

## ANOTHER SCHOOL IN THE BACKWOODS TALE!

It is a trying problem, this question of funds for the coming holidays, for Frank Richards & Co., the chums of the School in the Backwoods. Money is required, and with that thought predominating they set forth to find it.

# SOLVING A PROBLEM!



## THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Question of Cash!

"THE Cherub's got to come!" said Bob Lawless. And Frank Richards exclaimed emphatically:

"Yes, rather!"

It was the last day of school at Cedar Creek; on the following day the school in the backwoods was breaking-up for the summer holidays.

Frank Richards and his Canadian cousin were sitting on the school fence after morning lessons, holding a discussion.

Their plans were laid for the holiday.

But holidays cost money; and so they were a little doubtful on the subject of their chum, Vere Beauclerc.

To go on the excursion they had planned—to the Pacific Coast—without the Cherub was not to be thought of. But whether the remittance-man's son could raise the necessary cash was a doubtful point; and whether he would allow his chums to "stand the exes" was not doubtful at all—it was certain that he wouldn't.

"He's simply got to come!" said Bob Lawless. "If he won't come any other way, I'll rope him in and make him!" Frank laughed.

"It's got to be fixed somehow," he said. "Blow the money! Money's always a worry! Hallo! Here's Beau!"

Vere Beauclerc came across the playground towards his chums with a smile on his face. "You fellows holding a pow-wow?" he asked.

"I guess so!" said Bob, with a nod.

"What's the important topic?"

"The holidays."

Beauclerc's face clouded slightly for a moment. His holiday, so far as he could see, was likely to be spent at the shack on the creek—and without the society of his chums. But he smiled again the next moment.

"You're going off somewhere?" he asked. "We are—we three!" said Bob, with emphasis.

"Three or none!" said Frank.

Beauclerc shook his head.

"I'm afraid you'll have to count me out," he said. "But I hope you'll have a good time, old fellows. Where are you going?"

"To the Pacific Coast to look at the sea." "Lucky beggars!"

"Popper's arranged it for us," explained Bob Lawless. "Bill Hichens, who used to be on the ranch once, lives at Pacific Point—he's got a bit of land there, about a hundred miles north of Vancouver. Popper's fixed it up for us to go and stay with him. Hichens runs a holiday camp for people from the towns—tin shanties, and all that. Popper thinks we shall be safe under his eye. As a matter of fact, we sha'n't

trouble Bill Hichens' eye much. We can look after ourselves, we three."

"We three!" agreed Frank.

"Popper's seeing us through, of course," went on Bob. "He's settling the bill with Hichens. And he says he'll be glad to settle it for three instead of two, Cherub, and three railway-tickets instead of two."

"You're very kind," he said; "but I couldn't allow your father to stand my expenses on a holiday, Bob. I'm grateful, but it couldn't be done."

"Now, look here, Cherub—"

"It isn't really very much," urged Frank Richards. "Only the railway fare on the Canadian Pacific to New Westminster, and the run up the coast, and staying at Pacific Point—"

"Only!" said Beauclerc, with a smile.

"I guess you've got to come, Cherub!"

"Can't be done, old fellow!"

"Don't you want to see the big ocean?" demanded Bob. "We shall get some sailing on the Pacific. That doesn't come every fellow's way."

"Wouldn't you like it, Beau?" asked Frank.

"I'd like it no end."

"Then you're coming."

"Could it be done on ten dollars?" asked Beauclerc, with a laugh.

"Ahem! I'm afraid not."

"Then I'm not coming, thank you all the same. When are you starting?"

"Next week."

"Well, we'll see something of one another for the first few days of the holidays, anyhow," said Beauclerc. "I'm really sorry, you chaps; I shall miss you, and I'd like to come. But I can't ask my pater for an expensive holiday, and I don't suppose he could stand it if I did."

"It's got to be worked somehow," said Bob. "Suppose we lend you the rocks, and you square when you get rich?"

"Fathead!"

"Suppose—"

"It's not much good supposing," said Beauclerc cheerily. "Besides, I've made some arrangements for the holiday. A good many of the fellows are going out working on the farm at harvest, and I'm going to do the same. I shall earn some money instead of spending it, you see. And I've always got my horse, and there's the hills and plains, so I shall be all right for the holiday."

"You're coming with us!" roared Bob Lawless.

"Can't be done!"

"Then we'll stay with you," said Bob.

"That's it, isn't it, Franky?"

"You bet!" answered Frank Richards promptly. "After all, the Thompson Valley is all right for a holiday. We can get some ripping rides—"

"And canoeing!" said Bob.

Being the Adventures  
and Schooldays of  
Frank Richards  
in the Canadian  
Backwoods.

"We'll have a trip into the Rockies—"

"I guess so!" "What rot!" said Beauclerc, smiling. "You're jolly well going to Pacific Point, and you're going to enjoy yourselves. You can tell me all about it when you come back. That will be nearly as good as going with you."

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"There goes the bell, you fellows!" called out Chunky Todgers.

Frank Richards and Bob Lawless dropped from the fence.

"Come on, Cherub!"

The three chums headed for the lumber schoolhouse for their last lessons at Cedar Creek that term.

Miss Meadows found some of her pupils a little inattentive that afternoon.

Frank Richards & Co. were thinking, but not very much about the valuable instruction they were receiving from the Canadian schoolmistress.

Beauclerc, in spite of his smiling face, was feeling keenly the prospect of a long separation from his chums, and Frank and Bob were determined that they should not be separated.

Somehow or other Beauclerc was to be made to accompany them on their holiday excursion to the Pacific Coast, and the question was—how?

To that question at present the chums of Cedar Creek could find no answer.

Frank and Bob were determined to find an answer to it; the problem had occupied their minds for a good many days without a solution being found. But they meant to find one. They were still thinking of it when the trio rode home through the timber after school.

When they parted at the fork of the trail, and Beauclerc turned into the path to the shack, Bob called after him.

"Mind, you're coming, Cherub!"

Beauclerc smiled and shook his head. Bob knitted his brows as he rode on towards the ranch with Frank Richards.

"We've got to work the rifle somehow, Franky."

"We have," agreed Frank.

"But how?"

"I give that up."

"It's a question of cash," said Bob.

"I believe cash questions are the most difficult ones to answer," remarked Frank Richards ruefully.

"Hum! I guess that is so, sure!" grunted Bob.

And for that night at least the difficult question remained without an answer.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER. The 'Gold-Seekers'!

LATER! Clatter!

There was a merry beat of hoofs on the plain, and Old Man Beauclerc looked up from his hoeing in the bright summer morning.

The remittance-man was at work on his clearing by the creek.

He smiled a welcome as Frank Richards and Bob Lawless rode up.

The chums of Cedar Creek greeted him cheerily. They could not help noticing what a difference there was in the remittance-man now. Time had been when Old Man Beauclerc had seen the dawn rise in the poker-room at the Occidental, or had reeled home from the Red Dog in the small hours of the morning, to sleep heavily at the shack till noon or later. But those days were past.

For a long time now the remittance-man had been a hard and steady worker, and his holding was showing a good profit on the labour expended upon it.

In British Columbia there is a good living for any man able and willing to work, and the reformed scapegrace was both.

There was colour in his cheeks, a healthy spring in his step, and he looked years younger than of old. And he was living down, at last, the evil reputation that had made his name a byword in the valley.

"Good-morning, sir!" sang out Bob Lawless. "Is Beau about yet?"

"Yes, you'll find him up!"

Vere Beauclerc looked out of the doorway of the shack, with a frying-pan in his hand, and a smile on his handsome face.

"Hallo, you fellows, you're early!" he called out.

"We've come for you," said Frank.

"I'm getting breakfast. Will you join us?" "My dear chap, we came fishing for a free brekker!" said Frank, laughing. "We'll come in and help you."

"Sure!" said Bob.

The chums of Cedar Creek tethered their noses, and joined Beauclerc in the shack.

Outside, the hoe of the remittance-man was still ringing on the soil.

Mr. Beauclerc did not come in until breakfast was ready.

Then he joined the three schoolboys at the lumber table, where the simple, but ample, breakfast was spread.

"We want Beau to come with us this morning," Bob Lawless explained. "It's a stunt, Mr. Beauclerc, and we want the Cherub to help."

"I was going to work on the clearing this morning," said Beauclerc doubtfully. "As there's no school—"

"My dear boy," said the remittance-man, "you are going to make the best of your holiday; and there is little to be done here now. You will go with your friends."

And when breakfast was over Beauclerc fetched round his horse and rode away with his chums, the remittance-man resuming work cheerfully on the clearing.

Beauclerc glanced back at him several times, with a very happy expression on his face.

The change in the remittance-man from what he had been in former days had brought happiness into Beauclerc's life.

The chums rode down the trail into the timber, and the clearing disappeared behind.

"Now, what's the game?" asked Beauclerc, looking at his chums.

"Gold-seeking," answered Bob.

Beauclerc laughed.

"Looking for a gold-mine?" he asked.

"Sure!"

"Is it a joke?" asked Beauclerc.

"Not a bit of it. We've got an idea," explained Bob Lawless. "You know there have been some rich strikes made on the creeks up the Thompson River."

"I've heard so!" assented Beauclerc.

"A lot of galoots have been prospecting there, and some of them have struck it," said Bob. "Now, I know something about gold-mining. Why shouldn't we do the same now we've got the time?"

"It's Bob's idea," said Frank Richards, laughing, as Beauclerc glanced at him. "Bob thinks he's going to strike oil. After all, it will be fun."

"Well, it's a ripping morning for a ride up the valley, anyhow," said Beauclerc. "I don't think we shall have much trouble in carrying home all the gold we find."

"You never know!" answered Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank Richards and Beauclerc laughed heartily. The idea of spending the first day of the school holiday in hunting for gold, with the hope of finding any, struck them as comic.

But Bob Lawless seemed hopeful.

He had a spade and a pick slung on his saddle ready for business. His knowledge of mining was not perhaps very deep; but

he knew something about it—certainly enough to know if he made a "strike."

The three riders clattered away, and rode through the town of Thompson, where Chunky Todgers waved a fat hand to them outside Gunten's store. The other fat hand held a chunk of maple sugar.

From the town they rode up the river, past the placer claims, and an hour or two later they were in the foothills. Beauclerc uttered a sudden exclamation.

"There's Billy Cook!"

He pointed with his riding-whip.

Through an opening of the pine-trees a horseman appeared for a moment or two. It was burly, bearded Billy Cook, the foreman of the Lawless Ranch. Bob Lawless gave a start, and Frank Richards and Beauclerc looked very curiously at the burly ranchman. The pines swallowed him up the next minute, and he disappeared from view.

"What the thump is Billy Cook doing here, so far from the ranch?" ejaculated Frank Richards.

"Looking for gold, perhaps, like us?" said Beauclerc, laughing.

Bob Lawless did not speak.

The sudden sight of the ranch foreman seemed to have disconcerted the cheery Bob somehow.

It surprised his chums very considerably. They were a good ten miles from the Lawless Ranch, and they could not imagine what business Billy Cook could possibly have in the rugged foothills at that hour in the morning, too. He must have left the ranch very soon after daylight, and judging by the direction he was taking when they spotted him, he was now returning. It was puzzling, and Bob Lawless offered no suggestion; but the chums soon forgot the incident as they rode deeper into the hills.

Bob Lawless was looking about him very keenly, and his comrades grinned as they noted it.

"Are you expecting to spot a likely claim on horseback, Bob?" asked Frank Richards.

"Fathead! I guess I'm looking for a likely spot to begin," answered Bob. "No good scraping the roots of the pine-trees for gold. I reckon that little arroyo is a good spot."

The rancher's son pulled in his horse.

Ahead of the schoolboys lay a little shadowy ravine, through which a stream tumbled and cascaded on the rocks.

The murmur of the waters came musically to their ears as they dismounted.

The horses were tethered, and Bob unfastened the pick and spade from his saddle.

"Follow your leader!" he said.

And the chums of Cedar Creek entered the arroyo.

Frank Richards carried the spade, resting it over his shoulder like a gun, with a smiling face. Bob carried the pick, and as he advanced into the arroyo, he struck the rock here and there. Flashes of fire came as the pick rang on the hard rock.

"Tell us when you find a nugget, Bob," chuckled Frank.

"Oh, don't be funny," said Bob Lawless.

"Look here, this arroyo is a good place. If there's gold in these hills, this stream will have brought some of it down. If we strike it—"

"If!" laughed Beauclerc.

"Well, if we do, we share alike," said Bob.

"Who knows but what we're going to make fortunes this morning?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If we find enough to pay for a summer holiday on the coast, we ought to be satisfied," said Frank cheerily.

"I should be more than satisfied," said Beauclerc. "But I don't think it's likely."

The chums stopped on the bank of the tumbling stream, and Bob Lawless hooked the pick in the sand where the water ran shallow. There was plenty of sand to turn up, but there was no trace of the gleaming grains of gold.

"Hallo, we're not the first here this morning!" exclaimed Beauclerc.

Bob started.

"What! What's that?"

"Somebody's been here before us."

"How do you know, Cherub?"

"Because he's left a footprint behind him," answered Beauclerc.

He pointed to the sandy bank of the rivulet. In the soft sand was the impression of a big riding-boof.

Bob Lawless stared at it blankly.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "Oh, gum!"

"Perhaps Billy Cook's been this way!" smiled Beauclerc.

"Billy Cook!" stammered Bob.

"Yes; he seemed to be coming from this direction."

"Oh!"

Bob Lawless made no further remark, but went on with his investigations. His chums watched him with smiling faces. Bob seemed very much in earnest, but Frank Richards and Beauclerc evidently did not take the gold-seeking very seriously. But they followed Bob cheerfully as he picked his way along the rocky bank, testing the sand with his pick as he went.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER. The Nugget!

"JERUSALEM!"

Bob Lawless uttered that exclamation suddenly.

At a point where the stream foamed round a jutting spur of rock there was a bed of soft sand, brought there and piled against the rock by the stream.

The pick rang as it was thrust into the bed.

Click!

"Well, what have you found?" asked Frank.

"I guess there's something in the sand and—"

"Plenty of rock under it!" said Beauclerc.

"Give me the spade, Frank!"

Bob Lawless took the spade, and tramped into the shallow water, and started digging in the soft sand.

His chums watched him with growing interest.

It was always possible that a golden nugget might be found in the bed of a mountain stream in a gold-bearing country. It seemed rather too much good luck to come upon it like this, but it was always possible.

Bob tossed out spadeful after spadeful of sand.

"You take a turn, Cherub!" he said at last.

"Right-ho!"

Bob waded out, and Vere Beauclerc took his place with the spade. The remittance-man's son worked away merrily, tossing out the sand.

Click!

There was a sudden yellow glitter in the sun, as something hard whizzed out with a spadeful of sand.

Frank Richards gave a shout.

"Gold!"

"Gold!" yelled Bob Lawless.

Beauclerc ceased to work.

He stared at the rough, yellow object that lay in the sand-heap on the bank blankly.

"Gold!" he repeated.

"A nugget!" stuttered Frank Richards.

"Oh, my hat! It's a nugget! Look at it!"

"Great Scott!"

Frank, his face ablaze with excitement now, picked up the nugget.

There was no doubt that it was a nugget of gold—in the rough state, but gold.

Beauclerc tramped out of the stream, pick in hand.

"A-a-a nugget!" he ejaculated. "Well, my hat!"

"What did I tell you?" grinned Bob.

"Haven't we had jolly good luck?"

"It's extraordinary!" said Beauclerc.

"Well, I don't know about that!" remarked Frank Richards. "Lots of nuggets have been found here before this. One of the ranchmen found a nugget prospecting here."

"Not in a single morning."

"No; he was prospecting for three months, but he found a nugget. My uncle bought it from him, and I think it's at the ranch now," said Frank. "I remember uncle saying he was going to send it to the bank. Have you seen it, Bob?"

"Yes, I've seen it," said Bob briefly.

"Let's have another dig here. You never know what we may find."

"I'll take a turn," said Frank.

He took the spade and started digging. Vere Beauclerc stood with a rather thoughtful expression on his face.

He glanced several times at Bob Lawless, but Bob kept his eyes fixed on Frank, and did not meet his glance.

Frank turned up a huge quantity of sand; but no more nuggets came to view. Evidently the one that had been found was the only one the bed of sand contained.

Frank Richards came up the bank at last.

"No go!" he said. "I fancy that's the lot. Still, we've had jolly good luck. It's a regular ten-strike, to drop on a nugget like that, isn't it, Beau?"

"Extraordinary!" said Beauclerc. "What is it worth, Bob?"  
 Bob Lawless eyed the nugget.  
 "Six hundred dollars, at least," he answered.  
 "Phew!" murmured Frank.  
 "And whose is it?" asked Beauclerc.  
 Bob gave the remittance-man's son a quick look.  
 "Ours!" he answered. "We share and share alike, of course. That will work out at two hundred dollars each."  
 "Hurrah!" exclaimed Frank joyfully.  
 "Why, that's just what a holiday for three will cost, Bob."  
 "I—I guess so!"  
 "With a bit over," said Frank. "We sha'n't have to stick Uncle Lawless for the expenses, Bob. And Beau can come. His share of the nugget will see him through."  
 "Good!"  
 "Let's get back to the horses!" said Beauclerc abruptly.  
 "Come on! You carry the nugget, Cherub!"  
 "No; you carry it!"  
 "Oh, all right!"  
 The three chums clambered out of the arroyo, and returned to the spot where they had tethered the horses.  
 Beauclerc was strangely silent.  
 Frank Richards was in a joyous mood. The lucky discovery of the gold nugget cleared away all the difficulties that had worried the chums of Cedar Creek.  
 By a lucky chance, it well represented the sum that was required for a really ripping holiday on the Pacific coast for three—and the three discoverers were entitled to share alike.

Frank was jubilant.  
 For some time he did not notice the silence of Vere Beauclerc, or the shade that was gathering on his brow. Bob Lawless noted it, however, and he seemed a little unquiet.  
 Frank observed the preoccupation of the remittance-man's son, however, as they reached the tethered horses.  
 "You don't seem so glad as I am, Beau," he said.

"Perhaps not."  
 "This means that we can have our holiday together, after all, old chap."  
 Beauclerc did not answer.  
 Bob Lawless mounted his horse.  
 "Let's get off!" he said.  
 "Yes, rather! The sooner we get that nugget safe to the ranch the better," assented Frank Richards.

The chums rode homeward.  
 They had brought lunch in their saddlebags, but they did not stop for it now. Beauclerc, on his black horse, made a good speed on the return journey, and his chums had to ride hard to keep pace with him. Conversation was impossible, and they did not speak again till they were riding through Thompson town.

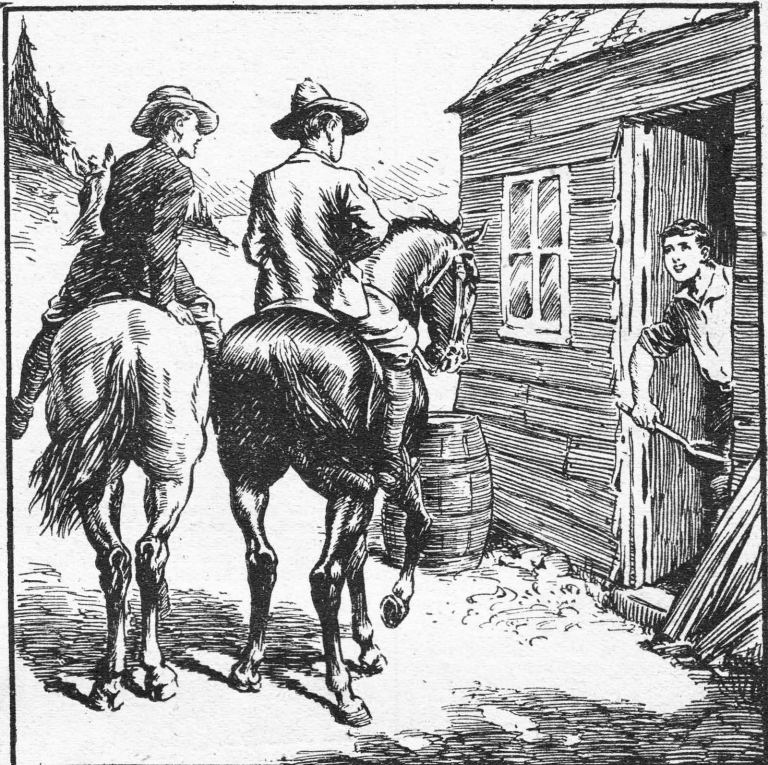
"Had we better stop here, and take it into the bank?" asked Frank Richards. "Mr. Hooker will tell us its value."  
 Bob Lawless cast an uneasy glance at Beauclerc's clouded face.  
 "Nope. Come on to the ranch," he said.

They rode out of the town, taking the trail by Cedar Creek School, and then turning through the timber. At the fork in the trail Vere Beauclerc reined in his horse.  
 "You're coming on to the ranch?" exclaimed Frank.  
 "No; I'll get home."  
 "But the nugget—"

"Never mind the nugget," said Beauclerc, his lip curling a little. "It was a very clever stunt, I'll allow that, and might have taken me in if I hadn't seen Billy Cook or the footprint in the arroyo. I'm much obliged to you and your father, Bob, but I cannot take charity. Good-bye!"  
 Beauclerc shook his reins and dashed away at a gallop up the trail to his home, leaving Frank Richards sitting in his saddle, petrified with astonishment.

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER.**  
**The Rift in the Lute!**

**F**RANK RICHARDS stared blankly at Bob.  
 Beauclerc's words had simply astounded him.  
 Vere Beauclerc had ridden off in anger; but why, Frank Richards could not guess.  
 "Bob!" he exclaimed.  
 His cousin gave a rueful grunt.  
 "Hardly a cinch, was it?" he said.  
 "What does it mean? What does Beau mean? Blessed if I can make head or tail



**AT THE BEAUCLERC SHANTY!**—Vere Beauclerc looked out of the doorway of the shack, with a frying-pan in his hand, as Frank Richards with his Canadian cousin rode up. "Hallo, you fellows!" he called out. "Coming in to help me?" (See Chapter 2.)

of it!" exclaimed Frank. "What is he waxing about?"  
 Bob Lawless grinned faintly.  
 "It was a stunt!" he exclaimed. "I reckoned the Cherub would have the wool pulled over his eyes. But it was no cinch! Fancy the Cherub tumbling like that! All through that ass Billy Cook letting himself be seen! It's rotten! Now the Cherub's gone off on his ear!"  
 "What on earth do you mean, Bob?"  
 "I didn't let on to you, Franky. You're so sweetly innocent, you'd have given the game away," explained Bob, grinning. "You see, it was a stunt to stand the Cherub's eyes on the holiday run."

"Wha-a-at!" Frank gasped. "Then that nugget—"  
 "Popper was willing to stand the eyes if Beau agreed. I talked him over this morning, and he let me have the nugget—"  
 "The—the nugget—"

"It's the one you were mentioning to Beau, you duffer; the one the ranchman found and sold to my popper. It's worth about as much as father is willing to spend on our holiday, so it came out the same thing. Billy Cook hustled off early this morning and planted it in the arroyo for us to find. Now do you tumble?"  
 Frank Richards gasped.  
 "Oh, Bob! You never told me—"  
 "Better not, you see. Your cheery enthusiasm over the find ought to have hoodwinked the Cherub. See?"  
 "You fathead, Bob!"  
 "Jaw away!" said Bob meekly. "It's been a ghastly failure, and the Cherub's got his back up. Jaw me as much as you like!"  
 Frank burst into a laugh.  
 "I see now," he said. "It was a jolly clever stunt. But Beau's offended, Bob. He's as proud as Punch, especially in money matters. Shall we go after him?"  
 "Better leave it till he's in a better temper," said Bob. "And I want to get this nugget back to the ranch. And you seem to have forgotten dinner."  
 "Oh, bother dinner!"  
 "Bosh! Come on!"  
 The chums rode on to the ranch.  
 Both of them were in a rather worried mood.

Bob Lawless had meant well in his good-natured stunt to provide his chum with the

wherewithal for the summer holiday. And it had been quite a clever scheme, and had come near to success. But it had not come quite near enough, and Beauclerc, whose pride was all the keener because of his poverty, was wounded. That was what worried the chums most.

At the ranch Bob Lawless handed the nugget to his father. The rancher gave a grunt when Bob explained. Bob had persuaded him into agreeing to the stunt, which his judgment had certainly not approved of.

"You're a young ass, Bob!" he said. "I'd never have agreed to such nonsense only I knew how much you wanted to take your friend with you on your holiday. Perhaps it's just as well that it's turned out as it has."

To which neither the rancher's son nor nephew could agree, though they said nothing.

The concern they were feeling did not prevent the chums from making a late and hearty dinner. After dinner, they left the ranch-house, both of them thinking about Beauclerc.

"It's too rotten!" muttered Bob uneasily. "I—suppose his feelings are hurt; but, dash it all, it was a friendly thing to do, and he might look at it that way!"  
 "Let's ride over and see him!" suggested Frank.

Bob shook his head.  
 "I reckon I'm not going," he answered. "You can, if you like, Frank."

"I sha'n't go without you. We don't want any rows in the happy family!"  
 "Well, I'm not going to eat humble pie," said Bob obstinately. "I did it out of friendship, and if the Cherub likes to take offence at it, he can, and be bothered with him."

"Bob!"  
 "Well, not bothered!" said Bob, relenting. "But I'm not going over to the shack. It's like asking pardon, and I've done nothing to ask pardon for. Let him come here if he wants to be friends!"  
 "I'm afraid he won't do that!"  
 "Then let him rip!" said Bob gruffly.

The chums walked on in silence. It was not a happy evening, as they strolled in the deepening sunset on the ranchlands. They could not help thinking of Beauclerc.

Clatter! Thud! Thud!

Frank Richards looked up quickly as there was a ringing of hoofs on the trail.

The stars were coming out now. In the dim light, he recognised the black horse, and the graceful figure of the rider.

"Beau!" he shouted.

"Cherub!" stammered Bob.

Beauclerc jumped from his horse. Both the chums had been certain that he would not come; but he had come!

### THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

#### All Serene!

VERE BEAUCLERC coloured as he met the chums on the trail, his rein thrown over his arm.

For a moment there was a pause.

It was Beauclerc who broke the silence.

"I'm sorry, you chaps!" he said.

"Beau, old man—"

"I left you in a temper," said Beauclerc, his colour deepening. "I—I was offended without cause. It was a generous thought of yours, Bob, though I wish you hadn't done it. But I know you meant it kindly, and I'm sorry I spoke as I did."

"Kick me, Franky!" said Bob.

"What for?" asked Beauclerc.

"I wouldn't ride over when Franky asked me, and now you've come first, and you're as proud as Lucifer, and I ain't!" said Bob repentantly. "I ought to be kicked. Franky didn't know anything about the nugget stunt, Cherub. I took him in as well as you; I thought his innocent old face would help to make it a success."

Beauclerc laughed.

"Well, it's all right now," he said. "I'm really very grateful, Bob. I can't accept your kindness, but I'm grateful all the same; and—and I had to see you chaps before I turned in to-night, to—tell you I was sorry for cutting up rusty. That's all. Good-night!"

And Beauclerc jumped on his horse again. "We want you to come to Pacific Point with us, Cherub!" said Bob wistfully.

"I wish I could."

And Beauclerc, with a wave of the hand, rode away.

Bob Lawless and Frank walked back to the ranch-house thoughtfully, but with lighter hearts. The "stunt" had failed; but at least they were on good terms with their chum, after all, and that counted for more than the holiday.

Vere Beauclerc galloped home in the starlight, feeling relieved also. He had repented of the hasty and somewhat bitter words he had uttered, and, though it had cost him an effort to subdue his pride, he had done the right thing, and he felt all the better for it.

A light was burning in the shack when he came in.

His father glanced up at him with a smile, and laid down his book.

"You've been riding late, Vere!" he said.

"I've been over to the ranch, dad. I haven't kept you up?"

"Oh, no! I was thinking about you, my boy—and about your holiday."

"That's all right, father. I shall have a ripping holiday! There's plenty to be done on the clearing."

"Not so very much," said the remittance-man, with a smile. "Our estate is not very large, Vere, and I am quite able to handle it. You are going to have your holidays."

"If I can be spared here, father, I'm thinking of getting some harvest work on the ranches down the valley."

"And earning money?" smiled Mr. Beauclerc.

"I should like to father."

"Quite right—quite right! But your friends are going on a long excursion, I understand; I think I have heard it mentioned?"

"Yes; they're going to the sea."

"They would like you to go?"

"Oh, yes!" said Beauclerc, smiling. "But I can't go, father, and I'm not thinking of it."

"Why not?"

"I—I don't want to go, father."

"Come, my boy!"

"Well, I—I should like to go," said Beauclerc, colouring; "but—but it's out of the question. It's a very expensive holiday, and we're not wealthy like Mr. Lawless."

"We are not wealthy, Vere," assented the remittance-man. "But we are not so poor as we used to be. Our holding pays now—"

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now that work is put into it. This summer we shall clear all our expenses out of our land, and have a little sum left over."

"That's good, father!"

"And since I—since I gave up the Occidental and the Red Dog, Vere," said the remittance-man, colouring, "I have been saving money."

"Not much, surely, father?"

"Five hundred dollars!" said Mr. Beauclerc.

"Why, father, that's a little fortune!"

The remittance-man laughed.

"And we shall add to it every year, Vere, now that I have found out the value of work," he said. "I have been putting by very carefully, Vere, chiefly with an eye to your summer holiday. You have had little money to spend so far, and you are going to have a good holiday this year. Will two hundred and fifty dollars see you through?"

"I shouldn't want half as much, father; but—but I won't spend the money. We may need it—"

"My dear boy, I tell you I have been saving it for you. To-morrow morning I shall go to the bank and draw out what you need. Don't you see that this is a pleasure to me?"

Beauclerc could not answer.

His eyes were full of tears.

Truly the remittance-man of Cedar Camp had changed, and Lascelles Beauclerc was a new man. And he had his reward, for he found more happiness in living for his son than in living for himself.

"Hallo, Cherub!"

Frank Richards and Bob Lawless were riding towards Thompson on the following day, when Vere Beauclerc joined them on the trail, coming away from the town.

"You're looking jolly bright, Beau!" said Frank Richards, as he noted the happy sparkle in Beauclerc's eyes. "Have you found another nugget—not planted by Billy Cook this time?"

Beauclerc laughed.

"Much better than that!" he answered.

Beauclerc felt in his pocket, and held up for inspection two hundred-dollar bills.

"Two hundred dollars!" exclaimed Frank Richards, in amazement. "You haven't been robbing a bank, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha! Not quite! But I've just been with my father to the bank, and he has insisted upon giving me this money for my holiday."

"Then—"

"I shall be able to come along on the holiday to Pacific Point, if you want me to," said Beauclerc brightly.

"If!" exclaimed Bob.

"Hurrah!" roared Frank Richards.

Frank waved his hat in glee; and Bob Lawless, in the exuberance of his spirits, made his pony waltz on the trail.

The problem was solved after all!

And a few days later the chums of Cedar Creek started westward on their holiday, which was destined to be an eventful one.

#### THE END.

(Another roaring Wild West story, dealing with the thrilling holiday adventures of Frank Richards & Co., the Chums of Cedar Creek.)



(Continued from page 6.)

selves once more at the mill, into which they crept silently, barricading the door on the inside with a sack of grain.

They had barely done this when the wind brought the clamour of voices across the fields, and, peeping through the shutter, they saw the flare of flambeaux, and knew that Snatchall and his party were running them to earth, and would arrive at their hiding-place in ten minutes at the outside.

"Kit, my friend," said Jack, "I am in no mind to be drawn like a badger; we must get out of this before those fellows arrive."

"True, Master Jack," said the mountebank, with a low laugh; "and here are the very means to our hands." He lifted something that rattled curiously from the peg upon which the miller's coat had hung, and that something proved to be two pairs of clumsy bone ice-skates.

"Given time to strap these securely," said Kit, "we can snap our fingers at them; for the river is as hard as the King's highway."

As Kit was adjusting the last buckle, Jack rose unsteadily to his feet and looked through the open shutter.

"Not a sound," he whispered; "the dogs are upon us!"

Considerably less than a quarter of a mile away, the main body of their enemies was approaching; but a greater peril lay near at hand, for Tom Donnithorne and two or three of his companions, who had had their skates with them, came gliding over the mill dam, and Tom Donnithorne held a torch.

Out from the end of the village street ran the soldiery—six of them all told—and the two parties greeted each other with a shout.

"Be that you, Master Donnithorne? The rogues are here about somewhere," cried one of the Militia; "we saw them not ten minutes ago!"

"Odds life!" cried Donnithorne, holding the torch close to the bank. "Here are their footprints, true enough, leading straight to the mill!"

The presence of the six armed men, added to the rage that boiled in his veins, made him recklessly valiant for once in his life, and, skating to the head of the dam, he began to clamber up the bank, at the imminent risk of twisting his ankles.

Kit and Jack made their way out of the room where the sacks were stored, Kit groping his way along towards the other side of the mill.

The three huge wheels were covered with icicles, and the mill-pool, whose surface was quite twenty feet lower than the edge of the dam, found its way into the river by a narrow channel, bordered on one side by the aforementioned island, and on the other by the mainland.

Uttering over the mill-pool, and supported by two stout wooden pillars, was a small room with a red-tiled roof, and towards this Jack and the mountebank went.

Jack got his legs over the sill, and clung there a moment.

Tom Donnithorne's blood was up, and at the risk of a pistol-bullet he came floundering round the corner of the mill at the very moment that Jack started on his descent, unable to stop himself.

In vain Jack grasped the pillar with arms and legs to slow his pace. Down he whizzed, and his skates struck the ice with a loud crack that went echoing across the frozen pool.

Tom Donnithorne and the soldiers were not fifteen paces away!

(In next week's big bumper issue you will find another long entraining instalment of this powerful highwayman romance, which deals with the exciting and daring escape of the fugitives, and of an amazing capture. Don't miss it!)