

ON THE TRAIL OF THE OUTLAW! Whilst the Thompson Valley is still buzzing with excitement over the daring return of the notorious bandit, FIVE-HUNDRED-DOLLAR JONES, Frank Richards makes a discovery which leads to a strange climax!



Do you know the Cheery Chums of Cedar Creek, the Lumber School of the Backwoods? They are here again this week . . . read of their amazing adventures below!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Disappointment for Chunky!

"YOU fellows heard?" yelled Chunky Todgers. Chunky was simply bursting with news when Frank Richards & Co. arrived at Cedar Creek School on Monday morning.

He came along the trail to meet them in order to be the first to impart the startling information.

The three chums chuckled.

As a matter of fact, they had been before Chunky Todgers on this occasion in getting the news—a long way before.

But Frank Richards made a sign to his chums, as he pulled in his horse, and answered Todgers gravely.

"Heard what?" he asked.

"The news—it's no end exciting!" gasped Chunky. "I thought you hadn't heard—you fellows never hear anything!"

"But what is it?" asked Bob Lawless, taking his cue from Frank.

"What's up?" inquired Vere Beauclerc. "Tell us, Chunky, like a good fellow. You're always in the know."

Chunky Todgers grinned complacently. He rather prided himself upon being always in the know. And now that he had excited the interest of his auditors, he was inclined to keep them in suspense a little.

"I guess I always get in on the ground floor," he said. "Precious little goes on in the Thompson Valley without me knowing."

"Well, what's happened now?" grinned Frank Richards. "Is Black Sam better now he's had the doctor?"

"Oh, he's much the same."

"Has the new odd-job man been on a bender?" inquired Bob Lawless. Chunky sniffed.

"Both the new man! I'm not talking about Jake Hooker," he said. "It's something more interesting than that."

"Miss Meadows—"

"Tain't about Miss Meadows."

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"My hat!" said Frank. "Have they elected you to the State Legislature? Is that it, Chunky?"

"They might do worse," retorted Chunky. "But, look here, you fellows, what about Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones the—"

"Who's that?" asked Frank innocently.

Chunky Todgers gave a snort.

"Don't you remember Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones?" he hooted.

Frank Richards winked at his comrades.

"I seem to remember the name," he remarked thoughtfully. "Who is he, Chunky? Not a new fellow in the school, is he?"

"You silly jay!" gasped Chunky Todgers. "I'm talking about Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones, the 'Frisco outlaw—the man who held up this section last year, and was roped in by old man Beauclerc at the Occidental Hotel in Thompson."

"Oh, I remember! What about him!"

"Guess!" said Chunky mysteriously. "You'd better tell us," said Frank, shaking his head.

"Well," said Todgers, speaking very slowly in order to linger out the suspense and add to the thrill of his startling communication, "Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones—"

"Well?"

"He's come back!"

"Come back!" repeated Frank Richards.

"I thought he went to prison after he was captured that time—"

"So he did—life sentence."

"Then how can he have come back?"

"He's got away, of course."

"Oh, I see—he's got away!" remarked Bob Lawless. "And he's come back to the Thompson Valley to give us a look in. That's kind of him."

"Kind of him!" hooted Chunky. "I tell you, the galoots in Thompson are talking about nothing else. The sheriff has been out with his men all day Sunday looking for him. He held up the

post-wagon from Kamloops on Saturday afternoon."

"Did he?" ejaculated Beauclerc.

"He did," said Chunky Todgers impressively. "Stopped Hank Hoskins on the trail, and robbed the post—five thousand dollars consigned to the bank in Thompson. What do you think of that?"

Frank and Bob grinned. As they had been in the post-wagon when it was held up by the 'Frisco outlaw, they naturally knew all about it before Joe Todgers did. But Master Todgers was not yet aware of that.

"You can grin!" said Chunky warmly. "But it's true. Don't you believe me, you jays?"

"Well, it's rather surprising, isn't it?" said Bob Lawless. "Sure you've got it right, Chunky?"

"Yep! Hank Hoskins was telling the tale in every saloon in Thompson on Saturday night," said Todgers. "The galoots all wanted to know about it, and Hank went all round telling the news. He woke up in the calaboose the next morning, and I guess he had a head on him like a pumpkin. It's true, every word. The post-wagon was stopped at the timber belt between Silver Creek and Thompson—only a few miles from your cabin, Beauclerc."

"Not really?" said Beauclerc.

"Yes, really! Hank Hoskins had two passengers on board—I don't know whom, but I remember there were two passengers—two kids, I believe. They were held up by the rustler, and the wagon was robbed, and Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones sent a cheekey message to the sheriff. I can tell you, we're going to have lively times in the Thompson Valley with that 'Frisco bulldozer cavorting around," said Chunky Todgers impressively. "Fancy you fellows not knowing! You never hear anything at the ranch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Chunky Todgers warmly. "Nothing to cackle at that I can see."

"You see," explained Frank Richards, "Bob and I were the two kids in the post-wagon——"

"Eh?"
"And we met Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones," grinned Bob Lawless. "You're late this time, Chunky!"

"Oh!"
The three chums trotted on to the gate of Cedar Creek chuckling, leaving Chunky Todgers standing in the trail staring after them.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The New Man!

CEDAR CREEK SCHOOL was in a state of excitement that morning.

Even Miss Meadows, the head-mistress, and Mr. Slimmey and Mr. Shepherd, the masters, shared in the excitement to some extent.

The reappearance of Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones in the valley had caused excitement everywhere, and little else was talked of on the ranches and the fruit-farms, and at the claims up the river.

Thompson was one of the outlying settlements of British Columbia. It was many a long mile from the railway, the telegraph, and the telephone. Its chief communication with civilisation was the post-wagon that ran down to Kamloops, on the Canadian Pacific line, twice a week. But it was an orderly and law-abiding place, as a rule. "Rustlers" and "bulldozers," common enough south of the border, were rare in the Canadian West. The previous advent of Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones—so called from the reward set on his head in his native States—had stirred the valley to great excitement, and it had been a never-to-be-forgotten occasion when the famous outlaw was "rounded up" in the poker-room at the Occidental.

And now he had come back.

For ten years or more the name of Mr. Jones had been notorious in the Western States, in association with hold-ups and train robberies. He seemed to have made his native land too hot to hold him, and had crossed into Canada. But there his career had been short. Nobody in the Thompson Valley had expected to hear of him again.

But they were hearing of him now—in fact, they were hearing of hardly anything else.

Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones was a name upon every lip.

Sheriff Henderson and his men were searching for him far and wide—in the woods and up in the Thompson hills, and in the lonely, unsettled wastes beyond White Pine.

But no trace of him had been found.

After the robbery of the post-wagon he had vanished on his horse, and no sign of him was found—as yet, at least.

During morning lessons that day the Cedar Creek boys and girls were thinking quite as much of Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones as of the lessons.

Indeed, Chunky Todgers, being asked by Miss Meadows to name the first Prime Minister of Canada, answered, "Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones!" without stopping to think, whereat there was a chortle in the class.

After lessons the Cedar Creek scholars came out of the lumber schoolhouse, and Mr. Jones was the one topic of discussion in the playground. But Frank Richards & Co. were thinking of another matter.

"Let's drop in and see how Black Sam is getting on," Frank Richards suggested, and, his chums assenting, they crossed the playground to Samuel Wellington Washington's cabin.

Outside the little cabin by the stable an old-looking, grey-bearded man was seated on a log, engaged in setting a saw. It was Jake Hooker, the new man who had taken Black Sam's place while the negro was incapacitated for duty.

Hooker glanced up and touched his hat to the schoolboys.

"Mornin'!" he said cheerfully.

"Good-morning!" said Frank Richards, with a rather curious look at the grey-bearded pilgrim. "Is Sam about yet?"

"You'll find him inside," said Hooker.

"Thanks!"

The chums of Cedar Creek passed into the cabin.

Black Sam was seated there with his woolly head in bandages. He grinned a greeting to the chums. Samuel Wellington Washington had had a severe blow on the head, but his skull was of African stoutness, and he was recovering from the damage.

"Feeling better, Sammy?" asked Bob Lawless.

"Me getting on orlright, Mass' Bob," answered Sam. "Nebber go on a bender agin. Soon as I see well I see going to de mission to swear off."

"Time you did, my black tulip," said Bob. "If you'd been sober the other night you wouldn't have got knocked on the head, Sam. Do you know who it was rapped you on the cabeza?"

Black Sam shook his bandaged head. "Nebber see him," he answered. "He come behind poor ole nigger."

"I guess you couldn't have seen him if he'd come in front, after mopping up the tanglefoot at the Red Dog," said Bob severely.

Sam grinned.

"How much did he clear you out of?" asked Frank.

"Three dollar!" said Sam. "All poor ole nigger had left. Dunno who did it, and sheriff dunno."

"Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones, perhaps," grinned Bob. "You know that Frisco bulldozer is up here again."

Sam chuckled.

"Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones nebber trouble about poor old nigger with three dollars," he said.

"Well, you're getting a rest now," said Frank. "How do you get on with the new man—Hooker?"

Sam's black face became graver.

His expression showed that he did not care very much for the new man, who had relieved him of his job.

"Berry good of him to carry me home when he found me in de timber," he said. "Ole nigger much obliged to him."

"There's room for both of you in this cabin," remarked Bob.

"Oh, yes, sah! But I see glad when I see well, and Hooker go after nother job!" said Sam. "Me no like guns in de cabin——"

"Guns!" repeated Bob, in surprise.

"Mass' Hooker keep guns in his room," said Sam. "Me no like dat. What does Mass' Hooker want gun for? No let Black Sam come into his room. Swear awful when I see looking in. Much obliged to Mass' Hooker, but I see glad when Mass' Hooker go, you bet!"

"Which is Hooker's room?" asked Frank.

The negro pointed to a door at the back. There were only three rooms in the log cabin, all on the ground floor.

"No go in," he said. "Door locked."

"What on earth is the door locked for?"

"Mass' Hooker always keep his door locked," said Sam sourly. "P'raps he tink ole nigger steal. Young massa know ole Sam honest."

The schoolboys glanced towards the door of the back room, but did not approach it. Jake Hooker's room was no affair of theirs; but they could not help feeling surprised at Black Sam's statement. A locked door in a log cabin was surprising enough. Jake Hooker had been tramping in search of work when he secured a temporary job at Cedar Creek School, and he could not be supposed to possess anything of great value. And Samuel Wellington Washington was as honest as the day.

It was evident that Hooker had succeeded in giving deep offence to the negro, in spite of Sam's gratitude to him for the service he had rendered in carrying him home after his injury.

The schoolboys left the cabin a few minutes later. Jake Hooker was still setting the saw outside. He glanced up at them with a pair of keen, almost rat-like eyes. Frank Richards paused to speak to him.

"Getting on all right at Cedar Creek, Hooker?" he asked.

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"Sure!" answered Jake.
"I suppose you'll be travelling when Sam is well?"

Hooker nodded.
"Yep. I'm looking for a job now," he answered. "Miss Meadows is kind enough to give me leave to go after any chance that turns up. I hope to get a job in Thompson soon."

"Oh!" said Frank. "I suppose you'd been after a job when we met you on the train Saturday evening?"

"That's so. Tramped over to Cedar Camp," said Hooker.
"Nothing doing there?"

"Nope."
"Come on, Franky!" said Beauclerc. Jake's file was making a horrid scraping on the teeth of the saw, and it was setting the nerves of the Cherub on edge. But Frank did not heed his chum's admonition.

"I should think there would be jobs going in Cedar Camp, Hooker," he said, with an air of interest. "The lumbermen there are pretty busy now."

Hooker shook his head.
"I asked up and down round the camp," he said. "They don't seem to want anybody there."

The file scraped horribly, and Beauclerc caught Frank by the arm and fairly dragged him away.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Frank's Suspicion!

"THIS way, said Frank.
He headed for the corral, and his chums followed him in some surprise.

"Going for a ride?" asked Bob.
"Yes; if you fellows will come."
"Oh, all right! We can't go far if we're getting back for dinner in the schoolhouse."

"All serene!"
The three scholars led their horses out on the trail and mounted. Frank Richards led the way.

"Not going home, Frank?" asked Bob, in surprise.

"No. Let's ride over to Cedar Camp."
"We sha'n't get back for dinner, then."

"We can get some grub there."
"Look here, Frank, what's the stunt?" demanded Bob.

"I'll tell you as we go," answered Frank.

The schoolboys rode off at a good pace under the leafy branches that shaded the trail.

Frank Richards' brows were knitted in deep thought, and his chums glanced at him several times in great surprise. Frank seemed in no hurry to speak, however, and the trio turned into the trail that ran past the Beauclercs' cabin, on the edge of the timber, and rode on towards Cedar Camp across the plain.

"You haven't told us what we're going to Cedar Creek for yet, Frank," said Vere Beauclerc at last, as the lumber camp came in sight.

"We're going to make inquiries," answered Frank, at last.

"About what?"
"Jake Hooker."

"My only hat! Why?"
"He said he was looking for work in Cedar Camp on Saturday afternoon," answered Frank.

"What does it matter to us?"
"Lots, very likely."

"Blest if I can see what you're driving at!" said Bob Lawless. "You seemed to have a down on Hooker when he came to Cedar Creek last week. I don't see any harm in him. I suppose

that if he said he was looking for work at the camp, he was looking for it."

"That's what I want to know."
"Why?"

Frank Richards paused.
"I won't tell you yet," he said at length. "Wait till we know a little more. Here we are!"

The chums rode into Cedar Camp, and stopped at the Continental Hotel. The landlord from that far from palatial building—in spite of its high-sounding title—was sitting on a bench outside in his shirtsleeves, smoking a short black pipe. He nodded to the schoolboys as they dismounted.

Frank Richards & Co. joined him on the bench. From inside came the musical clink of glasses, washed in the bar by the Chinese bar-keeper. After a few remarks on the weather, and on the lumber business, Frank Richards came to the subject that was in his mind. He was quite assured that if a man seeking work had asked for a job up and down Cedar Camp on Saturday afternoon, the landlord of the Continental would know about it.

But the landlord did not know.
"Never heard of the galoot," he said. "Who is he?"

"Old-looking man, with a grey beard," said Frank. "He's in a temporary job at our school now, but he says he's anxious to get something for the summer. You've not seen him?"

"I reckon he's been giving you chin-wag," said the landlord. "If a galoot was cavorting up and down this 'ere camp looking for a job, I reckon I'd know. Why, he'd come to the Continental first thing, I reckon. Besides, there's plenty of work to be had here now, with the lumber coming on. They'd take on any man with two hands at Simpson's yard. If he can work, and he's willing to work, there's no need for him to ask twice in Cedar Camp at this time of the year. I guess he's been chewing the rag, and he don't want work!"

That was all Frank Richards wanted to know.

He had suspected it already, and now he was sure.

The chums went into the log hotel to lunch, as they had missed their dinner at Cedar Creek.

It was not till they were riding out of the camp again that Frank Richards referred to the subject uppermost in all their minds.

"I thought it would turn out like that," he said. "It seems that I was right, you chaps."

"But I don't savvy," said Bob, mystified. "The galoot ain't bound to get a job if he don't want to. Why should he make out he was looking for a job, if he isn't?"

"That's what he's done?"
"Sure! But why?"

Frank Richards paused.
"I think I'm going to surprise you," he said. "You remember I thought, when that man came to Cedar Creek, that I'd seen him before somewhere?"

"I remember you said so."
"I didn't know his face, but I thought I knew his eyes," said Frank. "He's got rather uncommon sharp eyes—a good bit like a rat's."

"Well, he can't help that," said Bob. "I'd seen a man before with eyes like that," said Frank.

"I dare say."
"And I saw a man again with eyes like that—on Saturday."

Bob gave a start.
"Saturday!" he said.

"When the post-wagon was stopped on the prairie trail," said Frank Richards quietly.

"Frank!"
"Do you guess what I mean now?"
"You're speaking of—of—"
"Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones!" said Frank Richards quietly.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Put to the Test!

BOB LAWLESS pulled in his horse. "Frank!" he gasped.

The rancher's son stared at his chum in blank astonishment. Vere Beauclerc halted, too.

"You're dreaming, Frank!" he said.
"Well, look at it," said Frank. "Black Sam was knocked on the head on his way home from Thompson last week. Hooker found him on the trail and carried him home. Perhaps it was a good turn; perhaps he knocked poor old Sam on the head himself, just to get that chance. After what he'd done, as Sam wasn't able to do his work, he could count on being taken on as a temporary man, as he was looking for work."

"Yes; but why should he want—"
"That's what I'm coming to. You remember Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones stunt when he was here before. He lived in Thompson under another name, and swanked about at the Occidental Hotel, while the sheriff was hunting for him in the mountains. Just the trick he would play again if he could. It's the safest way. But he couldn't play exactly the same game again. Suppose he got himself up as a man out of work, and found a job in some quiet spot like Cedar Creek School—"

"Oh!"
"That would explain the whole bizney about Sam. And as he's supposed to be looking for a job, when Sam gets well, he's got a ready excuse for being away from the school whenever he chooses."

"But—"
"He was away on Saturday afternoon, as we knew, at the time the post-wagon was held up. We met him on the trail—on foot. We were surprised to find him on foot so far from here. He's explained to-day that he'd been over to Cedar Camp, looking for work. We've found out that he hadn't."

"That's so," agreed Bob thoughtfully.
"Why should he tell lies like that if he's got nothing to hide?"

"Blessed if I know."
"Of course, he doesn't know I suspect him, and never dreamed that I should ride over to Cedar Camp to inquire. It was a good enough yarn for you fellows."

Bob grinned.
"Quite so, old scout. Fire away."
"Well, what was he doing on Saturday afternoon, that he was bound to tell a pack of lies about? I believe that he was holding us up on the prairie trail—at least, I suspect it. You heard what Black Sam said. He keeps a revolver in his room—Sam's seen it. He keeps his door locked all the time. Why? What is there in his room that anybody mustn't see?"

"Hum! What do you think, then?"
"A good many things, if he is Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones—among them, the five thousand dollars he robbed from the post-wagon on Saturday."

"Pshaw!"
"But the outlaw was mounted when he stopped the post-wagon," said Beauclerc. "Hooker was on foot when you met him going back to the school."

"He couldn't take his horse there. Having a horse wouldn't agree with his yarn of tramping looking for work. Besides, he wouldn't want it seen—it might be recognised. Of course, he keeps his horse hidden somewhere in the timber."

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Bob Lawless whistled. "I suppose it's possible," he said. "But—but it sounds awfully steep, Franky."

"I know it does. But to come down to facts, we know that Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones is somewhere in the valley, and can't be found; and it's just such a trick as he played last time he was here. Only it's safer this time—less in the public view."

"He would have to vamoose when Sam gets well."

"That won't be for a few weeks, and, besides, Sam may get another knock on the head by that time."

"Oh, Frank!"

"If he is the 'Frisco outlaw, he wouldn't hesitate at that—or at pitching the poor old nigger into the creek, for that matter," said Frank.

Bob Lawless whistled.

"I guess it's steep," he said. "But—but I suppose it's possible. I know he's got eyes like the Jones man; but—but Jones is clean-shaved, and this galoot is as hairy as a gorilla."

"Exactly. I'm going to see whether his hairiness is genuine, and that will settle it," said Frank Richards. "If he's really got a big beard, he's not the man—Jones can't have grown a long beard since we saw him on the trail on Saturday."

"Ha, ha! No!"

"But if it comes off——" said Frank.

"But—but you can't walk up to a man and yank at his beard!" exclaimed Bob Lawless, aghast. "Dash it all, Frank——"

"I sha'n't do that. But it can be managed somehow—it's got to be," said Frank Richards. "Now we'd better be getting back, or we shall be late for lessons."

"Right-ho!"

The three chums rode back to Cedar Creek School in a very thoughtful mood.

Astounded as Bob and Beaulerc had been by Frank Richards' startling suspicion, it grew more probable to their minds as they thought over it. At all events, it could not be denied that Jake Hooker was a more or less suspicious character, and it was evidently advisable to look into the matter.

The schoolbell was ringing for afternoon lessons when the three chums arrived at the school.

"Just in time, you jays!" called out Chunky Todgers, as they hurried towards the schoolhouse. "Where have you been?"

"Looking for Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones," answered Bob Lawless, with a grin.

Todgers chuckled.

"Draw it mild!" he answered.

Frank Richards & Co. went into the school-room with the rest. Frank glanced towards Black Sam's cabin as he went, and caught sight of Jake Hooker, industriously splitting logs.

Frank was thinking out his problem during lessons. He had made up his mind to put the truth of his suspicions to the test, but it was not an easy matter. Miss Meadows spoke to him rather sharply once or twice that afternoon. Frank's thoughts were elsewhere, and the Canadian schoolmistress little guessed where they were.

It was a great relief to Frank when lessons were over, and he came out with his chums. Bob Lawless looked at him rather quizzically.

"Well, what's the game now?" he asked. "Are we going home?"

"Not yet," answered Frank.

"Lead on, then, and we'll follow!"



DISCOVERED! Frank Richards' hand closed over the beard as he fell to the ground with the man. The beard came off in his hand, and there was a yell of amazement from the boys. "Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones!" The ruffian, almost winded by the shock, sat on the ground, dazed.

(See Chapter 5.)

said Bob. "Are you going to borrow Shepherd's rifle, and hold up Jake at the muzzle of it, while the Cherub and I tug at his whiskers?"

"Ass!" said Frank, while Beaulerc chuckled.

"There he is now," said Bob, with a nod in the direction of Black Sam's cabin.

Jake Hooker was standing outside the cabin, talking to Mr. Slimmey, who had strolled across to speak a friendly word with him. The grey-bearded pilgrim was stroking his long beard as he talked to the young master. Frank looked at the man keenly and suspiciously. If he was in disguise, Frank had to admit that he was playing his part remarkably well.

"We'll hang around till Slimmey's gone," said Frank, in a low voice. "Then you fellows chase me, and I'll run into him by accident——"

"Into Slimmey?"

"No, ass—into Hooker!"

"Oh, all right!" said Bob, with a grin. "But look out! Black Sam says he swears, and if you crash him over he may shock you."

"Fathead!"

Mr. Slimmey walked away after a few minutes, and Jake Hooker remained, filling a pipe. Frank gave his chums a significant look.

There was a sudden whoop from Bob Lawless, and he rushed at Frank, who took to his heels and dashed across the playground. Vere Beaulerc joined in the pursuit, shouting.

Hooker glanced at them carelessly, as they came tearing and whooping in his direction.

Frank was dashing towards him at top speed, as if to escape from his pur-

suers, and there was nothing to indicate that the sudden outbreak was not a schoolboy game.

Frank looked as if he would pass a dozen feet from Jake Hooker, and the man did not shift his position.

But, close at hand, Frank swerved, and headed straight for the grey-bearded pilgrim, as if running blindly without seeing the man standing in his path.

"Hyer, look out!" ejaculated Hooker.

But Frank Richards did not look out. In another second, almost in the same moment that the words left the grey-beard pilgrim's lips, he crashed into him.

Crash!

There was an angry yell from Jake Hooker, as he went sprawling under the impact. He landed in a sitting position on the ground, gasping, and Frank sprawled over him, catching at him, and at his grey board!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Flight of the Outlaw!

"GREAT Scott!" yelled Bob Lawless.

Frank's hand closed on the grey beard as he sprawled over Jake Hooker.

If the beard held, certainly Jake was likely to be hurt, and in that case there would have been ample apologies forthcoming.

But the beard did not hold.

It came off in Frank's grasp so suddenly that he fell back with it in his hand, and sat on the ground.

With the beard there also came off the

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moustache and the shaggy whiskers, and the rascal's disguise only the shaggy grey eyebrows remained.

But the eyebrows did not disguise the dark, clean-shaven face. Recognition was easy now.

"Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones!" gasped Beauclerc.

"Oh!" gasped Frank.

He had proved the truth of his suspicions so suddenly and completely that he was astounded. Suspicious as he had been, he had not been certain, and he was taken quite aback by the result.

"Jones!" panted Beauclerc.

The ruffian, almost winded by the shock, sat on the ground, dazed for the moment, and perhaps not realising at once that he was known. For a moment or two the schoolboys and the outlaw stared at one another, equally dazed.

"Help!"

But the rascal was quick to recover.

He sprang to his feet, his teeth clenched and his rat-like eyes glittering.

"Help here!" roared Bob Lawless. "It's Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones! Help! Help!"

Frank Richards scrambled up. The three schoolboys closed in on the ruffian, but they stopped as a revolver glistened in his hand.

"Back!" he rapped out, between his teeth.

"Bless my soul!" It was Mr. Slimmey's voice. "What—what—"

Crack!

Frank Richards sprang away as Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones levelled the revolver at him and fired.

The bullet missed him by less than a foot.

"Cover!" panted Bob.

The schoolboys leaped into the cover of the wood-pile close at hand. Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones did not pursue them. He had no time then to think of useless vengeance.

He rushed to Black Sam's cabin, and thrust at the door; but the door was already barred against him. He beat on it furiously with the butt of his revolver.

The ruffian almost foamed with rage at the barred door. His plunder, evidently, was in the room in the cabin, and he had hoped to seize upon it ere he fled. But the barred door settled that matter for him. He had no time to deal with it.

"Oh, if I only had a gun!" groaned Bob Lawless. "If—if I'd only believed you were right, Franky, I'd have had a shooter handy—"

"Here comes Shepherd!"

Mr. Shepherd came running out of his cabin, rifle in hand. Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones, with a furious curse, turned from the barred door and ran. He had given up the thought of his booty. He was seeking now only to save his skin. Mr. Shepherd threw the rifle to his shoulder.

"Stop!" he shouted.

The outlaw, with a snarl, turned upon him, and his revolver rang out. Mr. Shepherd pulled the trigger at the same moment.

Crack! Crack!

The young master staggered, but recovered himself at once. The outlaw gave a howl, and the red was seen streaking down his dark cheek. The rifle-shot had grazed his face. Mr. Shepherd's hat flew off from his head with a bullet-hole through it.

Frank Richards sprang to his feet, grasping a billet from the wood-pile. The outlaw was about to pull the trigger a second time, when the billet crashed on his shoulder. He staggered, and the

(Continued on the next page.)

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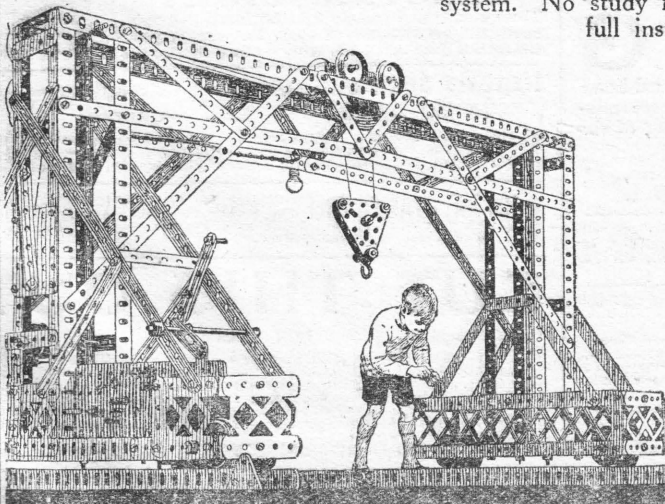
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(Continued from page 27.)

shot from his revolver glanced on the ground.

The next moment he was running away.

Mr. Shepherd was reloading his rifle. As the outlaw ran, there was a whooping behind him; a dozen Cedar Creek fellows rushed in excited pursuit. He did not heed them. He dashed into the corral, and dragged out the nearest horse, which happened to be Chunky Todgers' fat pony. He threw himself

on the animal's back, and drove it with savage blows into a gallop.

Clatter, clatter, clatter!
"My pony!" yelled Chunky Todgers from the shelter of the schoolhouse porch.

Clatter, clatter!
Mr. Shepherd's rifle was at his shoulder again. It rang out sharply as the outlaw dashed through the gateway.

But the pony, galloping frantically under the outlaw's savage blows, cleared the gateway in time, and Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones was gone!

Cedar Creek School dispersed that afternoon in a state of the wildest excitement. Bob Lawless rode at break-neck speed to Thompson with the news, and the sheriff and his men were soon in hot pursuit of the outlaw. Chunky Todgers' pony was found loose a few miles from the school, a pretty plain indica-

tion that the outlaw had another steed concealed in the timber, and had taken to it. In Black Sam's cabin, when it was searched, were found the five thousand dollars taken from the post-wagon the previous Saturday, as well as other plunder. That night and the following day armed men were seeking by every trail for the outlaw, but they did not find him. Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones, driven from his cunning hiding-place, was at large, and the chums of Cedar Creek had not yet done with him.

THE END.

(Now that Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones is at large again, and his clever hiding-place discovered by Frank Richards, what will happen to the plucky Cedar Creek chums, who are his deadly enemies? Don't miss reading next Tuesday's grand long complete Backwoods tale, entitled: "Trailing the Outlaw!")

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