

THE LAND OF ADVENTURE!

A tale of the Roaring Far West of Canada, the land of adventure, dealing with the little lumber school amidst the mighty forests of the North, and the snow-capped peaks of the Rockies, where the world-famous author, Frank Richards, spent his schooldays with his "rough-neck," cheery comrades of Cedar Creek.

FRANK RICHARDS' SCHOOLDAYS.



The Amazing Adventures of Frank Richards & Co., of Cedar Creek School.

**THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Hard Luck.**

"OH!"
"Ow!"
"Oh dear!"
"I guess somebody's hurt!"
grinned Chunky Todgers.

It certainly sounded like it. A group of Cedar Creek fellows were waiting in the trail in the thickening winter gloom.

From the darkness along the trail, which led to Cedar Creek from Hillcrest School, came those sounds of woe.

"Hyer they are!" chuckled Eben Hacke, as three figures came in sight in the dusk. "They've been lookin' for trouble, and, by thunder, I reckon they've found it—some!"
"Just a few!" chortled Todgers.

The three were Frank Richards, Bob Lawless, and Vere Beauclerc.

They were on their snowshoes, but were going slowly over the frozen snow of the trail.

They did not look happy. But their pained ejaculations suddenly ceased as they spotted the Cedar Creek crowd waiting for them.

"Hallo!" said Bob Lawless gruffly. "What are you galoots hanging around for?"

"For you!" said Tom Lawrence, laughing. "We knew you'd gone over to Hillcrest School—"

"To rag Mr. Peckover!" chuckled Chunky Todgers. "We waited to see what luck you'd have."

"And now we know! Ha, ha!"
"Nothing to cackle at!" said Frank Richards. "We've had rather bad luck. We were fairly caught—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Eben Hacke. "I guess I could have told you that! You'd better let Peckover alone!"

"We won't let him alone," said Beauclerc. "We've had bad luck this time."

"You look it! Did he lambaste you?"
"Ye-es."
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly funny, isn't it?" growled Frank Richards.

"I guess so. Ha, ha!"
"But what happened, Frank?" asked Molly Lawrence, in her sweet, soft voice, which had a soothing effect.

"Well, it was hard luck, Molly," said Frank. "You know Mr. Peckover came over from Hillcrest to complain to Miss Meadows about us, and actually told her what wasn't true. So we went over to—"

"To get a cow-hiding!" suggested Chunky Todgers.

"To make him sit up somehow," said Frank, unheeding the humorous Chunky. "We snowballed him in his own room, and cleared off; and then, by sheer ill-luck, we ran into Dicky Bird and Fisher and some others of that lot, and they collared us."

"You didn't expect to see them!" said Chunky.

"We thought they'd gone home, of course."
"They didn't think you had."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"The silly asses collared us, and then Peckover came on the lot of us!" said Frank ruefully. "Dicky Bird and the rest cleared off; but we were down in the snow, and before we could get away—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh, cut the cackle!" said Bob Lawless gruffly. "I don't see why you galoots haven't gone home. Nothing to wait for that I can see."

"We wanted to know how you'd got on at Hillcrest," said Molly, restraining her smiles. "It was very reckless to go there and snowball a headmaster. He might come complaining to Miss Meadows again."

"He didn't know us in the dark, luckily," said Beauclerc. "Still, it was a silly duffer's idea, yours, Bob!"

"Br-r-r-r!" growled Bob.
"We'll make Peckover sit up, somehow, all the same," said Frank Richards.

"Tell us when you mosey over to Hillcrest to do it!" implored Chunky Todgers. "We want to be on the scene next time; it will be worth seeing!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh, rats!"

Frank Richards & Co. slid on their way, and the Cedar Creek fellows took their homeward route, still laughing.

The unfortunate ending of the expedition to Hillcrest seemed to strike them as comic. It did not seem very comic to the three fellows who had taken part in it; they were still aching from the lashes of Mr. Peckover's big stick.

In fact, the expedition, which had been reckless enough, had turned out a hopeless failure; and the chums of Cedar Creek School were sore both in mind and body.

"Ow!" mumbled Bob Lawless, as they slid on over the snow. "I say, I've got a lot of bumps and things! That old galoot seemed to think that he was beating carpets when we were hanging on the fence!"

"Oh dear! I'm aching all over!"
"But we're not done with him yet," said Bob.

"Fathead!"
"I say, Franky—"

"Don't say anything!" groaned Frank Richards. "I feel as if I'd been put through a quartz crusher! You're an ass, Bob! If you propose going over to Hillcrest again I'll biffl you!"

"Well, perhaps it was a bit reckless," admitted Bob. "But it would have gone all right if we hadn't fallen in with Dicky Bird."

"But we did!" grunted Frank.

"There's other ways," said Bob Lawless. "I tell you Peckover's got to pay the piper, and I'm going to think—"

"You can't think, old chap!" said Frank. "Don't try!"

Tempers were a little sore in the Co., as well as backs.

They slid on in silence for some time, till they reached the fork in the trail.

"Good-night!" called out Beauclerc, as he took his turning.

"Good-night, Cherub!"

Vere Beauclerc disappeared along the dark trail that led to the shack by the creek, and Frank and Bob kept on by the main trail for the Lawless Ranch.

They were tired when they arrived home, and late for supper; and when they sat down to supper they betrayed an incessant desire to shift in their seats.

Mr. Peckover had laid on his big stick not wisely, but too well; and it was likely to be some days before the chums recovered from the infliction.

They were still feeling sore and sorry when they went up to the room they shared in the ranch-house.

**THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Doubting Thomases!**

FRANK RICHARDS & CO. were greeted with smiles by their schoolfellows at Cedar Creek next morning.

All Cedar Creek was "up against" Mr. Peckover, the exceedingly unpleasant master of Hillcrest School, and they quite approved of punishing him, if possible.

But Bob Lawless' reckless expedition only appealed to their sense of humour.

It was in vain that Bob explained that the expedition had really been a success, and Mr. Peckover had been snowballed in his own sitting-room.

The fact remained that the raiders had been caught on the fence in escaping, and soundly "lambasted" by the schoolmaster's stick, and that incident made the Cedar Creek fellows roar.

The chums were rather uneasy as they entered the school-room and saw Miss Meadows.

But the Canadian schoolmistress did not take any special note of them, and they were relieved.

It was apparent that Mr. Peckover had not recognised the raiders in the dark, and so there was no complaint to come to the schoolmistress of Cedar Creek.

Perhaps, too, Mr. Peckover considered that the raiders had been sufficiently punished.

Certainly he had laid it on well with his big stick, and they were likely to ache for some days to come.

Bob Lawless glanced at his chums several times during morning lessons.

He was in possession of a great idea for "downing" the obnoxious Peckover—or, at least, he believed he was.

But it was not surprising that his chums, for the present, were tired of Bob Lawless' "stunts."

When school was dismissed at twelve, Bob approached the subject, but Frank and Vere Beauclerc waved him off.

"Cheese it!" said Frank.
"Give us a rest, old chap," urged Beauclerc. "We haven't got over your last ripping wheeze yet, you know."

"Look here—"
"Wait till we recover."
"But I guess—"

"Anybody coming on the ice?" called out Frank.

The creek was frozen over that morning, and most of the Cedar Creek boys and girls were going down to the ice.

Frank and Beauclerc joined them, and Bob was left to waste his eloquence on the desert air.

He grunted, and took his skates after them, and there was no further opportunity for talk before dinner.

But after dinner Bob Lawless gripped his two chums by the arms as they came out into the playground.

He did not mean to let them escape him again.

"Now I'm going to talk to you," he said.

"Mercy!"

"Help!"

"Don't be such all-fired jays!" exclaimed Bob. "I tell you it's a stunt that puts the lid right on. I tell you it's a stunt that will make Peckover sit up and weep."

"More likely to make us sit up and howl, if it's anything like the last," said Frank Richards.

"Look here!" roared Bob Lawless. "If you don't want to hear my stunt, Franky—"

"My dear chap, I want you to go and find the deepest, darkest corner in the pine woods, and bury it—deep!" answered Frank.

"And don't mark its grave!" said Beauclerc, with a chuckle.

Bob Lawless surveyed his chums with a grim brow.

He was evidently ruffled.

"You're a pair of silly jays!" he said.

"Hear, hear! Now are we going on the ice?"

"You can go to Jericho, for all I care!" retorted Bob gruffly, and he strode away.

"Hold on, Bob—"

But the rancher's son did not turn his head.

He took his snowshoes, and started out on the trail, plainly in a huff.

"Poor old Bob!" said Frank. "He's got his back up, but he really can't expect us to enthuse over his new stunt while we're still sore from the last one. He will come round by lesson-time. Let's get on the creek."

And the two schoolboys joined the merry crowd on the ice.

Meanwhile, Bob Lawless was covering the trail towards Thompson Town over the snow in great style.

Where he was gone, and what was his object, his chums did not know; but they looked for him when the bell rang for afternoon classes.

Bob Lawless did not appear, however.

The rest of Cedar Creek went without him, but as they were settling down at their desks, Bob Lawless came in, ruddy and breathless.

He dropped into his seat beside Frank, who greeted him with a smile.

Bob nodded amiably in response.

His "huff" was over, and his good temper had quite returned. Bob could be very wrathful sometimes, but his wrath never lasted long.

He found an opportunity of whispering to Frank during lessons.

"It's all O.K."

"What is?"

"The stunt."

"Oh, my hat!"

That was all that could be said until after lessons.

But when Cedar Creek was dismissed, Frank and Beauclerc joined him in the playground, rather curious to hear where he had been, and what he had done.

"But they found Bob uncommunicative."

"I'm going home through Thompson," he said, as he fastened on his snowshoes. "You fellows coming?"

"Of course we're coming, if you're going that way," said Beauclerc. "But what have you been up to?"

"I've got a call to make," was Bob's reply; and that was all he would say.

The three schoolboys slid off on the trail to Thompson, and Bob declined to speak a word all the way; it was his turn now.

However, his chums were quite patient. In point of fact, they did not think much of the stunt, whatever it was.

To their surprise, Bob Lawless halted at the door of the local newspaper office and printers in Thompson.

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There a packet was handed to him at the door.

He slipped it into his pocket, and came back to his chums in the road.

"What have you got there?" asked Frank.

"Some stuff I've had printed," answered Bob. "I gave the order to-day, and it was promised for this evening."

"What on earth is it?"

"Invitation cards."

"My only hat! Are you giving a party?"

"No; Mr. Peckover is."

"Peckover!" exclaimed Frank and Beauclerc together.

"Yep!"

"And you've got the cards printed for him."

"Correct."

"Blessed if I expected to find you fagging for Peckover," said Frank Richards, very much puzzled.

"Whetting?" asked Bob, with a stare.

Frank laughed.

He had learned a good many new expressions since he had been in Canada, but he sometimes used expressions himself that were new to his Canadian cousin.

"Fagging," he said. "It's a word we used at my old school in England. What you call 'doing the chores.'"

"Oh, I see! Well, why shouldn't I do the chores for Peckover?" said Bob. "He's a nice man, isn't he? And it's up to us to oblige a nice man like Peckover. He exerted himself a lot with that stick of his, and now I'm exerting myself for his sake."

"If you're not wandering in your mind, old chap, suppose you explain what you're at," suggested the Cherub.

"Oh, you want to hear the stunt now?" asked Bob sarcastically.

"Go ahead!" said Frank.

"Hallo, there's Four Kings!" remarked Bob, as a burly, rough-looking man passed them in the street with a scowling face.

"And Euchre Dick! Pretty pair they are, aren't they?"

"Never mind them now. What the dickens—"

"I can't yell it out here for everybody to hear, fathead! Let's get along to the old wing-dam, and I'll tell you."

"Oh, all right!"

The three chums left Main Street, and went towards the river, carrying their snowshoes.

They seated themselves in a row on the old wing-dam, which was quite deserted now that the winter dusk had fallen.

And then Bob Lawless opened his little packet, watched with very curious eyes by his comrades. They were interested at last.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Something Like a Stunt!

"MY hat!"

"What the dickens—"

Frank and Beauclerc stared at the contents of the packet were

turned out.

There were a dozen nice-looking little cards, with gilt-bevelled edges, printed very tastefully.

Each of the little gilt-edged cards bore an inscription in delicate print, with blanks left for names to be filled in, as follows:

"Mr. _____ has the pleasure of requesting the company of _____ on Thursday afternoon, the 21st inst, on the occasion of his birthday.

"Music, dancing, refreshments."

"And they're for Peckover?" asked Frank in wonder.

"Sure!"

"He asked you—"

"Nope."

"You've got those cards printed for Peckover without his asking you?" exclaimed Frank.

"Yep."

"But what the dickens—"

"You see," said Bob calmly. "Peckover doesn't know that it's his birthday to-morrow."

"He—he doesn't know?"

"Not at all. He doesn't know he's giving a party."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I guess I'm arranging the whole thing for him," said Bob, grinning at his chums' amazed faces. "You see, if it was Peckover's birthday, and he was giving a party,

I don't suppose he'd invite the chaps who are going to get these cards."

"But—but—"

"You see, I'm going to fill them in with names, and send them to a set of the toughest characters in Thompson," said Bob coolly. "Four Kings, and Euchre Dick, Dave Dunn, and Frisco Bill, and some more of that sort."

"My hat!"

"They'll accept the invitation, of course."

"The—the invitation? Oh dear!"

"They're bound to. Nobody ever refuses an invitation to a party in this section, where there ain't many parties given. Besides, the word 'refreshments' would bring them a hundred miles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Music and dancing, too," said Bob. "You don't get much music and dancing in the Thompson Valley. They'll jump at the chance!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I suppose so. But—"

"You see, I had to get cards printed for this stunt, so as to use the third person. I couldn't write an invitation in Peckover's name. Can't use a man's name like that. But I can send along an invitation-card, stating that Peckover would be glad of someone's company on the occasion of his birthday. I dare say he would be—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Peckover won't know, of course. These cards will be delivered to-night. I'll get Injun Dick to take them round—he carries half the messages in Thompson, and it will look natural enough—and as Thursday's to-morrow there won't be time for the guests to reply, even if they thought of doing it. They'll simply turn up at Hillcrest for the party."

"Great Scott! But there won't be any party!"

Bob shrugged his shoulders.

"Peckover can settle that with his guests!" he answered.

"Oh!"

"And when a rough crowd turns up there, expecting a great time and free drinks, and gets nothing but slanging from old Peckover, I've a suspicion that there will be trouble. I shouldn't be surprised if they wreck the place."

"Oh!"

"It will be quite amusing for Peckover—as amusing as laying into fellows with a big stick!" chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now to get these cards filled in," said Bob, jumping up. "We can get pen and ink at a store in the town. Come on!"

Bob's chums followed him in almost a dazed state of mind.

The "stunt" almost took their breath away.

What would happen at Hillcrest on the morrow, when a rough crowd arrived there for the party, and were disappointed, they could hardly imagine.

But it was certain to be something very exciting.

The schoolboys entered a store, and Frank and Beauclerc made a few small purchases, while Bob Lawless asked for pen and ink, and sat down at a table in a corner.

There he filled up the cards, taking care to use a round-hand, quite unlike his ordinary "fist."

Frank glanced over his shoulder as he completed the first card.

It ran now:

"Mr. Peckover has the pleasure of requesting the company of Euchre Dick on Thursday afternoon, the 21st inst, on the occasion of his birthday.

"Music, dancing, refreshments."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Frank.

It did not take Bob long to work through the cards.

They were filled in with the names of Euchre Dick, Four Kings, Dave Dunn, Frisco Bill, Billy Bowers, Ike Scooter, and several others of the roughest characters who made the town of Thompson their abiding-place.

"Got the envelopes, Franky?"

"Here you are."

Frank had purchased a dozen envelopes in the store for the purpose.

Bob enclosed the cards in them, and inscribed the names on the outside.

"Wait for me here," he said.

He left the store and walked along the

Main Street into the naphtha-glare from the Red Dog Saloon.

Leaning against a post outside the Red Dog was Injun Dick, the red man who had once been a great chief, and was now a fetter and carrier of messages, and a terrific consumer of the potent fire-water.

Injun Dick returned Bob's greeting with a stately inclination of the head.

"Injun thirsty!" he remarked.

"You'd like a dollar, old sport?" asked Bob.

"You bet!" said the red man tersely. "I want you to deliver these letters. You know where to find the galoots," said Bob in a low voice. "They're all to be delivered this evening. And you don't let on who gave them to you to deliver, Dick. Savvy?"

"Injun savvy."

"And there's your dollar," said Bob.

"The Little White Chief is a bully boy with a glass eye," said the red man solemnly.

And he started on his errand at once.

Bob Lawless rejoined his chums at the store.

"All O.K.," he said. "I guess it's time we lit out for home. Get on your snowshoes."

And the chums scudded on cheerily.

Their only regret was that they would not be at Hillcrest on the following afternoon to see what happened.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Guests at Hillcrest!

THE old sport's ratty this afternoon!"

"Mind your eye!" whispered Fisher.

There was a hush in the school-room at Hillcrest.

Mr. Ephraim Peckover, the headmaster—and only master—of Hillcrest School, had just entered.

He did not look amiable.

Mr. Peckover had a very sharp and unpleasant temper—as the Cedar Creek fellows had discovered—and as the Hillcrest boys had learned to their cost.

The only fellow at Hillcrest who was in Mr. Peckover's good books was Kern Gunten, the son of the richest storekeeper in Thompson, who had a financial interest in the new school.

So far, the new school was not a numerous one, the fees being rather too high for the average citizen of the Thompson Valley; more especially as most of the people of the section sent their boys and girls to Cedar Creek.

Mr. Peckover's curriculum was more imposing than that of the "National" school, but French and Latin did not "cut much ice" with the citizens of Thompson.

Indeed, it was not at all certain that the venture would be a financial success, and that, perhaps, sharpened Mr. Peckover's naturally sharp temper.

Certainly he did not seem to think it was necessary to make himself liked by his pupils.

One of his favourite methods of instruction was rapping knuckles with a pointer, a method that could not be expected to recommend itself to the owners of the knuckles.

Mr. Peckover's look showed that his never amiable temper was a little worse than usual that afternoon.

He was still feeling the annoyance of his late experience, when he had been snow-balled through the window of his sitting-room.

He had taken condign vengeance on the culprits, but he did not know who they were, and he suspected that some of his own boys were mixed up in the affair.

His eye singled out Dicky Bird, as he came before the class, and the unfortunate Dicky wished that he had not addressed that murmured remark to Fisher.

"Bird!" rapped out Mr. Peckover.

"Yes, sir," said Dicky meekly.

"I think I have spoken to you before about chattering in class."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"What did you say to Fisher?"

"Only—only a remark, sir," stammered Dicky Bird.

He was not likely to repeat that remark to Mr. Peckover.

"I have told you not to chatter in class, Bird."

Rap!

"Yaroooh!" roared Dicky Bird.

"Silence!"

The unfortunate Dicky sucked his knuckles, and gasped.

The class were very circumspect when the lessons began. Nobody wanted to catch Mr. Peckover's dyspeptic eye.

But several fellows caught it, all the same, and the pointer rapped several times.

By the time an hour had elapsed, Mr. Peckover had made the tempers in class as bad as his own, and there were black and sulky looks on all sides.

Fortunately for the class, there came an interruption then.

A heavy tread sounded in the porch of the schoolhouse, and a deep, powerful voice bawled:

"Anybody to home?"

Mr. Peckover jumped.

He knew the voice; it was that of Four Kings, the leader of the "Red Dog crowd" in Thompson.

"Hyer I am!" went on the powerful voice. "I've come! Isn't there anybody to home, to speak to a galoot?"

"Dear me!" murmured Mr. Peckover, while the Hillcrest fellows stared at one another in astonishment. "What can the man want?"

Apparently Four Kings was annoyed at finding no one to receive him.

The man and wife who served Mr. Peckover in his house were occupied elsewhere.

Visitors were not expected during lessons, and the man was cutting logs in the timber, and his wife was gone marketing in Thompson.

Mr. Peckover was there to deal with his visitor himself, but he did not like interviewing such a visitor.

"Bird," he snapped, "go out and ask the man what he wants!"

"Yes, sir."

Dicky Bird left the school-room.

He came back in a minute or so with an expression of astonishment on his cheery face.

"Well?" snapped Mr. Peckover.

"He says he's come to the party, sir," said Dicky.

"The—the what?"

"The birthday party, sir."

"What do you mean, boy? Whose birthday party?"

"Yours, sir."

"Is this impertinence, Bird?" thundered Mr. Peckover.

"That's what he said, sir."

"Nonsense! Hold out your hand!"

"But, sir, he said—"

"How dare you tell me such ridiculous falsehoods, Bird? Hold out your hand at once!"

Swish!

"Ow! Oh! Ah!"

"Go to your place, Bird, and be silent!"

Dicky Bird went to his place with glittering eyes.

He had told Mr. Peckover the exact facts, but perhaps it was not surprising that the Hillcrest master suspected him of an attempt to "pull his leg," when he received that astonishing message.

But the message was quickly confirmed.

Dicky Bird had hardly sat down at his desk when the school-room door was thrown open, and a burly ruffian in leathern trousers, big boots, red shirt, and woollen jacket, and Stetson hat, looked in.

He gave the startled schoolmaster a grin and a nod.

"Oh, hyer you are!" he exclaimed.

"I—I am certainly here," stammered Mr. Peckover. "I—I do not understand what—"

"Put it there!" said Four Kings, holding out a huge, hairy hand.

Mr. Peckover shook hands with him mechanically.

He certainly did not want to shake hands with the ruffian, especially as Four Kings' hands showed that he had a rooted objection to the use of soap and water; but refusal was impossible.

"Glad to see ye, Peckover!" went on Four Kings amiably. "Many happy returns of the day to you!"

"Wha-a-at?"



THE FIRST QUEST! The school-room door opened, and a burly ruffian looked in. He gave the startled schoolmaster a nod and a grin. "Oh, hyer you are!" he said. "Many happy returns of the day. Am I the first?" (See Chapter 4.)

"I'm the first, am I?" said Four Kings, looking round. "Never mind—the boys will be along in a brace of shakes!"

"The—the boys!"

"I s'pose the dancing will be hyer," said Four Kings. "Are the kids staying for the party, Peckover?"

"The—the party?"

"And if the refreshments are handy, Peckover, I guess I don't object to a long drink, arter my walk up the hill."

"I—I—I—" stuttered Mr. Peckover helplessly.

"Oh, here they come!" exclaimed Four Kings, as Euchre Dick and Billy Bowers appeared together in the doorway. "Mosey right in, boys!"

"Hyer we are!" announced Billy Bowers. "Top of the afternoon to you, Mr. Peckover! You're a gentleman, sir!"

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Peckover, wondering whether he was dreaming.

"The gentleman was jest speaking of a long drink," remarked Four Kings.

"Mr. Peckover, you're a white man!" exclaimed dry Billy Bowers. "A long drink, sir—that hits me jest where I live! You're the real goods, sir!"

"But—but—" said Mr. Peckover dazedly. "P'raps we've come rather early for the party?" suggested Euchre Dick. "You said Thursday afternoon."

"I—I said what?"

"Bless your 'art, if we're early, what matters?" said Four Kings heartily. "Give us a quiet corner and something to drink, and we'll wait as long as you like."

"Correct!" said Mr. Bowers.

"But—but—" shrieked Mr. Peckover. "This—is this is some mistake—"

"What?"

"There is no party here—"

"Hay?"

"It is not my birthday—"

"Eh?"

"I—I did not—I never dreamed—I certainly—"

"Look here!" The amiable look had quite departed from the rough and stubbly countenance of Four Kings. "What sort of game do you call this hyer? You asked us hyer—"

"I did not!"

"You hear him, pards? What sort of a trick is this?"

"On the occasion of his birthday!" said Mr. Bowers solemnly. "Them was the werry words."

"Music, dancing, refreshments," said Euchre Dick.

"There was a fresh tramp of feet in the porch."

More of the guests were arriving. Dave Dunn and Ikey Scooter looked into the school-room.

Three or four more rough-looking customers could be seen beyond them. Mr. Peckover gazed at them dazedly.

This party of the roughest characters in Thompson had arrived for his birthday-party, apparently, and it was no wonder that it seemed like a specially severe nightmare to the unhappy headmaster of Hillcrest.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Nice for Mr. Peckover.

DICKY BIRD and his companions looked on in silence and amazement. They could not understand the strange affair any more than Mr. Peckover could.

The schoolmaster stood rooted to the floor, breathing hard.

Four Kings & Co. were indignant.

They had tramped a good distance, mostly uphill, to accept the invitation to Mr. Peckover's birthday-party, and instead of the hearty welcome they had expected, they met—this!

No birthday, no party, and, above all, no drinks!

Unless the man was mad, the Red Dog gentlemen could not imagine why he should play such a trick on them.

But, undoubtedly, they were not the kind of men to take such trickery patiently.

Four Kings' rough face was already assuming the expression of an infuriated bulldog.

"Hyer we are!" came the voice of Ikey Scooter, from the doorway. "Good-afternoon to you, Peckover, old sport!"

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"Dear me! I—I—I—" moaned Mr. Peckover.

"Boys!" roared Four Kings. "He says as how it's a trick on us, and there ain't no party!"

"Wot!"

"No, no!" panted Mr. Peckover. "Not at all! I—I said it was a mistake! You are under a—a—a misapprehension."

"You invited us hyer for your birthday, didn't you?" demanded Dave Dunn angrily.

"No, certainly not!"

"Why, I've got the card hyer, you lying old skinfint!" shouted Dunn. "Do you mean to say there ain't a party at all?"

"No! No, certainly not! I—"

"No music and dancin'?" howled Euchre Dick.

"No, I—"

"No refreshments?" wailed Mr. Bowers.

"Oh dear! No, I—I—"

"Then we've been gulled!" roared Four Kings furiously. "Boys, that there old hunk has brought us up the hill for nothing—jest a stunt on us!"

"Lynch him!" yelled Dry Billy.

"Peckover, you coyote—"

"You skinny rascal—"

The guests surrounded their unhappy host, whose knees were knocking together.

Four Kings flourished a huge fist under his nose, and Mr. Peckover jumped back.

"You've fooled us—hay?" roared Four Kings. "Give us a tramp up the hill for a joke on us—hay? I'll joke you, I guess! There ain't going to be no party, ain't there? There ain't going to be no drinks? By gum, if you don't trot out them drinks in short order, we'll lynch you over your own doorway!"

"Oh! Ow! Help!"

"Trot out them drinks!" exclaimed Mr. Bowers indignantly. "I'm s'prised at you, Peckover! Can't you ask a genelman if he's got a mouth on him?"

"Rope him!" exclaimed Euchre Dick. "Give him a larruping!"

"That's the music! Rope him!"

Mr. Peckover, with a gasp of terror, made a wild rush for the door.

He was grasped instantly by two or three of his unruly guests and dragged back.

"No, you don't!" said Four Kings grimly. "Yaroooh! Help!"

"Shet up!" Four Kings shook the unhappy schoolmaster till his teeth rattled in his head. "Now, Peckover, I'll go easy with you! You've fooled us! You're a silly old coyote, and you oughter be lynched! But you trot out them drinks, long and strong, and we'll let you off with a cow-hiding. I can't say fairer than that!"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

In Four Kings' muscular grip, Mr. Peckover was marched out of the school-room, surrounded by his terrible guests.

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Dicky Bird. The class sat and listened, dumbfounded. Dicky Bird ventured to the door, and watched the proceedings.

The unhappy Mr. Peckover, trembling for his skin, was serving his awful guests with all he could lay his hands on; the dining-room was filled with the thick smoke of pipes and cigars, the fumes of spirits, and the clatter of glasses and bottles.

It was fortunate for Mr. Peckover that he had a supply of firewater on the premises. It was a party, after all—of sorts.

But the guests wasted no politeness on Mr. Peckover.

They shouted at him, cursed him freely, and even threw glasses at him when he did not move quickly enough to please them.

And the unhappy master laboured untiringly in their service, lest worse should befall him.

He was still waiting on the guests when the hour of dismissal came round, but he had forgotten his pupils.

They dismissed themselves, and left the schoolhouse, with a roaring chorus following them.

Four Kings & Co. seemed to be enjoying themselves, after all.

"Well, my hat!" said Dicky Bird, as he came down the trail from the school. "My word! Poor old Peckover! It serves him right, but—"

"Hallo, here's the Cedar Creek galoots!" said Blumpy, as they turned into the Thompson trail.

Frank Richards & Co. were waiting at the fork of the trail.

They had sped there on their snowshoes immediately after lessons.

"Hallo! Anything happened at Hillcrest this afternoon, Dicky?" called out Bob Lawless.

"Yes, rather!" gasped Dicky. "A crowd of awful bulldozers came along—"

"Ha, ha!"

"They seem to think Peckover had asked them to a birthday-party, and he hadn't—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Frank Richards & Co.

"They cut up rusty," said Fisher. "They're making Peckover wait on them, and drinking all his tanglefoot. I only hope they won't lynch him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you fellows know anything about it?" asked Dicky Bird, with sudden suspicion.

"Do we?" grinned Bob Lawless. "Ha, ha! Hallo, there's Peckover!"

On the snowy trail, towards Hillcrest, a fleeing figure came in sight.

Mr. Peckover, hatless, was fleeing for his skin, and dodged into the timber, and vanished from sight.

Four Kings came staggering out of the gates after him, a coiled trail-ropo in his hand.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Lawless, and the Hillcrest fellows echoed the shout of merriment.

Frank Richards & Co. slid away chortling. The unhappy Mr. Peckover remained concealed in the timber till his terrible guests were gone, and then he crept back to Hillcrest.

And the next day there were roars of laughter at Cedar Creek, when Bob Lawless and his chums told the story of Mr. Peckover's guests!

THE END.

There will be another Topping Tale of the

Backwood Chums, entitled:

"TRICKED ON THE TRAIL"

NEXT WEEK.

**RESULT OF LEICESTER CITY
PICTURE-PUZZLE COMPETITION!**

In this competition one competitor sent in a correct solution of the picture. The First Prize of £5 has therefore been awarded to:

W. SIDWELL,
15, Broadmead Road,
Folkestone.

So many competitors qualified for the third grade of prizes that division among them of the prizes offered was impracticable. The Second Prize of £2 10s. and the ten prizes of 5s. each have therefore been added together and divided among the following twenty competitors, whose solutions contained one error each:

- John Hoghen, 35, Bournemouth Road, Folkestone;
- William Gilbert, 16, Sandhurst Gardens, Belfast;
- William Scott, 424, Parliamentary Road, Glasgow;
- S. J. Evans, 44, Regent Street, Gloucester;
- Mrs. E. Arnold, 27, Delorme Street, Fulham, S.W. 6;
- W. Boyd Barrie, 19, Barrie Terrace, Ardrossan;
- Charles H. Morton, 7, Eyre Street, Pallion, Sunderland;
- Nora Wyles, 51, Marmion Road, Southsea, Hants;
- Geo. Chambers, 172, Dover Road, Folkestone;
- Miss W. Wrigglesworth, 13, Church Street, Kidderminster;
- Archie Fullarton, 1, Adam Street, Gourock, Scotland;
- Miss M. Gunn, 15, Waverley Park, Edinburgh;
- R. W. Stratton, 63, High Street, Whiteley, Cambs;
- Ernest B. Simpson, 16, East View, Deepdale, Preston, Lancs;
- Thomas Howarth, 1, Pomfret Street, Accrington Road, Burnley;
- Fred Taylor, 53, Flaxby Road, Darnall, Sheffield;
- Miss A. Brewster, Polam Hall, Darlington;
- Oswald Williams, 71, Melrose Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey;
- F. Tardoton, 37, Lyndhurst Street, Leeds Road, Bradford;
- V. Linater, 101, Maperton Road, Bradford, Yorks.

SOLUTION.

Leicester City club had a great fight to establish itself, owing to the enormous drawing power Rugger has in that district. But it has courageously kept the flag flying. There have been several splendid sides, but never a really first-class one.

Don't Miss "Tricked on the Trail!" in Next Week's Bumper Number!