

HUNDREDS OF THRILLS!

Frank Richards, of Cedar Creek, paid the rival Lumber School a twilight visit, little thinking that this exploit would lead to so many thrilling episodes and dangerous moments. Fate steps into the limelight, and there is a sudden whirl of bewildering and breathless affairs!



Another roaring tale of the Chums of the Lumber School of the Canadian Backwoods!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.**Called Over the Coals!**

RICHARDS, Lawless, Beauclerc!" the names on the porch of the lumber schoolhouse at Cedar Creek. "Hallo! What's the trouble now?" murmured Bob Lawless.

There was a snowfight going on in the playground of Cedar Creek School. Frank Richards & Co. left the crowd of merry schoolboys, and hurried to the porch.

They assumed their meekest expressions as they came up to Mr. Slimmey.

"You called us, sir?" said Frank Richards. Mr. Slimmey blinked at them over his gold-rimmed spectacles.

"Miss Meadows wishes to see you three boys," he said. "You are to go in at once!"

"Ahem! Is anything the matter, sir?" murmured Beauclerc.

"I think there has been some complaint from Mr. Peckover, at Hillcrest," answered the young master, and he motioned to the trio to go in.

Frank Richards & Co. entered the schoolhouse, and proceeded slowly and reluctantly to Miss Meadows' sitting-room.

"Peckover again!" grunted Bob Lawless. "That galoot is always making trouble!"

"Bother him!" growled Frank. "I suppose we oughtn't to have gone over to Hillcrest yesterday," remarked Vere Beauclerc, with a smile.

"We only went to snowball Dicky Bird," said Bob. "It was a sheer accident that a snowball landed on Peckover when he put his silly head out of the window."

Frank Richards tapped at Miss Meadows' door, and the three schoolboys entered the headmistress' room, trying to look as if butter would not melt in their mouths.

But Miss Meadows' brow was stern. A letter lay on the table before her, apparently a communication from Mr. Peckover, the headmaster of Hillcrest School.

"I have sent for you three boys—" she began severely.

"Yes, ma'am!" murmured Bob. "You visited Hillcrest School yesterday?"

"Ahem! Yes."

"And threw a snowball at Mr. Peckover?"

"Oh, no, ma'am!"

"Mr. Peckover complains that he was snowballed at his own window," said Miss Meadows sternly.

"It was an accident, ma'am," said Bob. "I chucked—"

"What?"

"I mean, I threw the snowball at Dicky Bird. The silly galoot ducked his head, and it caught old Peckover—I—I mean, Mr. Peck-

over, in the eye! I—I couldn't foresee that, could I, Miss Meadows?"

"Sheer accident, Miss Meadows," murmured Frank.

"Accidents of that kind must not be allowed to happen," said Miss Meadows. "I believe your explanation, but Mr. Peckover is very angry. I have forbidden you to quarrel with the Hillcrest boys—"

"We weren't quarrelling, ma'am," said Bob eagerly—"only just making them sit up a little!"

"You will be detained for one hour after lessons to-day!" said Miss Meadows.

The three chums looked relieved. The matter did not seem so serious as they had anticipated.

But the Canadian schoolmistress was not finished yet.

"Mr. Peckover strongly disapproves of your disputes with his boys," she went on. "I am aware that you mean no harm; but Mr. Peckover's views must be respected. You must not visit Hillcrest School again."

"But, ma'am—"

"On any pretext whatever!" said Miss Meadows sternly. "Something of this kind always seems to occur. Remember, you are forbidden to go near the school!"

"But—"

"If this order is disregarded," said Miss Meadows, "I shall take the most severe measures!"

"But—"

"Kindly do not argue with me, Lawless!" exclaimed Miss Meadows. "You have heard my command."

"But—" murmured Frank Richards. Miss Meadows raised her hand.

"If I hear that any one of you has been to Hillcrest again, I shall make a complaint to your parents!" she said.

"Oh dear!"

"Bear that in mind. You may go!"

"But—"

"You may go!" repeated Miss Meadows, raising her voice slightly. The chums of Cedar Creek looked at one another.

No further argument was possible, and they quitted the room slowly, and Frank drew the door shut.

In the passage outside they looked at one another again.

"Here's a go!" muttered Bob Lawless. "Fancy Miss Meadows getting her rag out like that. And we told Dicky Bird—"

"That we'd wait for him outside Hillcrest gates after lessons, and snowball him!" said Beauclerc. "And if we don't turn up he will think we are funky."

"We've got to turn up!" growled Bob. "Look here, I'll try to explain to Miss Meadows that—that—"

"Better not," said Frank. "Schoolmistresses don't understand these matters."

"I guess I'll try," said Bob obstinately.

"I'll tell her we've got an engagement to meet Bird—"

"Better not—"

But Bob Lawless was already tapping at the sitting-room door again.

"Come in!" came Miss Meadows' voice. The rancher's son entered. Frank Richards and Beauclerc waited in the passage for him, rather anxiously.

They had cause for anxiety. There was a murmur of voices from the room, and then a sudden sharp sound.

Swish!

Bob Lawless came out again, with his right hand tucked under his arm, and a wry expression on his face.

"Ow!" was his remark.

And Bob said "Ow!" several times emphatically as the chums returned to the playground. It was evident that it was useless to attempt to explain the situation to Miss Meadows. The headmistress of Cedar Creek was in no mood for explanations from Frank Richards & Co.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.**Kept In!**

FRANK RICHARDS & CO. were feeling rather worried during afternoon lessons at Cedar Creek that day.

They were thinking of the appointment with Master Richard Bird, the leader of the Hillcrest fellows. The Cedar Creek Co. had solemnly engaged to turn up at Hillcrest and snowball Master Richard, and if they did not keep their engagement they laid themselves open to the accusation of "cold feet." That was a matter with which Miss Meadows would hardly have sympathised, but it was a very important matter to the chums of Cedar Creek.

As Bob Lawless remarked emphatically, they could not have the Hillcrest "galoots" crowing over Cedar Creek. That idea was not to be entertained for a moment.

But with an hour's detention to follow lessons, and a severe prohibition to visit Hillcrest at all, the chums were in a difficult position. Miss Meadows did not see the difficulty; but it was there all the same. The schoolmistress did not see eye to eye with her hopeful pupils.

Greatly as the chums respected the headmistress of Cedar Creek, they felt that in this matter they were bound to follow their own judgment.

But that was a matter requiring great care.

For it was certain that, if they visited Hillcrest after what Miss Meadows had said, there would be a storm in the event of the escapade being discovered. And it was not a light matter for a formal complaint to

be made to their parents by the school-mistress.

So that afternoon Frank Richards & Co. had plenty of food for thought, apart from the geography and grammar to which they were supposed just then to be devoting their attention.

When the school was dismissed, the three chums were left by themselves.

"I'll wait for you fellows," Algernon Beauclerc remarked, smiling a little as he surveyed the three doleful faces.

Vere Beauclerc shook his head. "No good hanging about for an hour, Algy," he said. "Better cut off home, and tell father I shall be late."

"All serene, then!" said Algy. And he cut off.

Frank Richards & Co. settled down dismally to their books. Miss Meadows was still busy at her desk, but otherwise the trio were alone in the big lumber school-room.

Miss Meadows came towards them after a few minutes. Her face was very severe.

"I will look in in an hour's time," she said. "Until then you will remain here and work at your grammar!"

"I—I say—" began Frank Richards. "That will do!"

The Canadian schoolmistress walked out, evidently in an uncompromising mood. Bob Lawless gave a dismal groan.

"Nice, ain't it?" "Rotten!" said Frank. "It won't do! We're landed here for an hour; and all the time Dicky Bird is waiting for us, and he will think we're afraid to keep our word!"

"We could hardly go, anyway, after what Miss Meadows has said!" remarked Vere Beauclerc hesitatingly.

Bob Lawless gave a snort. "We're bound to go. Miss Meadows won't hear of it."

"She might—" "I guess we shall have to chance it, then. We're not having Hillcrest crow over Cedar Creek!"

"Better get some work done," said Frank. "Oh dear!"

The chums settled down to work for ten minutes or so. But English grammar, interesting as the subject was, soon palled upon them.

Frank Richards was the first to look up. "I've got an idea," he remarked.

"About the conjugations?" asked Bob, with a faint grin.

"Blow the conjugations! About Hillcrest, I mean!" said Frank. "We can't have a shindy with Dicky Bird & Co. after what Miss Meadows has said. We're bound to obey her orders. But we've got to let Bird know how the matter stands. He will be waiting at Hillcrest, but he won't wait an hour."

"Nope." "We've got to get word to him that we're detained, and barred from Hillcrest," said Frank. "That's the way out. See?"

"What a brain!" grunted Bob Lawless. "You might have thought of that before, and Chunky or Algy could have taken the message. Now it can't be done!"

"There may be a chap still in the playground—" "Not likely!" "I'll look!"

After a glance at the door to make sure that it was shut, Frank Richards mounted on a desk, and looked out of the window.

Outside, the dusk was settling on the playground and the palisade, and the creek and the woods beyond.

There was no sign of a Cedar Creek fellow to be seen. Nobody had lingered about the school in the bitter winter evening, save the three unlucky youths who had no choice in the matter.

"Well?" grunted Bob, as Frank stepped down.

Frank shook his head. "I guess I could have told you so. Get on with your pesky strong and weak verbs!" growled the rancher's son.

But Frank Richards did not sit at his desk again. There was a determined expression upon his handsome face.

"I'm going over to Hillcrest," he said. "I want to catch Dicky Bird before he goes, and tell him."

"Aren't you detained, fathead? If you moscy out of the school-room, Miss Meadows will see you go."

"There's the window." "Oh!" said Bob.

"Miss Meadows won't be in here again till the hour's up," said Frank, who had thought it out. "I can be back by then, and she

will see me here all right. I can get over to Hillcrest and back in the time."

"You can't get your gee-gee out without being seen."

"I shall hoof it." "Then you won't do it in the time."

"Yes, I shall! I can sprint," said Frank. "I'll keep up speed all the way, and the same back. I can manage it. Give me a bunk up to the window."

"Slimmey may see you from his cabin," said Beauclerc doubtfully.

"It's too dusky now." "Well, I guess you can try," said Bob. "No good all of us going; some of us would be spotted. And we can't have a shindy over there, after what Miss Meadows has said. Dicky Bird will understand, if you tell him how we're fixed. Tell him, too, that some day we'll drop in and scalp that pesky headmaster of his!"

Frank Richards laughed. "Give me a bunk!" he said.

"What about your hat? It's in the lobby, and Miss Meadows will hear you if—"

"Never mind my hat! It's not snowing now!"

"All right!" Bob Lawless helped his cousin up to the window, and Frank climbed out. He dropped lightly to the ground outside.

"Vamoose, quick!" murmured Bob, from the window.

"Ta-ta!" Frank Richards ran off at once, keeping close to the lumber building in the gathering shadows.

Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc returned to their tasks. And occasionally they shifted their boots noisily on the plank floor, so that anyone passing the school-room door would hear them, and would know that the detained schoolboys were still there. But one of the detained trio was already far away.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Too Late!

FRANK RICHARDS kept close to the schoolhouse wall, skirting the building, towards the rear of the school enclosure. There, out of sight of the two masters' cabins, and of the schoolhouse windows, he climbed the fence and dropped outside.

He had succeeded in making his way out of the school enclosure unseen, and the open timber lay before him.

A few minutes more, and he was speeding among the leafless trees, en route for Hillcrest.

There was plenty of snow among the timber, and the straggling, leafless under-wood was caked with it. Frank brushed it off in clouds as he ran on. Well out of sight of the school, he ventured from the timber into the open trail, and ran on at renewed speed. The shadows settled deeper and deeper over the forest as he sped on tirelessly.

He was close by the spot where the path to Hillcrest branched off the Thompson

trail, when heavy footsteps fell upon his ears, coming from the direction of the town. Frank Richards halted at once. He did not want to be seen there by anyone who might mention the fact to Miss Meadows at a moment when he was supposed to be detained in the school-room at Cedar Creek. In a moment he had darted from the trail into the cover of the frosty trees. From this cover he looked out, waiting for the pedestrian to pass before he resumed his way. A burly form loomed up in the dusk. As it came closer, Frank Richards recognised Keno Kit, a member of the rough gang that had its headquarters at the Red Dog saloon in Thompson. Keno Kit was not exactly the fellow one would have chosen to meet on a dark and lonely trail at nightfall, and Frank was glad that he had taken cover as his eyes fell on the lowering, bulldog face of the ruffian. He waited for the man to pass, but, to his surprise, Keno Kit came to a halt almost opposite the big tree behind which Frank was in cover. For a moment Frank imagined that the ruffian had seen him, but Keno Kit was not looking in his direction. He turned in his tracks and stared back along the dusky trail towards Thompson, where lights were twinkling in the gloom. For a minute or two Keno Kit stood motionless, staring towards the town, as if in expectation of seeing someone appear on the trail. But no footsteps broke the silence. The ruffian moved at last, but he did not resume his way. He plunged into the timber a dozen yards from the spot where the amazed schoolboy stood behind the tree with bated breath. There was a crashing and a rustling as the ruffian forced his way in the underbush. He stopped at last, and Frank, who had listened intently, realised that Keno Kit, like himself, had been taking cover in the timber. The ruffian was hidden in the underwoods at the point where the Hillcrest path branched off from the main trail. What his object could possibly be in hiding himself there, Frank Richards could not even guess. Undoubtedly he was watching for someone to pass, but why was it a mystery? At all events, it was evident that he was settled there for the present, and did not intend to move, and that Frank Richards could not follow the Hillcrest path without passing under his watchful eyes. At present Keno Kit had no knowledge of his proximity, but if he came out into the path, the ruffian was certain to see him at once. Frank Richards stirred at last, but he did not emerge into the path. He had no desire to come into closer acquaintance with the most ruffianly member of the Red Dog crowd. He trod softly and silently away through the wood, avoiding the path, and approaching Hillcrest through the timber. Not till he was a good distance from the fork of the trail did he leave the trees behind and come out into the path by the gates of Hillcrest School. There he halted, with a muttered exclamation of disappointment. The school gates were closed for the night, and a column of smoke rising from a chimney was the only sign of life about the place. Dicky Bird & Co. evidently were gone. Probably Master Richard Bird had waited for some time for the Cedar Creek chums to arrive and make good their challenge, but he had tired of waiting and gone home with his friends. Frank Richards had arrived too late. "Rotten!" grunted Frank, as he stood in the snow and stared at the closed gates. He looked up and down the trail, but it was silent and deserted. If Dicky Bird & Co. had waited, they would have been in sight somewhere, but there was no sign of anyone near the school. The Hillcrest fellows had doubtless concluded that Frank Richards & Co. had failed to come up to the scratch, and had gone their way chucking, which was a very exasperating reflection to Frank. However, there was nothing to be done, and it was necessary to lose no time in returning to Cedar Creek. Frank Richards turned his back on the closed gates, and started down the trail. It was now quite dark, and only the glimmer of snow broke through the gloom that hung over the silent timber.

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As he neared the fork of the trail Frank paused, remembering the ruffian whom he had seen enconce himself in cover there.

It was only prudent to keep out of the way of the lawless "bulldozer," and Frank determined to strike through the timber again, and get out into the Thompson trail lower down.

But as he turned from the path there came a sudden sound from the trail ahead at the fork.

There was the sound of a fall, and a terrified yell, and then a voice, which Frank recognised as that of Mr. Peckover, the head-master of Hillcrest.

"Help! Help! Help!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Frank Richards to the Rescue!

"HELP!"

Frank Richards jumped. He knew Mr. Peckover's voice well enough, loud and shrill and terrified as it was at the present moment.

He had supposed that the Hillcrest master was in his house, but it was clear now that Mr. Peckover had been down to Thompson Town, and that trouble had befallen him on the way home.

And in a flash Frank realised the meaning of Keno Kit's mysterious movements.

The ruffian had seen Mr. Peckover leave Thompson for home, and had hurried ahead of him on the trail and ambushed him where the path turned off to Hillcrest.

Keno Kit's object, of course, was robbery. Probably his last dollar had gone on "Breewater" at the Red Dog, and he had adopted this method of replenishing the exchequer—not for the first time, it was certain.

And in case of resistance on the part of his victim, Keno Kit was not likely to be gentle in his methods. Robbery with violence was little to him, and he was prepared to use all the violence that was needed.

For a moment or two Frank Richards stood still, while the terrified cries of Ephraim Peckover rang in his ears from the darkness.

He had no love for the Hillcrest master. The bitter, suspicious man had caused him and his friends trouble more than once. But much as he disliked Mr. Peckover, he could not think of leaving him unaided in the grasp of a lawless ruffian. What made him hesitate chiefly was the thought that, if Mr. Peckover recognised him, the facts would come to Miss Meadows' knowledge—and she would know that he had broken detention and visited Hillcrest so soon after receiving her strict orders to keep away from the place.

But as the sounds of a struggle came to his ears, Frank Richards could not hesitate longer. He ran quickly down the path towards the scene.

In the dimness he made out faintly the two struggling forms.

Keno Kit had leaped from his ambush on the Hillcrest master, and borne him to the ground. Mr. Peckover was not a hero by any means, but he was struggling fiercely in the grasp of the ruffian's fist. It was the thought of being robbed that nerved him to resistance. Mr. Peckover did not like parting with money under any circumstances whatever.

"Quiet, you old fool!" came Keno Kit's savage voice, as he planted a knee on the struggling man's chest, and crushed him into the snow.

"Help! Help!"

"I guess—"

"Help!"

"By Jehosophat, I'll make you quiet if you don't let up!" growled the ruffian. "Pony up your dollars, you old idjit, and you won't get hurt!"

"Help! Help!"

Mr. Peckover still struggled and yelled. Keno Kit drew a revolver from his belt and grasped it by the barrel. He raised it, clubbed, over his victim's terrified eyes.

"Now let up!" he snarled. "Another howl, and I guess your silly skull will be cracked!"

"Help!"

"I guess you'll have it, then!"

Another second, and the savage blow would have descended, and Mr. Peckover would have lain stunned in the snow.

But Frank Richards had reached the spot by that time.

In the noise and excitement of the struggle, neither the footpad nor his victim had heard Frank's footsteps on the snowy trail. His arrival was quite unexpected.

It was fortunate for Frank, for the ruffian would certainly not have hesitated to turn the revolver on him, rather than be balked of his prey.

Frank came up with a breathless rush, as Keno Kit's arm was descending. Without stopping to think, he crashed his fist full upon the ruffian's bulldog jaw.

Keno Kit uttered a howl of surprise and pain as he reeled from off his victim, and lurched into the snow beside him.

Frank had given him a moment to recover, it would have gone hard with the plucky schoolboy. But he did not. As Keno Kit lurched over, Frank Richards piled on him, hitting out with all his strength. One fist crashed into the ruffian's eyes, the other followed it up, landing under the ear, and Keno Kit rolled in the snow, the revolver flying from his hand.

Frank caught the glint of it as it rolled, and sprang at it. A second, and it was in his grasp.

Mr. Peckover lay sprawling on his back in the snow, gasping for breath, too bewildered to know, for the time, quite what was happening.

The moment the revolver was in his hand his finger sought the trigger, and he fired.

The bullet crashed into the ground a foot from Keno Kit, as he sprawled and gasped and cursed.

Frank Richards did not aim at the ruffian. He wanted to avoid wounding him if he could, and his object was to scare him off.

Crack, crack!

The flashing of the revolver, and the bullets pattering about him, were enough for Keno Kit.

The ruffian squirmed away in the snow, howling:

"Let up! Let up! Don't shoot! I give in! Let up!"

Crack!

Frank fired again as the ruffian scrambled to his feet, six or seven yards away.

The bullet grazed Keno Kit's arm, tearing the sleeve, but missing him, as Frank intended that it should.

But it had come too close for the ruffian's taste; he had not the remotest idea that the marksman was intentionally missing him.

With a gasp he took to his heels.

His heavy footsteps pounded away down the trail, and Frank Richards sent another bullet over his head as he ran.

The last cartridge in the six-shooter he

kept for more serious use if the ruffian should return.

But Keno Kit was not thinking of returning.

The shooting at close quarters had been more than enough for him, and he was fleeing as fast as he could go, and his running footsteps died away in the distance.

Frank Richards, revolver in hand, watched the direction in which he had gone, and listened.

A few yards from him, Mr. Peckover was sitting up in the snow, pumping in breath.

In the darkness he could only dimly make out the figure of the schoolboy, whose back was to him.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Peckover. "Is—is he gone?"

Frank Richards was about to reply reassuringly, but he checked himself. Mr. Peckover would have recognised his voice.

Instead of answering, the Cedar Creek schoolboy moved further off in the darkness, still keeping his back to the gasping man.

Certainly, after what had happened, Frank Richards ought to have been able to count upon the gratitude of Ephraim Peckover; but he thought he knew the man too well for that. Mr. Peckover had never given him the impression of being capable of anything in the nature of kindly feelings, and Frank's only idea was to keep his identity unknown. He did not want Mr. Peckover's thanks, if thanks were intended, but he very much wanted to make sure that Miss Meadows would never learn that he had been to Hillcrest that evening.

"Who are you?" gasped Mr. Peckover, as he struggled slowly and painfully to his feet.

Frank Richards did not speak.

Without turning his head, he moved farther off down the path into the open trail.

The Hillcrest master stared after him, not understanding his action. He knew that the dimly seen schoolboy had saved him from robbery and serious injury, and for the moment, at least, he was feeling thankful and grateful, though possibly his feeling would have been modified if he had recognised in his rescuer the Cedar Creek fellow whom he especially disliked.

"Do you hear me?" he called out, in amazement. "You have saved my life—My dear boy, come here!"

Frank Richards grinned in the darkness.



FRANK RICHARDS TO THE RESCUE. Frank came up with a breathless rush, as Keno Kit's arm descended. Without stopping to think, he crashed his fist full upon the ruffian's bulldog jaw. The man uttered a howl of surprise and pain as he reeled off his victim, and lurched into the snow beside him. (See Chapter 4.)

He had never expected to hear Mr. Ephraim Peckover address him as a dear boy.

He did not turn back, however. Keno Kit was clean gone, and it was safe enough to leave Mr. Peckover alone; and Frank Richards started down the trail at a run in the direction of Cedar Creek School. The astonished Hillcrest master called after him several times; but Frank did not heed. In a few minutes Mr. Peckover's voice died away behind. In a state of great astonishment, Mr. Peckover turned from the spot and hurried on to Hillcrest. His rescuer was gone, and he was in a hurry to get into the shelter of his own walls.

**THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
All Serene!**

FRANK RICHARDS ran down the trail at top speed.

He paused only a moment to toss Keno Kit's revolver into the trees, and then ran on again.

There was no time to lose if he was to get back into the Cedar Creek school-room before the hour of detention was up.

His mission had been a failure. He had not succeeded in seeing Dicky Bird & Co. before they left for home. But he was not sorry that he had come. Unpleasant as Mr. Peckover was, Frank was glad that he had been at hand to render him aid in the hour of danger.

His only thought now was to get back to Cedar Creek, and to keep the whole occurrence a dead secret.

His feet seemed scarcely to touch the snowy ground as he raced on.

Cedar Creek loomed up in the darkness at last, and Frank skirted the palisade and climbed over it at the back. He dropped breathlessly into the playground.

Without pausing a moment, he hurried on to the schoolhouse.

From the window lamplight was glimmering, and against the lighted window he made out the outlines of two heads. Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclere were watching for his return—anxious for him, as the last minutes of the hour ticked away on the school-room clock.

"Here he is, by gum!" came in a mutter from Bob Lawless, as he heard Frank's panting breath below.

"Good!" muttered Beauclere. "Just in time, Frank!"

"Help me in!" gasped Frank Richards.

"Here you are!"

His chums grasped his hands from above and dragged him up.

Frank Richards sprawled through the window, and it was closed after him. He stood pumping in breath after he was safely landed in the school-room.

"Sit down!" muttered Bob anxiously. "You're only just in time, old scout. There's only two minutes more."

"My hat!" murmured Frank.

He dropped into his seat at his desk, and took up a pen.

He had been successful; but it had been a narrow escape. Five minutes more would have been too late.

But when the school-room door opened, and Miss Meadows came in, she found three schoolboys bending over their tasks, industriously at work.

Frank Richards & Co. rose respectfully to their feet as the Canadian schoolmistress came up the long school-room.

"You may go now, my boys," said Miss Meadows gently.

"Thank you, ma'am!" said Bob Lawless demurely.

"I am sorry to have detained you," said Miss Meadows. "I am sure that you will realise that it was by your own fault."

"Oh, yes, Miss Meadows!" said the three schoolboys together, in a dutiful chorus.

"Good-night, my boys!"

"Good-night, ma'am!"

Frank Richards & Co. left the school-room. They took their hats from the lobby, and started across the playground to the corral for their horses.

"By gum!" murmured Bob Lawless. "I wonder what Miss Meadows would say if she knew?"

"I wonder!" said Frank, laughing.

"Did you see Dicky Bird?"

"No. The fellows were all gone," answered Frank.

Bob gave a grunt.

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"Rotten! All the trouble and risk for nothing, then! I guess I'll look for Dicky in Thompson on Saturday, and I'll explain to him."

The chums of Cedar Creek led out their horses, and Blake Sam closed the school gates after them. They mounted in the trail, and started for home.

"You were a jolly long time gone, if Dicky Bird wasn't there, Frank," said Beauclere, as they trotted away on the shadowy trail. "What did you hang it out for like that?"

"Couldn't be helped," said Frank. "I didn't see any of the Hillcrest fellows, but I landed into trouble."

"Not Peckover?" exclaimed Bob Lawless, in dismay.

"I've seen him."

"Oh, Jerusalem! Then he'll be over at Cedar Creek in the morning, to tell Miss Meadows you've been round Hillcrest again, and all the fat will be in the fire!"

"It's all right; he didn't recognise me," said Frank reassuringly. "I was jolly careful not to let him see my chivvy."

"Sure of that?"

"Yes."

"All O.K., then," said Bob, in great relief. "Miss Meadows would be as mad as a hatter if she knew. It would make no end of trouble if she sent a complaint to popper. He would think we were to blame."

"Ha, ha! I think he would!"

"But what happened at Hillcrest, then?" asked Beauclere.

Frank Richards explained.

Bob gave a whistle as he concluded.

"Well, you're always landing into trouble of some sort, and no mistake!" he said.

"I suppose it wouldn't have mattered very much if you'd left that bulldozer to knock Peckover on the head. Still, I guess you had to chip in. Lucky he didn't recognise you."

"Even Peckover wouldn't have made trouble, after Franky pulled him out of a footpad's claws like that," said Beauclere.

"Rot! Peckover was born to make trouble. He wouldn't care what Franky had done for him," grunted Bob.

"It would be rotten—"

"Well, Peckover is always doing something rotten, isn't he?"

"Well, yes, that's so," admitted Beauclere. "It's just as well that he didn't recognise Frank."

"I was careful of that," said Frank Richards reassuringly. "He has no idea who came to his help. I saw only my back—in the dark, too—and I think he was too scared to see anything very clearly, too. I dare say he will think it was one of his own boys, if he thinks about it at all. I don't suppose he was thinking about anything but his own precious skin!"

"You bet!" said Bob.

And the chums of Cedar Creek rode homeward, with the happy conviction that nothing more would be heard of the affair. But for once Frank Richards & Co. had not quite done Mr. Peckover justice. Sour and suspicious as he was, that unpleasant gentleman was not wholly incapable of grateful feelings; and Mr. Peckover's unexpected gratitude for services rendered was destined to have results not in the least anticipated at present by the chums of Cedar Creek.

THE END.

(There will be another roaring Wild West tale of the School in the Backwoods next Tuesday. Don't miss it!)



THE PLUCK OF THE CURLEWS!

(Continued from page 6.)

Tom Merry was hoisted on the shoulders of Lowther and Blake. He gripped the branch, and drew himself upon it. Then an exclamation of triumph was heard.

"Sign!"

Blake scrambled up after his leader.

"What is it?"

"Look at that!"

It was a broken twig on the bough, out of sight from the ground, but plainly to be seen now.

"He pulled himself up here!" said Tom, his eyes ablaze with excitement. "Come on!"

He crawled along the bough. In a few moments he reached the main trunk. Below, growing thickly round the huge tree, was an impenetrable mass of thickets. The general had certainly not descended there. If he had been there at all he had gone back the way he had come. Then where was the cup? The Curlews felt that they were close upon success now.

Tom Merry & Co. crawled into the branches of the tree. Every recess was scanned in vain. Then Tom crawled back to the low branch, and scanned the massive trunk below. He reached down as low as he could, and dragged back the brambles that hid the trunk.

His hand had found a hollow in the old trunk, hidden hitherto by the brambles. His eager fingers glided in the hollow, and closed upon a hard object of metal! He drew it out, and held it aloft, and there was a glimmer of metal in the sunrays that glinted through the foliage.

The Curlews, clinging to the boughs, burst into a cheer.

"The cup! Hurrah! Hip-hip-hurrah!"

"The bugle, Blake, old man!"

"Sound the loud timbre!" grinned Monty Lowther.

Blake grinned, and put the bugle to his lips.

Ta-ra-ra-ra-tara!

The bugle-blast rang through the wood, to tell the searching scouts that the hunt was over, and that the prize was found. Tom Merry & Co. scrambled along the branch again, and dropped from it, and in the glade Blake sounded the bugle again. From all sides came the scouts now, eager to discover who was the victor, and to see the cup.

"Tom Merry!" exclaimed Gordon Gay, as he came panting up. "You've got it?"

"Behold!" laughed Tom Merry.

"My 'at!" said Grimes. "You've done it!"

"The Curlews win!" chortled Blake.

"Hurrah for the giddy Curlews!"

"Hip-hip-hurrah!"

The hunt was over, and Tom Merry & Co. had triumphed.

The St. Jim's scouts marched home, and the Wolves and the Kangaroos and the Jackals rejoiced almost as much as the Curlews, for, at least, the much-coveted trophy had come to St. Jim's.

The Curlews had won the cup, and they rejoiced. And that evening there was a tremendous celebration of the victory, in which all the scouts of St. Jim's joined, and the Scouts' Cup reposed in a place of honour in Tom Merry's study, for ever afterwards the proudest possession of the Curlews!

THE END.

(There will be another Grand Long Complete Story, dealing with the thrilling adventures of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's, entitled: "The Gypsy's Warning!" by Martin Clifford, in next Tuesday's Grand Issue.)

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