

EXTRA-SPECIAL BUMPER PROGRAMME OF SCHOOL & ADVENTURE TALES
IN THIS ISSUE.

EVERY
TUESDAY

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New Series
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The POPULAR

2d

A Tremendous Success!

Our

CLAUDE DUVAL

Serial Inside!

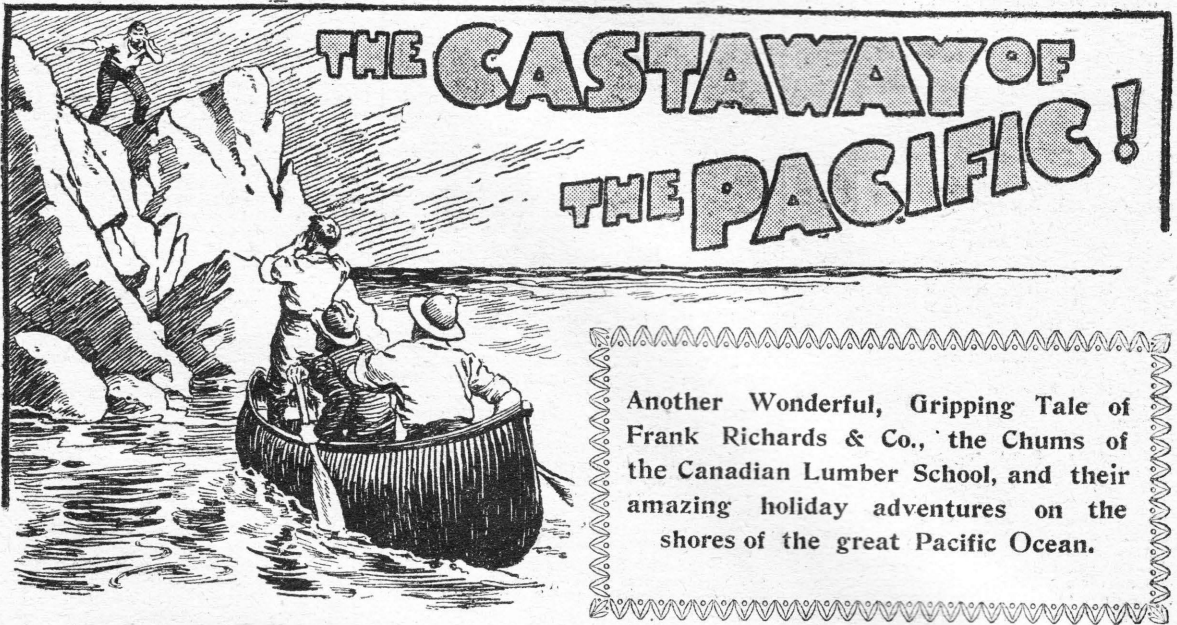


THE REMOVE ACROBATS!

A Rollicking Story of Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of
Greyfriars School, Inside.

GOLD, A CASTAWAY, AND A FIGHT FOR LIFE!

On the long, winding, rocky coast where the great Pacific crashes incessantly upon the shores and sandy beaches Frank Richards & Co., have discovered an amazing mystery—they had crossed many miles of prairie and forest in search of ADVENTURE, and there by the rolling blue ocean they find it in plenty!



THE CASTAWAY OF THE PACIFIC!

Another Wonderful, Gripping Tale of Frank Richards & Co., the Chums of the Canadian Lumber School, and their amazing holiday adventures on the shores of the great Pacific Ocean.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Message from the Sea!

WHAT is it, Bob?" Bob Lawless did not answer. He was standing on the rocky headland at Pacific Point, shading his eyes with his hand, and looking away towards the sea.

It was a bright and sunny morning, and the wide waters of the Pacific glistened blue in the sunshine. The waves broke on the rocky Canadian coast with a deep murmur. Frank Richards & Co. were clambering along the headland, exploring for traces of the schooner wrecked there a couple of days before, when Bob Lawless halted and fixed his eyes upon the sea. Frank and Vere Beauclerc followed his glance, but they could see nothing but the glimmering blue waters. Far out at sea a rocky islet rose barely to view on the horizon, and overhead the seagulls were wheeling and calling. But that was all.

But Bob Lawless evidently saw something more, for he stood shading his eyes and gazing at the sea with an intent gaze. Frank Richards tapped his Canadian cousin on the shoulder.

"What are you looking at, Bob?" he asked.

"I guess it's a bottle!" said Bob, at last. "A bottle!" ejaculated Frank. "Yep!"

Frank glanced at the shining sea again. He made out a small object that rolled on the waves, occasionally glittering as it caught the rays of the sun.

"That's curious!" remarked Beauclerc. "If the cork were out, it would sink!"

"Then the cork's in," said Frank. "It's a bottle from the schooner that went down, I suppose. What about it?"

"I guess that's not from the wreck!" said Bob.

"Why not?" "It's two days since the schooner went down. Everything that was coming ashore has come by this time. That bottle has been afloat all the time it's been in the sea, and if it had come from the wreck I reckon it would have been ashore long ago. I guess it's not been in the water so long, or else it comes from a greater distance. And there's something in it—"

"Whisky, perhaps!" said Frank, laughing.

"Whisky would sink it!"

"Then it's empty, I suppose."

"Correct—so far as liquor is concerned.

But it's corked, or it would go down. Haven't you ever heard of messages from shipwrecked sailors shut up in a bottle and thrown to sea, fathered?"

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"Oh!" exclaimed Frank.

He was interested now. Three pairs of eyes were fixed upon the bottle as it danced shoreward on the waves. Closer and closer it came.

The chums of Cedar Creek School watched it eagerly.

The possibility that the floating bottle contained a message from a shipwreck excited them.

And unless it contained something of the kind, it was difficult to see why an empty bottle should have been so carefully corked.

Bob Lawless tramped into the sea as the bottle was tossed close, and grasped it and bore it ashore in triumph.

"Now I guess we'll see!" he remarked.

The chums of Cedar Creek gathered eagerly round the prize.

The bottle was a common one, and had evidently contained spirits at one time, but its light weight showed that it contained none now. The cork was driven in flush with the top, so that it could not possibly escape.

"Anybody got a corkscrew?"

"That's about the last thing I should have thought of putting in my pocket," said Frank, laughing.

Crash! Bob Lawless knocked the neck from the bottle on an edge of rock.

Inside the bottle a folded paper was seen.

Bob Lawless drew it out with fingers that trembled with excitement.

The paper was a single leaf, apparently from a pocket-book, and it was written on in pencil.

And the first word that caught the eyes of the chums of Cedar Creek was "Help!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Benedetto!

MY hat!" murmured Frank Richards. "You were right, Bob; it's a message from a shipwreck!"

"I guess so!"

Bob Lawless unfolded the paper and spread it on a flat rock in the sunshine, and the chums of Cedar Creek bent their heads over it together, eager to read the strange message from the sea.

It ran:

"Help!

"Whoever finds this bottle is begged to send help to save a shipwrecked man."

"I am the sole survivor, so far as I am aware, of the American schooner, Eliza

Smith, a coasting trader belonging to Seattle. I took passage in her from the North, returning from the Klondike. The crew learned that I had gold in my possession, and mutinied during a storm, and the ship struck while the struggle was going on. The ringleader was an Italian named Benedetto. I was thrown into the sea when the schooner sank, but I found a spar and clung to it. This morning I found myself cast upon a rocky islet. Where I am I cannot tell, but I can see mountains to the eastward, so I conclude I must be near to the Canadian coast. I have found water in a gully, and the eggs of sea-birds; but there is no other food, and I must perish miserably unless I am speedily rescued.

"Send help! I will divide my gold—just equally with whoever shall save me.

"Help!

"Robert Oake."

Frank Richards drew a deep breath as he finished reading. The chums of Cedar Creek looked at one another.

"The schooner that went down here was the Eliza Smith," said Frank. "You remember the name—it was on the boat?"

Bob Lawless nodded.

"And the Italian who escaped from the wreck—the man we dragged out of the sea," said Frank. "He called himself Lazarini, but—"

"As likely as not the man mentioned here, I guess," said Bob. "It's plain enough he was one of the gang who tried to rob this poor chap, Oake, on the schooner. And that's why he's hanging about Pacific Point, though the Mounted Police are after him. He's still after the Klondike gold."

"That's it!"

Bob Lawless looked away towards the sea, and pointed to the rocky islet that rose just above the blue waters in the distance.

"He's there!" he said. "That's the island he mentions, I'll bet; it's the only islet near this part. He put this message in the bottle and threw it into the sea, and the water's brought it across the bay."

"My hat! Then we—"

"I guess we'll have a boat out to-day, and visit the island," said Bob. "If he's there, we'll find him. We'll take this paper to Mr. Hichens at the hotel, though."

"Lazarini spoke of an Englishman with a brown beard who was on the schooner," said Frank. "I shouldn't wonder if this was the man. Of course, it's pretty clear. That's why Lazarini was so anxious to know if the Englishman had come ashore; it was the gold he was thinking about."

"Clear enough!"

"And the poor chap's stranded on the island yonder all the time most likely," said

Were Beauclerc. "If that's the case we can soon have him off. And the sooner the better."

Bob Lawless spun round suddenly, as there was a sound among the rocks.

Only a few yards away a dark and savage face rose over the rocks—the face of Beppo Lazarini, the Italian whom the schoolboys had saved from the wreck.

His black eyes glistened at the chums of Cedar Creek.

The expression on his dusky face showed that he had heard every word uttered by the trio.

"Lazarini!" ejaculated Frank.

"Or Benedetto!" said Bob Lawless. "That's his right name, I guess. And now we'll collar him. Come on!"

The chums of Cedar Creek made a movement towards the Italian.

Lazarini did not retreat.

He came clambering over the rocks towards them, a heavy bludgeon in his hand.

The chums were unarmed. They had never dreamed of meeting the ruffian on the headland, so near to the summer hotel of Pacific Point. But there were loose rocks at hand, and in a twinkling each of the schoolboys had hold of a jagged lump.

The Italian halted.

"Give me the paper!" he said.

Bob Lawless shoved the paper into his pocket.

"Come and take it!" he answered coolly.

The ruffian showed his white teeth.

"Listen to me, signorini," he said. "I have heard you speaking. I saw you take the bottle from the sea, and I watched you and listened. I am Benedetto, and if I am taken my life is forfeit for what happened on the schooner. I am a desperate man. Is it true that Robert Oake is on the islet across the bay?"

"Find out!"

"Give me the paper!" shouted Lazarini—or, rather, Benedetto, to give him his true name.

"I guess not!"

"He is there—I know he is there!" hissed Benedetto. "Has he saved the gold he carried in his belt?"

Bob Lawless shrugged his shoulders.

"Will you give me the paper?"

"Nix!"

The Italian seaman made a spring forward, the bludgeon whirling in the air.

But the chums of Cedar Creek were ready for him.

They separated and dodged the savage blow, and at the same moment the lumps of rock were hurled.

Crash, crash!

There was a yell of anguish from the ruffian, as the heavy, jagged missiles struck him.

He staggered back, the bludgeon dropping from his hand.

"Collar him!" shouted Bob Lawless.

The chums of Cedar Creek rushed forward.

In a moment more their grasp would have closed upon Benedetto; but the Italian, eluding them, dashed away among the cliffs and disappeared.

"After him!"

Frank Richards picked up the bludgeon, and the three chums rushed in pursuit.

But the ruffian was gone.

"We'll let them know at the hotel!" gasped Bob Lawless, stopping at last. "Not much good hunting for him among these rocks; like looking for a needle in a haystack. Come on!"

And Frank Richards & Co. hurried back to the lumber hotel at Pacific Point.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Castaway!

MR. HICHENS, at the Pacific Point Hotel, removed his pipe from his mouth and whistled, as he listened to the story of the Cedar Creek chums.

"Then that Eyetalian is still hanging around," he said. "I calculated he had vamoosed the ranch. The Mounted Police haven't been able to find hide or hair of him. You yonkers had better keep around the hotel, I guess, till he's laid by the heels."

Frank Richards & Co. smiled.

They had little intention of keeping "around" the lumber hotel.

"I guess not, Mr. Hichens," said Bob Lawless. "I reckon we've got a cruise on this afternoon."

"A cruise!" repeated the landlord.

"Correct! We're taking the canoe out to the island to look for the galoot who put that paper in the bottle."

"What-ho!" said Frank.

Bill Hichens glanced at the sea and the sky, and nodded.

"I calculate there won't be a blow today," he remarked. "You can go in the canoe if you like. The dago won't be able to swim arter you, I reckon. Good luck to you!"

And after lunch at the hotel the chums of Cedar Creek ran out the canoe and embarked.

The Pacific was as calm as glass, and the little craft was safe enough on the sea in the hands of experienced canoers like Frank Richards & Co. They had done a great deal of canoeing in the creeks and on the river in the Thompson Valley. As for the Italian, they gave him no thought. Benedetto might be dangerous ashore, but at sea he could not reach them. And several men from Pacific Point were already searching the headland for the elusive mutineer of the Eliza Smith.

Three paddles flashed into the water, and the canoe glided away swiftly across the bay.

Out in the wide bay the roll was wider and heavier, and the chums had to be careful.

In the distance the rocky islet rose more clearly to the view.

One or two sails glimmered on the sea—coastwise vessels going south to Vancouver or the Californian ports; and far out on the ocean they sighted the smoke-stack of a steamer.

Bob Lawless glanced back towards the land.

Pacific Point was only a spot now, and behind the shore the mountains of British Columbia rose in great masses against the sky.

Near the headland a boat was pulling out to sea, with a single man at the oars.

Bob gave it only a careless glance.

There were several fishermen at Pacific Point, and the chums had often watched them in their boats on the bay.

The boat was following the same track as the canoe, but at a good distance.

"I guess that's the island of the bottle galoot right enough," said Bob Lawless. "He mentioned that he could see the mountains east, so he couldn't be so very far off the shore. I reckon we'll find him on Gull Island."

"I hope so," said Frank. "We ought to see something of him when we get a bit nearer."

The chums glanced incessantly at the rocky isle as it loomed up larger and clearer.

There seemed little of it but precipitous rocks, amid which numberless gulls had built their nests, and a score of the seabirds could be seen wheeling in the air above it.

"Look!" exclaimed Beauclerc suddenly.

He pointed.

On top of a big rock, close by the sea, a spar stood upright, jammed in a crevice of the rock, and from the top of the spar fluttered a shirt.

It was evidently a signal of distress—the only one that the shipwrecked gold-seeker had been able to erect.

"I guess that settles it," remarked Bob Lawless. "There's somebody there, at any rate."

The chums paddled on with great vigour, and the canoe glided swiftly towards the islet.

Round the islet the sea rolled roughly, and the canoers looked out cautiously for a safe landing.

There was a sudden shout in the calm, sunny air, and the figure of a man appeared on the rock beside the distress signal, waving his arms wildly.

"Help!"

Across the sea the shout floated to the schoolboys.

Bob Lawless waved his paddle in response.

The canoe glided closer to the big rock, which rose sheer from the water. There was no landing there, however.

Bob Lawless stood up, and shouted to the man above.

"We've come for you!"

"Thank Heaven! Paddle round the rock on the south side, and there's a good landing."

"Good!"

The canoe passed on, and floated round



A RASCAL AT BAY! "Seize him!" panted the miner. But the oar swept round, and Frank Richards & Co. floundered back out of reach. The miner had the empty revolver clubbed in his grasp, but it was useless as a weapon until he could get at close quarters. The Italian's whirling oar drove him back. (See Chapter 5.)

the towering rock. A beach of shelving shingle came into view, upon which the waves broke softly.

"Here we are!" said Frank Richards cheerfully.

The canoe glided close to the sandy shore, and the figure of the castaway came speeding down to the water's edge. He waded into the sea and helped the canoe ashore.

Frank Richards & Co. jumped out.

They regarded the castaway with curiosity. He was a big man, more than six feet in height, with a thick, brown beard. His face was bronzed by exposure to sun and weather. His clothes showed plain signs of long immersion in the sea water, though they were now dried by the hot sun.

"You're Robert Oake?" asked Bob Lawless.

"Yes. And you?" asked the castaway. Bob smiled.

"We're schoolboys on holiday from Cedar Creek, in the Thompson Valley. We found your bottle on the headland this morning. That was a good stunt, Mr. Oake, and it's turned out well. The Eliza Smith went down by the headland, but nobody reckoned that a survivor would have landed so far away as this rock."

"I guess I was hours clinging to the spar before I was thrown ashore," said Oake. "I had that little spirit-bottle in my wallet, and I've heard of such stunts, and I reckoned I would try it. Was anyone saved from the wreck?"

"Only a dago," said Bob. "Lazarini, he called himself, but he's owned up that he's Benedetto."

The brown-bearded man set his teeth.

"He was the leader in the mutiny," he said. "The skipper gave me a passage from the coast up north, and the rascally dago found that I had gold in my belt. There were only six hands on the schooner, and they followed his lead, excepting one, who was killed in the struggle. They would have killed me, but the vessel struck. And so Benedetto escaped?"

"We pulled him ashore after the wreck," said Frank Richards. "He was nearly gone when we got him out. The Mounted Police are searching the coast for him now. But we've got some grub in the canoe for you, Mr. Oake. We brought a basket from the hotel."

The basket was taken out of the canoe, and the chums of Cedar Creek busied themselves attending to the wants of the Klondike miner.

He ate almost ravenously, and the colour came back into his pinched cheeks as he did so.

"I guess there's another galoot coming out for you, Mr. Oake," remarked Bob Lawless, with his eyes on the sea.

The man from the Klondike glanced round.

The boat the schoolboys had seen pulling out from the headland was drawing near the island now.

The sun streamed down on the man who sat at the oars, pulling away steadily—a bareheaded man, with thick, black hair.

As his back was to the island, the school-boys could not see much of him; but it struck them that there was something familiar about the thick, clustering, jet-black hair.

"I guess I've seen that black poll before," said Bob suddenly. "That isn't the topknot of any of the Canadian fishermen, I guess."

"Lazarini!" exclaimed Frank Richards, with a jump.

Oake sprang to his feet.

"Benedetto!"

As if he knew that his name had been spoken, the man in the boat looked round towards the islet, and the chums of Cedar Creek recognised the swarthy, savage face of the man they had saved from the sea.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Face to Face!

"BENEDETTO!"

The man from the Klondike muttered the name between his teeth. His hand went to his hip-pocket, and a deadly glitter came into his eyes as he watched the Italian in the boat.

The boat pulled steadily on for the islet.

"The bound!" muttered Bob Lawless. "He must have taken that boat from one of the fishermen. It's one of the Pacific Point boats. What's he done to the owner, I wonder?"

"Let him come a little nearer!" said Oake grimly.

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He had taken a revolver from his hip-pocket, and was examining it carefully.

Frank Richards & Co. looked at him quickly.

"You're not going to fire at him?" exclaimed Frank.

Oake nodded.

"I guess so!" he answered coolly. "What do you think the dago is coming here for?"

"He heard us talking, after we had found the paper in the bottle—"

"And he knows I am here?"

"Sure!"

"He is still after my gold-belt!" said the Klondike miner. "I reckon it's something else he is going to get!"

"But—"

Oake held the revolver ready in his hand, down at his side, so that the Italian should not observe it, and watched the boat.

Frank Richards & Co. looked at one another.

They knew the Klondike man's intentions. They knew, too, that Benedetto was pulling to the islet with murderous intent—that he was a mutineer and an assassin, and that he deserved his doom. It was for the sake of Oake's gold-belt that he had roused the mutiny on the Eliza Smith, and thus caused the wreck of the schooner. It was for that that he had lingered at Pacific Point, instead of making his escape inland. And it was plain enough that he would stick at nothing when he landed on the islet. But it went too much against the grain to see him shot down defencelessly.

The chums of Cedar Creek stood, troubled and undecided, as the boat pulled nearer. The broad back of the Italian, as he bent to the oars, offered an easy target, and the man from the Klondike was only waiting for a favourable moment.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Frank Richards, as Oake raised his arm.

Bob caught at his wrist.

"You can't shoot him!" he said.

Oake uttered an impatient exclamation. It was pretty evident that he had been used to rough ways on the Klondike, where life was held cheap.

"I guess I've two thousand dollars in dust in my belt," he said. "Half of it belongs to you youngsters, for coming here to me. That's what the dago is after. He's going to get lead instead of gold."

"We don't claim any reward for coming here for you," said Bob. "But you can't shoot a man in cold blood. Let him land, and we'll rope him in and take him back to Pacific Point a prisoner."

"If he has a shooter about him—"

"He hasn't. He's lost his knife, too," said Bob. "We shall handle him easily enough when he lands."

The man from the Klondike gave a grunt.

"You've saved my life," he said. "I should have starved to death here but for you. You're a fool, but I guess I'll let you have your way. But if he resists, I'll drill him on the spot!"

"That's all right!" said Bob.

The boat was very near now.

Benedetto had seen the landing-place and the four figures standing there by the canoe, and he came on, as if intending to land in the same spot. But at a distance of a dozen yards from the shore he stood up in the boat, and his black eyes fixed on the Klondike miner.

Oake eyed him steadily, his hand behind him, with the revolver in its grasp.

"Cospetto! So you are still alive, amico mio!" said the Italian. "You also have had good fortune. And the gold—that is still in your belt, none e vero?"

"I guess so," answered Oake quietly.

"Listen to me, then. Throw the belt into the boat, and I will pull away and leave you in peace."

The man from the Klondike laughed.

"You refuse, signor?"

"I guess so. Come ashore."

"I shall come fast enough, mi amico," said Benedetto. "And neither you nor the giovani will live to tell of what has happened."

"I guess that galoot is a cool customer," murmured Bob Lawless. "There's four of us here, and he's unarmed."

"Is he unarmed?" muttered Vere Beauclerc. "He must have taken that boat by violence, and he may have obtained weapons."

"He wouldn't be fool enough to attack four of us unarmed," said Frank Richards. "He must have a weapon. Look out!"

Benedetto stooped in the boat, as if to take up his oars again to pull ashore.

The next moment a rifle glinted over the gunwale.

It was evident that the Italian was armed. "Look out!" shouted Oake.

Crack!

The Italian fired, quickly, but the man from the Klondike was on his guard. He dropped on his knees behind a spur of rock, and the bullet whistled harmlessly over his head.

"Cospetto!"

A curse from the Italian floated over the water.

Frank Richards & Co. darted into cover instantly.

As the report echoed and rang among the crags of the islet, the castaway and his rescuers were out of sight, and the Italian stood in the rocking boat, with the smoking rifle in his hand, gritting his teeth.

"I guess it's my turn now!"

Oake muttered the words grimly.

He raised his head cautiously above the rock.

The Italian was quickly reloading the rifle in the boat, his eyes glinting towards the shore as he did so.

Crack!

Oake's revolver rang out; but the Italian, quick as a cat, dropped on his knees in the boat.

Crack, crack, crack!

Three rapid shots pumped into the boat, but the Italian was lying below the gunwale, and there came no sound from him. But that he was not hit was soon proved. The barrel of the rifle rose into view over the gunwale, glimmering in the sun, the Italian keeping out of sight.

Oake watched grimly.

Frank Richards & Co. peered out of the cover of the rocks, and watched the boat.

They noted that it was drifting nearer to the shore on the undulating waves, and it was only a matter of minutes before the crouching Italian would be exposed to the revolver.

The man from the Klondike was waiting. He did not waste a shot. Only two bullets remained in his revolver, and he had no more ammunition. He could not afford to waste another ball.

There was a sudden movement in the boat, and Benedetto rose into view, and the rifle rang out. The revolver answered it at the same moment.

Crack-ack!

There came a scream of pain from the boat, and the Italian dropped the rifle.

The Klondike miner stood unhurt. The rifle-ball, fired so hastily, had gone near enough to clip a fragment of cloth from his shoulder, but that was all.

"I guess that's got him!"

The Italian was clapping his right arm with his left hand, and his fingers were red. The rifle lay in the bottom of the boat, smoking.

Oake ran down to the water, with the chums of Cedar Creek at his heels. The boat had drifted very close now, and they were able to wade to it in the shallow water.

"Hands up, dago!" shouted Oake, as he strode into the water to the rocking boat. His revolver was levelled.

Benedetto, with a snarl like a wild beast, threw his hands above his head.

"Our game, I guess!" grinned the man from Klondike. "Ah, would you!"

Benedetto had made a sudden spring from the boat. The revolver rang as he did so; but the shot was hurried, and it missed the Italian by an inch or more.

The next instant the grasp of the ruffian was upon the Klondike miner, and they were struggling furiously in the water.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

For Life or Death!

SPLASH!

The struggle was fierce, but it was brief. Before the chums of Cedar Creek could lend their aid to the Klondike miner it was over. For a moment it had looked as if the big, brown-bearded miner would crumple up the slighter Italian in his grasp; but his foot slipped in the sand under the water, and he went backwards. The water closed over his head, and the Italian sprang free.

With the water washing to his waist, he stood for a moment, his black eyes glaring at Frank Richards & Co.

But he did not attack them.

He scrambled back to the boat and

clambered in, as Oake rose, panting and spluttering, from the water.

"Seize him!" panted the miner. He splashed towards the boat. Frank Richards & Co. were already wading to it as fast as they could. Their object was to seize the Italian before he could reload the rifle. But Benedetto was in the boat again now, and an oar whirled in his grasp. He aimed a savage blow at Oake, and the miner sprang back, splashing.

The oar swept round, and the schoolboys floundered back out of reach. Oake had the empty revolver clubbed in his grasp, but it was useless as a weapon till he could get to close quarters, and the whirling oar drove him back.

Benedetto did not heed the rifle. He would have been given no time to reload it, and he knew it. He shoved the oar against a rock under the water, and the boat sprang out from the shore.

Out of reach of his foes, the Italian seaman seized the other oar, and began to pull.

His black eyes glittered back at the four as he pulled away from them. The blood was running down his wounded arm, but he did not heed the wound. Oake muttered an oath between his teeth.

"He's getting his distance, to pot us from the boat," he said bitterly. "If you had let me drill him at first—"

"Tumble into the canoe!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "I guess the canoe can beat that boat any day! He won't get us yet."

"I guess that's a good idea." Frank Richards & Co. and the miner tumbled hurriedly into the canoe as the Italian pulled off.

The chums of Cedar Creek flashed out the paddles.

There was no paddle for Oake, and he sat watching the Italian, with the useless revolver in his grasp.

As the canoe glided out into deeper water the Italian ceased to pull. The boat was fifty yards distant, and he had time now. Laying in the oars, he picked up the rifle, and loaded it methodically.

There were tense faces in the canoe now.

Oake was muttering between his teeth. The Italian had been at his mercy, and the schoolboys had held his hand. But it was too late to think of that now. The Italian was preparing to fire.

"I guess we'll beat him yet!" muttered Bob Lawless. "Once we get a start, he'll never get near us in that heavy boat." "Look out!" muttered Beauclerc.

The Italian, kneeling in the boat, was taking aim at the canoe. The rifle was far from steady. The ruffian's right arm was hurt, and the wound was painful, and the boat was rocking on the sea. Benedetto dwelt long and carefully upon his aim before he pulled the trigger.

Bob Lawless muttered directions to his comrades. The three paddlers acted as one man.

Instead of proceeding in a direct line, the canoe wound and twisted like a snake on the calm surface of the sea, zigzagging its course, and the evil scowl on Benedetto's face showed how the movement baffled him in taking aim.

He fired at last.

Crack!

But the zigzagging canoe was six yards from the line of fire when the bullet flew.

The ball splashed into the waves harmlessly.

"Good for you!" exclaimed Oake.

"Now," panted Bob Lawless, "go it! Put it on, like thunder!"

His comrades did not need bidding.

They paddled with every ounce of their strength to put a greater distance between the canoe and the boat, while the Italian was reloading his rifle.

The canoe fairly flew over the shining waters.

"Look out!" called out Oake. "He is taking aim again."

"Play up!" said Bob.

The canoe resumed its zigzagging course.

It was a good hundred yards and more from the boat now, and the Italian's task was more difficult than before. Only by chance could the bullet strike the occupants of the rapidly twisting little craft.

Crack!

The bullet ploughed up the water a dozen yards from the canoe, and the chums of Cedar Creek burst into a laugh.

"Now put it on!" exclaimed Bob.

Again the canoe flew on at top speed.

The Italian, standing up in the boat, was reloading the rifle as fast as his injured arm would permit. Had he possessed a repeating rifle the result would probably have been different. But the fisherman's gun he had stolen with the boat was an old-fashioned breech-loader. Before he was ready to fire again the canoe was almost at a safe distance.

Crack!

"I guess he won't hurt us now!" grinned Bob Lawless. "Where did that one go?"

"About twenty yards off," said Beauclerc, with a smile.

"He's rowing now," said Oake.

Bob Lawless chuckled.

"Let him row. I guess we can beat that old boat in this canoe, and not half try."

Bob Lawless was right.

Benedetto had taken the oars again, and was pulling desperately after the canoe. But at every stroke of the paddles the distance between the two craft was increasing.

Pacific Point was in sight now, and the schoolboys could see moving figures on the beach, among them a mounted man in uniform. It was one of the North-West Mounted Police. Benedetto looked round at the canoe, and, with an oath, relinquished the oars. He was losing instead of gaining, and the sight of the mounted officer on the shore gave him pause.

He seized the rifle again, and loaded and fired as rapidly as he could. But the canoe was almost out of range now, and the bullets flew wide. And from the shore there came the crack of a rifle, and a ball flew very near to the Italian's boat.

A furious dusky fist was shaken after the escaping canoe, as the Italian abandoned the chase.

He threw down the rifle, and took up the oars again, pulling away to sea. For his life he dared not land, and he had to take his chance on the open ocean.

Frank Richards looked after him, and he was not sorry to see the boat vanishing into the haze of the sea. Benedetto was gone, and Frank wondered whether he had seen the last of him. The gold belt for which the ruffian had plotted and shed blood was safe from him now. Five minutes later the canoe ran on the sand, and Frank Richards & Co. jumped ashore.

The next day the man from the Klondike started for Vancouver; but on land this time, on a horse borrowed at Pacific Point. And for several days afterwards horsemen were riding up and down the coast in search of Benedetto. But the Italian was not found, and Frank Richards & Co. concluded that his boat had drifted out upon the Pacific, and the deep blue waters held the secret of his fate.

THE END.

(A roaring Wild West story dealing with the holiday adventures of the boys of Cedar Creek Lumber School will be included in next Tuesday's top-hole programme of stories.)

CUSTOMS IN FAMOUS SCHOOLS!

An interesting article dealing with the origins of some public school customs. By N. TOURNEUR.

EVERY famous school has some custom or other, and in English schools a number of these customs go back so far into past centuries that the origins of some have been long forgotten. On the other hand, it is possible to arrive at the reason of others. For instance, in Westminster School the curious term, "chiswicks," is used in one of the boarding-houses for some studies which formerly were set apart as sick-rooms. These "chiswicks" take the Westminster boys back four hundred years and a little more. Early in the sixteenth century, to ensure that the scholars were taught with as little loss of time as possible when unwell, a house was taken in Chiswick, now a suburb of London, but then a distant village on the Thames. And so, in time, among the Westminster School boys a chamber kept for use as a sick-room has become known as a "chiswick."

Almost every boy who likes good reading knows "Tom Brown's Schooldays"—one of the best pieces of fiction ever written, and for all boys, too, whether they be English or not—and it tells much of the queer customs at Rugby. Many of them were generations old when the book was written.

As in the days of "Tom Brown," a century or so ago, fresh boys at Rugby have still to pass the singing test in front of their seniors. The newcomer is given a lighted candle to hold in each hand, and made to step up on to a table, and quaver a song before the very critical and crowded audience. When his efforts do not please, he is promptly

brought down on to the floor, and forced to drink a pint or so of water, into which plenty of salt has been thrown, and then stirred with his guttering candles till dissolved. If he refuses the tumblerful, he is seized, and the mixture is poured down his throat.

Winchester School, as becomes its position among the oldest public schools in England, if not in Western Europe, has a number of quaint customs. One of the oddest and oldest, also, is that which the new boy has to undergo. He has to hold out a hand, and on the back of it three lines are marked with a burning stick. A more modern custom there of dealing with the newcomer is to compel him to mount a form in the largest room of his "house," and suffer a painful bombardment with bits of hard bread.

Of all the great and famous schools in the British Isles, it is Eton which has the greatest number of queer rules and customs. The newcomer there has to learn much more in his first term than school work. If he dares to neglect any of the hundred and one little items which go to distinguish the Etonian, and give him a slang all his own,

he suffers for it so sharply that he makes haste to master it all. For instance, he must keep the bottom of his trousers turned up, leave the lowest button of his waistcoat unfastened, have the collar of his overcoat turned up, and never roll his umbrella. When out "in town" he must walk on the right-hand pavement, and leave the left severely alone, except when crossing on a shopping expedition. And only the Sixth Form, together with members of the cricket and boating teams, are allowed to wear collars other than the well-known turned-down Eton kind.

Other great schools have many terms and words of their own, even as, like Eton, they have peculiar customs of dress and deportment. At Harrow School, for instance, some Forms, it is understood by all, must not turn up the bottom of their trousers, and no boy may whistle in certain parts of the buildings unless he is one of the prefects. At Rugby, among other singular rules that have been handed down for generations, is one that none but the Sixth Form may walk about the grounds in groups of more than three. But as regards school speech, or, better, vernacular, Eton appears to have the most singular and extensive. There, as elsewhere, this slang is neither vulgar nor shocking, but arises through the fondness every healthy boy has of keeping up the speech and ways of his forefathers at school, together with his knack for nicknames, and abbreviating names and sentences.

To-day, as two hundred years ago, "dame" is applied by Etonians to the matron or Housemaster's wife. "Fire lags" are the juniors, who have to look to the fires in the "chambers," or large rooms in college, that are divided into cubicles or "stalls." "Tug" is the usual name for a boy who is a "colleger"—that is, who has

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