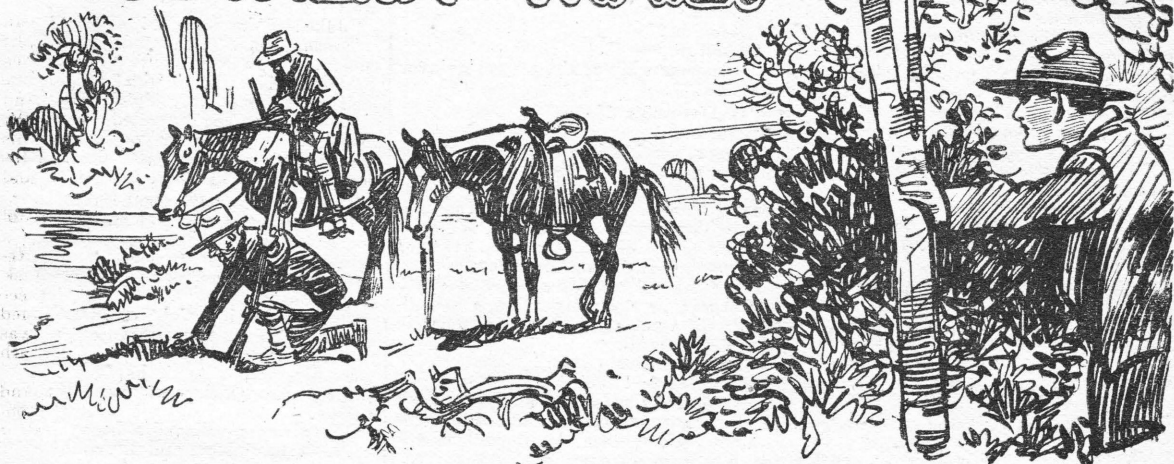


TRACKED BY RUSTLERS! Frank Richards, setting out on the trail to the plains, knows that the gold in his belt will draw trouble to him, but he is determined to meet any peril that besets his path with a bold front!

ON THE SOUTHERN TRAIL!



Another thrilling long complete story, dealing with the stirring adventures of Frank Richards, the homeless schoolboy of the Backwoods of Canada!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Peril on the Trail!

HOW far from Cinnamon now?" "Mebbe five miles." "We sha'n't be in by dark, at this rate." "Mebbe not."

"Can't you get a hustle on?" "Mebbe."

The driver of the one-horse wagon cracked his whip lazily, and the horse quickened pace a little. But in a few minutes it dropped into a walk again.

Frank Richards, as he sat on a pile of sacks in the wagon, was growing impatient and a little suspicious.

The wagon had quitted Hard Pan in the morning, and Frank Richards had fully expected to arrive at Cinnamon Camp, lower down in the foothills of the Cascade Range, by noon.

But it was sunset now, and his destination was still far away.

Ginger, the driver, had started at a good speed. But a few miles out of Hard Pan he began to lose time. A horse's shoe had wanted attention, and then at noon he claimed that his horse required a lengthy rest. And in the sunny afternoon Ginger had dawdled along the mountain trails as though time was of the least possible value. Twice he had taken the wrong trail, and had had to retrace his way. Now the sun was sinking behind the cascade peaks to the far Pacific.

Frank Richards was in no hurry, if it came to that. He wanted to take it easy, after his hard days in the mountains, with five hundred dollars in banknotes fastened up in his belt. He could afford to take a rest after his luck at the diggings.

So at first he had been quite patient, and, in fact, enjoyed the sunny day on the mountains. But as night came on he grew at first impatient, and then suspicious.

He knew nothing of Ginger, except that he belonged to the camp of Hard Pan.

Frank had inquired at the lumber

hotel for any vehicle going south, and Ginger had found him out, and offered him a seat in his wagon to Cinnamon for the sum of five dollars. At Cinnamon Camp he intended to buy a horse, a luxury he could afford now. But he was beginning to wonder whether he would have the five hundred dollars in his belt by the time he reached the lower camp.

Ginger was evidently losing time on the road intentionally, and he was not doing that without a motive.

More than once Frank scanned the lonely hillsides with an anxious eye as the wagon creaked and rumbled on.

Ginger, in all probability, had heard in Hard Pan of his luck, and knew that he had the proceeds about him. And nothing would have been easier than to send word ahead along the trail—

Frank set his teeth at the thought.

He was in a wild and unsettled region, far beyond the borders of the regular settlements, where a man who could not take care of his "dust" with his own hands was not likely to retain possession of it long.

And as soon as he grew suspicious of his companion, Frank had taken his revolver from his pocket, and examined it rather ostentatiously, in order to let Ginger see that he was "heeled."

Ginger had looked at him and at the revolver, and shrugged his shoulders and driven on slowly.

Frank sat on the sacks in the wagon now, with the revolver resting on his knee, and a grim determination in his breast to use it if any attempt was made upon his "dust." Weeks of hard work in the hills had earned his five hundred dollars, and he did not mean to lose the money easily.

The horse had dropped into a walk, and the walk became a crawl as the wagon turned into a wide, rocky canyon, the last lap on the way down to Cinnamon.

The shadows were lengthening in the canyon, and Frank's glance dwelt anxiously on the patches of pinewood

and fir and larch among the rugged rocks.

There were scores of places where rustlers might have lain in wait, and Frank's suspicions of his driver deepened.

Ginger gave a jump as something cold and hard was pressed to the back of his disdainful head.

"Gee whiz!" he roared. "Take that thing away, you greenhorn! It might go off!"

"Drive faster!" said Frank.

"Nix!"

"Listen to me!" said Frank savagely. "I tell you I know your game, and your pards may start up any minute on the trail. You know I've got my dust about me, and you've sent word ahead for the wagon to be watched for!"

"I—I guess—"

"That's why you've hung out the journey. Now you're going to gallop all the rest of the way to Cinnamon, and I'm going to see that you do it!"

"I guess not. I—"

"I can't shoot you from behind, though I believe you're a thief," said Frank. "But if you don't get top speed out of that horse I'm going to pitch you off the wagon, and if you raise a finger to stop me I'll shoot! I swear that!"

Ginger drew a deep breath.

There was a ring of deadly determination in Frank Richards' voice, and the rascal knew that his life hung on a thread.

He cracked his whip and lashed, and the horse broke into a trot.

"Faster!" said Frank.

"I guess—"

"Faster, I tell you, and don't jaw!"

Ginger gritted his teeth and lashed again, and the trot became a gallop. Bumping heavily on the rocky, uneven trail, the wagon raced down the canyon bottom. And suddenly, from a clump of timber a hundred yards from the trail, three horsemen burst, and rode fiercely to intercept the wagon.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Run Down by the Rustlers!

"HALT!"

It was a shout from the distance as the three horsemen spurred on towards the trail.

Frank Richards took a grip on Ginger's collar with his left hand, and with the right kept the revolver pressed to the back of his head.

There was a gasp of pain from the driver as the steel muzzle ground upon his head hard.

"Let up!" he gasped.

"Drive on, you scoundrel! If you draw in your horse I pull the trigger the same instant!"

"Oh Jerusalem!"

The horse galloped on.

"Halt!"

"Ginger, you fool!"

Crack, crack!

The pistol-shots rang out from the horsemen as they raced on, and the bullets splintered on the rocky trail.

Frank, still keeping his grip on the driver, glanced towards the trio.

They had evidently been posted in the timber to intercept the wagon, and had the vehicle been crawling, as before, one rush of their horses would have been enough.

But as it was, the wagon was past them before they were half way from their cover to the trail.

They spurred on furiously, waving to the driver.

"Stop, you galoot!"

"Halt!"

Crack, crack, crack!

The horsemen were riding behind the wagon now, clattering on the rocky trail and loosing off their revolvers. But the bullets did not come very near. The leaping of the horses on the rough trail disordered the aim. The three rustlers had perceived Ginger's unenviable position now, and understood why he did not halt. And evidently they had little regard for their confederate's skin, for a bullet would scarcely have struck Frank Richards without equal danger to the driver.

Frank looked back with glinting eyes.

He swung the revolver away from Ginger's head for a moment to loose off a bullet to the rear. It was a hasty shot, but it went near enough to cause the horsemen to pull in, cursing loudly. The next moment the smoking muzzle was clapped to Ginger's head again.

"Faster!" hissed Frank.

The horsemen were spurring on again, firing as they rode. Ginger gasped.

"I guess the hearse will go over if we keep this up!" he spluttered. "There's a big slope ahead—"

"Chance it!"

"I guess I ain't—"

"Faster, or I'll pitch you off the wagon!"

With a curse the driver lashed the horse. The wagon was rocking like a boat at sea now as the horse rushed down the steep slope of the canyon-bottom towards Cinnamon Camp. Through the deepening dusk lights were winking ahead from the camp.

Ginger could not have stopped the horse now if he had tried. The wagon was speeding down the steep slope of its own weight, and the horse could not have stopped without being overwhelmed by it. On the rough trail one wheel, and sometimes two, left the ground as the wagon rushed and rocked onward.

It was a fearful risk to take, but there was worse behind, for Frank Richards at least, and Frank set his teeth to go through it.

Half a mile ahead the lights of

Cinnamon Camp winked and glimmered through the falling night.

Behind, the three horsemen were still riding in pursuit, but they were not firing now, and their pace was slower. It was a dangerous path for galloping, and the three rustlers were paying some attention to the safety of their necks.

"Oh, gum, we're done for, I reckon!" groaned Ginger. "We'll both get our necks broke afore we hit the camp, you durned tenderfoot. You don't know this hyer trail."

"Keep on!"

"I tell you—"

"Use your whip again, or you go over the side!"

"Oh Jerusalem!"

Lash, lash!

Ginger was helpless with the revolver muzzle grinding on his skull, and well he was aware that his intended victim was desperate. The wagon leaped and rocked, and every moment it seemed a miracle that it did not overturn. Ginger was putting all his skill into the driving, for the sake of his own neck, and again and again he narrowly avoided a collision with a jutting rock or a boulder in the rugged trail.

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

Bump, bump! Crash!

In spite of the fearful peril Frank felt a strange sense of exhilaration as the wagon rushed down the slope, and the wind sang in his ears.

Cinnamon Camp was close at hand when the disaster suddenly came.

A wheel caught and crashed on a sharp rock, and in the twinkling of an eye the wagon spun round, and crashed over. There was a terrified squeal from the horse, a frightful crash of the wagon, and Frank Richards felt himself whirling and spinning.

What happened in those stunning seconds he hardly knew, but he found himself sprawling in a thicket, scratched and torn and breathless, but still whole.

He lay for several minutes, gasping for breath, trying to gather his whirling senses. Clatter, clatter! came the pursuing hoof-beats as he lay, and there was a trampling and jingling as the horsemen drew rein close by the wrecked wagon.

Frank pulled himself together. He was dazed and scratched and bruised, but the thicket had saved his bones.

He wondered dazedly what had happened to Ginger. But he could see nothing. The darkness was complete now. The last glimmer of the sun was gone, and he had lost sight of the lights of Cinnamon.

As he struggled up in the thicket, the revolver still gripped in his hand, a hoarse voice came through the darkness.

"Ginger! Where are you, Ginger, you fool? Where's the tenderfoot?"

There was a deep groan.

"That you, Jake?"

"Yep. Where's the tenderfoot?"

"Durned if I know! My leg's broke!" groaned Ginger.

"Serve you right for being a fool! Why didn't you stop?" snarled the rustler, with a curse.

"How could I stop with a gun at my cabeza?" snarled Ginger, in return.

"The tenderfoot was wide to the game, durn him! My leg's broke, and the hoss is killed; and I reckon his dust won't pay for the damages, nohow." And the hapless rascal groaned again.

"Hang you, Jake—hang you!"

"Oh, ring off, you groaning fool!"

Every word came to Frank's ears as he groped in the thicket. He was not six yards away from the gang.

Jake's savage voice rang out again.

"Hustle round, boyees! He can't be

far off. Ten to one he's broken a limb, same as that mumbering jay! He's got five hundred dollars in his clothes, durn him! Shoot him on sight!"

"You bet, Jake!"

The rustlers had dismounted now, hitching their horses to the wreck of the wagon.

Frank Richards breathed hard as they began to search among the boulders and patches of scrub by the trail.

There was a howl from the unfortunate Ginger.

"Jake! Jake Scuttler!"

"Seen him?" shouted back the ruffian.

"Him! No. Durn him! Come and lend me a hand. My leg's broke!"

"Durn your leg!" yelled back Jake Scuttler. "We'll tote you into Cinnamon when we've got the dust. Shut your yaup-trap till then, Ginger!"

Tramping footsteps came closer to the patch of thicket where Frank Richards stood, his heart thumping. One of the rustlers was close to him, cursing the darkness as he groped for a sign of the tenderfoot.

He was coming right on Frank, and discovery was inevitable in a few moments more.

Frank set his teeth hard, and fired through the thicket at the advancing ruffian.

There was a yell and a heavy fall.

Frank fired low, and he could guess that the bullet was in the leg of his unseen enemy.

"Thunder!" It was Jake Scuttler's voice from a dozen yards distance. "Is that you, Hank?"

"He's got me! I'm laid out!" yelled Hank. "He's here—close at hand—in the scrub—"

A groan finished the sentence.

Frank Richards was already backing away through the thicket.

Loud trampling warned him that the other two rustlers were hurrying to the spot. A revolver rang out, and the bullet tore away twigs within a yard of his head.

He came out of the thicket, and trampled on the rough rock beyond. Darkness was around him—he felt rather than saw the rugged boulders round him. Crack, crack! came through the thicket again, and the rustlers plunged savagely in search of him.

Frank was tempted to return the fire, but he did not. He slipped the revolver into his pocket, and dropped on his hands and knees, crawling silently away among the rocks.

Jake Scuttler and his companion came trampling breathlessly out into the open, cursing loudly.

Frank was a dozen yards away by that time, and he remained still, pressed close to a rugged boulder, hidden by the darkness as by a blanket.

He almost ceased to breathe.

"See him, Jake?"

"Durn you, how can a man see anything in this dark?" hooted Scuttler. "Listen for him!"

Frank tried to still the thumping of his heart, lest it should betray him to the listening rustlers.

There was a minute of silence, and then Jake Scuttler's raucous voice broke out again.

"I guess he's creeping clear! If he gets away to Cinnamon, the jig's up. S'arch for him, Pete!"

"Durn him!" growled Pete.

The heavy cowhide boots trampled the rocks again.

Frank Richards did not move, relying on the darkness and his silence to save him. His revolver was gripped in his hand again now, ready for use if he was

run down. But the darkness baffled the rascals.

Once Jake Scuttler's heavy trampling went by within six feet of Frank; but after that the footsteps and savage voices receded. The rustlers returned to the trail by the wrecked wagon, and Frank heard their voices in fierce consultation.

But he did not stay to hear.

He moved slowly, cautiously, silently, creeping away foot by foot, till he felt himself at a safe distance to rise and run.

Far down the canyon the lights of Cinnamon Camp beckoned him to safety. A few minutes more, and he was running, and he arrived breathless and gasping in the rugged street of Cinnamon, while Jake Scuttler and his gang were still cursing their luck on the shadowy canyon trail.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Buying a Horse!

THE flaring naphtha lights in a row outside the Cinnamon Hotel were a welcome sight to Frank Richards.

He was glad to get a rough-and-ready supper at a crowded pinewood table, and retire to a room where there was a plank bed, and where he could lock himself in to rest. He slept soundly enough that night, though in his dreams he went through more than once the wild scene on the canyon trail. The morning sun, glimmering in through the barred square that answered the purpose of a window, awakened him early, and he turned out.

He went down to breakfast in the lumber hotel, in a cheery temper. But he kept his eyes well about him, wondering whether he would see anything more of Jake Scuttler and his gang. In the darkness in the canyon he had seen them but dimly, and he was not sure that he would know them again by sight.

He wisely resolved to quit Cinnamon as early as he could, and place a safe distance between himself and his late foes. It was very probable that Jake Scuttler & Co. still had designs upon the five hundred dollars he had brought away from Hard Pan.

The landlord of the Cinnamon Hotel received with an expansive smile Frank's request for information with regard to buying a horse. Big George, the landlord, was standing in his shirt-sleeves in the doorway, smoking a pipe, and cheerfully cursing a Chinaman who was rubbing down a horse in the yard, when Frank addressed him. He turned all his attention to Frank at once, with a great geniality.

"Looking for a hoss?" he said. "You've come to the right galoot, I guess, young man! As it happens, I've got a horse to sell."

And he beamed on Frank Richards.

"A good horse!" hinted Frank.

"There ain't a critter between the Cascades and the Rockies to beat that hoss!" said Big George, impressively. "He won't carry my weight, or I wouldn't part with him for a stack of greenbacks as high as your hat. But seeing as you're a stranger, I'll let you have him—and cheap! I reckon it's giving him away, at fifty dollars, but you shall have him."

"Let's see him!" suggested Frank.

"Sartin!"

Big George called to the Chinaman, and the man went round to the shed and led out the wonderful horse that Big George was willing to part with at so low a figure.

Frank Richards smiled.

The horse had not only seen his best days, but seen the last of them years before—he dragged one leg, and blinked wearily out of aged eyes. Frank Richards was getting used, by this time, to being "on his own," and looking after himself. But he realised that he must still look "considerable" of a tenderfoot for Big George to attempt to sell him that horse.

Big George turned to him impressively.

"Look at him!" he said with enthusiasm. "Jever see a critter like that going for fifty dollars, stranger?"

"Never!" said Frank.

"I orter said sixty," said the landlord regretfully; "but I'm a man of my word, and you're going to have him for fifty. Choo Chow, hand the hoss over to the young gent."

"You know something about hosses?" he asked.

"A little," said Frank, with a smile. "I've lived on a ranch in the Thompson Valley, and my uncle bred hosses."

Big George gave a grunt.

"Why couldn't you tell me that sooner?" he said. "It would have saved time. Take that critter back, Choo Chow—and mind he don't fall down. I tell you, stranger, if I don't sell that hoss soon, he'll be a dead loss to me—I'm expecting him to pass in his chips every day. I'm wasting good feed on him till a real greenhorn comes along, but I reckon I don't have any luck." Big George shook his head sadly. "I've got two other critters, and you can take your ch'ice of them."

Frank Richards followed him to the sheds. A tall, loose-jointed, big-bearded



FORCING THE PACE! Frank Richards looked back along the trail at the galloping rustlers. He swung the revolver away from the driver's head to loose off a bullet to the rear. The next moment the smoking muzzle was clapped to Ginger's head again. "Drive faster!" hissed Frank.

(See Chapter 2.)

"Hold on," said Frank coolly; "I'm not buying that horse."

"Eh?"

"I've never seen a horse like that go for fifty dollars," said Frank. "I should have said that fifty cents was nearer the mark."

"Wha-a-t?"

Big George stared at the schoolboy of Cedar Creek.

"If you've got a horse," continued Frank, "I'm ready to buy it at a fair price—if not, tell me where I can buy one, like a good chap."

"What's the matter with that hoss?" roared Big George.

"Life's too short for the full list," answered Frank. "He wouldn't suit me. You see, I'm not hefty enough to carry him—and he would have to be carried."

Big George seemed to be struggling with his emotions for some moments.

man looked into the yard from the street, and his eyes fixed on Frank Richards. Frank glanced at him, and turned quickly to Big George.

"You know that man?"

The landlord glanced round.

"I reckon! It's Scuttler—Jake Scuttler, from Dakota."

"I thought I knew him," muttered Frank.

Scuttler passed on along the street, and was lost to view.

"That man stopped me on the trail last night and tried to rob me, with a gang of others," said Frank.

"I shouldn't be s'prised," assented Big George calmly. "I've heard yarns about Jake afore. Better not let him hear you say so, though—he's a hard man from Dakota, and it ain't safe.

This camp is a bit out of the range of

THE POPULAR.—No. 337.

the Mounted Police, and Jake always carries a gun—better thank your stars you got off, and keep wide of him."

Frank Richards mentally decided that the landlord's advice was good.

"Hyer's the hosses," continued Big George. "Take your ch'ice, and put down your hundred dollars. If you've fell foul of Jake Scuttler, what you want is a good mood between your knees and a clear trail afore you. And my advice to you is to saddle up and git!"

"I mean to," said Frank.

He looked at the horses and selected one. He had learned enough on the Lawless Ranch to be able to pick out a good horse. Big George gave him a nod of approval.

"You've been there, I guess," he remarked.

Although he had sought to swindle the "tenderfoot" with a worthless crock, Big George bore no malice. Like many men in the West he did not apply the rules of morality to the selling of horses. But probably he had had many disappointments over the aged crock Frank had rejected, and had come to take them philosophically.

"Shell out a hundred dollars and that critter's yours," he said. "Make it a hundred and one and you can have the old gee thrown in."

Frank laughed.

"Thanks, I don't want the relic. And I'll give you fifty dollars for this one."

"You mean ninety-five?" queried Big George.

"I mean fifty."

"Good morning!" said the landlord. And he strolled away towards the lumber building.

In the doorway he turned round and called out:

"Did I hear you say ninety dollars?"

"Not unless your ears are playing tricks on you," answered Frank Richards. "But I'll make it sixty."

"Seventy-five, and be blowed to you!"

"Done!" said Frank.

Having gone through the time-honoured formulas, Frank became the possessor of the horse. It was necessary to bargain with Big George for every item of the outfit; but he was fitted out at last, and he felt considerable pleasure when he mounted his steed and rode out into the rugged street of Cinnamon. The horse under him reminded him of old and happy days on the Lawless Ranch.

Big George called to him as he was starting to leave.

"I guess you're heading for Dusty Bar if you're making for the plains. Take the lower trail, and if any galoot comes asking arter you I guess I'll tell him you went by the upper trail. Savvy?"

"Thanks!" said Frank.

And he rode out of Cinnamon Camp in the sunny morning, taking the lower trail for the next camp.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Sharp Shot!

FRANK RICHARDS halted at noon, where the trail ran by a mountain stream, and camped to feed and rest. He had kept his eyes well about him during the morning's ride, but he had seen nothing of Jake Scuttler. He wondered whether the ruffian had taken the trouble to follow him. It was probable that if he sought to do so he would ask questions at the Cinnamon Hotel, and in that case probably Big George had sent him on the wrong track. Frank was relieved to feel that he was clear of the gang now. There were still four hundred dollars in his belt, and he was ready to fight in

THE POPULAR.—No. 357.

their defence, but he would have given a good many of the dollars to be saved from the necessity.

Although there was no sign of danger he did not forget his caution when he camped to rest in the heat of noon. After giving his horse drink at the stream he staked him out in a clump of trees, where he was hidden from sight of anyone passing along the trail. And after eating his lunch from his wallet, he lay in the trees, to rest in cover.

Half an hour later he had reason to be glad that he had taken these precautions.

There was a clinking of hoofs on the rocky trail, and Frank jumped to his feet at once. He peered out of the timber without showing himself, and his heart beat faster at the sight of two horsemen coming at a canter towards the stream. One of them was Jake Scuttler, and the other, he had no doubt, was one of his comrades of the previous night.

Both the riders looked weary and dispirited. Judging by appearances, they had done harder riding than Frank that sunny morning.

Frank Richards hoped that they would ride by, but he was disappointed. They headed directly for the stream, and stopped on the bank, while the horses stretched down their necks to the water.

Frank glanced rather uneasily at his own horse. The animal was nibbling the herbage among the trees quietly enough. A whinny would have betrayed him to the foes who were evidently seeking him. But the horse, fortunately, was quiet.

Jake Scuttler's voice came to Frank's ears as the rustlers sat their steeds by the stream.

"I reckon it's up, Pete. He never went by the upper trail, or we'd have sighted him. Big George was lying."

"Then I reckon he went by this trail," answered Pete. "If he was going down the mountain he had to take one or the other."

"Durn him! I never reckoned that galoot George was fooling me," said Jake with an oath.

"Hold on!" broke out Pete suddenly. "I reckon the galoot passed this way. Look at them tracks!"

He pointed with his riding-whip to the soft soil by the water, where Frank Richards' horse had trodden.

Jake Scuttler uttered an exclamation.

He jumped from the saddle and bent over the hoof-prints, examining them with eager attention.

Frank Richards drew a quick breath.

He knew that discovery was certain now. It would not be long before the two rustlers learned that Frank's horse had been led into the timber.

Frank jerked the revolver from his pocket.

In a few minutes, probably, the two rustlers would know that he was in the timber-clump, and then there would be a rush, and he knew what he had to expect. Jake Scuttler and his comrade would not leave him alive to tell of their deeds as gold-robbers and horse-thieves. His life was in his own hands to save or to lose by his own courage and strength.

He knew it, and he knew what he must do.

Jake Scuttler was half-hidden from him by the horses. Pete had dismounted, and was holding the horses, following Jake's movements with his eyes. He stood within full sight and easy range of the timber, unaware of his danger for the moment.

Frank's face was pale and tense, but it did not flinch, as he levelled his revolver, resting the barrel on a low bough.

He aimed at the ruffian's legs; though

his own life was at stake, he could not bring himself to shoot to kill.

Crack!

Scuttler was still on his knees, examining the "sign," when the sudden pistol-shot barked out from the timber.

A wild yell awoke the echoes of the trail.

Pete collapsed as if his legs had suddenly been plucked from under him, and rolled, yelling, by the water's edge. His right knee had been shattered by the bullet. The startled horses reared and squealed, and backed away wildly. Jake Scuttler leaped to his feet with a startled oath.

His hand was on the revolver in the leather holster swung to his belt. He stared for a second at the wounded ruffian, and then his glaring eyes sought the timber whence the shot had come.

His revolver came out in a twinkling, and he fired at random at the trees. Pete lay groaning at his feet.

The bullets from the ruffian's revolver tore through the trees round Frank Richards—one of them glanced from a thick trunk, and whizzed by an inch from his ear.

Crack, crack, crack!

The six-shooter was empty. Jake Scuttler was fumbling with fresh cartridges as Frank ran from behind the trunk, with his revolver up.

"Hands up!" shouted Frank.

With a curse, the ruffian hurled the empty revolver at him. Then his hand dropped on the knife in his belt.

Frank easily eluded the whizzing weapon; and his right hand did not falter. As Jake Scuttler rushed on him, the knife half-drawn, Frank pulled the trigger.

For a moment he thought, with sickening heart, that his shot had failed, as the ruffian came rushing on. But Scuttler was hit, and he did not quite reach Frank. Within a yard of him he fell heavily, crashing on the ground on his face.

Frank Richards gave almost a sob of relief.

He stepped forward, jerked the ruffian's knife away, and tossed it into the stream.

Frank hurried towards Pete, his revolver ready. The wounded ruffian was seeking feebly to loosen a six-shooter from his belt. Frank stooped over him, tore the weapon away, and flung it into the stream, and his knife after it.

Then he ran to his horse, and led it out of the timber.

The two ruffians watched him with malevolent eyes as he mounted. Jake Scuttler made an effort to rise, but sank back again, with a groan. Frank looked at him grimly.

"You deserve a bullet through the head, you scoundrel!" said Frank contemptuously. "You can hang on your horse somehow, and get back to Cinnamon, and it's more than you deserve."

He turned his back on the two groaning rascals, and rode away down the canyon.

He lost no time on the trail after that. Before sunset he was riding into the rugged street of Dusty Bar, where he was safe from all possible pursuit.

But he did not linger there. Frank Richards had had enough—more than enough—of the wild foothills; and after a hasty meal and a short rest, he saddled up again, and took the southern trail out of Dusty Bar, riding away cheerily in bright moonlight.

THE END.

(There will be another stirring, long complete tale of Frank Richards, the homeless schoolboy, entitled: "School-boy Versus Rustlers!" in next Tuesday's issue. Don't miss it.)