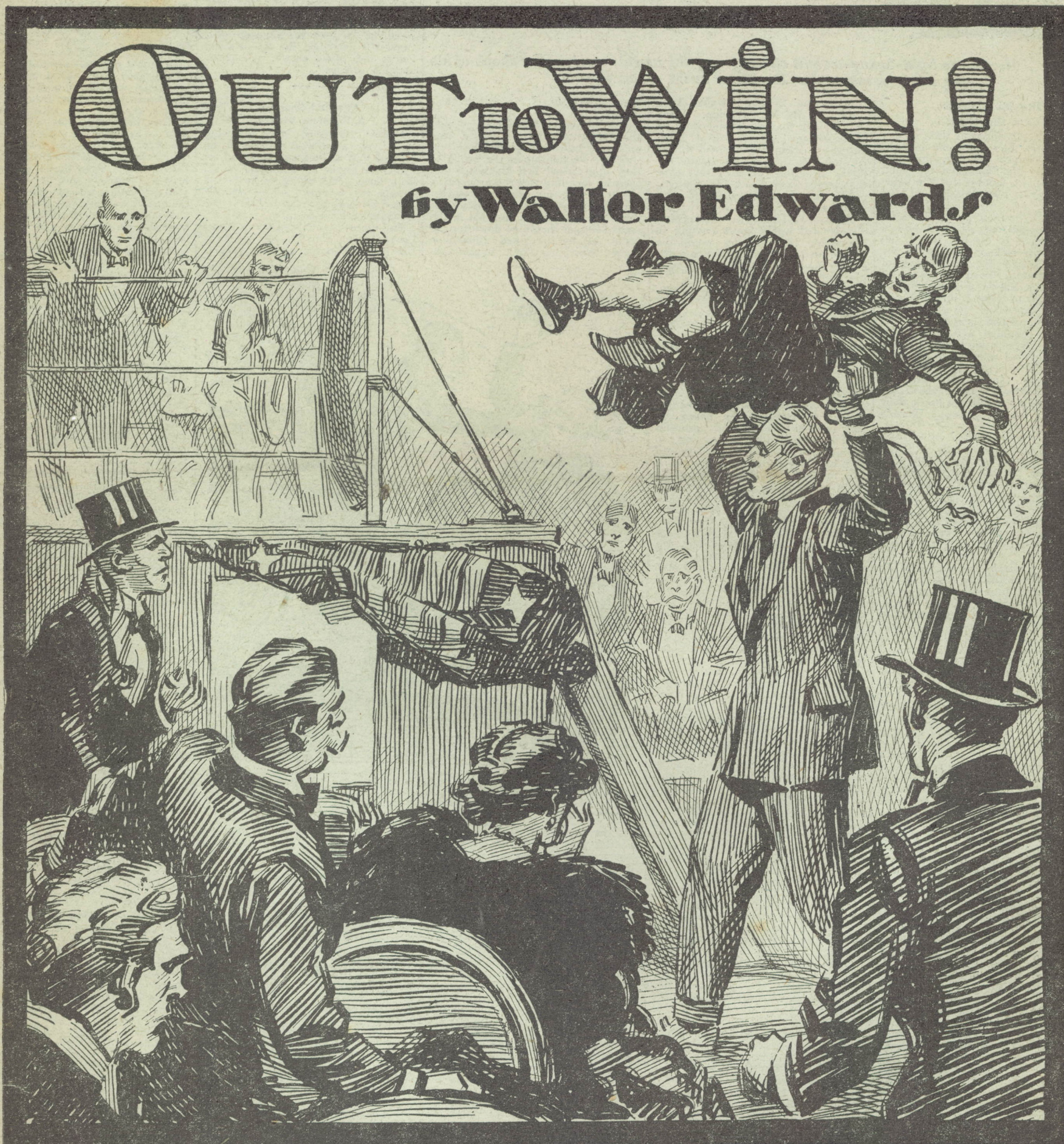
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THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

[Week Ending June 2nd, 1923.]

OUT TO WIN!

by Walter Edwards



CARRIED INTO THE RING! The Dramatic Arrival of the Light-heavy-weight Champion.

(An incident from the great Boxing Yarn complete in this issue.)

JIMMY SILVER & CO. OUT WEST—MORE THRILLS THIS WEEK!



The Bad Man From Texas!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

(Author of the Tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Popular.")

Jimmy Silver & Co. round-up Poker Bill, a real "Bad man," who is proving a menace to the little township of Mosquito!

The 1st Chapter.

Lovell, the Lassoer.

"You fellows coming?" Jimmy Silver, with Blazer's reins looped over his arm, came out of the corral at the Windy River Ranch and called to his chums.

Lovell & Co. were busy. Arthur Edward Lovell was manipulating a lasso. Arthur Edward was determined to become an expert with the "rope," and he was putting in a lot of practice. At a distance of twenty yards from an upright post stuck in the ground Lovell was essaying to rope in that post. Raby and Newcome looked on, grinning.

Arthur Edward Lovell could do many things. Not so many, perhaps, as he believed that he could do, but a good many. But among his gifts the throwing of the lasso was not numbered.

Lovell had seen the Windy River cowpunchers roping in steers while mounted and going at full speed. It had not looked particularly difficult to Lovell. Actually doing it, however, was another matter. Lovell found unexpected difficulties even in roping in an upright post that could not dodge him.

The rope crashed for the twentieth time a yard from the post, and there was a chuckle from Raby and Newcome. Those two youths seemed to be enjoying the show. Pete Peters, the long-legged foreman of the ranch, was grinning at a distance.

Lovell was not much of a lassoer so far; but he was adding to the gaiety of existence at the Windy River Ranch, and that was something. It was not what he had come out to Canada for, but it was something.

"Blow the thing!" gasped Lovell. "Coming?" called out Jimmy Silver again.

"Dry up!" "What?" "Dry up, for goodness' sake!" Lovell seemed to be getting cross.

He gathered in the long rope and prepared for another cast. Three or four cowpunchers had gathered at various distances to look on, apparently interested in Lovell's exploits with the rope. Even Boss Smedley was glancing out of a window of the ranch-house.

Perhaps Lovell felt that he was the cynosure of all eyes. That would have been all very well in case of success. It was not so pleasant when he was failing every time and causing general smiles.

"Where are you off to, Jimmy?" asked Raby.

"Going down to Mosquito about the stores for Mr. Smedley," answered Jimmy. "If you fellows want a ride—"

"Good! I'll come!"

"Same here!" said Newcome.

"You coming, Lovell?"

"Shut up!"

"Look here—"

"Cheese it!" roared Lovell.

Undoubtedly Lovell was cross. He gave his chums a glare and prepared for the cast, determined that somehow that obstinate post should be roped in at last.

Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged grins and looked on. When Lovell was in that mood it was best to give him his head. It saved trouble. The rope flew.

"Got it this time!" gasped Lovell.

But the hapless Arthur Edward counted his chickens too early. The rope hit the post—for the first time. Lovell dragged on it, expecting it to tauten.

But the rope had only struck the post, and the noose had not dropped over it.

As Lovell dragged there was no resistance. The rope came away in his grasp, and Lovell staggered back.

It was, as Lovell would have said, just his luck that his foot should catch in a root as he staggered. Otherwise he would not have sat down. As matters stood, he did sit down—hard.

"Bump!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Perhaps it was unfeeling to chortle. But the Rookwood chums simply could not help it. Lovell's aspect as he sat down so suddenly was comic. His feet flew into the air and tangled with the rope, and the expression on his face was quite startling.

"Poor old Lovell!" gasped Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell sat up.

"You cackling asses—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at!" roared Lovell.

"Your mistake, old man—there is!" said Newcome. "See if you can do that again!"

"What?" roared Lovell.

"It's no end funny! My hat! I wish all Rookwood was here to see you!" said Newcome. "It would even make the Head chuckle!"

Arthur Edward Lovell rose slowly to his feet. His look showed that he was meditating assault and battery.

But he restrained his wrath, and gathered in the unhappy rope once more. Lovell was not skilful with the lasso, but he was a stickler.

"I say—" began Jimmy Silver.

"Cheese it!"

"I've got to start—"

"Start, then, and be blowed!"

"But you—"

"Start!" roared Lovell. "The sooner the better! How do you think a chap can practise the lasso with silly idiots gurgling all round him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell swept the coiled rope round again. Pete Peters lounged up, with a grinning face.

"Stick it, young 'un!" he said.

"Nothin' like stickin' it!"

"I'm going to!" grunted Lovell.

"You're a stickler!" agreed Pete.

"Like the old emigrant who chalked on his wagon: 'Pike's Peak or bu'st!'"

"And did he get to Pike's Peak?" asked Raby.

"No; he bu'st!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell gave Mr. Peters a glare. He was in no mood for Pete's humorous stories.

"Stand clear!" he said.

"Yaroooh!" roared Pete Peters suddenly, all his humour vanishing as the swinging lasso caught him under the chin.

He jumped back.

"You young ass—"

"Stand clear!"

Pete Peters stood clear enough after that. Lovell was not safe at close quarters when he was practising with the lasso.

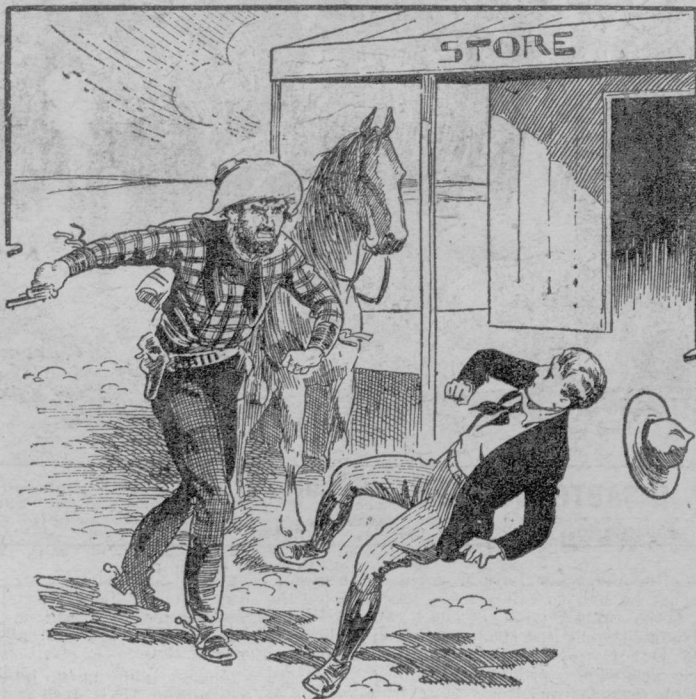
He rubbed his stubbly chin, no longer grinning. But the other

onlookers howled. Even Woo Sing, the Chinese chore-boy, who had come out of the house with a bucket in his hand, stopped on his way and looked on, with enjoyment in his almond eyes.

Lovell gritted his teeth and hurled the lasso again. He was determined to succeed this time. It was "Pike's Peak or bu'st!" with Lovell now. He simply would not fail this time.

The lasso flew, it uncoiled and fell, and Lovell dragged on it. To his joy, it resisted his pull. He had caught on at last!

In his excitement and satisfaction, he did not for the moment observe that it was not the post that the lasso had caught.



A BRUTAL BLOW! "So you was going to chip in, hay?" said Jimmy Silver a savage blow that sent him reeling to the ground!

He dragged to tauten the rope, and there was a wild yell from Woo Sing and the clatter of a falling bucket. "Whoop! You lettee go! No killee pool li'l Chinese!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jimmy Silver, the tears running down his face.

"Lovell, stop it; you'll throttle him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wha-a-at?" gasped Lovell.

The noose was round Woo Sing, and it had tightened as Lovell dragged, and Woo Sing was sprawling on the ground and yelling frantically.

There was a joyful roar from the cowpunchers.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help! You lettee go!" shrieked Woo Sing. "No pullee pool li'l Chinese! Me chooke! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Raby rushed to the rescue. Lovell slackened on the rope, with a crimson face.

The hapless Chinese was released.

"Sorry!" gasped Lovell. "You—you shouldn't have been in the way, Woo Sing."

"He was yards out of the way!" yelled Newcome.

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

Raby helped the Chinese up. Woo Sing streaked for the ranch-house at top speed, without even waiting to recover his bucket. Apparently he did not consider himself safe near Arthur Edward Lovell.

Jimmy Silver wiped away his tears.

"Come along to Mosquito, Lovell!" he called out. "You've done enough for one day! Next time you may hang somebody."

"Fathead!"

Raby and Newcome went for their horses, and joined Jimmy Silver.

"You're coming, Lovell?"

"Go and eat coke!"

And Jimmy Silver & Co. rode down the trail without Lovell.

The 2nd Chapter.

Something Up at Mosquito.

Jimmy Silver & Co. grinned as they rode away over the sunlit prairie, on the hoof-marked trail to Mosquito town. Lovell's performances with the lasso had cheered them considerably.

They rode at a gentle trot.

"Lovell will come along after us," Jimmy remarked. "We'll give him a chance to join up. Don't say anything about lassos."

"Ha, ha ha!"

And the chums of Rookwood proceeded at a leisurely pace.

It was about a quarter of an hour later that they heard the thud of horses' hoofs on the trail behind them, and, looking back, saw Arthur Edward coming after them.

Jimmy Silver was right. He knew his choleric chum well. Lovell had had time to cool down, and he had decided to ride with his comrades.

His face was flushed as he joined the three juniors and rode on with them.

couldn't." But he kindly made that remark audible only to Raby.

"In fact, the bigger ass a fellow is the more likely he is to do it," said Lovell. "You do it pretty well, Jimmy."

"Thanks!"

"Like mathematics," said Lovell.

"Mathematics?"

"Yes; I'm convinced that a fellow has to be pretty dense to be able to mug up mathematics."

"Oh!"

"You remember I was always pretty rotten at maths?"

"I remember."

"Fellow with a really active brain can't bring it down to such stuff," explained Lovell. "That's how it is."

"Hem!"

"Same with this silly trick of chucking a rope about. Sort of knack—no sense required. Chap who's got plenty of sense is really at a disadvantage."

"I understand!" said Jimmy gravely.

And that point being amicably settled, Lovell allowed the subject to drop, and seemed quite satisfied with himself and things generally.

It was close on noontide when the Rookwood juniors arrived in sight of the little lumber town of Mosquito, on the lower Windy River.

The chums of Rookwood had been there before; it had been the last stage on their journey from Calgary, in Southern Alberta, to the ranch. Only a few weeks had passed since then, but the Rookwoods had already learned a great deal of the ways of the Canadian West, and they knew their way about—they flattered themselves that they were not much like the four "tenderfeet" who had dropped on Mosquito and found everything new and strange.

Mosquito was a small place, consisting of a shack hotel, a store, which was also a post-office, and a dozen or so of cabins, with a dozen more of shacks.

The trail ran through the town to the river; but within the limits of the township it was not called a trail—it was called Main Street. There was nothing, so far as a stranger's eye could see, to distinguish it from the trail, excepting that cabins and shacks were bunched along either side of it. Nevertheless, it was Main Street, and Jimmy Silver & Co. would not have been surprised had it been called the Grand Esplanade. They had already learned that the imaginative Westerners were "great" on sounding names.

Even the lumber hotel, where guests were provided with boards upon which they spread their own blankets by way of bedding, was called the Grand Pacific Hotel—though Mr. Bunch, the proprietor, had not gone to the expense of having that grandiloquent title painted up.

The juniors intended to lunch at the Grand Pacific and their morning's ride had made them hungry. They quickened their pace as they approached the little town.

To their surprise, there was no one in sight in Main Street.

Generally, there would be a cowpuncher or a lumberman to be seen, and two or three half-breed loafers; and Mr. Bunch generally adorned the rail in front of the Grand Pacific with his portly person.

Now the street was empty, utterly deserted.

The juniors noticed, too, that every cabin door was closed; and the door of the Grand Pacific was shut also, and there were no horses tied to the rail before the building.

It was scarcely possible that Mosquito was still asleep at that hour of the day; and they wondered what had happened. Certainly the stillness was most unusual.

They rode up to the hotel and dismounted, and hitched their horses to the rail. Then Jimmy Silver knocked at the door with the butt of his riding-whip. The door was locked or barred within; it did not open to the touch as usual.

"Knock, knock, knock!"

"What on earth's the matter here?" said Lovell, in wonder.

"There's something jolly well up!"

"Knock, knock!"

The voice of Mr. Bunch came from within.

"Go away! You keep your distance! I've got a shotgun here, and, by thunder, I'll let you have it from a winder, if you don't git!"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver, utterly amazed.

The juniors stared at one another. Had the plump and portly Mr. Bunch gone mad? That seemed the only explanation.

"Git!" shouted the hotel-keeper.

"You hear me! I can tell you that these here games won't do for Canada! I advise you to hump it back over the border afore the Mounted Police git after you! Sure!"

"He's potty!" said Lovell in wonder.

Jimmy Silver knocked at the door again, and shouted:

"Mr. Bunch!"

"Git, I keep on telling you!" roared Mr. Bunch. "By thunder, I'm going up to the winder now, and if you're still there you git this hyer shotgun in the midriff. I warn you."

"Mr. Bunch—"

"I'll Mr. Bunch you, you goll-darned bulldozer! You wait till I git a bead on you with this hyer shotgun, Poker Bill!"

"Poker Bill!" repeated Lovell. "Who's Poker Bill?"

"He takes us for somebody else, I suppose," said Jimmy Silver. He rapped on the door again. "Let us in, Mr. Bunch! We're from the Windy River Ranch!"

"Eh! Who's there?"

"Jimmy Silver, Mr. Smedley's cousin."

"Oh, hokey!" There was a change in the hotel-keeper's tone. "Young Silver! I reckoned it was Poker Bill agin! Have you seen him?"

"Seen whom?"

"Poker Bill!"

"Shouldn't know him if we did. But we haven't seen anybody. The whole town seems to have gone to bed."

They heard Mr. Bunch fumbling with the bars within.

"Sure he ain't in sight, young Silver."

"There's nobody in sight!" said Jimmy Silver impatiently. "Only us! Let us in, Mr. Bunch—we're jolly hungry."

The door was cautiously opened about a foot. Mr. Bunch's fat face looked out, and he glanced up and down the street. Then he opened the door about another inch.

"Hump in—quick!" he said breathlessly.

"What's the hurry?" demanded Lovell.

"That goll-darned bulldozer may come back any minute!" gasped Mr. Bunch. "He's shooting up the town."

"Wha-a-t?"

"Quick, I tell you, or I'll shut you out! Do you want to be riddled like a sieve?" shouted Mr. Bunch. "Hustle! Lively!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not even begin to understand what was the matter. But they realised that something was very seriously the matter; there could be no doubt about that. So they pushed in one after another quickly enough, and Mr. Bunch shoved the door shut again, and dropped the wooden bars into place with a gasp of relief.

The 3rd Chapter.

Shooting Up the Town!

"You're safe here!" gasped Mr. Bunch.

"Safe!" repeated Jimmy.

"I guess so—unless he bu'st in! But if he does, I've got the shotgun loaded ready."

"He—who—what?" yelled Lovell.

"Poker Bill."

"Who the merry thump is Poker Bill?"

"Course, you wouldn't know!" said Mr. Bunch. He wiped the perspiration from his plump brow. "To think that you might have run right into him. He's been through the town once—right through—and he's coming back again! I guess he's coming back. Oh lor!"

Billy Benson, the innkeeper's chore-boy, had an eye to a crack in a wooden shutter. He gave a sudden howl.

"He's coming!"

"Oh, good Heavens!" said Mr. Bunch.

"Well, this beats Banagher!" said Raby. "Blessed if I know what it's all about! Do you, Jimmy?"

"Listen!" said Jimmy.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

It was the beat of horse's hoofs, distant, but growing louder and nearer every moment.

A horseman was riding into the town, from the direction of the river, at a wild and reckless speed.

Then suddenly, stabbing the still air, came the rapid reports of pistols incessantly fired.

Crack! Crack! Crack-ack-ack!

On window-shutters and walls and stones and rails bullets crashed and pattered like hail.

The horseman was firing right and left, with a revolver in either hand, as he rode furiously up Main Street.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another with rather scared faces.

Only by five minutes or so had they escaped meeting that shooting madman as they rode in from the prairie.

"Good heavens!" murmured Newcome.

"But what—" stuttered Lovell.

Crack! Crack-ack-ack-ack!

The chore-boy had jumped back from the shutter and dived under a bench. Mr. Bunch stood up, grasping his shotgun in hands that visibly shook. Jimmy Silver made a spring to the crack in the shutter.

"Keep back, you young fool!" shouted Mr. Bunch.

Jimmy Silver did not heed.

He was determined to have a glimpse of what was passing in the street, if only to make sure that this amazing experience was not a wild dream. Moreover, the shutter was not thick enough to stop a bullet, and there really was little more danger at the crack than elsewhere.

His eye was glued to the narrow opening, and what he saw without was like a vision from a particularly lurid film.

He wondered for a moment whether it was real.

Up the street came a galloping horseman—a big, burly man with a thick red beard, and a ragged Stetson hat stuck on a bunch of red hair. His face was rugged, rough, stubbly, and full of a wild excitement that could only be due to mad intoxication.

In either hand he held a revolver, and as he rode up the street he fired right and left, almost at random.

does it mean, Mr. Bunch? Is that man a lunatic?"

"I guess he ain't much better, with the fire-water in his inside," answered the landlord.

"Oh, he's tipsy!" said Newcome.

Mr. Bunch grinned faintly.

"Tippy ain't the word for Poker Bill. He's full up on liquor that he's got from the half-breed boot-leggers, and there's methylated spirits in it, and stuff that's worse than that!"

"Great pip!"

"And this is the law-abiding Canada that Mr. Smedley told us about at Rookwood!" grinned Newcome.

"That galoot don't belong here," said Mr. Bunch rather snappishly.

"He's from Texas, Poker Bill is. He's a bad man."

"A what?"

"A bad man, I tell you."

"Well, he doesn't seem to act like a good man, that's certain," agreed Jimmy Silver.

"Ass!" said Lovell, with a smile of superior knowledge. "Bad man" is Western slang. It doesn't mean a bad man, but an awfully lawless and dangerous character. A regular rip-snorter."

"That's it," said Mr. Bunch. "Poker Bill is a rip-snorter, if ever there was one. He's been on a bender—"

"A—a what?"

"That means a giddy spree," murmured Lovell.

"On a bender, and no mistake," said Mr. Bunch. "He's been fired from the Sunset Ranch—"

"That means sacked!" said Lovell.

finished "shooting up the town," and by that time was probably somewhere out on the prairie sleeping off the effects of the potent fire-water of the half-breeds.

The 4th Chapter.

A Hold-Up!

Jimmy Silver & Co. finished lunch, and followed it with boiling black coffee, and felt grateful and comforted. Then it was time to see about the business upon which they had come to Mosquito. They wanted to be back at the ranch by sundown, if they could; and they had no time to waste.

By this time Mr. Bunch had opened the big pine-plank door of the Grand Pacific Hotel.

Two or three neighbours had come along to talk to Mr. Bunch about the outbreak of Poker Bill; in every tone was of wrath and indignation.

Mosquito Town was wrathful.

"I guess he kinder figgers it out that he's in Texas agin!" said Mr. Bunch. "That's what's the matter with Bill. Down in Texas I've seed the cowboys shoot up a town, arter the round-up; and galoots does nothing but hump it out of the way. That won't do for Alberta."

"I guess not!"

"No, for sure."

"Not good enough."

Mr. Bunch's neighbours were quite of his opinion. The bad man had made himself decidedly unpopular in Mosquito.

Anybody might have been hit by the flying bullets; and, indeed, there

up of the conclave, and a rush for cover.

Leaving the discussion going strong, the Fistical Four of Rookwood walked out of the Grand Pacific and along to the store, which was only a dozen yards away.

They found the storekeeper, a plump French Canadian with a black beard, just unbarring his door.

He gave a jump as, opening the door, he found Jimmy Silver just outside.

Jimmy gave him a re-assuring nod.

"All serene, Mr. Lesage; it's not Poker Bill."

"Only little us!" grinned Lovell.

"Entrez!" said Mr. Lesage. "Zat man, he is gone."

"Clean gone!" said Jimmy Silver. The juniors entered the store.

Jimmy Silver had a list of the goods that were required for the Windy River Ranch, and he was occupied for some time with the French store-keeper.

He had just finished when there came a sudden shout of warning from Main Street.

"Look out!"

The thunder of horses hoofs was heard at the same moment.

Crack! crack!

Two sharp shots rang out, and there was a sound of doors slamming.

"My hat!" yelled Lovell. "He's coming back!"

"La porte—la porte!" yelled the storekeeper frantically, as the thunder of hoofs came nearer.

But the fat man had to get out from behind a long pine counter; and the juniors, for a moment, did not remember their French to the extent of catching on to the fact that he was alluding to the door.

Before Mr. Lesage could reach the door to shut it a galloping horse was drawn up outside the store, so suddenly that it almost fell upon its haunches.

Poker Bill's burly figure was in the doorway the next moment.

There was a revolver in his right hand.

The ruffian was not "shooting up the town" now. That entertainment was over. He had partially sobered, but his deep-set eyes were bloodshot, his face savage and scowling.

He was evidently in a savage and reckless mood, partly from the remaining effects of the fire-water, partly from natural brutality.

Lesage put his fat hands over his head without waiting to be told. The juniors stood in a group by the counter, silent and still.

The ruffian paid them no heed.

"I guess I'm doing some shopping hyer!" he rapped out. "I'm taking the trail, Lesage, and I want some stuff. Savvy?"

"Mais oui, oui!" gasped the store-keeper.

Poker Bill flung a leather sack on the counter.

"Put in what I tell you!"

"Mais oui."

The bulldozer rapped out a list of goods, chiefly provisions, required for camping on the trail. Lesage hastened to select them from his stock and cram them into the sack.

There was no question of payment.

Poker Bill was "holding-up" the store, and Lesage was only too glad to buy off the truculent ruffian with an assortment of his goods. He only hoped that the bad man would be satisfied with that, and would go without shooting.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked on in silence.

The bad man gave them a stare and a glare, and then devoted his attention to filling the leather sack.

Apparently Poker Bill was sober enough to realise that after "shooting up" the town, it would not be healthy for him to remain at Mosquito. He was going to "light out" for fresh fields and pastures new. As probably his last cent had been expended among the half-breeds for fire-water, this was his way of supplying himself for the journey.

It was, in fact, robbery under arms—not an uncommon occurrence in the bad man's native country, but extremely uncommon in Canada.

The sack was soon stacked. Lesage was only anxious to be rid of his terrible visitor.

"Now for the juice!" said the bad man.

Lesage shrugged up his shoulders and spread out his hands in gestures of helplessness.

"The juice!" roared Poker Bill.

"But it ess impossible!" shrieked Mr. Lesage. "You shall know zat it is not allow. Zere is no juice."

Poker Bill raised his revolver and aimed it full at the scared, excited

(Continued overleaf.)



TRACKED DOWN! Silently, with infinite caution, the four juniors of Rookwood stole forward, almost on tiptoe. Closer and closer they came till they stood looking down on the recumbent figure of Poker Bill!

Of the stubbly, savage face, the tossing mane of the horse, the flashing of the revolvers, Jimmy had only a glimpse. The frightful vision passed him, and the thundering hoofs and the rattling revolvers receded up the street towards the open prairie outside the township.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Crack-ack-ack!

Mr. Bunch wiped his perspiring brow.

"He's gone!" he gasped.

"He's passed," said Jimmy Silver, stepping back from the shutter.

"Look there!" said Lovell in a shaking voice.

He pointed to a hole in the wooden shutter, through which a shaft of sunlight gleamed. It had not been there before the wild horseman passed.

The hole was within a couple of feet of the crack where Jimmy Silver had looked out. It was a bullet-hole; winged death had passed so close to the Rookwood junior, and he had not known it.

Jimmy Silver compressed his lips.

"I guess that was a close call," said Mr. Bunch. "I guess there's been a good many close calls in Mosquito this mornin'."

By gum, we'll rouse out that bulldozer later on!"

The thudding, and the ringing of the revolvers had died away in the distance now.

"And now," said Lovell, "what

"And he's mad about it," said Mr. Bunch. "He's been among the half-breeds, absorbing the juice, and now he thinks he's in Texas again, and can play the goat. He'll sure find out that he's in Canada, though, afore long. We don't allow bulldozers to shoot up the town in Canada, I can tell you."

"So that's shooting up the town, is it?" asked Jimmy.

"That's it."

"What a jolly entertainment," said Lovell, with a grin. "If he's through with it, we may as well have some lunch, and give our horses some."

"That there door ain't going to be opened," said Mr. Bunch positively.

"Poker Bill may come back agin. What's the good of a shotgun agin a madman with a couple of big revolvers? You let that door alone."

"But our horses—they might have got hit—"

"I guess I'll amble round the back and put them in the stable while Poker Bill's off. You stick here, Billy, get some lunch for the gents."

And in a few minutes more the hungry juniors were sitting down to a rough but very substantial lunch, and discussing that amazing experience of "shooting up the town."

And as they ate they could not help listening for the sound of returning hoof-beats and the cracking of reckless revolvers. But there was no alarm; Poker Bill, apparently, had

was news that a Chink had had part of an ear carried away.

A Chink was not a very important person, certainly; but even a Chink had a right to have his ears respected in a law-abiding dominion.

Almost every cabin had been hit by a bullet; but no glass had been broken, for the excellent reason that glass was an unknown luxury in Mosquito. Very little paint had been damaged; paint was rare. But a mule had been killed, and a Chink wounded—and what was still more serious, any citizen of Mosquito might have been hit, though he hadn't been. Five or six burly men gathered in the Grand Pacific and discussed what was to be done with Poker Bill, though a suggestion of following him out on the prairie met with no enthusiasm. Everybody agreed that Poker Bill had to be instructed that these Texas stunts would not do in Canada; but nobody was keen to take on the task of instructor.

Indeed, the ruffian, maddened with fire-water, and armed with deadly weapons, was no easy customer to tackle, and as the men of Mosquito would have hesitated to shoot him down with a volley, it was not easy to say how he was to be handled.

Jimmy Silver more than suspected that, had the returning hoof-beats of the Texan been heard again there would have been a sudden breaking-



The Bad Man From Texas!

(Continued from previous page.)

Then he jumped on his horse, gathered up the reins, and rode away towards the prairie. As he went he fired right and left at the cabins, shouting defiance to all the men of Mosquito as he pulled the trigger. But in a minute or less he was gone, and the thunder of hoofs died away on the rolling plains outside the town.

The 5th Chapter. The Trail of the Bad Man

Jimmy Silver staggered to his feet. His head was singing from the brutal blow, and blood was trickling from his ear. He felt dazed.

The Rookwood junior cast one glance after the vanishing form of the Texan, and then re-entered the store with rather unsteady steps.

His chums had emerged from the cover of the flour-sacks, and they joined him.

At the Grand Pacific they led out their horses.

"You 'uns had better hang up hyer for a piece, I guess!" called out Mr. Bunch. "You mought light on that galoot out on the prerar."

"He won't eat us!" said Lovell.

"I reckon he might lam you with a quirt, and take away your hosses, if he thought of it," answered Mr. Bunch.

The Co. looked inquiringly at Jimmy Silver.

"We're going," said Jimmy. "Mr. Bunch, will you lend me your shotgun?"

"I guess I'd like to know what for," answered the landlord of the Grand Pacific, staring at him.

"I'm going after Poker Bill."

"What?" yelled Mr. Bunch.

"Jimmy—"

The good-natured innkeeper rushed out in alarm.

"You young galoot!" he roared. "Nope, I won't lend you any old shotgun. I guess I'll keep you here till Boss Smedley sends a man for you, if you're thinking of any sich nonsense. Go inside!"

Jimmy laughed, and jumped on his horse.

"Come on, you fellows!" he said.

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Bunch. "I tell you—"

The Fistical Four of Rookwood did not heed. They rode at a smart trot

"Well, I'm going!"

"Go it, then!" said Lovell resignedly. "We'll back you up. 'Anyhow, it will save us the trouble of going back for the new term at Rookwood, as Poker Bill is pretty certain to mop us all up with his jolly old revolvers."

Jimmy Silver did not answer that.

He was scanning the prairie through a pair of field-glasses which he carried slung in a leather case at his saddle.

"See him?" asked Newcome.

"Yes; he's taken the southern-trail, towards the Red Deer River," said Jimmy Silver. "The brute knows he will have to get out of this section. He dare not wait till word is sent for the Mounted Police to get after him. He will get clear easily enough, if we let him."

"Blessed if I see how we're going to stop him!" said Newcome.

Jimmy looked at his chums.

"His trail's as plainly marked as a fellow could wish," he said. "You can see it here without dismounting. And until dark I can keep him in sight with these glasses, while we're too far off for him to see looking back. I'm not proposing to run him down and run on his revolvers. He will have to camp on the prairie to-night, and then we shall have a chance—with his firearms left out of the picture."

"I'll bet you he sleeps with a

deeper fell the night till blackness surrounded the riders. One by one the stars came out in the clear sky of Alberta.

Jimmy Silver still held on his way, and his chums followed. Darkness had swallowed up the retreating bad man; the field-glasses were useless now. Jimmy was not riding. He was on foot, leading his horse, and every now and then glancing at the trail by the light of a match.

It was a calm, still night, warm and fine. Long ago the chums had been expected home at the ranch, and doubtless Mr. Hudson Smedley was wondering what had become of them. That could not be helped.

"All serene now!" said Jimmy Silver suddenly.

And he quickened his pace.

"Blessed if I can see an inch!" growled Lovell.

"That doesn't matter!"

"Swank! You can't see the trail any more than I can!"

"Look, ass!"

Jimmy Silver raised his hand and pointed. From the darkness in the far distance there glowed a red speck of light.

"What the thump—"

"Camp-fire!" said Jimmy Silver briefly.

"Oh!" said Lovell.

The juniors pushed on in silence after that. The red gleam of the camp-fire grew brighter and clearer as they advanced.

They were breathing hard now.

They were close on the camp of the bad man, and the tussle was at hand. Even if he were sleeping, he would sleep weapon in hand, and they had no weapons but their clubbed riding-whips. But they did not hesitate. Where Jimmy Silver led, the Co. were willing to follow, and Jimmy showed no sign of slackening down.

"Leave the horses here!" muttered Jimmy abruptly.

He stopped by a shadowy dwarf pine. The four horses were tied up, and the juniors crept onward.

"There he is!" breathed Lovell.

The camp-fire, dying low, glowed red in the darkness. By its faint light they made out the burly, powerful figure of the Texas ruffian, stretched on a blanket on the grass and close by a spring where half a dozen trees grew in a bunch.

They halted, and watched for some minutes in breathless silence. There was no movement from the ruffian.

Evidently he was fast asleep.

"Come on!" whispered Jimmy Silver at last.

Silently, with infinite caution, the four juniors of Rookwood stole forward almost on tiptoe.

Closer and closer, with gleaming eyes and beating hearts, till they stood looking down on the recumbent figure only a few feet away.

Still Poker Bill did not move.

He was lying on the blanket, not rolled in it, and there was a revolver gripped in his right hand as he lay. His horse lay in the grass, tethered, at a little distance. The heavy, stertorous breathing of the ruffian reached the juniors' ears.

Jimmy made a sign to his chums.

Then, with a spring, he was upon the sleeping ruffian, and the revolver was torn away and flung into the spring.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were on the bad man half a second later. And still—amazing to relate—Poker Bill did not stir.

He grunted, and lay helpless and unresisting in the grasp of the Rookwood juniors. And the Rookwooders, amazed at their easy victory, stared at Poker Bill and stared at one another.

The 6th Chapter. Rounded Up

Poker Bill slept on. His heavy eyes had not opened. He was totally unaware that the hands of enemies were grasping him.

After one minute of amazement, Jimmy Silver understood. Beside the ruffian in the grass lay the spirit-bottle Poker Bill had forced from the Mosquito storekeeper at the revolver's muzzle. But it was empty now. And all round and over the sleeping brute hung the aroma of strong drink.

"Squiffy!" ejaculated Lovell, in disgust.

"Dead tight!"

"What a little bit of luck for us!" Jimmy Silver stooped over the ruffian and took away his second revolver, which followed the first into the waters of the spring.

Then he jerked off Poker Bill's

(Continued on page 663.)

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The FIRST PRIZE of £5 will be awarded to the reader who submits a solution which is exactly the same as, or nearest to, the solution now in the possession of the Editor. In the event of ties the prize will be divided. The other prizes will be awarded in order of merit. The Editor reserves the right to add together and divide the value of all or any of the prizes, but the full amount will be awarded. It is a distinct condition of entry that the decision of the Editor must be accepted as final. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

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down the rugged street, leaving Mr. Bunch staring after them in blank dismay. In a few minutes they were clear of the town and riding across the sunlit prairie.

"I—I say, Jimmy," murmured Lovell uneasily.

"Well?" said Jimmy Silver grimly.

"You were pulling Bunch's leg, I suppose?"

"I wasn't."

"Dash it all, Jimmy," said Raby, "that brute is armed to the teeth, and we've got nothing but our riding-whips! Not much sense in looking for trouble with him, is there?"

"He punched me and sent me spinning," said Jimmy Silver, gritting his teeth. "I'm going to make the ruffian pay for it somehow! But I don't want you fellows to come."

"Oh, don't be an ass," said Newcome. "If you go, we go!"

shooter in his hand, though!" said Lovell. "If I'd brought my lasso, I—"

"What?"

"With my lasso I could have roped him in," said Lovell. "But I never thought of bringing it."

"You can't rope in anything but Chinese chore-boys, old chap!" said Raby. "Give us a rest!"

"Look here—" roared Lovell. "This way, if you're coming!"

said Jimmy Silver; and he turned Blazer in the direction of the bad man's distant figure, visible only by the aid of the glasses.

The three juniors rode after Jimmy Silver.

They were not wholly averse to trying conclusions with the bad man from Texas if they had anything like a sporting chance in the struggle. But they were well aware of the recklessness of such a pursuit, and they were unusually silent and thoughtful as they rode on over the darkening prairie.

The sun disappeared beyond the Rockies in a blaze of purple and gold, and the dusk deepened on the murmuring plains. Deeper and

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The Bad Man from Texas!

(Continued from page 662.)

were sleeping soundly under the stars.

The sun was in the sky when Jimmy Silver was aroused by a sound of mumbling and growling.

Poker Bill was coming to himself and stirring in his bonds.

"Who's done this?" he howled. "Little us!" said Lovell, getting up and rubbing his eyes.

"Let me loose, gol-darn yer!" roared the bad man.

"I don't think!"

"I'll make mincemeat of you! I—I—I—I!" Poker Bill's words trailed off into a string of savage words.

"Shut up!" shouted Lovell angrily. "By Jove, I'll soon stop you!"

And he gathered up a fistful of dead ashes and crammed them into Poker Bill's mouth.

"Groooogh! Gug-gug-gug!" The bad man was busy chewing ashes for a long time after that, and had no leisure for picturesque language.

Jimmy Silver raked the fire together, and the clumsy brew of coffee and breakfasted, the bad man watching them with deadly hate and rage.

His looks did not affect the Rookwooders, however. After breakfast the horses were prepared, Poker Bill's horse being saddled up with the others.

Wriggling and muttering, the bad man was lifted on to his horse, his legs being loosened sufficiently for the purpose, and then his ankles were tied to his stirrups.

The Fistical Four mounted and rode out of camp, Jimmy Silver leading the bad man's horse by the reins.

They rode at a gallop, on the trail back to Mosquito.

For a good hour Poker Bill occupied the time in running over a varied list of expressive words. After that he came down to pleading, having realised that he was helpless, and that his captors were not to be frightened by his unmusical voice.

But pleading availed him no more than threats. Heedless of him, the

thick neckerchief, twisted it, and proceeded to bind the ruffian's wrists together slowly, carefully, and scientifically.

The bad man from Texas did not stir or even open his eyes. After his deep potations earlier in the day, a whole bottle of spirit had done the business for Poker Bill.

It was a lesson in temperance, if the Rookwood juniors had needed one. The vile liquor which had turned the ruffian into a murderous bully had delivered him, as if bound hand and foot, into the hands of his foes.

"The brute looks as if he won't come to till morning!" said Jimmy Silver, with a look of disgust at the prostrate, heavily breathing ruffian.

"We'll make him safe enough!"

"What-ho!" grinned Lovell.

Jimmy cut a length from the trail-ropes that tethered Poker Bill's horse. With that he shackled the ruffian's legs so that he would be able to walk, but not to kick. It was impossible to be too careful in dealing with the bad man from Texas.

Then another length of rope was cut, and Poker Bill's hands, already tied, were secured to his leather belt.

Then the juniors felt that he was safe till morning.

It was getting near midnight now, and it was many a long mile to the Windy River Ranch. There was no alternative to camping out for the night, and the juniors stirred together the embers of Poker Bill's camp-fire, added fresh wood, and helped themselves to supper from the contents of the leather sack the bad man had filled so carefully at the Mosquito store.

Then they stretched themselves round the fire to sleep. They had no blankets, but the fire gave plenty of warmth, and, fortunately, the night was fine and mild. In a very short time the chuns of Rookwood

Rookwood juniors rode on at a gallop.

In the morning sunlight Mosquito town came in sight at last. Then the bad man burst into another torrent of pleading, his rugged stubbly face pale with apprehension.

Not a word was given him in reply.

The juniors rode into the township with their prisoner, and two or three men in the streets raised a yell.

"They've got him!"

"The tenderfeet have got Poker Bill!"

Right up to the Grand Pacific the juniors rode, feeling very elated. Mr. Bunch came out, and almost fell down at the sight of the bad man from Texas.

"Oh, carry me home to die!" ejaculated Mr. Bunch.

Jimmy Silver grinned.

"Here's your giddy bad man, Mr. Bunch! I told you we were going after him. Have you got somewhere to put him safe?"

"Oh, this caps the stack!" said Mr. Bunch. "I'm sure dreaming this hyer. You greenhorns have roped in Poker Bill, what was shooting up this hyer town only yesterday! Pinch me, somebody!"

A dozen men of Mosquito were round the riders now. Rough hands grasped Poker Bill and dragged him from the horse.

"You'll keep him safe?" said Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Bunch grinned.

"I guess I've got a cellar that will just fit his ribs till the Mounted Police can be sent for," he answered.

"You leave him to us! Bring him in, boyees!"

In savage silence the bad man from Texas was hustled into the shack hotel.

Jimmy Silver & Co., in great spirits, rode out of Mosquito again,

and trotted away on the trail to the Windy River Ranch.

Mr. Hudson Smedley frowned as he met the Rookwooders at the door of the ranch-house.

"I guess I thought something had happened to you," he snapped.

"Where have you been?"

Jimmy Silver explained.

The rancher listened to him, his frowning face relaxing and utter astonishment taking the place of wrath in his sunburnt countenance.

"Well, search me!" he ejaculated, when Jimmy Silver had finished.

"I guess you're a set of reckless young duffers."

Which was all the rancher had to say on the subject. But later on Jimmy Silver & Co. found their presence in great request in the bunk-house, where the whole Windy River outfit listened to their story with deep interest and many ejaculations.

"I reckon you tenderfeet are the goods, sure!" said Pete Peters. "I guess if I had been around Poker Bill wouldn't have held up Mosquito quite so easy. Lucky for you you found him outside a bottle of spirit, or we'd never have seen hide nor hair of you agin at Windy River."

And Jimmy Silver & Co. admitted that they had had luck, as undoubtedly was the case. Nevertheless, in the opinion of the Windy River outfit—and in their own opinion, too—they had done remarkably well in rounding up the bad man from Texas.

THE END.

"The Rebel of the Ranch!" is the title of the great story of Jimmy Silver & Co. out West in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND. Make sure you read this by ordering your copy in advance!

(The Rebel of the Ranch! is the title of the great story of Jimmy Silver & Co. out West in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND. Make sure you read this by ordering your copy in advance!)

RESCUING "RAGS"!

By PETER FOY.

(Continued from previous page)

bag the dogs? And what were those hoops doing in the underground soup-kitchen? Also, what were those weird-looking instruments that some of the fellows have been gassing about with Beakie Parrott and Davies?"

Pargiter grinned.

"The hoops," he replied quietly, "were there for the wretched dogs to jump through. The instruments were those arrangements which these beastly animal-trainers use in their disgusting business. As a matter of fact, that dug-out was nothing more nor less than a secret training college for dogs. The animals were taught all kinds of tricks by persuasion, and I expect if old Rags had remained there much longer he'd have had to go through the hoop as well. As it happens, he is none the worse for his adventure."

"There's one thing old Pargiter hasn't told you," Parrott remarked. "Those fellows were actually done in by their own cleverness. Those dogs who attacked them from the rear had actually been trained by them to fly at their breeches as a stage-trick. But the cue for the attack was a scuffle and noise. The instant the dogs heard that noise and saw that scuffle, they played their parts! If they hadn't, it's a thousand pounds to a penny that the blighters would have downed the three of us, and got clean away before we woke up! Hallo, there's old Rags barking! Strikes me that his imitation of me is not half as good as my imitation of him!"

THE END.

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