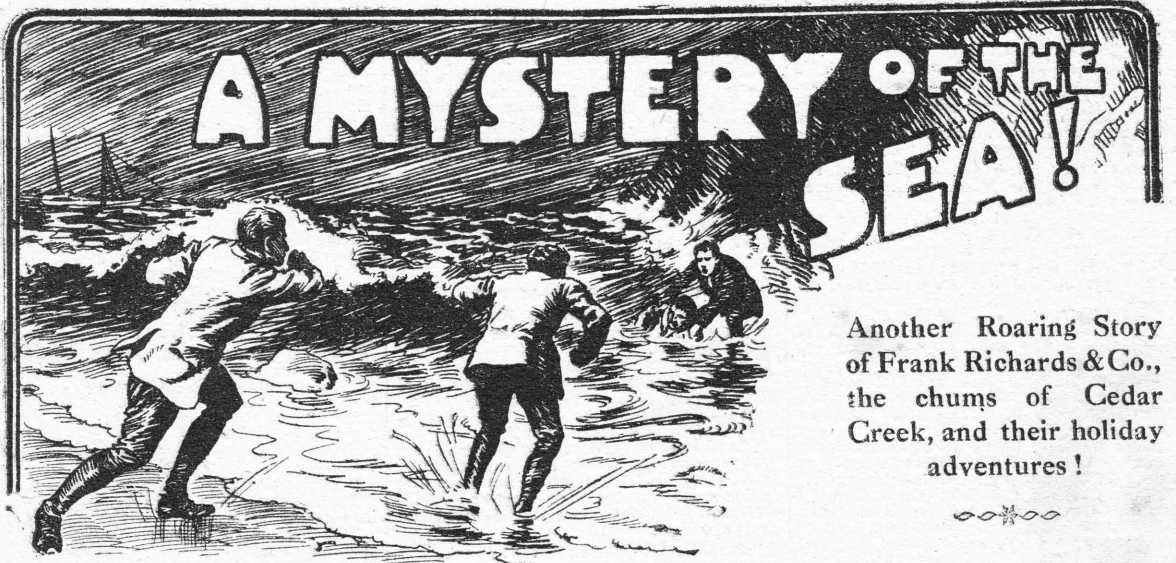


A STORM, A SHIPWRECK, AND THE MYSTERIOUS CASTAWAY!

Frank Richards & Co., the boys of the Lumber School, meet with their first thrilling adventure on the wild shores of the great Pacific Ocean, and that eventful night on the rugged, wind-swept shores marks the first day of a long chain of perilous experiences!



Another Roaring Story
of Frank Richards & Co.,
the chums of Cedar
Creek, and their holiday
adventures!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

By the Pacific!

BOOM!

Boom! Frank Richards listened to the dull, heavy roar that came through the thickening dusk.

"It's the sea!" said Bob Lawless. "The sea!" repeated Frank. He peered through the gloom that surrounded the buggy. On the forest path leaves were whirling in a fierce wind. The driver had his collar turned up, and his cap pulled low over his brow, as he faced the wind. In the buggy the chums of Cedar Creek School were seated.

Cedar Creek and the Thompson Valley were many a long mile away now. Frank Richards & Co. were nearing their destination, where they were to spend their summer holiday on the shore of the blue Pacific. The buggy from the hotel at Pacific Point had picked them up at the nearest railroad stop, and there was a seven-mile drive before them. As the vehicle followed the dusky route Frank Richards had noted the deep roar that sounded faintly in the distance, growing louder and clearer every minute with each turn of the wheels.

"The Pacific!" said Vere Beauclere, with a smile. "Not very pacific at the present moment, I should say!" Boom!

Bob Lawless grinned as Frank peered into the shadows of the forest path. "It's a good many miles off yet, Franky," he said. "You've never heard the Pacific in a bad temper before. I have—once. It's going to be a wild night."

"It sounds like it," said Frank. The wind was roaring through the trees, and occasionally there came to the ears of the chums the crash of falling branches. But deeper than the roar of the wind or falling timber sounded the voice of the distant ocean. Boom, boom!

Frank Richards had looked forward keenly to his first visit to the Pacific coast of Canada. He had thought of the Pacific as blue and sunny and smiling; but evidently it was not to be thus that he would behold the great ocean for the first time. For miles inland sounded the boom of the great rollers breaking on mighty rocks.

The buggy slowed down as it met the force of the wind from the sea. It came out of the forest path at last, and the dark sky was open above the schoolboys. Hardly a star was to be seen; black clouds were scurrying over the heavens, driven by the fierce wind. Louder and more threatening sounded the breaking waters.

Bob caught Frank Richards' arm.

"Look!" he said.

"What is it?"

"The sea!"

In the black distance there were broken gleams of rolling water. In the midst of the blackness a light gleamed and danced.

"A ship!" said Beauclere.

"A ship at sea—in this weather!" said Frank, with a deep breath. He watched the dancing light as it fascinated.

Not a glimpse of the vessel was to be had; the schoolboys could not even guess whether it was a steamer or a "windjammer"—a schooner or a full-rigged ship. But the dancing of the light showed how it was rolling and pitching on the stormy sea.

The horses' hoofs rang on the rocky road. Lights gleamed on the shore, and the driver turned his head for a moment.

"Pacific Point!" he said.

Then he turned to his horse again.

The road was open to the wind from the sea, and Frank wondered at times whether the blast would whirl over the buggy as it swept by. But the man drove on steadily, and the lights of Pacific Point drew nearer and brighter.

A big, lumbering building, with a piazza and steps in front, loomed up out of the shadows.

"That's the shebang," said Bob Lawless.

There was little to be seen in the darkness. The buggy stopped, and the schoolboys tumbled out, taking down their bags after them. A door opened, and a big man with red beard and whiskers came out to greet them. It was Bill Hichens, once a ranchman on the Lawless Ranch in the Thompson Valley, now landlord of the summer resort on the Pacific Coast.

"Young Lawless?" he asked.

"You bet!" answered Bob.

"I guess you've had a rough drive here," said the big man. "Here, Long Lung, tote this truck in!"

A Chinaman came out and relieved the chums of Cedar Creek of their bags, and carried them into the lumber hotel.

Frank Richards smiled a little as he followed his chums into the building.

He had been thinking of a seaside hotel such as he had seen in his native island. But Pacific Point did not bear the remotest resemblance to Brighton or Scarborough.

The hotel was built of lumber and logs, and there was no other building in sight, save a few sheds. A holiday at Pacific Point meant "roughing it."

But Frank had been too long in the Canadian West to mind roughing it.

There was homely comfort, and the chums of Cedar Creek were quite prepared to dispense with "trimmings."

Long Lung showed them to their room,

in which there were three camp-beds in a row, and a big window looking towards the sea. But the window was protected by thick wooden shutters at the present moment. The whole building, firm as it was, seemed to shiver in the blows of the wind, as if smitten by a giant's hand.

"I guess we shall be all right here," remarked Bob Lawless. "No good looking round for the bell, Franky. There isn't one, and nobody to answer it, if there were."

"I wasn't looking for the bell," said Frank, laughing. "I'm thinking of supper. That drive's made me hungry."

"Same here!" said Beauclere. "My hat! Listen to the wind! I wonder how that ship's getting on?"

"All right, I guess," said Bob Lawless. "They're safe enough if they keep well off the coast. I pity any ship that gets too near the rocks at the headland. You fellows ready?"

The chums of Cedar Creek went down to supper. They found a good many other guests at Pacific Point—a fruit-farmer from the valleys, a "drummer" from Chicago, three or four city men from Vancouver and New Westminster with their wives, a mission minister with a large family, and several others.

There was quite a cheery party at the supper-table, and conversation ran on lightly, while outside the wind roared and the waves of the Pacific boomed and boomed upon the rocky shore.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Wreck!

"I GUESS that racket will keep us awake a bit."

Bob Lawless made that remark when the three chums went to their room at an early hour.

The storm was increasing in violence, and every board in the lumber hotel seemed to be creaking and groaning.

Frank Richards sat on his bed; but he was not thinking of turning in.

His new surroundings and the close proximity of the stormy Pacific excited him, and he did not feel inclined for sleep.

"Feeling tired?" asked Bob.

"Not a bit!"

"What are you thinking of?" asked Vere Beauclere, looking at Frank with a smile.

"Going out!" said Frank.

"The Shebang's closed up for the night," said Bob. "And I reckon it's none too safe out of doors, Franky; with falling trees and branches. We're under the wing of Mr. Hichens here, you know; the popper's put us in his charge. I reckon he will look gum if we go down to go out."

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"This window opens on the piazza, doesn't it?"

"Yep!"

"Well, let's have a look round before we turn in. I've never seen the Pacific before, you know."

"It will keep till morning. It won't flow away in the night, you know!" said Bob, laughing.

"But the storm may be over by morning, and we mayn't have another chance of seeing it like this."

Bob Lawless nodded.

"Well, I'm game!" he said. "I don't know whether Mr. Hichens would approve, but we needn't tell him, so that's all right. By gum, though, we shall get the wind in here if we open the window! Blow out the candle first!"

Frank extinguished the candle, and the window was opened, and the big wooden shutters unfastened.

A mighty blast of wind swept into the room, and there was a rattle and clatter as several articles were overturned.

"My hat! This won't do!" said Beauclerc. "Let's get outside and close the shutters again."

"Right-ho!"

The three chums gasped for breath as they stepped out on the piazza, and the fierce wind beat upon them.

The shutters were closed and fastened outside, and the schoolboys stood with their backs to the wall, looking out from the piazza towards the sea.

There was still no rain, but black clouds loomed overhead, and at intervals a forked tongue of lightning pierced the blackness.

Frank Richards watched for the light he had seen dancing on the waters a couple of hours before; but it had vanished.

He wondered where was the ship that had carried the light.

"Come on!" he said, at last.

Every window was shuttered, and there was no eye to observe the three schoolboys as they went down the steps of the piazza. In front of the lumber hotel the ground lay open to the shore, and the chums hurried towards the sea, and did not stop till the spray was lashing in their faces.

Vast, limitless, the great ocean rolled before them, the black gloom alternating with ghastly light as the lightning gleamed.

The foam from the breaking waves rolled almost to their feet as they stood and watched the storm-tossed sea.

Frank Richards uttered a sudden exclamation:

"Look!"

Overhead, a binding sheet of lightning irradiated the dark heavens. For some moments the rolling sea was as clear as by day. And in those lurid moments a vessel came into sight—a dismasted schooner—driving heavily on towards the rocks of the headland, a quarter of a mile from where the schoolboys stood.

Then deep, dense blackness.

The wrecked schooner vanished like a spectral vision, swallowed up by the black night.

For a moment the chums stood, frozen. Then Bob Lawless panted:

"Come on!"

He dashed away over the rocks, reckless, along the shore of the headland, his chums at his heels.

All three had seen the startling sight, and they knew that in a few minutes—long before they could reach the spot—the schooner would crash upon the headland. Their only thought was to get there as rapidly as they could, to help any survivor struggling shoreward through the waves.

The glimmering foam on their right was their guide as they raced on through the darkness, stumbling and falling and picking themselves up again, bruised and breathless.

Through the boom of the wild waters Frank Richards thought that he heard the crash of the striking vessel, but he could not be sure.

The chums stopped at last, breathless, on a shingly shore, with the waters lashing to their feet. A great bulging rock stopped further progress. They breathed hard, and waited for the lightning. It came, in a vivid flash, and showed them the tossing sea, but the schooner was not to be seen. Sea and sky and wild rocks were all that met their gaze.

"She's down—gone down!" muttered Bob Lawless.

Frank Richards shivered.

It seemed only too certain that the schooner had gone down with all hands, and

the chums were too late to render aid, if aid had been possible.

But they were loath to leave the spot while the shadow of a chance remained; and they waited and watched, while the wind buffeted them and the waves foamed at their feet.

And suddenly Bob Lawless darted away from his chums, plunging waist-deep in the foaming water.

"Help me, you fellows!" he shouted in the darkness.

Frank and Beauclerc rushed after him. Bob's grasp had closed on some object tossing in the surf, and his chums lent their aid. It was a body—the body of a man—but whether alive or dead they could not tell. The three schoolboys grasped it, and dragged it from the water, the waves thundering behind them as if hungry for their prey.

Out of reach of the cruel waters, they sank down exhausted upon the shingle, their grasp still upon the shipwrecked seaman.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Man from the Sea!

BOB LAWLESS was the first to recover.

He sat up, panting.

"I guess that was close for all of us!" gasped Bob. "I was nearly sucked away—" He broke off. "I wonder whether he's alive, poor chap?"

The chums of Cedar Creek staggered up. They were breathless and panting from their struggle with the water, but their first thought was for the man they had saved.

He had not moved since they dropped him on the shingle.

"Get him into shelter!" said Frank.

Three pairs of hands grasped the seaman again, and he was lifted and carried into the shelter of a big rock, which screened them from the tearing wind.

Bob Lawless groped over him, and felt for the beating of his heart.

"He's alive!" he said, with a deep breath.

"Thank goodness for that!"

"We've saved one, at any rate!" muttered Beauclerc. "But the rest—"

He shivered.

"Not much chance for them on this coast, I guess," said Bob. "This poor chap was nearly gone when we pulled him out. But we've saved him, anyhow. I think he's coming to."

There was a faint moan from the seaman. Even in the darkness the schoolboys caught the glitter of his eyes as they opened—large, glittering, black eyes.

He made an effort to move, and groaned.

"It's all right!" said Bob Lawless. "You're among friends. You're safe now."

The man gave a violent start at the sound of his voice. As if called suddenly to himself, he sprang up; but his strength was spent, and he fell on his knees.

"Keep still a bit," said Frank Richards. "Why—what—my hat!"

There was a gleam of sharp steel in the gloom. A knife flashed in the hand of the shipwrecked man.

The schoolboys started back.

The action of the shipwrecked man was utterly unexpected, and the fear came to them that he had lost his senses in his struggle with death.

"Mind what you're at!" shouted Bob Lawless. "Put that sticker away! You're among friends now."

"Chi parla?"

"Wha-a-at?"

The Chums of Cedar Creek heard the words in a foreign tongue, without understanding them.

They could guess that it was the tongue of a Latin race, and that was all.

The man was peering at them suspiciously in the gloom, the knife still in his hand. He was evidently on his guard.

"Chi parla—non posso vedervi—"

"You're in Canada," said Bob Lawless. "Bless your little heart, you haven't got wrecked among Red Indians or cannibals! You're in no danger here; you're among white Christians, my man! Put away that sticker!"

"Can't you speak English?" asked Beauclerc.

"Inglisi? Capisco. Sì, sì, signori!"

"Some blessed Spaniard or Italian!" muttered Bob Lawless.

"I think that's Italian," said Beauclerc. "You are English?" came the voice in the gloom.

"Canadian—same thing," answered Bob Lawless. "So you can speak English?"

"Oh, yes! I speak English."

"You'd better speak it, then. Your own lingo is a bit too deep for us," said Bob.

"Put away your knife!" said Frank.

The man was still peering at them. In the confusion of his first conscious moments he had spoken in his own language; but it was clear that he could speak English as well. He was in no hurry to put away his knife; but it disappeared into his belt at last.

He rose slowly to his feet.

"Where did you find me?" he asked abruptly.

"We pulled you out of the water."

"Cospetto! Then you have saved my life?"

"Something like it."

"Grazie tanto!" The words were grateful, but the man's tone was indifferent; he was not even looking at the schoolboys, but was staring round him. "The ship—did it come ashore?"

"I guess it's gone down."

"Is anyone else saved?"

"We've saved nobody."

The man muttered to himself in a savage tone. The schoolboys could not understand his words, but they had a strong suspicion that he was cursing.

"You have seen nobody?" he asked at last.

"No."

"Not a man with a brown beard—a big man with a brown beard—an Englishman?"

"Nobody at all," said Bob.

"A friend of yours?" asked Frank.

The Italian showed his teeth for a moment in a strange grin.

"Sì, sì, sì! A friend! Unamico—carissimo amico mio! I am very anxious to find him. If he is lost—ah, cospetto!—if he is lost—" He broke off with muttered curses in a strange tongue. "Tutto perduto! niente—niente—niente!" He cursed again. "But perhaps he has come ashore! He may be found!"

"I guess nothing will be found till dawn," said Bob Lawless. "You'd better come along with us to the hotel."

The man started.

"The hotel! There is an hotel here?"

"A summer-holiday hotel," explained Bob.

"It's some distance from here—back of the headland. They'll be glad to take you in and give you shelter. Come with us!"

The Italian seaman did not answer. He moved away from the big rock towards the sea, and stood for some minutes staring at the turbid waters. Frank Richards & Co. watched him rather uneasily.

They were glad that they had saved the man's life, but there was something about him that aroused suspicion and distrust.

"A rather tough customer that galoot, I guess," murmured Bob Lawless. "Pesky handy with his knife, too. Still, we'll tote him along and give him a night's shelter."

The man came back towards them at last.

"Lead the way!" he said.

"Come on, then," said Bob. "By the way, what's your name?"

The foreign seaman hesitated before he replied.

"Beppo," he answered at last—"Beppo Lazarini."

It came into the minds of the three chums—they hardly knew why—that the man was speaking falsely; that he had paused to think of a false name before answering.

Bob Lawless led the way along the headland in silence.

The Italian seaman followed slowly, stopping every now and then to look towards the sea.

He seemed hardly able to take his eyes from the hungry waters that had swallowed up the schooner.

It was a weary tramp over rock and shingle, through the fierce wind, back to the lumber hotel. But the schoolboys reached it at last. A single light gleamed from one of the lower windows, and Bill Hichens, in great surprise, opened the door at Bob's knock, and stared at the schoolboys.

"You out of doors!" he exclaimed.

"There's been a wreck," said Bob hastily. "A schooner's gone down on the headland."

"By gum!"

"We've saved one man."

"Good for you!"

Mr. Hichens looked curiously at the Italian seaman as he entered with the schoolboys. He closed the door, and then had another long look at the man who had been saved from the sea. Frank Richards & Co. looked at him, too, in the lamplight.

Beppo Lazarini, as he called himself, was a slim, lithe fellow, dressed as a seaman, roughly. He was rather handsome in a dark, swarthy style, and his eyes were big and black and gleaming. Mr. Hichens gave him a civil greeting, but the chums could see that he was not favourably impressed by the man.

"You young jays had better get off to bed!" said Mr. Hichens. "You can leave this man to me."

And the schoolboys were glad to get to their room and get their wet clothes off, and in spite of the boom of the storm they were soon in bed and sleeping soundly.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. By Whose Hand?

DAWN flushed up on the wide waters of the Pacific.

Before the sun fairly showed over the mountains inland, Frank Richards & Co. were out of bed and down on the beach.

Only Mr. Hichens and the Chinese servants were down when they appeared, and in answer to their questions, Mr. Hichens informed them that the rescued sailorman was still sleeping in the barn.

Frank Richards & Co. lost no time in getting along the headland to see whether anything remained of the wreck.

The storm had almost passed, and the wind had dropped, but the sea was still rolling roughly. Turbid waves glimmered in the morning sunlight, and broke on the headland with a deep murmur.

The juniors scanned the sea in vain for the wrecked schooner.

The vessel had evidently gone down, but there were plenty of fragments from the wreck floating on the waves, or strewn along the shore. Casks and planks, spars and torn rigging, and a staved-in boat, lay along the shingle, tossed there by the sea.

There were no bodies to be seen, as they had feared.

"They'll come ashore later, I guess," said Bob Lawless. "I guess there wasn't anybody saved, excepting our Italian friend. I wonder who that chap was that he was speaking of—the Englishman with the brown beard?" He said he was his friend.

He did not mean that," said Vere Beauclerc quietly. "He was an enemy of the man he spoke of."

"That struck me, too," said Frank Richards. "I—I wonder if there was trouble on the schooner before she went down? That fellow had his knife very handy, and it looked—"

"I wonder?" said Bob.

The chums walked slowly back towards the lumber hotel for breakfast. On the staved-in boat they read a name—the Eliza Smith, evidently the name of the schooner that had gone down.

Beppo Lazarini seemed to be the sole survivor of the Eliza Smith, though it was quite possible that other survivors had struggled ashore farther along the coast. As they drew near to the lumber hotel the schoolboys discerned a crowd gathered on the beach.

Bill Hichens was there, with most of the visitors at the hotel, and several fishermen. They were gathered about some object that lay on the sand, and the juniors hurried up to see what it was.

"Stand back, you kids!" called out Mr. Hichens.

"What is it?" asked Bob.

"One of the bodies from the schooner."

"Dead?" asked Frank Richards, in a hushed voice.

"Yep!"

There was a buzz of voices in the crowd round the body. In every voice there was a note of horror. And it dawned upon the chums of Cedar Creek that there was something the hotelkeeper had not told them. They pushed forward, and saw the body that lay in the sand.

One glance was enough for them, and they turned away, sick at heart.

"Better get away, you youngsters," said Mr. Hichens.

The schoolboys were glad enough to get away. Their faces were white as they moved towards the hotel.

"That man wasn't drowned last night!" muttered Bob Lawless huskily. "You—you saw—"

"It's horrible!" muttered Frank. "There must have been fighting on the schooner before she went down. He was killed—"

"It was a knife-thrust," said Bob, in a low voice. "And—and that Italian chap—"

who was so handy with his knife—he must know something about it."

"He ought to be detained, and made to tell what has happened!"

"He will be, I guess!"

The same thought had evidently occurred to Mr. Hichens, for he was proceeding towards the barn where the Italian seaman had been given shelter, with a couple of other men. The schoolboys followed.

It was evident that some terrible tragedy had happened on the schooner the previous night, and that there had been bloodshed on the ill-fated vessel; and Beppo Lazarini, of course, must know what the facts were.

Mr. Hichens entered the barn, with the others at his heels.

The Italian was stretched out on a pile of straw, sleeping, but he awoke instantly at the sound of footsteps, and started up.

His big black eyes turned questioningly upon the newcomers. His dusky hand rested on his belt, close to the haft of his knife.

"Che cosa e?" he asked quickly. "What is it?"

"There's a body come ashore from the wreck," said Mr. Hichens quietly.

"E dunque?"

"It's a man who's been killed in a scimmage."

Lazarini started.

"Non capisco niente—I know nothing of that!" he answered.

"Was there fighting on the ship last night?"

"No."

"Then how was the man killed?"

"Io non so—"

"Speak English!"

"I know nothing—chi lo sa!" said Lazarini. "I myself was in the fore-castle, asleep. I was thrown into the sea, and that is all I can tell you."

"I guess that isn't good enough. You will be detained here, and handed over to the authorities when I've sent the news of the wreck," said Mr. Hichens. "Give me that stick of yours! You're better without that!"

Lazarini's eyes gleamed.

"I am a prisoner?" he exclaimed.

"That's the size of it."

"And why—why?"

"Till you give a good account of yourself, my man," answered Mr. Hichens. "I shall lock you up in a room in the hotel till someone comes to take charge of you."

He made a step towards the Italian. Lazarini sprang back, and his knife flashed out.

"Hands off!" he exclaimed savagely.

"Drop that!"

"You shall not touch me—"

Mr. Hichens strode towards him, heedless of the knife. The Italian threw up his hand threateningly.

"Stand back!" he said, between his teeth. "I warn you—"

He backed away from the burly Canadian, still threatening with the knife. The open window of the barn was near, and with a sudden spring Lazarini clambered through it and dropped outside before he could be seized.

"Stop him!" shouted Mr. Hichens.

Frank Richards & Co. rushed round the barn.

But Lazarini was already fleeing at top speed, and he ran up the beach like a hunted hare.

There was a shout, and five or six pursuers dashed on his track; but the Italian had a good start, and he vanished among the rocks.

Mr. Hichens shouted to Long Luug for his horse, and in a few minutes he was riding in pursuit.

Frank Richards & Co. went in to breakfast in an excited frame of mind. Half an hour later Mr. Hichens returned, unsuccessful. Beppo Lazarini had vanished, and was beyond pursuit. That afternoon two of the North-West Mounted Police arrived at Pacific Point, and after a few minutes' stop at the lumber hotel they rode away in search of Beppo Lazarini.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

In Direst Peril!

"THIS isn't quite the holiday we were expecting, I guess!" remarked Bob Lawless.

The chums of Cedar Creek were strolling along the beach, in the golden afternoon, by the blue sea.



THE ESCAPE OF THE MAN FROM THE SEA! "Stand back!" said the Italian between his teeth. He backed away from the burly Canadian, still threatening with the knife. The open window of the barn was near, and with a sudden spring Lazarini clambered through it and dropped outside, before he could be seized. "Stop him!" came the cry from within.

The storm was quite gone now, and the Pacific rolled calm and blue, shining in the sun, beautiful and blue as far as the eye could reach towards the setting sun.

The three chums were not thinking much of their planned holiday—the riding, fishing, swimming, and sailing they had arranged to fill the summer days.

The tragic happenings of the previous night were in their minds, and their thoughts ran incessantly upon the strange mystery of the sea.

What had happened on board the ill-fated schooner as she drifted to her doom on the rocky shore? That was the question that was on their minds, and to which no answer could be found. Had it been a mutiny—had a deadly struggle been proceeding while the hapless vessel was driving to her tragic end? It seemed likely enough, and it was more than likely that whatever crime had taken place Beppo Lazarini had had a hand in it.

No more bodies had been washed up, though a good deal of wreckage had come ashore. The chums wondered what had become of the big man with the brown beard of whom Lazarini had spoken. The probability was that he had found a grave beneath the treacherous waves of the Pacific; but they could not help thinking of him, and hoping that he had, perhaps, reached safety somewhere on the shore. They kept their eyes well about them as they walked along by the sea, in the faint hope of finding some trace of a shipwrecked survivor.

"I guess I don't feel like holiday-making," went on Bob Lawless. "I'd give a good deal to find that chap Beppo spoke of had got ashore. I suppose there's little enough chance of it."

"It's not likely, but it's possible," said Frank. "If he was a good swimmer he had a chance. And if he got ashore he might have landed anywhere along the coast for miles."

Bob Lawless halted suddenly. "By gum! Look!" he exclaimed. He pointed to the sand at his feet. Deep in the soft sand was the imprint of a foot.

The track ran along the sand for some distance ahead of them, and disappeared round a mass of high rocks.

"Might be anybody—" began Frank. Bob shook his head.

"The folks at the hotel don't come up here," he said. "We're miles now from Pacific Point. And there isn't another building along the coast for a long way. I wonder—"

"Let's follow it, anyway," said Beauclerc. "I guess we will!"

There was a possibility at least that the track had been made by some survivor of the wreck, and the chums of Cedar Creek followed it with keen interest. It ended where the soft sand was replaced by a path of rocky, stony soil.

There was no one to be seen as the chums started round them on the silent, lonely beach.

They listened, but there was no sound save the scream of a wheeling seagull.

"Somebody made that track, and it's fresh," said Bob. "Anybody landing here might think the whole coast was deserted. I guess we're going to find the galoot who's left his footprints here. Scatter among the rocks, and call out if you find any sign." "Right-ho!"

The chums separated, and were soon lost to one another's sight among the big rocks.

Ten minutes after he had parted with his chums, Frank Richards came on the track again in a patch of sand among the rocks. It was a patch before the opening of a deep, shadowy cave in the rocks, and Frank looked curiously into the dark opening.

He was about to whistle to his comrades when there was a quick step behind him, and he turned.

"Is that you, Bob? Oh!" The dark, swarthy face of Beppo Lazarini was close to him, grinning evilly. Frank stared blankly at the Italian.

He had supposed that Lazarini was far away by that time, fleeing from the pursuit of the mounted police. It was a surprise—and not a pleasant one—to find the swarthy seaman close at hand.

Frank jumped back. "Taci!" muttered the Italian threateningly. "Silence, signorino, on your life!"

His knife was in his dusky hand, and the signal whistle died on Frank Richards' lips.

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The swarthy seaman came closer. "So you have found me!" he said, between his white teeth.

"I was not looking for you," answered Frank calmly, though his heart was beating with great throbs.

"Then what are you doing here?" "I was following a track in the sand—"

"My trail?" said Lazarini.

"I did not know it was your trail. I supposed—"

"Chi lo sa? Well, now you have found me, and you will not take the news back to your friends!" said Lazarini sourly.

His black eyes glittered at the English schoolboy, and his hand closed on his knife.

Frank's heart thumped.

"I helped to save your life last night, Lazarini!" he said.

Lazarini shrugged his shoulders.

"And now you have brought it into danger!" he said. "If I am discovered here—"

"What is to prevent your escape if you choose?"

Lazarini laughed. "I do not choose," he said. "I cannot go till I have found my friend from the schooner—the big Ingleso with the brown beard. But I cannot let you tell that I am here. I am sorry, signorino, but you have run your head into this, and it is your own fault."

He made a step towards Frank, who backed away, his hands clenched.

"It was you who murdered the man on the schooner last night, then!" he said.

"You are an assassin!"

Lazarini did not answer, but he made a spring forward. The ruffian's murderous intention was plain enough; but Frank did not lose his presence of mind, terrible as the danger was. His eyes were fixed upon the swarthy ruffian, and he sprang back and eluded the rush. But his foot slipped on a smooth pebble, and he staggered and fell.

The next instant the swarthy ruffian was upon him.

But the murderous blow never fell.

There was a sudden whiz, and a jagged rock came hurtling through the air, and it struck the swarthy face full on the jaw.

Lazarini uttered a yell of agony, and spun blindly away from the fallen schoolboy.

The knife clattered on the rocks.

Bob Lawless came tearing up, with another lump of rock in his hand.

"Bob!" panted Frank.

Beppo Lazarini was scrambling up, his swarthy face black with fury, and as he did so the second rock crashed in his face. He rolled on the sand, and Bob Lawless, bounding forward, seized the knife and grasped it.

"Now, you hound—"

The two schoolboys rushed on Lazarini. But the lithe Italian eluded them, and darted away among the rocks. Vere Beauclerc joined his chums, and the three followed the fleeing ruffian together; but they pursued him in vain. Lazarini had vanished amid the rocks of the rugged shore, and he was not seen again. The chums of Cedar Creek gave up the pursuit at last, and turned homeward to Pacific Point.

But they did not believe that they had seen the last of the ruffian. And events were to prove that they were right.

THE END.

(There will be a thrilling, roaring story of Frank Richards & Co.'s holiday adventures on the Pacific Coast next week.)

THE "POPULAR" BOOKSHELF! By CLIVE FENN.

SOME time since the "Popular" drew attention to the advantages of collecting a library volume by volume, selecting as you went on, and putting yourself to some trouble to get a thoroughly representative collection. Naturally, this sort of thing takes time. No good and worthy thing is ever done in a hurry. But by forming a book collection of this kind you are building up something which will add a lot to the real and abiding interest of life.

Books are friends before they are instructors. There is a lot of bosh talked about education. Often enough the best sections and the most valuable of an educational endowment are to be found in the chunks of information which a fellow finds he has in his possession. He, for one, has not the remotest notion of how they got into his mental store. The plain fact is he put them there unconsciously. He read some book which appealed to him, and he remembered every word. More than that, as the months rolled on, he found himself taking in extra bits of knowledge on the subject which had such an appeal to him.

Some fellows may say that swotting up ancient history is an awful bore. But there are individuals who are no end keen about that sort of thing. If, for instance, you take French history way back in the gilded days, when King Louis the Fourteenth of France was waging wars in the Netherlands for the glory of France, no doubt—though it all pressed rather hardly on the taxpayer—you will find a simply wonderful picture of it all in a little-remembered yarn by G. A. Henty, called "The Cornet of Horse." That is the real thing. The action of this fine tale transports you to Lille, and shows you, also, just what was happening in London. You meet John Churchill, long before he became Duke of Marlborough, leaving the presence of her august Majesty Queen Anne. It is this kind of story which fixes in the mind a definite impression of what was actually happening in the old days.

We all have our favourite authors, and most authors have a key-story which illustrates some of the best part of their genius. There can be no question, in the case of our "Popular" bookshelf, of securing every story written by any author, however much appreciated his work may be. In the case of Mr. H. G. Wells, for instance, it is possible that only one or two of his romances can be obtained, at any rate, at the start. That being so, I should opt for the splendid mystery called "The Invisible Man." That tale focusses one of the supreme mystifications to be encountered. There have been many shots by writers at portraying an invisible character, but Wells got all imaginable effect out of his theme. He shows the limitations of invisibility, the appalling difficulties attendant on such a condition. He brings in science to support his contentions. The ingenious discoverer of the secret thinks, of course, he has found a means of subduing the world and harnessing life itself to his chariot. Nothing of the sort. The clever fellow, with his grasp of certain phases of science, discovers that he is hedged about by terrible disabilities all the time. "The Invisible Man" is a marvellous romance, if grotesque, as the author describes it. It is not horrible. It puts things in a dry and common-sense way. It rings with reality, notwithstanding the astounding nature of its subject. In many respects it outdistances the brilliant "Time Machine" of the same author.

ANOTHER FOUR Long Complete SCHOOL TALES NEXT WEEK.