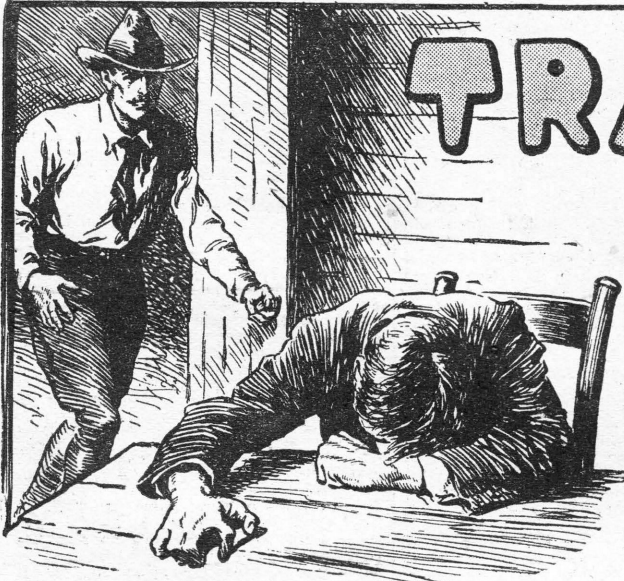


ROUNDING UP THE OUTLAW FROM OVER THE BORDER! THRILLING BACKWOODS STORY!
 Vere Beauclerc is troubled at the strange actions of his father, the remittance-man. Those frequent visits to the town . . . was his father falling back into his old ways? But that was not Mr. Beauclerc's object . . . he was on the track of the notorious Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones!



TRAPPED!

Another Gripping Tale
 of the School in the
 Backwoods and Frank
 Richards & Co.

**THE FIRST CHAPTER.
 Dark Doubts!**

"BEAU!"
 "Cherub!"
 Frank Richards and Bob Lawless uttered these exclamations together in startled tones. They had come upon their chum—Vere Beauclerc—suddenly, on the bank of the creek. They had missed him after morning lessons at Cedar Creek School, and had been looking for him for some time, when they suddenly found him.

Vere Beauclerc was sitting on a log by the bank of the stream, his elbows on his knees, and his chin sunk in his hands, gazing out dully over the shining creek, his whole attitude one of deep dejection and trouble.

Sunk in gloomy thought, the remittance-man's son had not heard the approaching footsteps of his chums.

But he heard their voices, as they exclaimed together in dismay, and gave a sudden start. His handsome face flushed as he looked round and met their surprised glances.

He half rose, and then sank back again on the log, crimson. But the colour ebbed from his face, leaving him pale.

"Beau," exclaimed Frank Richards, "what's the matter, old chap? What's happened?"

"N-n-nothing!" stammered Beauclerc. Bob Lawless shook his head.

"I guess that cuts no ice with us, Cherub," he said, in his direct way. "I reckon there's something very much the matter when you look like that. And I reckon, too, that you're going to tell your pals what it is."

Beauclerc was silent. The two chums halted by the log, looking down in dismayed surprise on Vere Beauclerc's bowed head.

Well they knew that the remittance-man's son had had troubles enough, chiefly on account of his father; but it was very unlike the quiet, calm Beauclerc to give way like this. He was trying now to regain his usual composure, but it was not easy.

"Beau, old fellow," said Frank Richards softly, "you can tell us, I suppose? We're your friends, you know."

Beauclerc smiled faintly. "I know!" he answered. "But—but you couldn't help! And—and it's nothing. Very likely I'm mistaken. I—I hope so!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Frank. "Your father—"

Beauclerc nodded. "Poor old Cherub!" said Bob Lawless gently. "But—but—"

He broke off. What could he say to console the troubled lad, who feared that his

father was breaking out again into the wild recklessness which, not so very long ago, had earned him an unenviable notoriety in the Thompson Valley?

In the days when Lascelles Beauclerc, the remittance-man, had been "one of the boys," when he had spent his remittances as fast as they arrived in playing poker at the Occidental, or faro at the Red Dog, or in "painting the town red," Beauclerc had borne the trouble and notoriety it brought upon him with quiet calmness and a face of proud indifference.

But the remittance-man had changed for the better, and for months past there had been no more industrious worker in the Thompson Valley than Lascelles Beauclerc.

Till of late—
 It was needless for Beauclerc to tell his chums, if he wished to. They knew. Of late, Lascelles Beauclerc had been as frequent a visitor as of old at the poker-room at the Occidental. Many a pilgrim in Thompson had grinned, and remarked that "Old Man Beauclerc" was on a "bender" again.

"But—but—" muttered Frank Richards.

Vere Beauclerc bit his lip hard. Even with his best chums it was repugnant to him to discuss his father. Yet, at the same time, the lonely lad's heart was yearning for comfort and counsel—above all, for some friendly assurance that his doubts were unfounded.

"It's rotten, old chap!" said Bob Lawless at last. "I—I'm afraid it's no good blinking the facts. I've heard the chaps on the ranch speaking of your poppa haunting the Occidental again. But it's not like it used to be."

Beauclerc gave him a quick look. "How did you mean, Bob?" he asked, in a low voice.

"It's only poker at the Occidental," said Bob, "and—and it used to be worse than that, old chap. So—so I don't think I should worry. You poppa's the kind of man who's nobody's enemy but his own."

"You—you mustn't think badly of him," said Beauclerc, with almost pathetic eagerness. "And—and he's under the influence of a rotten rascal. It's because he's easy-going, you know. You know that fellow Poker Brown, the newcomer who's taken up mining on Tucker's Tailings? You remember him?"

"Sure!"
 "He's always with my father," said Beauclerc. "They play poker nearly every evening at the Occidental, so I hear. My poor father is never home till midnight now. I—I can't understand his slipping back like that, after he had thrown it all over. I—I sometimes think he's had a shock. You remember—"

Beauclerc paused.
 "Yes, old chap?"
 "It's only since that villainous outlaw, Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones, located in the valley," said Beauclerc. "You remember he attacked my father at the shack a week or two ago—the day after his remittance arrived. There was shooting. I've wondered sometimes whether the shock did my father any harm, and—he's not quite himself now."
 Frank Richards and his Canadian cousin were silent.

Poor Beauclerc was clinging to any straw; but to the two chums it was extremely unlikely that the tough-grained remittance-man was suffering from any "shock," as the result of his encounter with Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones, the Californian outlaw.

"It's only since then that he's chummed with Poker Brown, and gone to the Occidental in Thompson in the evenings," said Beauclerc. "It began then—never before. It's a coincidence, at least."

"It is," assented Frank.
 "I'll tell you what, Cherub," said Bob Lawless abruptly. "Have you spoken to your poppa about it?"

"No, no, no!"
 "Then, why not?"
 "I—I can't! It's not for me to judge my father," muttered Beauclerc. "Besides, he's had troubles you fellows don't understand; he's had lots of troubles, and—and he used to be reckless as he was to drive painful thoughts away. I'm sure that was it. And now—"

"I guess I'd have it out with him, if I were you," said Bob sturdily. "I'd speak out plain, and ask him to chuck it, for his own sake and yours."

Beauclerc shook his head, and was silent. "As for Poker Brown," said Bob, "I believe he's a rotter! He makes out that he's mining on Tucker's Tailings, but there's precious little gold to be found there, I guess. More likely he makes the money at poker. He's got plenty. Lots of galoots have seen him spreading his cash in Thompson. The less your poppa sees of that galoot the better. I'd speak out, Cherub!"

Clang, clang!
 The school bell rang through the sunny air, and Vere Beauclerc startled to his feet. It was probable that he welcomed the interruption to the discussion.

He had, for once, spoken out impulsively, but every word he heard on the subject of his father made him wince.

There was a smile on his handsome face as he walked back to Cedar Creek School with his chums; but the smile did not deceive them. They knew that it hid an aching heart, and their own hearts were heavy for their chum. But there was nothing they could say, nothing they could do. The remittance-man's son had to bear his burden alone.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Poker Brown's Luck!

"WHAT a pesky sell!" Chunky Todgers made that remark after school in the playground. There was quite a forlorn expression on Chunky's fat face.

"Hallo! What's biting you now, Chunky?" asked Bob Lawless. "Have they run out of maple-sugar at Gunten's store?"

Chunky shook his head.

"It's Tucker's Tailings!" he said.

Beauclerc stopped, and looked quickly at Todgers. "Tucker's Tailings" was the abandoned mine which had recently been taken up as a claim by Amos Brown, a stranger in the section. And "Poker" Brown was the new acquaintance of the remittance-man, to whose influence Beauclerc attributed the backsliding of the reformed remittance-man.

"What about Tucker's Tailings, Chunky?" he asked.

Chunky looked lugubrious.

"It's a sell!" he said. "A dozen galoots have pegged out Tucker's Tailings since Tucker went up the flume and tried to make a stake there, and they all gave it up. Why, I guess I've been over the tailings myself, looking out, you know, and now here comes a stranger in the valley, pegs out the tailings, and makes a regular bonanza of it!"

"So the old mine is turning out a bonanza, is it?" asked Bob Lawless.

"Sure!"

"That's jolly curious!"

"Oh, it's luck!" said Chunky. "Fool's Luck, I call it! This new pilgrim—Poker Brown—he's from Colorado, I hear. He's simply dropped into it by luck. Fancy those old tailings turning out a bonanza!"

"But is it true?" asked Frank Richards.

"Sure, I tell you! Poker Brown don't make any secret that he was hard up when he came to town; he's said so himself. Dawson's brother, at the Occidental, has heard him say so. And now he's fairly rolling in durocks. Orders the most expensive drinks at the Occidental, and the biggest cigars, and makes big bets on the races down the valley, and spreads himself around. Rolling in it!" said Chunky Todgers impressively.

"He's boasted at the Occidental that he's making three hundred dollars a day out of those goddamned old tailings!"

"Phew!"

And Chunky Todgers rolled away to his fat pony, evidently in a very discontented mood.

If Poker Brown had made a rich strike at the abandoned mine, it was clear that wealth had been lying around loose, as it were, almost at Chunky's door, and he had missed the chance of picking it up. It was really very exasperating.

"Never mind, Chunky!" called out Bob Lawless, with a grin. "There's another chance for you to get rich quick!"

"Eh? What's that?" asked Todgers, looking round.

"There's still a reward of five hundred dollars offered for that bulldozer from California, you know. You were talking about going after the scalp of Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones. That's your chance!"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Chunky.

And, with that reply, he climbed on his fat pony and trotted away. Since the Californian outlaw had raided Cedar Creek School, Chunky had quite lost his desire to make an attempt at "roping in" the five hundred dollars offered for Mr. Jones' apprehension.

Frank Richards & Co. were rather thoughtful as they rode away from Cedar Creek School in the timber trail.

The information that Poker Brown had made a rich strike at the abandoned mine was interesting enough. Since the original Tucker had abandoned the mine years before, it had been supposed to be worthless. Certainly Mr. Brown, of Colorado, seemed born under a lucky star.

"Blessed if I quite savvy!" remarked Bob Lawless. "I've looked over the mine myself, and I know something about mining, too, but I reckoned it was all tailings, and no use. And that galoot Brown doesn't put in much work, from what we saw when we called there to see him. He goes away from the Occidental early in the day and returns at night, and sometimes stays all night at the shanty there; but when I passed the tailings last time I couldn't see much sign of work done. It's queer!"

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"But if he's spending the money, that proves that he's got it," said Frank.

"Unless he makes most of it at poker," said Bob dryly.

"I don't think that's the case," remarked Beauclerc. "Dawson's brother is employed at the Occidental, you know, and Dawson has heard a lot about Poker Brown from him. Brown plays high, and loses as much as he wins, according to Dawson. I've heard him say so."

"Then he must have made a strike at the mine," confessed Bob. "But it's jolly queer. I never believed there was much gold there, and a dozen galoots have tried for it there without finding any."

The chums of Cedar Creek rode on together to the fork in the trail, where Beauclerc parted with his comrades.

"So long, you fellows!"

He turned into the branch trail that led to the remittance-man's shack, and Frank Richards and Bob rode on towards the plain beyond the timber, homewards.

"Poor old Cherub!" said Bob Lawless, as they trotted on towards the ranch. "It's no good saying anything—a chap can't help him. He's worried about his father."

Frank Richards nodded.

"It's rough on him," he said. "I—I wish there was something we could do. But there isn't."

"Nothing, old chap!"

And the cousins rode on to the ranch in a thoughtful and rather sombre mood.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Father and Son!

VERE BEAUCLERC smiled back at his chums as he turned into the branch trail, but when his back was to them the smile died off his face.

A dark, almost haggard look took its place. There were deep lines in his boyish brow as he rode homeward.

He had felt so sure, so certain that the remittance-man had abandoned his wild ways, and settled down to steady work, that the sudden outbreak on his father's part had come as a miserable shock to him.

His affection for his father never faltered, and he found innumerable excuses for him; but the trouble of it lay heavy upon his heart.

The Beauclerc clearing lay hot and sultry under the afternoon sunshine as the school-boy came in sight of his home.

The door of the little shack was open—an indication that his father was at home.

Vere Beauclerc put up his horse in the shed behind, and came round to the door.

Mr. Beauclerc was at the log table, and he glanced up, with a smile, as his son entered.

Beauclerc's glance passed his father and fell upon a revolver that lay on the table. Evidently Mr. Beauclerc had been cleaning and loading the weapon, and had just finished when his son came in.

The remittance-man saw the start his son gave, picked up the revolver hastily, and slipped it into his hip-pocket.

"It is necessary to be careful these days, Vere," he said lightly. "With Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones roaming the valley, a man may need a weapon on the trail at nights."

"Yes, father."

Beauclerc did not utter what was in his mind—that there was no need for his father to be on the trail at nights, except to return from the poker-parties at Thompson.

The remittance-man gave him a rather keen look.

"You are tired, my boy," he said.

"No, father."

"You do not look well."

"I am quite well."

"Has anything happened at school?" asked Mr. Beauclerc, still looking at his son's pale face intently.

"Nothing."

"You are not so cheerful as usual, at all events."

"I—I am not feeling very cheerful, father," said Beauclerc, colouring a little. "It's nothing. Is there anything to be done on the clearing before supper?"

"No; I have finished there, and I want supper early, too," said the remittance-man. "I shall be out this evening."

Beauclerc made no answer to that.

"I have business in Thompson," added the remittance-man. "You will go to bed early, Vere."

"Yes, father," said the boy heavily. He knew what the "business" in Thompson was.

The remittance-man gave him a sharp look alone, but made no further remark. Father and son prepared the frugal supper together, and the meal was eaten almost in silence.

After supper Lascelles Beauclerc went for his horse, and led it round before the shack.

Beauclerc watched him from the doorway as he saddled up. His heart was heavy, and his face was sombre.

He tried to smile as his father glanced at him, but it was a pathetic attempt. The remittance-man came towards him, his rein over his arm.

"I am going now, Vere."

"Yes, father."

"Bar the door after I am gone. You remember that Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones came here once after I had my remittance from the bank?"

"I remember."

"He is not likely to come again, but you must be careful. Before long, my boy, my business in Thompson will be over—perhaps very soon. I am not willing to leave you alone here, but I have reasons."

Beauclerc was silent.

The remittance-man looked at him, and seemed to hesitate, and then turned to his horse and mounted.

"Good-night, Vere!"

"Good-night, father!"

Lascelles Beauclerc rode away in the sunset, already deepening into dusk. Beauclerc gazed after him till the remittance-man vanished among the trees by the trail.

Then he turned back into the cabin.

He threw himself into a chair, and leaned on the table. Now that he was alone, his calm composure failed him.

His face dropped into his hands, and a sob shook him.

He was thinking of his father, of the glare of lights in the card-room at the Occidental Hotel in Thompson, the reckless talk in the bar-room, of the excesses into which the remittance-man would probably be led by riotous companions.

Such excesses had made Lascelles Beauclerc's name a byword in the section; but of late he had been living down his evil repute. There had been very pleasant evenings in the shack after work was done on the clearing, when father and son read or chatted by the blaze of the log fire, and made plans for the cultivation of the holding and the marketing of the produce.

But the remittance-man had evidently tired of quiet contentment. The excitement of the card-table had drawn him away again, and those quiet, homely evenings were ended—perhaps for ever.

Alone in the shack, with the shadows deepening, Beauclerc gave way for once to the trouble and pain he had felt so long. The tears ran through his fingers.

He did not hear the sound of a hoof without or of a footstep in the doorway, still open.

"Vere!"

He started as his name was spoken.

"Father!"

The remittance-man stood framed in the doorway of the shack. He came quickly towards his son.

"Vere, what is the matter?"

"Father, you—you! I did not expect—" the boy stammered, crimsoning with the consciousness of his tear-stained face.

"I came back," said Mr. Beauclerc quietly.

"I was troubled about you, Vere. I knew you were in some trouble, from your looks. What is it?"

"Father—" muttered the boy miserably.

"Tell me, Vere."

"It—it is nothing."

"Come, come!"

Vere Beauclerc looked at his father. There was affectionate concern in the face of the remittance-man.

"Father," Beauclerc broke out suddenly, "it—it is you! Why—why couldn't you be satisfied? We were happy enough here—at least, I was. But—but I know where you are going—everybody knows. I've known about it ever since the day the outlaw came here and tried to rob the shack. Father, if—if only you wouldn't—"

His voice broke.

The remittance-man stood looking at him in silence for some moments.

"My poor boy!" he said at last, and his tone was very gentle. "So you have been troubled about me?"

"Yes," muttered Beauclerc.

"Because—because you know that I go to the Occidental in the evening?"

"To gamble," said Beauclerc—"to gamble

with that rascal, Poker Brown. I know it all, father."

"My dear boy, I told you I had business in Thompson."

"I know what it is."

The remittance-man smiled.

"You do not know what it is, Vere. You are mistaken. You think that I have given up my new life—that the lure of the card-table has taken hold of me again. But it is not so."

"Father!"

"I have a reason for what I am doing, Vere, and you must trust me," said the remittance-man quietly. "You can trust your father, surely?"

"Yes, yes, yes! But—"

"To-night, I believe, is the last time I may have to go to the Occidental," said the remittance-man. He reflected for a moment. "I cannot explain now, Vere. The secret must be kept till I have finished my business. But you shall come with me to-night."

Beaulerc started.

"Come with you!" he stammered.

"Where?"

"To Thompson."

"But—but—"

"Get out your horse, Vere, and come."

"But—but—" stammered Beaulerc.

"I—"

"Come with me!"

The bewildered boy made no further demur. Five minutes later father and son were riding together on the Thompson trail.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

"Hands Up!"

THERE was a blaze of lights at the Occidental Hotel in Thompson.

The usual crowd had gathered there in the evening, and there was good business going on, to the clinking of glasses in the bar, and a chatting group on the piazza.

There were a good many of the usual habitués in the poker-room, which opened on the piazza. Lounging near the doorway was Poker Brown, the man from Colorado, who had made a strike at Tucker's Tailings.

Poker Brown was quite a conspicuous figure at the Occidental, and treated with considerable respect there.

His clean-shaven face was a little tanned by the sun; his white hands did not look as if they did much manual labour. But there was no doubt about the "strike." For Poker Brown spent his money very freely about the town, and was frequently seen on a "bender," when the dollars flow like water.

Some suspicious galeots in Thompson had suspected, like Bob Lawless, that Poker Brown made more money at the game of poker than by working on his claim. But that suspicion had been allayed.

Mr. Brown looked a good deal like a sport; but it was soon known that he played a reckless game, and, indeed, lost more money at cards than he won. He was a desperate gamster, and had been seen to rise from the card-table a thousand dollars "out." But as fast as his money went, it seemed to be replaced—which substantiated the surprising story of a rich strike on Tucker's Tailings.

Poker Brown nodded, with a smile, at Mr. Beaulerc as the latter came up the steps of the piazza.

For some time now the two had been well acquainted. The remittance-man was always willing to meet the newcomer at his favourite game, and Old Man Beaulerc had better luck with the cards than of old. Now that he had given up drink, he had the advantage of a cool brain and a clear head, while Poker Brown was given to filling himself with expensive drinks as a start to the merry evening. And Mr. Brown was the more reckless player of the two. So long as he had the excitement of high stakes, he seemed to care little whether he won or lost—it was the craving for excitement that he wanted to gratify; and, as for the dollars, it was a case of "easy come, easy go."

"Hallo, old sport!" he remarked. "I've been looking for you. I guess the luck is going to change this evening."

"Very likely," said Mr. Beaulerc, with a smile. "It will not always go the same way."

Poker Brown glanced at the remittance-man's son.

"Is the kid with you?"

"Yes, this evening."

"Teaching the young idea how to shoot—eh?" chuckled Poker Brown.

The remittance-man smiled, but did not answer. Vere Beaulerc accompanied his father as he followed the man from Colorado into the poker-room. And many glances followed Vere. The card-room at the Occidental was not exactly the place for a schoolboy.

Mr. Beaulerc and Poker Brown sat at a card-table near the window, and the remittance-man signed to his son to sit down by them. Vere obeyed in silence. Why his father had brought him there was a mystery to him, and his surroundings were utterly repugnant. The hard, reckless face of Poker Brown filled him with dislike; but he obeyed his father, and sat silent, with an impassive face.

A crowd gathered round the poker-table.

For several nights past the remittance-man had won heavily from Poker Brown, and the latter was keen on his "revenge." He sat at the table with a big cigar in his mouth and a glass of spirits by his side. It was not a good preparation for a hard tussle, but it was the reckless gamster's way.

Beaulerc looked on icily, unmoved by the excitement of the game that followed, though it drew many comments from the onlookers. He understood that it was a tussle—a sort of battle of the giants—between his father and Poker Brown, and most of the habitués of the Occidental were keenly interested in it.

The play was deep. There were large sums on the table, and at first the clean-shaven man from Colorado was winning. But he began to lose, and a rather ugly look came over his tanned face. His glass was emptied and refilled several times.

There was a murmur among the spectators as a game ended, and Vere saw his father rake in a "pot" which certainly contained over a thousand dollars.

The remittance-man's success did not seem to excite him, and it caused no sense of pleasure to his son.

Poker Brown sat rather silent, shuffling the cards after the pot had been taken.

The remittance-man looked at him with a smile.

"Not giving in?" asked Mr. Beaulerc.

Poker Brown shook his head, with an oath. "I'll see you!" he answered.

"Your deal."

The cards went round again.

Vere Beaulerc drew a deep breath. Why had his father brought him there? He could not understand. And that smile on the remittance-man's face, the tone of provocation in his voice—it was as if he were bantering the man to play, when common-sense warned the loser to leave off. Vere Beaulerc felt a sickness at his heart.

He longed to go, to get away from the sight of it, but he sat still. It was his father's wish, and he obeyed it.

He hardly saw the glimmering cards. The money was raining into the pool again, amid excited comments from the Occidental crowd. Other play in the room had almost ceased, and the loungers had gathered round the table to watch the high stakes.

Vere Beaulerc was aware that there was a pause, and he looked up. The pool seemed to him to be stacked with banknotes—and Poker Brown was hesitating.

The reckless gamsters were playing a "no limit" game, and the remittance-man had put in a bill for five hundred dollars. It was up to Poker Brown to cover it, or abandon the pot without a struggle.

And the sport was hesitating.

But the gaming instinct was too strong for him. He turned out his wallet—it was empty. His hands groped in his pockets, and came out empty, too. The remittance-man watched him grimly.

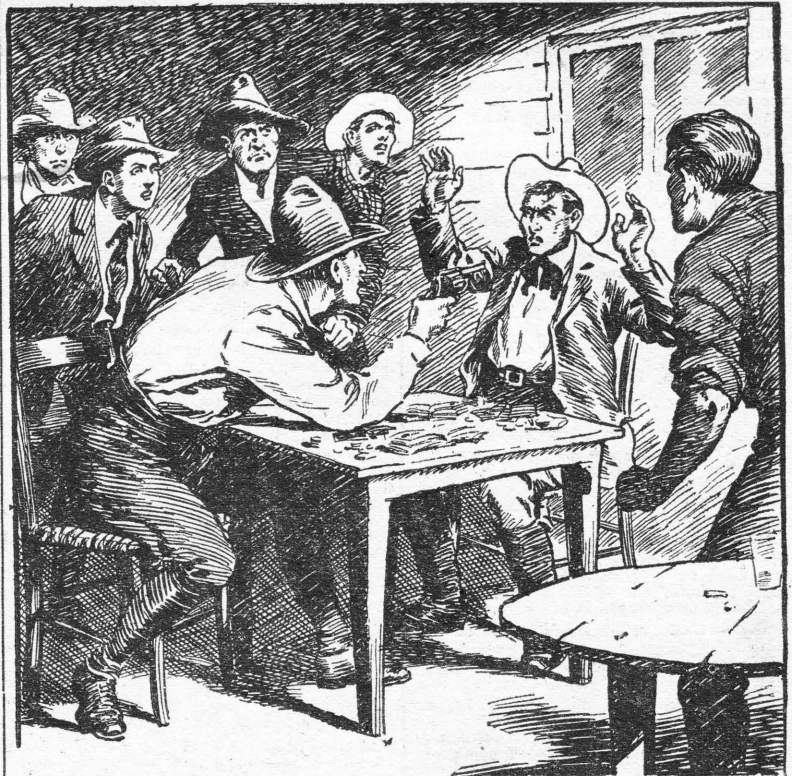
Slowly the hand of the gambler went to his breast, and he drew out a bundle of notes. It was apparently a supply of cash he had been unwilling to touch, but in the heat of the struggle he had abandoned prudence, and it was a case of "all in."

With an oath, Poker Brown flung a wad of notes into the pool.

"I see you, and go five hundred better!" he said savagely. "Now cover that, you galoot!"

"A thousand dollars there?" asked the remittance-man.

"Sure!"



CORNERED AT LAST!—"Cover the stake, or pass!" grunted Poker Brown. Mr. Beaulerc nodded. He slid his hand into his hip pocket, apparently for a further supply of cash, but when it came out a revolver glittered in it. "Hands up, Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones!" snapped the remittance-man. (See Chapter 4.)

"Excuse me if I look. You did not count the bills."

Poker Brown's eyes glittered.

"You don't take my word?"

The man was ripe for a quarrel. But Mr. Beauclerc answered quietly and suavely:

"Your word is good enough, Mr. Brown; but you did not count the bills. Let me see before I pass out."

"See, and be hanged to you!" growled Poker Brown.

The remittance-man lightly fingered the bills the sport had thrown on the stack in the pool.

He smiled.

"Satisfied?" grunted Poker Brown.

"Quite."

"Then cover the stake or pass!"

Mr. Beauclerc nodded. He slid his hand into his hip-pocket, apparently for a further supply of cash. But Vere Beauclerc, who had seen his father place a loaded revolver in that pocket, started violently.

The remittance-man's hand came out, and there were no bills in it—but a revolver glittered in his fingers, and the weapon was levelled full at the face of the startled gambler opposite him.

"Hands up, Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones!" was what the remittance-man said.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Last of the Outlaw.

"FIVE-HUNDRED-DOLLAR JONES!"

The name was repeated on all sides with a buzz of amazement.

Vere Beauclerc gave a cry.

The revolver in the remittance-man's hand never deviated. It was bearing on the startled, enraged face opposite him, within three feet of Poker Brown's nose.

The gambler's hands were on the table; he had no chance of drawing a concealed weapon.

He glanced furiously at the remittance-man.

"You—" he began huskily.

Mr. Beauclerc's voice rang out again:

"Hands up! Unless you put up your hands, Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones, I'll shoot you where you sit!"

"It's a lie," panted the gambler—"a lie! I'm Brown—Brown, of Colorado—"

"You are Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones, of California, and I've got you covered. For the last time, hands up!"

There was a roar in the poker-room of the Occidental now.

Poker Brown's teeth came together hard. He cast a wild glance towards the door, then towards the window. But the crowd was thick round the table, and the unwavering revolver looked him in the face. The outlaw's game was up!

Slowly, with mad rage in his face, Poker Brown put up his hands, clasping them above his head.

Still the remittance-man kept him covered. He was taking no chances with Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones, of California.

"What's this game?"

"You're mad, Beauclerc!"

"Let up!"

It was a buzz of excited voices round the poker-table. Mr. Beauclerc glanced round quietly.

"That man is Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones, the outlaw and murderer!" he said. "Call in the sheriff. I'll make my charge good!"

"The sheriff's on the piazza—"

"Call him in!"

Poker Brown's face twitched as the burly form of Mr. Henderson, the sheriff of Thompson, filled the doorway. He made a movement to lower one of his hands, and the remittance-man rapped out:

"Keep them up! My finger's on the trigger!"

And the gambler obeyed with a bitter oath. Mr. Henderson strode forward.

"What's this, Mr. Beauclerc?" he exclaimed. "You charge this man—"

"I charge him with being Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones, the outlaw, and I can prove it!"

"Prove it, durn you!" hissed Poker Brown. With the left hand the remittance-man pointed to the bills in the pool.

"Take those bills, sheriff, and look at them. You'll find they're the bills stolen from the Thompson bank a few days ago. I

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have the numbers from the manager. I asked him for them."

"I have the numbers, too!" said the sheriff.

"Well, look!"

A deadly paleness came over Poker Brown's clean-shaven face. Mr. Henderson picked up the bills, and examined them, in the midst of a deep silence.

"They are stolen bills," he said. "These bills were taken from the bank, Mr. Brown, at the point of the pistol, by Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones. How did you come by them?"

"I—I guess—"

The wretched man's voice faltered and trailed off.

There were grim looks round him now, and more than one weapon was in sight. If the man was Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones, who had terrorised the valley, there was no escape for him. And the belief was gaining ground now that the remittance-man was right.

Mr. Beauclerc's clear, cool voice broke the silence.

"I have been watching the man for a long time. As soon as it came out that Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones' red beard and whiskers were a disguise, I guessed that he had located in Thompson, and that that was how he gained his information for his robberies."

"But—" began the amazed sheriff.

"Poker Brown was a newcomer in the town, with plenty of money to spend—that is why I looked for him. He pegged out Tucker's Tailings—a worthless claim—and made out that he had made a rich strike there. It was to account for the money he spent, of course. A dozen times I visited the Tailings, without showing myself. I watched the place, and I knew that Poker Brown did little work there—and that he was absent every time an outrage was perpetrated by Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones. When the bank was held up in Thompson the other day, I galloped at once to Tucker's Tailings, and found that he was not there. I was sure of what I suspected; but I had to have proof. That is why I have played cards with him—"

A savage curse from the outlaw interrupted Mr. Beauclerc. Vere was watching his father, his face very bright now.

He understood at last.

"Sooner or later," went on the remittance-man, "I knew that in the fever of gambling he was likely to lose his caution, and produce stolen bills that he did not intend to show in Thompson. Those bills, taken from the bank, he was keeping hidden, no doubt to pass at another time at a distance. But the gambling spirit was too strong for him—as I guessed it would be sooner or later. He chanced it—not knowing that it was what I was watching for. And so he sealed his own fate. If you search in the shanty at Tucker's Tailings I guess you will find the disguise he wears when he goes on the trail, and probably a good deal of stolen property, too. There's your man, sheriff—Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones, of California!"

Mr. Henderson's heavy hand dropped on Poker Brown's shoulder.

"I guess you'll come with me, Mr. Brown!" he remarked. "I reckon you're the right bird; but, never fear, you'll have a fair trial. Ah! Would you?"

The desperate rascal, throwing prudence to the winds now that he realised that all was lost, leaped furiously to his feet. His hand clutched at a revolver hidden under his coat. But the sheriff's strong grasp was upon him.

Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones was borne to the floor with a crash.

There was a roar of excitement, as a dozen Thompson men threw themselves upon him in aid of the sheriff. Struggling furiously, the ruffian was soon overcome, and dragged from the room.

That night Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones spent in the calaboose of Thompson with shackles on his limbs. The reign of terror of the Californian outlaw was ended.

In the poker-room at the Occidental a congratulatory crowd surrounded the remittance-man. But he hurried away as soon as he could with his son.

They mounted their horses to ride back to the shack on the creek. Vere Beauclerc was silent; his heart was too full for words.

He understood at last; and the understanding brought happiness to his heart.

Father and son dismounted at the shack.

The remittance-man lighted a candle, and looked at his son with a smile.

"Well, my boy, you understand now?" he said.

"Oh, father!"

"No more evenings at the Occidental, Vere," said the remittance-man, smiling. "And you will never doubt me again?"

"Never, never!"

And there was a smile on Vere Beauclerc's face as he slumbered that night under the humble roof of the remittance-man's home. The trouble that had lain so heavily upon his heart had been lifted at last.

"Bean, old chap!"

"By gum! The Cherub looks merry this morning!"

The Chums of Cedar Creek met on the trail, on their way to school. And Frank Richards and Bob Lawless looked in wonder at Beauclerc's bright face.

"Good news, you chaps!" said Beauclerc.

"The very best!"

And he explained.

Bob Lawless hurled his hat into the air, in the exuberance of his satisfaction.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Frank. "And Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones is arrested?"

"He's in the calaboose now; the Mounted Police are going to hand him over to the American authorities, I think. The Thompson Valley will be rid of him, anyway!"

"Hurrah!"

It was a happy day for Vere Beauclerc and his chums. And the satisfaction of the chums of Cedar Creek was shared by most of the citizens of the Thompson Valley, relieved for ever of the presence of Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones.

THE END.

(Another roaring Wild West tale in next week's issue. Look out for it.)

FANCY MICE-KEEPING.

Fancy mice are very easily kept. They are so small that very little space is required for their accommodation, and they are such tiny feeders that the average schoolboy's pocket-money amply suffices for their maintenance. These are certainly advantages, but it must not be thought that mice, or any other pets, will thrive without care.

Cleanliness is the chief thing to be remembered. In themselves these tiny creatures are quite inoffensive; but if neglected or kept in a dirty cage, they soon make their presence noticeable and become absolutely unendurable.

If the following simple routine as regards food is carried out, there is no reason why mice should not live their short little lives to a natural end.

Stale bread soaked in milk should form the staple food of fancy mice. It should never be allowed to stand long, as the milk will turn sour and upset the tiny creatures. Make a little fresh food for each meal, and keep the dishes spotlessly clean. It would be difficult to exaggerate the amount of sickness among pets which is caused by neglecting this essential.

Oats and bran will make a welcome change occasionally, but the simpler the diet the better for the mice. One meal a day will be found quite sufficient; and when the mice have eaten their fill, take away the remains, and give them a small quantity of oats, or some other dry seed, to eat at their leisure.

An empty wooden chocolate-box will make a capital mouse-cage. A space about three inches wide should be partitioned off along one side, and fitted with top doors, so that the whole nest is accessible. The remainder of the nest, or box, should be covered with a fine netting or trellis-work, made to remove, and holes about two inches in diameter should be bored through the partition leading to the nest, so that the inhabitants can easily reach their playground. The nest should be kept well supplied with cotton-wool, which must be frequently changed, and a thin layer of sawdust over the floor of the playground will keep it in nice condition, and make the labour of cleaning it much lighter. Of course, this is a very simple sort of cage. Elaborate palaces, fitted with wheels, ladders, trees, and all manner of luxuries, can be purchased if desired; but the simple box-cage will be found as good as any.