

**THE BOY RANCHER AT ROOKWOOD!** Texas Lick, the amazing new boy, finds it extremely hard to settle down in his new surroundings. His ways are certainly not the ways of Rookwood, and consequently there is trouble for Lick—and for others!

# A WILD WESTERN AT ROOKWOOD!

by  
**OWEN CONQUEST**



A STIRRING LONG COMPLETE STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO., OF ROOKWOOD, STARRING TEXAS LICK, THE NEW BOY.

## By OWEN CONQUEST

(Author of the Amazing New Story of the Chums of Rookwood just starting in the GEM.)

### THE FIRST CHAPTER.

#### The Licking of Lick!

**Y**AW-aw-aw-aw!"

That yawn was loud and deep and prolonged.

Mr. Dalton started.

The Fourth Form stared.

English history was being dealt with in the Fourth Form-room at Rookwood. They had arrived at Henry the Eighth, and Mr. Dalton was imparting quite valuable information to his class respecting the times of that much-married old gentleman.

The yawn interrupted him.

It proceeded from the new boy at Rookwood, the American youth who rejoiced in the striking name of Texas Lick.

Probably more than one fellow in the Fourth felt disposed to yawn. Their interests were mostly concerned with the reign of George the Fifth, naturally, and they could have given Henry the Eighth a miss with pleasure.

But fellows in the Form-rooms did not always do what they were disposed to do. Only Texas Lick allowed himself that freedom.

Mr. Dalton ceased to speak, and fixed his eyes upon the junior from Texas.

"Yaw-aw-aw-aw!"

Quite deliberately Texas Lick yawned again, with his somewhat extensive mouth well open, and his sharp eyes almost shut.

There was an irrepressible chuckle in the Fourth.

Evidently the boy from the Wild West was bored; equally evidently he did not hesitate to make the fact known.

Texas Lick had been brought up in the freedom of a Texas ranch, and he

had roughed it with the cowpunchers ever since he could remember. He did not find it easy to settle down to the orderly life of Rookwood School. Neither, apparently, did he see any special reason for settling down to the collar.

Being bored, he yawned—yawned portentously—regardless of his surroundings.

"Lick!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton.

The young Texan looked at him.

"Yep?" he answered.

"I have told you several times, Lick, not to use the word 'yep,'" said Mr. Dalton sharply. "Do you hear?"

"Yep."

"Cannot you say yes?" exclaimed the Form master.

"Yep."

"Then say yes when you mean yes."

"Sure!"

The Fourth-Formers grinned, and Mr. Dalton compressed his lips.

"What do you mean by yawning in class, Lick?"

"Nothin' in particular, sir, only I'm bored," said Lick.

"Bored!" ejaculated Mr. Dalton.

"Bored stiff, boss!" said Lick.

"You must not call me boss!"

snapped Mr. Dalton. "Boys here address their Form master as 'sir.'"

"I guess I don't mind."

"You must not yawn in class, Lick. It is very—very ill-bred. You must contrive somehow to learn better manners."

Texas Lick made a grimace.

"I guess all this guff makes me tired, sir," he answered.

"This—this what?"

"Guff, boss."

"Sir!" snapped Mr. Dalton.

"All serene, sir!" said Lick obligingly.

"What do you mean by guff, Lick?" "Oh, jest guff, sir! All this old stuff about that galoot Tudor."

"That what?" gasped Mr. Dalton.

"That ornery old galoot Tudor," said Lick. "The pilgrim you call Henry the Eighth. I guess if we'd had him out in Texas he would have been lynched on the nearest tree!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fourth.

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton. "Lick, are you aware that you are speaking insolently?"

"I guess not, sir—jest giving you what I think," said Texas Lick. "All this hyer guff is a waste of a galoot's time. Who cares a Continental red cent about old Henry? If there ever was such a disreputable old mug-wump, the sooner he's forgotten the better, I calculate."

Mr. Dalton stared at him, at a loss for words. His class grinned joyously.

"Doesn't that Texas merchant take the giddy cake?" murmured Mornington. "Dicky will skin him."

"I guess so!" grinned Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Lick, I shall cane you for impertinence, and for interrupting the lesson," said Mr. Dalton.

"Will you, by gum!" said Texas Lick.

"Stand out before the class!"

"I guess I'm comfortable hyer, sir. I don't mind going to sleep while you go on chewing the rag."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lick, you ass!" whispered Jimmy Silver, really concerned for the boy from Texas.

"Stand out at once, Lick!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton.

Texas Lick eyed him, but did not stir.

"You want to wallop me?" he demanded.

"I am going to cane you."

"I guess I've never been walloped," said Texas Lick. "I reckon that when I'm hit I hit back, boss."

"What-a-at?"

"I'm not looking for any old trouble," went on Lick. "The popper's sent me to this hyer school, and hyer I am! I guess I'm going to stand it as long as I can, jest to please the popper. It bores me stiff, and, as far as I can see, you don't teach a galoot anything that's worth knowing. But carry on, boss, and don't mind me."

"Stand out here, Lick."

Texas Lick did not stir.

Mr. Dalton picked up a cane from his desk, and came among the forms, his face hard and set. During the day that Texas Lick had been at Rookwood School his Form master had been very tolerant and patient with him. He realised that a rough life on a Texas ranch had hardly fitted Lick for Rookwood and its ways, and he was very considerate.

But there was a limit, and Texas Lick had reached the limit now.

Mr. Dalton dropped his left hand on Lick's collar, to jerk him out of his place.

Lick grasped the desk before him, and held on.

"Let up!" he shouted.

"Boy!"

"Hands off! Don't I keep on telling you that you can't wallop a galoot from Texas?" roared Lick.

Mr. Dalton was a young master and an athletic one. He wrenched Lick away from his hold with a swing of his powerful arm. Texas Lick came out before the class in a bundle, with his arms and legs flying. Mr. Dalton crashed him down on his feet.

"Oh, Jerusalem!" gasped Lick.

Evidently this was a surprise to him.

"Now hold out your hand!" thundered the Fourth Form master.

"I'm sure not going to do anything of the sort."

"For the last time, Lick."

"Oh, guff!"

"Then I shall cane you more severely for your disobedience," said Mr. Dalton.

"Let up, I tell you!" said Lick. "I ain't a galoot to be walloped! You can't do it!"

Mr. Dalton very promptly proved that he could do it—by doing it. The youth from Texas was grasped in his powerful hands and laid across the desk.

Texas Lick struggled. He struggled and wriggled and kicked. One of his kicks landed on Mr. Dalton's knee, and the Form master gave a gasp of pain.

Then Lick was held down on the desk with a hand of iron, and Mr. Dalton's other hand, grasping the cane, rose and fell.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Mr. Dalton did not run any risk of spoiling the Texan by sparing the rod. He laid on the strokes of the cane with a hofty hand.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

The dust rose from Texas Lick's trousers. Wild yells rose from Texas Lick.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Yaroop! Let up!" roared Lick. "I guess I ain't standing this— Oh Jerusalem! Oh gum! Let up!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Dickey Dalton's in a wax!" murmured Mornington. "I kinder guess

and calculate that Lick is sorry he spoke."

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Yooop! Whoop! Woorroop!"

"Now, Lick—"

"Yow-ow-wooooo!"

"You will apologise at once for your impertinence!" rapped out Mr. Dalton.

"I guess not—"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Ow! Ow! Wow! Whoop!" roared Texas Lick. "Oh, great snakes! I guess I apologise, sir!"

"Very good."

Mr. Dalton allowed Texas Lick to slide off the desk and stand upon his feet again. The Texan stood wriggling with anguish.

"Now go back to your place, Lick, and remember that while you are at Rookwood you must treat your Form master with respect."

Texas Lick groaned.

"Ow! I guess I'll remember that, boss! I reckon you've given me suthing to remember it by! Ow!"

"I am sorry to punish you, Lick. But you compelled me to do it."

"Ow! Ow! I guess I never reckoned you was such a hefty galoot, boss! I ain't arguing with you any more! Ow!"

"Go back to your place."

"Ow! Wow!"

Texas Lick limped back to his place amid a grinning class. He sat down, and jumped up again immediately. Mr. Dalton frowned at him.

"Sit down at once, Lick!"

"If you don't mind, boss—I mean, sir—I'd rather stand for a bit!" groaned Texas Lick.

"Oh! Ah! Yes! Very well, you may stand."

And Texas Lick stood. And he was still standing when the Fourth Form were dismissed. It was quite a long time before Texas Lick wanted to sit down.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Bumptious!

"I GUESS I ain't standing it!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. grinned.

They had come up to the end study after dinner, and they found Texas Lick there.

He was leaning against the window, apparently still disinclined to sit down.

There was a deep frown on his rugged brow.

"I ain't standing it," he repeated.

"You can't wallop a free American. I guess I'm going to make that galoot sit up somehow!"

"What galoot?" asked Jimmy Silver, with a smile.

"That guy Dalton!"

"You're going to make Mr. Dalton sit up?" grinned Arthur Edward Lovell. "How?"

"I guess I've been thinking that out," said Lick. "He ain't going to wallop a galoot from Texas, and don't you forget it. He's too hefty for me, but—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Raby. "You shouldn't come to Rookwood if you don't want to toe the line!"

"And you've got to toe the line, anyhow," said Newcome.

"And the sooner you settle down to it the better for you," said Jimmy Silver.

Texas Lick shook his head.

"I guess I ain't taking a cow-biding from any son of Johnny Bull," he answered. "Why, on our ranch in Texas—"

"You're not on your ranch in Texas now," interrupted Jimmy Silver. "You asked for a licking in the Form-room

this morning, and you got it!—Are you coming out with us this afternoon?"

"Yep! All the same—"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Lovell. "Dickey Dalton is a good sort, and he wouldn't have licked you if you hadn't made him. Give it a rest!"

Texas Lick grunted and followed the Fistical Four from the study.

As a matter of fact, Jimmy Silver & Co. did not rejoice in the company of the youth from the wild and woolly West. But as he had been placed in their study they felt that it was up to them to take him in hand a little.

The chums of Rookwood walked out at the gates, and Lick sauntered along with them. He showed little interest in the surroundings. When he observed them, it was only to make a remark pointing out their infinite inferiority to things in Texas. The green hedges, above all, moved Lick's scorn.

"I guess we'd root all that up, and put in barbed wire," he remarked. "You galoots don't know how to make anything even of this little old ten-cent island you've got!"

"Oh, come on!" said Lovell.

"Don't you walk so pesky fast!" said Lick. "I don't want to risk falling off this little island!"

Thud, thud, thud!

"Hallo! There comes Tubby in a hurry!" said Raby.

Reginald Muffin of the Fourth was coming down the lane towards the Rookwood juniors, going at great speed. His cap was off, his face was crimson with exertion, and the perspiration poured down his fat cheeks. It was quite unusual for the fat Tubby to put on speed, and it was clear that some thing had happened to alarm him.

He came up panting, and was rushing past the juniors, when Lovell caught him by the collar to stop him.

Tubby spun right round Lovell under the impetus of his rush, and curled up and sat down in the lane with a bump.

"Ow!" he gasped.

"What's the row?" demanded Lovell. "What are you bolting for, you fat duffer?"

"Ow! The bull!"

"What bull?"

Tubby Muffin scrambled up.

"Farmer Outram's bull!" he spluttered. "He's loose!"

"Oh, rot!" said Jimmy Silver. "They're always careful with that black bull."

"I tell you he's loose!" howled Tubby. "Don't stop me! Ow! Run for your lives!"

"Have you seen him?" asked Raby.

"No; a man told me he was loose, and told me to clear! I'm jolly well clearing, too!"

And Tubby Muffin rushed on, perspiring and panting, towards Rookwood.

Jimmy Silver looked up and down the lane and across the fields. There was no sign to be seen of Farmer Outram's black bull. That prize bull was well known in the locality, and known to be a dangerous animal, and the Rookwood juniors paused.

"If he's loose we'd better get back," said Newcome. "He gored a farmer's man once in a field."

"I suppose we'd better," said Jimmy.

Texas Lick burst into a laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha! You guys afraid of a bull?"

"No, we're not, you cheeky ass!" exclaimed Lovell angrily. "But it's no good running into a dangerous bull if he's loose. If the gate was left open he's in this lane somewhere."

"I guess I'm not skeered of a bull,"

THE POPULAR.—No. 464.

grinned Texas Lick. "Your old bulls in this country ain't a circumstance to our bulls in Texas."

"Oh, blow Texas! We're hearing a lot too much of Texas!" snapped Newcome. "Let's get back, you fellows."

"Come on, Lick!"

Lick laughed derisively.

"Get back if you like," he said. "I'm not goin' back. I reckon I'm not skered."

"We're not scared, you dummy!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell.

"I guess you sure look scared!" chuckled Lick. "If I had my lasso with me—and I've got it in my box—I guess I'd rope that bull in, and show you 'uns how it's done."

"You've not got it with you!" snapped Jimmy Silver. "So come back with us, and don't play the goat!"

"Oh, run off and hide somewhere," said Lick contemptuously, and he walked on up the lane towards Coombe.

The Fistical Four exchanged glances. They were well aware that it was the height of folly to risk meeting a savage bull in that narrow lane. But they did not turn back to Rookwood now. The bumptious youth from Texas was not to be allowed to say that he had gone where Rookwood fellows dared not follow. With grim faces Jimmy Silver & Co. hurried after Texas Lick.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER. Some Rider!

"LOOK out!"

The five juniors were half-way to Coombe when a cyclist came tearing by them at top speed. It was Peele of the Fourth Form.

His face was white as he bent over the handle-bars and pedalled as if his life depended on it.

The juniors had just time to jump aside as Peele came rushing them down. "Peele!" shouted Lovell angrily.

"What—"

"The bull!"

Cyril Peele flung back that word as he rushed on, and the bike and its rider vanished towards Rookwood.

"Oh, my hat!" said Newcome.

"Then—"

Newcome was interrupted. From a turning of the lane came a deep, heavy roar. It was the black bull—and he was close at hand. A second more and the bull was in sight. He came round the turning at a run, and was within ten feet of the juniors when they saw him—a huge, muscular, magnificent beast, as huge and powerful as any fighting bull in the arenas of Spain.

"Good heavens!" stuttered Lovell.

"Hook it!" panted Jimmy Silver.

But there was no time to "hook" it. The bull had seen them, and was evidently in a furious temper. Probably it had already been hunted and harried since escaping from the field, and its temper—never good—had been exasperated to a pitch of fury. There was a rumbling roar, and the bull rushed at the group of juniors.

Jimmy Silver & Co. bolted through the hedge into the adjoining field, and a second later the bull was charging the hedge. In the field stood a large tree with low-hanging branches, swept clear of foliage by the winter wind. The juniors scrambled into the low boughs with frantic haste.

The Fistical Four were in the tree almost in the twinkling of an eye. But Texas Lick was late.

The Texan was good at many things—he could ride the widest horse bare-

backed, he could flick a cap from a fellow's head with a stockwhip at six yards, he could handle a lasso in a masterly manner. But he was not good at climbing in a hurry. He caught a branch, lost his hold, and dropped back in the damp grass, as the bull came bursting through the hedge.

Texas Lick was on his feet in an instant, dodging round the thick trunk of the tree.

"Oh gum!" he ejaculated. "If I had a gun!"

He made a spring for the branches, keeping the trunk between him and the bull. The savage animal came careering round as Lick strove to clamber up.

Jimmy Silver reached down and grasped the Texan by his collar.

Texas Lick was a good weight, but Jimmy put all his strength into the tug, and the Texan was dragged bodily off the ground.

"Catch hold!" panted Jimmy.

Lick grasped the branch, and the bull's massive head struck his boots as he swung.

A moment more and Lick was on the branch, safe out of danger.

"Gee-whizz!" he ejaculated. "That was a close call, I guess!"

The bull paced under the tree, roaring.

"My hat!" said Raby.

"Lucky we got into this tree! You thumping idiot, Lick—"

"You howling ass, Lick!" shouted Lovell. "A pretty scrape you've got us into with your silly gas!"

"Oh, can it!" gasped Lick.

"We might be safe in Rookwood now!" exclaimed Newcome. "And with all your gas, you'd have been gored if Jimmy hadn't dragged you into the tree, you silly clump!"

"If I had my lasso here—"

"What's the good of 'iffing'?" snorted Lovell. "You haven't got your silly lasso—only your silly self!"

"How long are we going to be freed, I wonder?" grunted Jimmy Silver.

"I guess I'm not going to be freed long," said Texas Lick coolly. "This hyer perch don't agree with me."

"Going to walk away with the bull there?" snorted Lovell.

"Nope. I'm going to ride."

"Ride?" yelled Lovell. "On what?"

"On the bull, I guess."

"On the bull?" gasped Lovell.

"Mad?"

"I guess I've rode bulls before on the llano in Texas," answered Lick. "This hyer bull may skeer you, but he ain't a circumstance to the bulls I've handled in Texas. You watch out."

"Look here, Lick—" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Can it!"

Lick hung to the branch with his hands, while the bull roared below. The juniors watched him blankly. They had heard of Texas cowpunchers riding on the backs of bulls—indeed, they had seen such things on the films. Now, apparently they were going to see it in reality.

**RIDING THE BULL!** Texas Lick chose the right moment and dropped from the tree fairly on the back of the bull. "Now, you gee, you critter!" he cried. The next moment the bull was careering across the field with the Texan schoolboy sticking like a limpet to its back. (See Chapter 3.)



"Stop!" shouted Jimmy.

"Oh guff!"

Texas Lick chose the right moment, and dropped fairly on the back of the bull. Astride of the animal, he held on with his knees, as when riding a barebacked horse.

"Now, you gee, you critter!" he shouted.

The bull, for a second, seemed too dazed to move. Then, with a roar, it leaped away and careered across the field, with the Texan schoolboy sticking like a limpet to its back.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Lovell.

Texas Lick rode away on the almost frantic bull. How he maintained his strange seat was a mystery to the Rookwood juniors; but he did maintain it. Well they knew that if he fell he would be gored to death by the savage animal in a matter of moments. But, amazing as it was, he seemed in no danger of falling.

"Well, this beats Banagher!" said Newcome.

"It do, it does!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "I only hope the silly ass won't be killed."

"He seems to be sticking on!"

There was a shout in the distance, and a stout, gauffered farmer appeared in the field, with a labourer armed with a



pitchfork. Evidently they were hunting the bull.

But the animal, maddened by the rider sticking to his back, was not to be caught. The black bull charged down on the farmer and his man with such savage determination; that they jumped aside and let him pass.

They had entered by a gate, which was left open, and the bull rushed out into the road, Texas Lick still sitting on his back.

The Texan waved his cap to the Rookwooders as he was carried away. Bull and rider vanished from sight.

Jimmy Silver & Co. descended from the tree. They went back into the lane and stood irresolute. Texas Lick was out of sight, hidden by high hedges, and the juniors naturally wanted to get back to Rookwood and safety while the coast was clear. But they did not want to go back without the Texan.

"Bother the fellow!" growled Lovell. "All his silly fault that we're in this scrape at all!"

"He may be hurt," said Jimmy Silver anxiously. "I think we'd better look for him."

The juniors proceeded up the lane, with their eyes well about them, prepared to dodge if they sighted the bull again. But they did not sight the bull—they sighted Texas Lick. They found that youth sitting on a fence by the roadside, whistling. He nodded and grinned to the Fistical Four.

"Where's the bull?" demanded Lovell.

"Miles off by this time, I reckon," said Lick. "He was going real slick-like when I dropped off his back and nipped over this fence before he could turn on me."

"We thought you'd be killed—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lick. "Not this infant! That bull ain't a circumstance, I tell you, to the bulls I've handled in Texas."

"Oh, rot!" said Jimmy Silver. "I'm glad you're safe, anyhow. Now come back to the school."

"I guess I'm in no hurry."

"Well, we are!" snapped Lovell.

"You've got us into danger once, and we're fed-up. Come on!"

"None."

"You've got to come!" roared Lovell.

Lick laughed. "You galoots vamoose if you're afraid of bulls. You leave me hyer."

"We're not going to leave you here," said Jimmy Silver.

"Are you coming?"

"I'm sure not coming."

"Then you'll be taken. Collar him, you chaps!"

"Hyar, let up!" roared Texas Lick, as the Fistical Four grasped him and

dragged him off the fence. "You let up, you uns! You hear me yaup."

But the Fistical Four did not "let up," as the Texan expressed it. They grasped Texas Lick by his arms and his ears, and walked him off to the school. All the way to Rookwood Texas Lick told them what he thought of them, loudly and with emphasis; but they did not heed. Lick was not released till they were inside the gates of Rookwood, and then he was bumped down in the quadrangle.

"Now you can go and eat coke, or anything else you like!" growled Jimmy Silver, and the Fistical Four walked on, leaving Texas Lick sitting on the ground, and still telling them what he thought of them.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### A Surprise for Mr. Dalton!

"WHAT on earth's that?"

Valentine Mornington asked the question. It was near tea-time, and Mornington had come upon Lick in the Fourth Form passage. Lick had a coiled rope on his arm, and Morny looked at him curiously.

"That!" said Lick. "I guess it's a rope."

"I can see it's a rope," said Mornington. "Somebody asked you to put up a clothes-line?"

"Oh, can it!" said Lick. "It's my lasso, that I brought with me from Texas."

"Can you handle it?" asked Morny, with interest.

Lick gave a snort. "Can I?" he said. "I guess I could rope in a steer before I was six years old."

"Well, there are no steers here to be roped in," said Mornington, with a

laugh. "I suppose you're not thinking of going out to hunt for Mr. Outram's black bull. Tubby Muffin says it is loose."

"I guess I'd rope in that bull for them if they asked me," answered Lick. "But I ain't stalking bulls now. I guess I'm after that galoot Dalton."

"What!" yelled Mornington.

"If that galoot thinks he can wallop a free American citizen, he's missing his guess," said Lick darkly. "Why, if I'd had him out on the ranch in Texas, I'd have pulled a gun on him."

"Oh, gad!"

"I guess I'm goin' to rope him in, and make him sit up and take notice," said Lick. "You can come along and see the fun, if you like."

"You mad duffer!" exclaimed Mornington. "You'll be flogged and bunked from the school if you do anything of the kind!"

Texas Lick shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess I'm carrying on, all the same," he answered; and he walked down the passage with the coiled rope on his arm.

Mornington stared after him for a moment or two, and then, with a chuckle, strolled along to the end study. The Fistical Four were there, making preparations for tea.

"Hallo! Trot in, Morny!" said Jimmy Silver cordially. "Just in time for tea!"

"I haven't come to tea," said Morny, laughing. "I understand that you fellows are the keepers of that potty Westerner, Lick."

"Well, he's in our study," said Jimmy. "We're trying to keep an eye on him. What's he up to now?"

"He's going to lasso Dicky Dalton for licking him in the Form-room this morning."

"Wha-a-a-at?"

"So he says, at least," grinned Mornington. "If you think it's worth while to keep him from being sacked, you can go and stop him. I'd rather watch the fun myself. Dalton's in the quad now."

Jimmy Silver jumped up.

"The potty chump!" he exclaimed. "Come on, you chaps! We must stop him! We don't want him sacked!"

"Let him be sacked, and blow him!" granted Lovell. "I want my tea!"

"Oh, come on!"

Jimmy Silver ran out of the study, followed by his chums. Mornington followed on, laughing.

"Where is he, Morny?" shouted Jimmy.

"I think he went downstairs."

Jimmy Silver & Co. ran down the staircase. Texas Lick was not to be seen indoors, and they ran out into the quadrangle. Mr. Dalton was standing by the beeches, talking with Mr. Greely, the master of the Fifth Form. They were discussing the rumoured escape of Farmer Outram's black bull.

"If that dangerous animal is indeed loose, the school gates should be kept closed," Mr. Dalton was saying, as the Fistical Four came along the path.

"Undoubtedly," agreed Mr. Greely.

"It's all serene," whispered Lovell. "Only that duffer's gas—or guff, as he would call it. There's Dicky Dalton safe and sound."

Jimmy Silver nodded, greatly relieved. The Texan was not to be seen in the quad, and they came to the conclusion that he had been pulling Mornington's leg. But Jimmy noticed the next moment that Mr. Greely was staring up curiously at the big beech-tree close to which the two masters were standing.

"Upon my word, there is a boy in

the tree!" exclaimed the Fifth Form master.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked up, startled. There was Texas Lick. He was standing in a fork of the branches, and his lasso was in his hand. His eyes were fixed on Mr. Dalton, who looked up at the same moment. The Fourth Form master frowned.

"Lick!" he shouted.

"Yep?"

"You are not allowed to climb the beeches! Descend at once!"

Texas Lick did not answer. His right arm made a sudden swing, and the lasso flew.

Mr. Dalton was utterly unprepared for the lasso-cast, but had he been prepared he could scarcely have eluded it. The loop was over his head in a twinkling, and it dropped round his body, and instantly the rope was dragged taut.

The astonished Form master lost his footing with the drag of the rope and rolled on the ground. Mr. Greely looked on, his eyes almost starting from his head with amazement.

"Oh, crumbs!" stuttered Lovell.

"He's done it!"

"Rescue!" gasped Jimmy.

The chums of the Fourth rushed to the Form master's aid. But there was no time to help him. Lick had taken a turn of the rope over a higher branch, and he was dragging on the end. The result was that Mr. Dalton was dragged from the ground. Leaning back against the trunk, with his feet firmly planted in the fork of the branches, Lick dragged on the rope with all his weight and strength. With the gripping rope tight round his chest, the young master was lifted and swung clear of the ground, his brain in a whirl.

"Lick!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"I guess this is where I come in!" chuckled Texas Lick breathlessly. "I reckon that galoot won't wallop me again!"

"Boy!" shrieked Mr. Greely. "How dare you! Release Mr. Dalton at once! Do you hear?"

"Oh! Ah! Help!" gasped Mr. Dalton.

He clutched at the rope with his hands, but with his weight on it he could not loosen the gripping noose. He swung helplessly.

There was a roar of laughter from Texas Lick in the tree. It was echoed by a crowd of Rookwood fellows who rushed to the spot.

"Roped in!" chuckled Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's lassoed Dicky Dalton!"

shrieked Peele.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The boy must be mad!" gasped Mr. Greely.

"Lick, I command you!"

Bulkeley, Neville!"

Bulkeley ran towards the beech, to climb up and deal with Lick. At the same moment there was a wild shout from the direction of the gates.

"The bull! Look out!"

The shout was followed by a rush of footsteps. Fellows on all sides were running for the houses. Old Mack had leaped into his lodge and banged the door and bolted it. In the wide gateway of Rookwood stood the escaped bull, huge, magnificent, its red eyes glaring with rage. From the road behind came a sound of shouting; from two or three directions the hunters were closing in on the bull. But the school gates, unfortunately, stood open, as they generally did on half-holidays, and there was nothing to prevent the entrance of the bull. Certainly old

Mack, the porter, had no intention of trying to prevent it. Old Mack palpitated behind a bolted door.

In a twinkling the crowd round the beech broke up, as the bull charged in at the gateway. Mr. Greely, portly and dignified as he was, headed a rush for the School House, and he put on a speed that was remarkable and creditable in a gentleman of his years and circumference. In a moment or two the spot was clear, save for Mr. Dalton swinging on the rope, with his toes touching the ground.

He could make no movement to escape. The bull, bellowing, with lowered head, charged after the fleeing crowd. Jimmy Silver took a hurried glance back, thinking of the helpless Form master. But what he saw was a lowered head only six yards behind him, and he put on a desperate burst of speed. He could not help Dicky Dalton by staying to be gored, and he went up the steps of the School House almost as if he were flying. In a jamming crowd, the Rookwooders poured into the House, and Mr. Greely and several fellows fumbled in wild haste with the big door. But the door was not needed. The bull stopped at the steps, and stood there roaring, with a roar that rang like thunder through the quadrangle of Rookwood.

#### THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

##### Lick in the Limelight!

"GEE-WHIZ!"

Texas Lick uttered that exclamation as the crowd below scattered before the rush of the bull. Bulkeley of the Sixth was the only one that remained; he was already climbing the tree when the bull appeared, and for him the path of safety lay upward. He clambered into the branches breathlessly.

"Some scare, what?" grinned Lick.

He stared after the bull. The animal was roaring at the School House steps. The quadrangle was clear now. From doors and windows in the School House scared eyes stared at the terrible animal.

From the steps the bull swung round, its red and furious eyes seeking a victim. Five or six men appeared in the distant gateway, the gaitered farmer and his men armed with pitchforks, one of them with a gun. The bull did not heed them. He had sighted Mr. Dalton suspended from the beech, and he was careering back towards the spot whence the crowd had scattered.

"Gee-whiz!" said Texas Lick again, and for a moment his sunburnt face paled.

Then he shouted to Bulkeley.

"Bear a hand here, pard! Help me with the rope!"

Bulkeley did not answer—there was no time for speech. He grasped the lasso with his powerful hands, and put all his force into the pull. With Bulkeley and Lick pulling together with all their strength, the lassoed Form master was swung high above the ground. The rope was over a high branch, and the pull brought Mr. Dalton up into the lower branches, where Texas Lick and Bulkeley stood.

It was none too soon. Less than a minute after Mr. Dalton had been dragged up into the big beech the bull was careering below.

"I guess that was a close call!" gasped Texas Lick.

Bulkeley helped the dazed Form master to a secure fork in the branches, and Mr. Dalton was released from the lasso. He was too aching and breathless to speak, but the look he gave the cheerful youth from Texas was a very expressive one.

Texas Lick, astride of a branch, drew in his lasso and coiled it. As he did so he watched the bull.

The farmer and his men were in the quad now, closing in on the bull. But as the infuriated animal turned upon them with flaming eyes and lowered head, they broke away and scattered. One of the men had a narrow escape of being gored, leaping into the fountain just in time, and rolling drenched in the great granite basin.

"I guess that animal's goin' to give some trouble," chuckled Texas Lick. "I reckon his dander is riz, and he won't be skered home by a guy with a pitchfork."

He looped the lasso on his arm, and swung to the lowest branch of the beech. "Lick!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton.

"Yep?"

"Where are you going?"

"After the bull, I reckon."

"Are you mad, boy? Stay where you are! You are safe in the tree!" snapped the Form master.

"I guess I've got my rope hyer, sir. I'm going to rope him in, same as I did you, boss," chuckled Lick.

"You will do nothing of the kind!" gasped Mr. Dalton. "I forbid you to leave this tree, Lick!"

"Oh, can it, boss!" said Lick coolly.

"You don't know what you're talking about!"

"What? What?"

"Lick, you cheeky young rascal!" exclaimed Bulkeley.

"Give it a rest!" said Lick. "Chin-wag cuts no ice with me when there's a job to be done, I can tell you! On our ranch in Texas that bull would have been roped in in two shakes of a beaver's tail. I guess I'm goin' to show you 'uns how to handle a bull!"

"I forbid you, Lick! Bulkeley, seize him!" exclaimed the master of the Fourth.

Bulkeley made a grasp at the Texan, but he was too late. Lick dropped from the low branch to the ground.

"Good heavens! He will be killed!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton, as the Texan schoolboy, with his lariat in his hand, ran lightly towards the careering bull.

"He's got pluck, sir," said Bulkeley.

"It's possible he can do as he says."

"If the bull attacks him I must go to his aid," said Mr. Dalton, and he prepared to drop from the tree.

The bull, careering round in search of a victim, watched on all sides by anxious eyes, speedily sighted the Texan schoolboy running towards him. He turned on the Texan at once.

Lick stopped, and watched him coolly.

Every eye was on the Texan now with breathless interest. Texas Lick was enjoying himself. To be the cynosure of all eyes, to show off to all the school what he could do, just "jumped," as he would have expressed it, with his inclinations.

Even when the bull, with red, savage eyes, charged down on him, the Texan found time to wave his hand airily at the crowd of faces at the School House windows.

"Swank!" growled Arthur Edward Lovell!"

"Pluck, too!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Yes, rather. If he can handle that bull, he's the real goods," said Mornington. "Oh gad!"

For a moment it looked as if the charge of the maddened bull would sweep the Texan helplessly away. But a quick, active leap aside saved Lick, and the bull, with lowered head, went thundering past him. Texas Lick spun round on him, and the lasso flew with an unerring aim.

Right over the massive head and

horns the loop circled, and slid round the great, muscular neck of the bull.

The rope flew out taut as the bull thundered on. Against that powerful pull the Texan could not have held it for a moment. But he knew what he was about. He was standing close by a tree, and as the rope flew out, Texas Lick took a turn of it round the trunk, and then another rapid turn.

The double turn of the rope, with Lick holding the end, held it as fast as a knot. The rope tautened, and sang almost like a harp-string as it stretched. The wild career of the bull was suddenly stopped. With the immense strain on it it looked as if the rope must snap, but it did not. That same lasso had held many a struggling steer on the plains of Texas, and it was more than equal to the strain.

Crash!

Over went the black bull, sprawling helplessly on the ground, and roaring with rage.

"Gee-whiz! I guess that's done the trick!" exclaimed the Texan.

He coolly knotted the end of the rope round the tree-trunk. By the time he had finished, the maddened animal had struggled to its feet. It came whirling back towards the Texan at furious speed. Texas Lick walked away with his back to the bull.

He did not run.

With the eyes of all Rookwood upon him, that was a magnificent moment for the bumptious Westerner.

He just walked.

Behind him the bull came thundering, while Texas Lick strolled, with his hands in his pockets, towards the School House.

Texas Lick knew the length of the rope, he knew its strength, and he knew that he was out of reach of the bull's charge if the rope held. And he was quite certain that it would hold. Had it snapped, the horns of the savage brute would have been in his back in a second more. Sure as he was of the rope, it required an iron nerve to walk calmly away with his back to the savage bull behind him. He did not even glance round.

Twang!

The rope sang as the charging bull drew it to full length from the tree, his horns only a few yards behind the Texan.

But the rope held, and the sudden wrench threw the bull off his feet again, and he went down with a crash and a roar.

As if unconscious of his proximity, Texas Lick strolled on towards the School House, not giving the bull a look.

He came up the steps and grinned cheerily at the swarm of fellows in the doorway.

"I guess it's all O.K. now!" he remarked airily. "You 'uns needn't worry about that pesky bull. He's roped."

#### THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

##### Called to Account!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. watched the roped bull as if fascinated. The animal had struggled up again, puzzled and enraged by the strange hold that held him to the tree. Again and again the bull sought to rush away, and again and again he was hurled to the ground by the tautening of the lasso. And the tightening of the noose about his neck was almost choking him now. The great brute's strength and fury were a terrible sight to behold. The juniors almost held their breath as they watched. There was little doubt that the bull might have done fearful damage before he was captured had he

not been roped in by the Texan school-boy. Farmer Outram and his men were gathering round the bull now, keeping out of the radius of the rope. They waited for the great animal to exhaust his strength in his futile efforts to escape.

"They've got him!" said Lovell at last.

The bull, exhausted, half-throated, was seized at last by the farmer and his men. Several ropes were tied to him, and the farmer held on to the lasso. In the midst of his captors, the subdued brute was led away, and disappeared out of the gates.

Glad enough were the Rookwooders to see him go. Old Mack rushed out of his lodge and slammed and locked the gates, on the principle, apparently, of bolting the stable-door after the horse had been stolen. The quadrangle was soon swarming with Rookwood fellows again, excitedly discussing the startling happening. Texas Lick seemed, like the celebrated young lady at the tea-party, to "swell visibly." There was no doubt that Lick had acted well and bravely, and there was still less doubt that Lick felt that he was entitled to "swank."

"That was plucky, kid," said Bulkeley of the Sixth, as he passed the Texan.

"It sure was!" agreed Lick.

And Bulkeley grinned as he walked on.

But a few minutes later a message reached Lick that he was wanted in the Head's study. Lick nodded complacently.

"I guess the old guy figures it out that he's bound to put in a few words," he remarked. "I reckon he's never seen a bull handled like that before in all his natural."

"You awful ass!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "The Head wants to see you about handling Dicky Dalton, of course."

Texas Lick shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess I'm going to handle any galoot that lays his paws on me!" he answered.

And he walked away to the Head's study.

He found Mr. Dalton in the presence of Dr. Chisholm. There was a deep frown on the doctor's face, and Mr. Dalton looked troubled.

"Lick!" exclaimed Dr. Chisholm sternly. "From the window of my study I saw your action—"

"Yep," said Lick. "I guess I handled the animal all right, sir."

The Head coughed.

"I am referring to your attack on your Form master—Mr. Dalton. I was about to come out and deal with you when the bull appeared."

"And then you reckoned you'd wait a bit, sir!" chuckled Lick. "I guess you was wise. That bull would have made shavings of you before you could have said, 'No sugar in mine.'"

"You have dared to raise your hand against your Form master, Lick!"

"Not my hand, sir, only a rope," said Lick.

"Have you any excuse to offer?"

"Heaps! That guy—"

"What!"

"Mr. Dalton, sir, he walloped me this morning. I figured it out that I would get level. And I guess I did, just a few!"

"Bless my soul!"

Dr. Chisholm stared at Texas Lick over his glasses. He was already aware that Lick was a new and strange inhabitant for a school like Rookwood. But this reply almost took his breath away.

"You—you justify your conduct on

the grounds that Mr. Dalton punished you?" he articulated at last.

"Yep."

"Very well," said the Head. "It is evident, Lick, that you are not suited to Rookwood, and that Rookwood is not suited to you. I shall communicate by telephone with your father's agent in London, and you will leave the school to-morrow morning."

"Gee-whiz!" ejaculated Lick.

"That is all. You may go, Lick!" said the doctor, with a wave of the hand.

Lick hesitated. Somehow he did not seem to have anticipated that his retaliation upon his Form master would lead to his dismissal from the school. He looked dismayed.

Mr. Dalton broke in.

"I should certainly have expected you, sir, to expel this boy from the school for his outrageous conduct," he said. "But—"

"I could do no less, Mr. Dalton."

"Quite so, sir. But as it happens the boy acted very bravely in securing the bull. I am afraid that lives might have been lost but for his action. I think he has, to some extent, atoned for his lawless conduct. So far as I am concerned, sir, I should be willing to overlook his conduct towards myself for this once, if you thought fit to give him another chance here."

Dr. Chisholm hesitated.

"The boy certainly acted bravely, and doubtless prevented serious damage from being done," he agreed. "But—"

"I guess you're a real white man, Mr. Dalton!" said Texas Lick cheerfully. "I don't mind saying, sir, that I'm sorry I handled you. I reckon I ain't used to Rookwood ways yet. It's a pesky big change from Texas."

"That is certainly true," said the Head. "At Mr. Dalton's request, Lick, I will give you another chance."

"Thank you, sir!"

"But any repetition of such conduct —" added the Head, in a terrific voice. He did not finish, leaving the rest to Lick's imagination.

"Sacked?" asked Jimmy Silver, as the Texan strolled into the end study for tea.

Lick shook his head.

"Not this time. I guess I went a bit over the limit. That guy Dalton is a real white man. I guess I'm going to be real nice to him after this. He put in a word for me with the old guy."

"More than you deserved," said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Oh, guff!" said Texas Lick.

And he sat down cheerfully to tea.

THE END.

## NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

### (A Grand Christmas Number)

will contain a fine long story of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, dealing with their Christmas holiday adventures. As Texas Lick goes with them, you can guess there'll be tons of fun knocking about.

Look out for

## "TEXAS LICK'S GHOST HUNT!"

Next Tuesday.