

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO JIMMY SILVER & CO.? SEE . . . BELOW.

The BOYS' FRIEND 1^{1d} 1²

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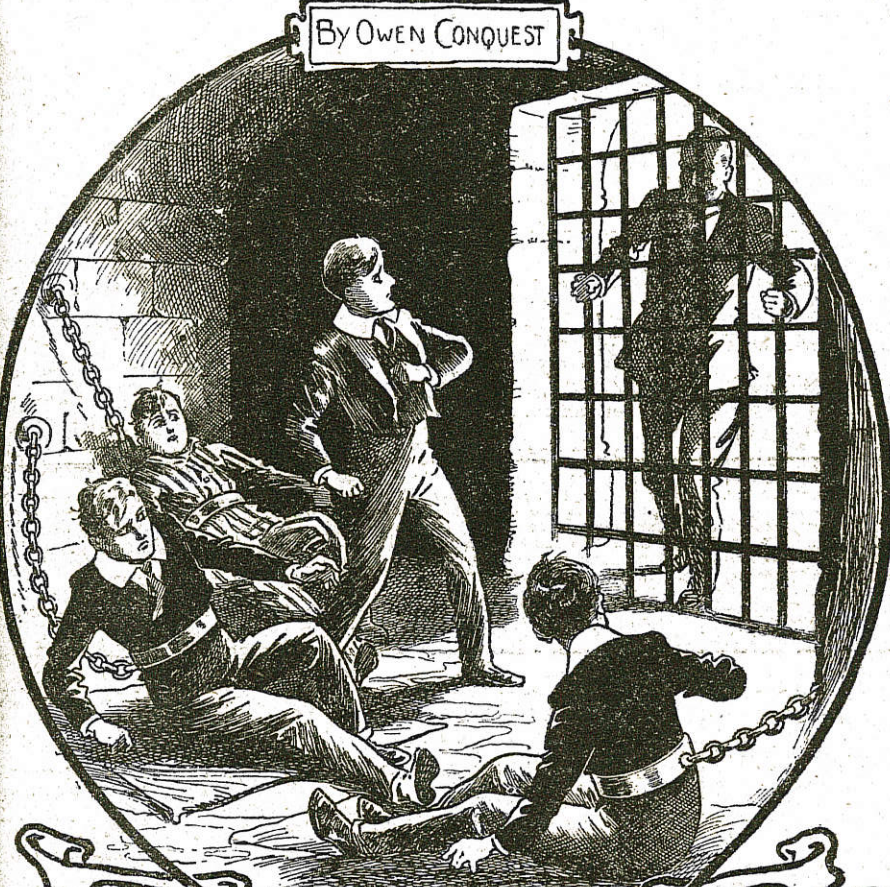
No. 911. Vol. XVIII. New Series.]

THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending November 23rd, 1918.]

The Secret of the Vaults! The Boys Who Beat the Kaiser!

By OWEN CONQUEST



THE SCHOOLBOY CAPTIVES!

By DUNCAN STORM.

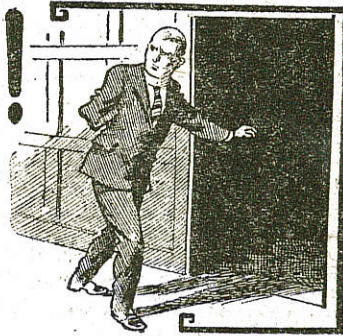
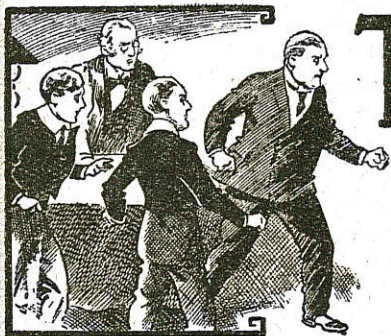


ONE FOR HIS NUT!

THE SECRET of the VAULTS!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of
JIMMY SILVER & CO., the Chums of Rookwood School.

By OWEN CONQUEST.



The 1st Chapter. Missing!

"Impossible!"
Dr. Chisholm, the Head of Rookwood, rapped out the word angrily.
Mr. Bootles coughed.
"I regret to say, sir—"
The Head rose from his chair, his brows knitted. Mr. Bootles coughed again apologetically. He could not help being the bearer of unpleasant tidings.
Dr. Chisholm fixed his eyes upon the master of the Fourth.
"You say that Silver, of your Form, cannot be found, Mr. Bootles?"
"Quite so, sir."
"He is not in the dormitory with his Form?"
"No."
"Has he been searched for?"
"Everywhere."
"It is extraordinary!" exclaimed the Head, biting his lips. "He has, of course, left the school without permission, as his three friends have already done. It is unpardonable!"
Another cough from Mr. Bootles.

"Two boys of the Fourth, sir, have made a statement to me," he began. "They are Mornington and Erroll."
"Have they any knowledge of this affair?" snapped the Head.
"So they say, sir."
"Admit them at once, then!"
Mr. Bootles turned to the door, and made a sign to the two juniors, who were waiting in the corridor.
Mornington and Erroll entered the Head's study.
Dr. Chisholm glanced at them sharply.
"What do you know of Silver's actions?" he asked. "Were you aware that he intended to run away from school?"
"We know that he has not run away from school, sir," said Mornington quietly.
"What?"
"Something has happened to him, sir," said Erroll.
"An accident, do you mean—within the walls of Rookwood?" exclaimed the Head, in astonishment. "If so, where is he?"
"We last saw him enter the Oak Room—Captain Lagden's sitting-room, sir."

"Indeed! When was that?"
"About half an hour before bedtime."
"And after that?"
"Nothing after that, sir," said Mornington. "He never came out of the Oak Room!"
"Do you mean to say that all this disturbance is about nothing, and that Silver has visited Captain Lagden, and simply forgotten bedtime?"
"No, sir."
"Silver is not there now," interposed Mr. Bootles. "After Mornington told me this, I called on the captain at once, and found him alone."
"Then what does Mornington mean?" exclaimed the Head testily.
"Explain to Dr. Chisholm, Mornington."
"Certainly, sir. Since Silver's chums disappeared, sir—Lovell and Raby and Newcome, one after another—we've been keeping an eye on Jimmy," said Mornington. "I had a suspicion that something might happen to Jimmy Silver, too, and we hardly ever let him out of our sight."
"Indeed!" said the Head, in surprise. "When he went to, call on Captain

Lagden in the Oak Room this evening, we went as far as the landing window and waited for him," said Mornington. "He couldn't have left the Oak Room without our seeing him. He never left it. We cut off to the dorm at half-past nine, expecting Jimmy to turn up there before lights out. But he never came."
"Undoubtedly he left the Oak Room after you left your post," said the Head.
"Then what became of him, sir?"
"He has left Rookwood, I suppose. His friends had already run away, and he has gone to join them!" exclaimed the Head angrily.
"He hasn't run away in this weather, without his cap or his coat, sir," said Valentine Mornington.
The Head started.
"What do you mean to imply, Mornington? That Silver is still in Captain Lagden's quarters, although Mr. Bootles says he is not there? Are you out of your senses?"
"I think Captain Lagden might be able to explain, sir."
"Nonsense! However, I will see Captain Lagden," said the Head testily. "I

believe he was on friendly terms with this boy, and he may have some suspicion of his intentions."
The Head, evidently in a very irritated mood, left his study hastily.
Mr. Bootles coughed.
"You may go to your dormitory, my boys," he said mildly.
"Yes, sir."
Mornington and Erroll left the study, but they did not go to the dormitory of the Classical Fourth.
They followed Dr. Chisholm to the Oak Room.
Quite unconscious of the fact that the two juniors were at his heels, Dr. Chisholm tapped at the door of the Oak Room, and entered.
Captain Lagden was in his dressing-gown, the right sleeve of which hung empty at his side.
Apparently the captain had been going to bed when he was disturbed by Dr. Chisholm's visit.
"Pray excuse this intrusion, Lagden, my dear fellow!" said the Head.
"Not at all, sir! You are disturbed (Continued on the next page.)"



THE SECRET OF THE VAULTS!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

(Continued from the previous page.)



about Silver's peculiar conduct, I suppose?"

"Exactly. Two boys state that he was in this room up to bed-time."

Captain Lagden nodded.

There was a thoughtful expression upon his scarred face, and he looked very concerned.

"Silver certainly called on me this evening, sir," he answered. "I had made friends with the boy. That, I suppose, was his reason for confiding certain circumstances to me, which, in view of what has happened, I feel bound to tell you of. He confessed to me that his friends, Lovell and Raby and Newcome, have left Rookwood with the intention of trying to enlist in the Army."

"I suspected as much," said the Head. "And Silver actually confessed this?"

"Yes; and admitted that it was arranged that he should join them for the same object. I earnestly dissuaded him," continued the captain. "I thought I had succeeded. When he left me he promised not to carry out his intention, but to write to his friends, and to urge them to return to school. But for that, I should have felt it my duty to come to you at once."

"Quite so. But—" "I am afraid that Silver has broken his word," said the captain slowly. "Having confided the matter to me, and found that I disapproved strongly, no doubt he guessed that I should warn you of his intentions, and, fearing to be stopped, he has left Rookwood without a moment's delay. But certainly he gave me the impression that he had abandoned his intention."

Dr. Chisholm compressed his lips. "I do not blame you for relying on the boy's assurance."

Mornington and Erroll were outside the half-open door, and they exchanged a quick glance.

The captain's manner was perfectly natural.

It seemed impossible to suspect the scarred, one-armed man, bearing the signs of honourable wounds received at the front, of treachery and duplicity; but Mornington, at least, was certain in his own mind that Jimmy Silver had never left the Oak Room.

Yet what could have happened?

Why should Captain Lagden, a retired officer of the Loamshire Regiment, engaged as football coach at Rookwood School, harm Jimmy Silver of the Fourth?

The question was unanswerable; but Mornington's conviction remained unshaken.

His glance roved over the oak panels that formed the walls of the Oak Room, one of the oldest parts of Rookwood School, and he was wondering what dark secret those old panels might hide.

Captain Lagden made a sudden movement as he perceived the two juniors at the doorway.

The Head, following his glance, turned his eyes upon them, and frowned angrily. "Mornington! Erroll! What are you doing here? Go to your dormitory at once."

"But, sir—" began Mornington.

"Go!" thundered the Head.

Mornington set his lips, but Erroll drew him by the arm, and the two juniors departed.

They returned to the dormitory, where the Classical Fourth were in a buzz of excitement.

"Any news of Jimmy?" called out Tubby Muffin.

"No!"

Bulkeley looked in.

"Turn in!" said the captain of Rookwood tersely. "You're a good bit past bed-time now. Enough talk; turn in!"

The juniors turned in, and Bulkeley put out the light and retired.

But it was a long time before the excited discussion ceased in the Fourth Form dormitory and sleep visited the eyes of the juniors.

Lovell clenched his hands.

The three juniors had never lost the hope that their chum would somehow, sooner or later, help them.

But that faint hope of rescue was dashed to the ground now.

Jimmy Silver had fallen a victim like the rest of the Co.

Jimmy looked at his pale and haggard chums.

They were secured by heavy chains that were fastened to iron girdles round their waists, rusty old fetters left in the cell for many long years unused.

Jimmy was not so secured, however; the kidnapper had departed hastily after flinging him in, and closing the grating on him.

Evidently the rascal was anxious to get back to his room above as quickly as possible, to keep up appearances there if any inquiry was made for the captain of the Fourth Form.

"So you're here, you fellows?" said Jimmy at last.

"It seems like years," muttered Lovell.

"We—we hoped that you would get us out of this somehow, Jimmy. And now—"

He broke off with a groan.

"Now I'm landed as well!" said Jimmy Silver grimly.

"And it's all up!" said Raby.

"Keep smiling!" said Jimmy, though without much conviction. "While there's life there's hope."

He rose to his feet, and examined the grating that closed in the only opening of the vaulted cell.

It was old and rusted, the rust of hundreds of years was thick upon it, but the bars were thick and strong, and defied his strength.

Out of reach, beyond the iron bars, the lamp burned dimly, and beyond was black darkness.

He turned back to his chums, and examined their fetters.

The iron girdles, which in old days had secured unhappy prisoners in those gloomy depths, were locked upon them.

"Well, this is a go!" said Jimmy.

Something like despair was creeping into his own courageous heart, but he tried to keep up a cheerful tone.

"We're done!" muttered Lovell. "Oh, Jimmy, I thought you might somehow get to suspect that villain and keep clear of this."

"I did half suspect him," said Jimmy.

"I—I was caught, though. But—but who could suspect an Army captain of being a kidnapper? And even now I can't make out what his object is."

"I don't believe he's an Army captain at all," said Lovell. "There's more in it than we understand. When he collared me, I found out that he was not one-armed, as he pretended. If Captain Lagden of the Loamshire Regiment lost his arm at the front, that man can't be Captain Lagden."

"Some swindling impostor," said Raby.

"I'm sure of that."

Jimmy Silver nodded.

It seemed the only conclusion.

When the captain had seized him in the Oak Room, Jimmy had made the startling discovery that the empty sleeve was a lie and a cheat, and that the supposed cripple was in possession of all his limbs.

The discovery had almost dazed him.

If the man was not Captain Lagden, who and what was he, and what amazing deception was he playing at Rookwood School?

"You found him out first, Lovell," said Jimmy. "Tell me what happened that night when you went down from the dorm to play a trick on him in his room."

Lovell shivered.

"We traced you afterwards as far as the door of the Oak Room," said Jimmy. "But there we were beaten. We couldn't suspect—"

"I suppose you couldn't," said Lovell. "You didn't know what I knew. When I got down to his rooms I found them dark, and I supposed that he was in bed, and I went into the sitting-room. I thought he was in the next room—the bedroom, of course—and I was going in quietly to pitch the can of ink over him. Then all of a sudden— He broke off, and shivered again."

"Then?" asked Jimmy.

"All of a sudden there was a click, and I heard somebody in the dark."

The next instant the light was turned on—an electric lamp he had in his hand—and I saw a big panel in the wall wide open, and Captain Lagden coming out."

He saw me at the same moment. I—I was so stunned that I stood quite still, half thinking I was dreaming. I—I had thought he was asleep in bed, and there he was, coming out of the secret door in the wall. He was as startled as I was, but in a second he jumped on me like a tiger."

Lovell's voice shook.

"Even then," he went on, "I thought I had a chance, as he was one-armed; but I found out fast enough that he had two arms, and he was as strong as a tiger, though he pretended to be wounded. He handled me like a baby. I hadn't a chance even to call for help—not that anyone could have heard me. He dragged me down here, and chained me up like this. I've lived on bread and water since—alone here, till Raby came."

"And you, Raby?" asked Jimmy.

"You remember you left me outside the door of the Oak Room," said Raby.

"Captain Lagden opened the door suddenly, and asked me what I wanted. I told him we had been thinking he was ill, and he said he was feeling faint, and asked me to step in and help him into his bedroom. I stepped in, and he collared me. That's all."

"When Raby came," said Lovell, "I knew that the villain meant to collar the lot of us. He's playing some game at Rookwood, some deep game, and he was afraid we should spot him. Of course, if he'd let me go, after I'd seen the secret panel open, it would have been all up with his game, whatever it was. And after kidnapping me he was bound to finish with you fellows, for he knew, of course, that you'd never rest till you found me."

"I knew that—too late!" said Raby.

"And I!" said Newcome ruefully. "I walked into his room without suspecting anything at all, and as soon as he knew I was alone he seized me, and I was brought down here. I—I was afraid that you might follow me to his room, Jimmy, and follow me here, but you never came."

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath.

"I've had some narrow escapes of this already," he said. "I can see it now. I understand now. The rotter kept it up to the finish that he was trying to help me. I went into the abbey vaults with him to explore them, and he pitched into Mornington because he followed us—I know why now. If I'd gone into the vaults I should never have come out. I know now why he wanted to keep it all dark from Brown, the detective, too. What a fool I've been!"

"You couldn't know," said Lovell.

"I suppose I couldn't. Even now I can't guess what he's at. But it's clear that when he was at Rookwood as a boy he discovered that secret passage which is supposed to exist between the School House and the abbey vaults, and when he came here now as football coach he got the Head to give him the Oak Room as his quarters, because he knew of the secret panel. But why—why? What game is he playing?"

"Goodness knows!"

"He must be an impostor of some kind," said Lovell. "He keeps up appearances well enough, but he's no Army captain."

"But—but he must be an old Rookwooder, as he makes out, or he couldn't know anything about the secret panel in the Oak Room."

"That's true!"

"It beats me!" said Newcome. "Hark! There was a step in the darkness. He's coming back!" muttered Jimmy.

The eyes of the four juniors were fixed on the grating.

Into the dim radius of light from the lamp stepped a figure they knew well—that of the kidnapper, who was known to all Rookwood as Captain Basil Lagden.

His scarred face looked in through the bars with a grim smile.

He unlocked the grating, and stepped into the cell.

Jimmy Silver clenched his hands hard.

But his fettered chums could not help him, and the hopelessness of a renewed struggle with the powerful ruffian was only too clear.

"You villain!" muttered Jimmy.

Lagden did not speak.

He laid a strong grasp on the junior's shoulder—a grasp that was like iron, and showed at once the futility of resistance.

Jimmy was dragged to the nearest stone pillar, to which was attached one of the rusty chains and iron girdles.

The captain of the Fourth struggled, though without hope, as he was dragged to the fetters; but he resisted in vain.

The iron girdle was locked round his waist, and he was a prisoner like his chums.

"Oh, you villain!" he muttered.

Captain Lagden burst into a laugh.

"All here now!" he said. "You were a little too sharp, Master Silver. But not quite sharp enough, as it turned out. You should not have come and warned me that you intended to speak to the man from Scotland Yard."

"I did not know you were a rascally kidnapper, then!" said Jimmy Silver disdainfully.

"You know it now!" said the captain, unmoved.

"I know more than that—I know that you are an impostor!" said Jimmy savagely. "You are not Basil Lagden who was at Rookwood fifteen years ago."

Lagden looked at him curiously.

"You think not?" he asked.

"I am sure of it. You are some scoundrel who has borrowed Lagden's name!"

"Yet, as you see, I am well acquainted with the place," said the captain mockingly. "Did I not ask the Head to assign the Oak Room to me for my quarters? And, as you see, I knew of this old prison cell, and the fetters that have now come in so useful."

"You must have been at Rookwood," said Jimmy, puzzled. "But I do not believe you are Basil Lagden. A man who had been distinguished at the front would not turn out such a villain as you are."

The captain laughed again, but he did not answer.

He left the cell, locking the grating after him, and picked up the lamp, and disappeared in the vaults beyond.

From beyond the stone pillars that hid him from view came the glimmer of light, and low sounds which the juniors could not understand, but which showed that the man was engaged upon work of some kind.

"What is he doing there?" muttered Jimmy.

"I don't know," said Lovell. "Nearly every night he comes down into the vaults, and we hear him at work. It's some kind of hand-machine he's using. Goodness knows what it means. But whatever it is he's doing there is the reason why he came to Rookwood."

"It's something against the law," said Raby, "and he knew this was a safe place, being an old Rookwooder, and knowing the secret of the vaults. We should never have known anything about it but for Lovell happening to find him coming out of the secret door that night."

"And no one but us will ever know!" muttered Newcome.

"We can't be kept here for ever!" said Jimmy.

"What's to prevent him from keeping us here as long as he likes?"

Jimmy was silent.

But he broke the silence at last, speaking in a low whisper.

"There's a chance for us, you fellows! Listen to me—I must whisper! Morny and Erroll may guess—"

"Why should they?"

"Morny had an idea that what had hap-

pened to you fellows, might happen to me," whispered Jimmy. "He set out to keep an eye on me, and hardly ever left me. He may know— He knew I was coming to the Oak Room this evening to see the captain, and he may know."

"Oh!" muttered Lovell.

"I don't know whether he was keeping it up, and whether he may have followed me there," said Jimmy. "But he may have. Anyway, he knew I was there, and he may guess."

"You knew I went there, but you never guessed," said Lovell.

Jimmy was silent again.

The thread of hope was a slight one, but he would not part with it; it was the only glimmer of light in the darkness.

The juniors threw themselves upon the sacking wearily.

It was an hour later that the kidnapper came back, and placed the lamp by the grating, and disappeared.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were sleeping uneasily in the vaulted cell.

The 3rd Chapter.

Mornington's Decision.

Morning dawned upon Rookwood School.

There was only one topic that morning among the Rookwood fellows, and that was the disappearance of Jimmy Silver.

Every fellow at Rookwood, on the Classical and the Modern side, was talking of it.

Not that there was any mystery about it.

Captain Lagden's statement to the Head was known to the school, and there was no doubt on the subject.

It was already generally believed that Lovell and Raby and Newcome had run away from school to make an attempt to join the Army; and some of the fellows had suspected that Jimmy Silver was in the scheme, and intended to join his chums as soon as the coast was clear.

Now he had done so, and that was all there was about it.

But there were two fellows in the Classical Fourth who did not share the general opinion, though they said nothing about it.

Mornington and Erroll were not satisfied.

They went into class with the rest of the Fourth that morning, but they were certainly not thinking much about the valuable instructions imparted by Mr. Bootles in the Form-room.

The two chums were glad when lessons were over, and they were free to think out the problem that weighed on them.

Mornington drew Erroll away, as the Fourth-Formers streamed out after morning lessons.

They retired to a quiet corner of Little Quad, while most of the other fellows went down to the footer ground.

"You fellows slacking?" Conroy called after them.

"Yass," said Mornington.

"You'll be wanted for the Bagshot match, you know; somebody's got to take Jimmy Silver's place."

"Perhaps Jimmy will be back in time for the Bagshot match," answered Mornington.

"Not likely, if he's gone off to try to enlist," said the Cornstalk junior, laughing.

"You never can tell!" answered Mornington.

"Well, I'm sticking to footer," said Conroy, and he joined the others on the way to Little Side.

Mornington and Erroll sat down on a bench under the leafless trees in Little Quad, and Morny's face became very serious.

"This is up to us, Erroll," he said.

Kit Erroll nodded.

"I think it is, Morny."

"You see, I was right about Jimmy disappearing after his pals," went on Mornington. "We oughtn't to have let him out of our sight."

"We couldn't follow him into Captain Lagden's room."

"No. But that was where he disappeared, Erroll."

Erroll knitted his brows.

"It looks like it," he said. "But—but it's impossible, Morny. How could he disappear there? Why should Captain Lagden harm him?"

"I don't know! But he has!"

"Morny!"

"There's more in that fellow than meets the eye," said Mornington quietly. "Look at it, Kit! He came back here as an old Rookwooder, covered with glory at the front, and everybody was prepared to like him and admire him. Lovell found he was a distant relation, and claimed him at once, and he gave Lovell the marble eye directly. He acted badly towards Lovell, too. My belief is that he didn't want any fellow with a right to step into his quarters."

"But he made friends with Lovell's pals afterwards."

"Only after Lovell disappeared. If he had a hand in that he would naturally want to know what they thought of it, and what measures they were taking to look for him."

"That's so, But—"

"Think of it, Kit! Lovell's friends have disappeared, one by one, and each of them was somewhere about the Oak Room when he vanished."

"I know what it looks like, Morny! But what possible object—"

"That beats me!" confessed Mornington. "Unless the man's mad, I can't guess what it means."

"It's no good suggesting it to the Head, Morny."

"I know that; he's jawed me enough already," said Mornington, with a grin. "And we can't do anything alone. But we're going to take professional advice."

Erroll started.

"Brown!" said Mornington tersely. "Brown the detective is still at Coombe, and he's hanging about the school every day. He's looking for that man Bar-mann, the counterfeiter, who used to be at Rookwood when he was a boy. Like his cheek to be hunting for him here."

IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN

Write to me whenever you are in doubt or difficulty. Tell me about yourself; let me know what you think of the BOYS' FRIEND. All readers who write to me, and enclose a stamped envelope or postcard, may be sure of receiving a prompt and kindly reply by post. All letters should be addressed: "The Editor, THE BOYS' FRIEND, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4."

FOR NEXT MONDAY

"TUBBY MUFFIN'S BENEFIT!"

By Owen Conquest.

For humorous incidents next Monday's magnificent long complete tale of the Rookwood chums would be hard to beat. Tubby Muffin is an inveterate borrower, but usually he does not endeavour to borrow more than half-a-crown at a time. But in our next story the fat junior asks the Fiscal Four for five pounds!

Needless to say, Tubby does not get this amount, but Jimmy Silver shows some sympathy towards the fat junior when he discovers that Tubby is in difficulties. Jimmy hits upon the idea of holding an entertainment for Tubby's benefit, and to Tubby Muffin's delight the tickets sell like hot cakes.

Tommy Dodd & Co. are not asked to take part in the entertainment, but, nevertheless, they decide to do so. They do not help Jimmy Silver and his chums, but— Well, I must not tell you what part the Moderns play; this will come as a pleasant surprise to you. There is also another surprise awaiting you right at the very end of the tale, a surprise that is connected with Tubby Muffin.

"A DESPERATE VENTURE!"

By Martin Clifford.

In next Monday's splendid tale of Frank Richards & Co. you will find that the strike is still in existence at Cedar Creek. But food is short—very short. Some must be obtained in a short time, and Bob Lawless and Frank Richards embark upon a desperate venture. They manage to secure the necessary food, but before they reach Cedar Creek again they have a most thrilling adventure. The nature of this adventure you will learn next Monday.

"THE BOYS WHO BEAT THE KAISER!"

By Duncan Storm.

Our amazing adventure serial has now reached a most interesting stage, and I am sure you will all vote next Monday's instalment one of the best that has so far appeared. To get away from the palace of Booloo is a most difficult task. A pool which is infested by crocodiles has to be crossed. How this is done, how Obob el Mook funks taking what is known

as the King's Leap, and how Horace plays a very prominent part in persuading him, makes most interesting reading. You will also revel in the amusing incidents which follow. The boys take the native king under their wing, so to speak, and— Well, there is some rare fun then.

"BARKER, THE BOUNDER!"

By Herbert Britton.

The next instalment of our splendid school serial describes how Jack Jackson was forced to accompany Barker to the Plough and Har

It never mind that now. He's a Scotland Yard detective, and he must have some sense. My idea is to go to him, make him listen to the whole story, and tell him what we suspect. He can't refuse to hear us."

"I'm afraid the Head will be ratty if I hear of it."

"I know he will, but I'm willing to risk that, for the sake of the fellows who've been kidnapped—if they've been kidnapped. If it turns out that they have really run away from school, we shall look a pair of asses for our pains, I know that. But—"

"I think you're right, Morny. Let's go to Brown; it can't do much harm, even if it doesn't do any good."

"Good!" said Morny, rising. "Come on, then, and let's lose no time."

That decision having been reached, Mornington and his chum started for the gates at once.

Captain Lagden was sauntering in the quadrangle, and he came towards the two juniors as he sighted them, with a pleasant nod.

Morny gave Erroll one quick look. The thought was instantly in his mind that the captain wanted to ascertain whether they harboured any suspicion.

But Morny's face expressed nothing of that thought to the captain, and Erroll was only looking quiet and grave.

"No news of your friend yet?" asked the captain, with a smile.

"Jimmy Silver, do you mean, sir?" asked Morny.

"Yes, he appears to have gone away to join the others, after all. I did my best to dissuade him," said the captain, shaking his head. "I certainly thought he had given up the idea when he left the last night."

"I haven't heard from him," said Mornington. "Fancy Jimmy Silver playing the goat like that! If he's at Lantham, though, he'll be brought back soon enough; I hear that the Head has telephoned to the police there."

"The sooner the better for the foolish boy," said the captain.

"Well, he must be an ass if he thinks he can wedge into khaki at his age," said Mornington. "They wouldn't have him."

Captain Lagden laughed.

"No; I think not," he agreed. "But probably he will not venture to face the Head when he fails, and he may not turn up immediately. I hope for his own sake that he will."

"Well, I should think he would come back in time for the Bagshot football match," said Mornington gravely.

"I hope so," said the captain, with a smile.

He nodded, and walked on, and the two juniors went out of gates.

Kit Erroll glanced inquiringly at him as they went down the lane together towards Coombe.

"Morny, old man," he said, "I can't believe it—I can't suspect it! He spoke like what we've always supposed him to be—fair and above-board."

"He spoke as I expected him to," answered Mornington quietly. "He wanted to know whether we were suspicious, and I've made him believe that we are not. And he put in a reason why Jimmy should not return to the school, because he knows that Jimmy won't turn, and he wants to account for it in advance. I feel more certain than ever, Kit."

The two juniors walked on in silence till they reached Coombe, and there, in the grounds of the Coombe Arms, one of the first persons they saw was Mr. Brown of Scotland Yard, reading a newspaper.

"There's our man!" said Mornington.

"I can't guess," said Morny frankly. "You, being a detective, may be able to see light when it's all dark to me."

Mr. Brown smiled.

That tribute was not displeasing to the podgy gentleman from Scotland Yard.

"Possibly," he assented. "I may say that the affair has interested me. You suspect, then, that your friends may have made some discovery which endangered a certain person, and that he has secured their silence by kidnapping them."

"I suppose it would be something like that."

"Baumann!" exclaimed Erroll suddenly. "Morny, what if that man is really in this neighbourhood, as Mr. Brown supposes—Jimmy Silver may have fallen foul of him!"

"Tosh, old chap!" said Mornington. "Jimmy Silver & Co. disappeared at Rookwood, and Baumann isn't at the school, wherever he may be."

The detective's eyes glistened for a moment.

"Whom do you suspect?" he asked.

It was evident that Mr. Brown took a very deep interest in what Mornington had to tell him.

Dr. Chisholm would have angrily pooh-poohed the matter at once, for the scholarly old gentleman did not see eye to eye with a Scotland Yard detective.

"Captain Lagden!" answered Mornington at once.

"What?"

"You've seen the man," said Morny. "You called on him—"

"I did, with some difficulty," said Mr. Brown. "Owing to ill-health he was unable to see visitors, but I called on him at last."

"He don't look much like a chap in ill-health," said Morny. "I shouldn't wonder if he was not specially keen to meet a detective."

Mr. Brown smiled.

Perhaps that thought had already been somewhere in the back of his mind.

"But Captain Lagden is a man with a very honourable record," he said. "I understand that he was formerly at Rookwood, that he had a distinguished career

that was known of Newcome was that he had gone into the room."

"Oh!"

"Since then we've been looking after Jimmy, and last night we waited for him outside the room when he called on the captain. He never came out!"

"By gad!"

Mornington went on to explain fully, and Mr. Brown listened with the keenest interest, putting in a question here and there, till he knew all that Morny knew, and perhaps a little more.

He was silent when the junior had finished.

"I know it sounds thick," said Mornington, encouraged by the detective's evident interest. "It looks, from what I've said, as if Lagden came to Rookwood and specially got hold of the Oak Room because he knew of the secret passage there, for the purpose of kidnapping the Fistical Four one after another. Unless he's mad it can't be so, I know. But he may be mad, for all I know."

"Or suppose," said Mr. Brown—"suppose he were carrying on some nefarious scheme of some kind, and Lovell happened to make a discovery by coming into his quarters unexpectedly at night?"

Morny brightened.

"Yes, that's so," he said. "But—but what could he be doing that Lovell mightn't see?"

Mr. Brown did not answer that question.

"In that case the secret passage was ready to his hand," he remarked. "And he may have chosen that room because his secret occupation—granted he had one—required to be carried on in a secret place. Lovell's disappearance would then be followed up by that of his friends, because they were anxiously hunting for him, and making endless surmises as to what had become of him, and might have hit upon something like the truth in time."

Morny gave Erroll a triumphant glance.

"Just what I thought!" he exclaimed.

"You are a very keen lad, Master Mornington," said Mr. Brown, with a smile. "I am glad you came to me this morn-

Basil Lagden, Loamshire Regiment, was killed in action on the Somme?"

A tense pause.

"Thank you!"

The detective put up the receiver and turned to the juniors.

Mornington made a hasty step towards him.

"Mr. Brown! Captain Lagden—"

"Captain Lagden, a brave and honoured officer, fell six months ago," said Mr. Brown.

"Good heavens! Then—then that man at Rookwood—"

"Evidently an impostor!" smiled Mr. Brown. "Being an old Rookwooder himself, he adopted Captain Lagden's name, knowing, of course, all about the unfortunate officer. And the scars on his face enabled him to pass muster, as poor Lagden, if he had received such wounds, would not have been recognisable."

"But—but—Mornington stammered—"he must be an old Rookwooder, or he wouldn't know all he knows!"

"Quite so."

"And—and as he's been wounded he must have been a soldier."

"He was wounded in attempting to escape to the German lines, to join the enemy," said Mr. Brown coolly.

"You—you know—"

"I know now," Mr. Brown smiled. "Poor Lagden was known to have lost his right arm, which is why the impostor keeps an empty sleeve. I suspect very strongly that he will be found to have two arms, my boy. Lagden was killed by a shell at the dressing-station. The rascal knew that he was dead, and borrowed his name. By gad! You young fellows have done me a service! I've got my man!"

"Your man?" stammered Mornington.

"I will come back to Rookwood with you," said Mr. Brown. "I have only to call at the police-station for two or three constables. Cheer up, my boys! In a very short time now, I think, you will see your missing friends."

Mornington and Erroll, in a dazed frame of mind, followed the podgy gentleman from the room.

"Really, sir—"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the Head emphatically.

"Baumann, after leaving prison, was taken into the Army under the Conscription Acts," said Mr. Brown. "He was shot down while leaving the trenches with the obvious intention of deserting to the Germans—being of German descent himself. His injuries were chiefly in the face, and it appears now that they rendered him so unrecognisable that I have talked with him face to face without knowing him."

The captain's left hand had disappeared behind him, as if feeling over the panel behind his back.

Still Mr. Brown, usually so sharp, seemed to be blind to his movements.

"Baumann, once at Rookwood, seemed to have made some discoveries while he was a boy here," resumed Mr. Brown, still addressing the amazed Head. "Is it not a fact that he was expelled from this school, sir, for certain actions, such as breaking bounds at night, gambling in low resorts?"

"That is true. But I do not see—"

"And it was a matter of conjecture how he contrived to enter and leave the school on so many occasions and for so long a period without being detected?"

"Quite so. But—"

"It never occurred to you that he had by chance discovered the secret passage which was supposed to exist between the School House and the abbey ruins?"

"Certainly I never thought of any such nonsense!"

"Yet it was true, sir."

"What?"

"For which reason," pursued Mr. Brown calmly, "he came back to Rookwood, as a safe refuge, under an assumed name, to carry on his work of counterfeiting banknotes in the recesses of the hidden vaults, to which only he knew the mode of ingress."

"Are you joking, sir?"

"Not at all. He assumed for that purpose the name of a brave man who was killed on the Somme, who had once been his study-mate at Rookwood—in whose name he came here unsuspected. The disfigurement of his face made the deception easy. And it was easy, too, to affect the loss of an arm by wearing an empty sleeve."

"Are you mad?" exclaimed the Head huskily.

Click!

Dr. Chisholm spun round.

The panel had opened, and the Head was just in time to see Captain Lagden disappear through the wall.

He stood transfixed.

The detective sprang forward, and his foot was in the opening in a moment. But the captain had vanished down the spiral staircase hidden in the thickness of the ancient wall.

"Good heavens!" stuttered the Head.

"Have you any further doubts, sir?" smiled Mr. Brown.

Dr. Chisholm passed his hand over his brow.

"I cannot have," he said. "What does this mean? This—this man is—Baumann, calling himself Captain Lagden?"

"Exactly!"

"And you have allowed him to escape you?" gasped the Head.

"Not quite!" smiled Mr. Brown. "The abbey vaults, of which he knows the secret, are guarded. The moment he emerges he will be seized. I saw to that precaution, sir, before I came here. Now he has kindly revealed the secret entrance to the vaults from this side, we shall have no difficulty in finding the juniors whom he has kidnapped."

"What!" stuttered the Head, amazed by that statement as much as by Mr. Brown's astuteness.

"That, however, can wait—first I must see to my prisoner."

Mr. Brown called in a constable from the corridor, and posted him on guard at the secret panel in case the desperate rascal should double back. The podgy gentleman from Scotland Yard was leaving nothing to chance.

Then he hurried out of the Oak Room and down the stairs, the amazed Head following him like a man in a dream.

Outside in the quadrangle there was a buzz of astounded voices—or, rather, a roar.

Half Rookwood was gathered round a startling group—two constables, who held by the arms a handcuffed prisoner, whom they were bringing to the House.

It was the man who had been known at Rookwood as Basil Lagden.

His scarred face was white and tense, his eyes gleaming with rage and hatred.

Mr. Brown smiled as his eyes fell upon the exposed cheat.

"You've got him!" he said, with satisfaction.

"Yes, sir," said one of the officers. "He came out of the door in the abbey vaults and ran fairly into our arms. He unlocked the door from the inside."

"Quite so!" Mr. Brown rubbed his fat hands, making no attempt to conceal his satisfaction.

"But what does this mean?" exclaimed Bulkeley of the Sixth hotly. "What is Captain Lagden treated like this for?"

Mr. Brown did not heed. His shifty eyes were fixed upon the sullen, desperate face of the prisoner.

"Baumann, I arrest you in the name of the law!" he said. "I warn you that whatever you say will be taken down, and may be used in evidence against you."

Baumann—to give him his own name—burst into a bitter, sardonic laugh.

"The game's up!" he said. "But how did you find it out, hang you? I thought I was safe here—safe and sound in this quiet corner! Hang you!"

"Take him away!" said Mr. Brown.

"Baumann!" repeated a dozen voices.

"Is that man Baumann?" stammered Bulkeley.

"Just so!" smiled Mr. Brown. "Baumann, once of Rookwood, afterwards of several of his Majesty's prisons, deserter from the Army, spy of the Germans, and, in fact, a pretty thorough scoundrel—"



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ing. You have rendered me assistance beyond what you can possibly have thought of."

"I don't quite see that, sir," said Morny, puzzled. "I wanted you to help us find Jimmy Silver. I don't see how I've assisted you."

"You will see shortly, no doubt. Captain Lagden!" The detective spoke the name slowly and thoughtfully. "Right arm missing, face badly scarred. Old Rookwooder. H'm! Fool!" Mr. Brown was apparently addressing that uncomplimentary epithet to himself. "Fool! You knew that Baumann had his headquarters somewhere near the school; you even suspected that he was utilising some knowledge gained in boyhood of a secret den among the ruins; you even ascertained that Captain Lagden had had a key made to fit the door of the abbey vaults. Yet you never suspected—"

The juniors stared blankly at Mr. Brown.

He was talking to himself, not to them, and his words astounded them.

"Remain here!" said the detective suddenly.

There was a telephone in Mr. Brown's room, and he crossed to it and took up the receiver.

His podgy face was almost ablaze with excitement.

He gave a number into the transmitter, and Mornington started.

"Kit!" he muttered. "Did you hear that? That's a War Office number. I remember hearing my uncle use it."

Erroll nodded, a little excited now. Both the juniors guessed that Mr. Brown was about to make inquiries at the War Office concerning Captain Lagden.

The detective spoke rapidly into the transmitter when he was put through. His words did not all reach the juniors' ears.

But suddenly they came out loud and sharp.

"Killed?"

"And then—"

"Let there be no mistake. Captain

in the Loamshire Regiment, and he lost his right arm at the Front in the fighting on the Somme, when his face received the scars he bears now. Surely such a man is above suspicion."

"I know!" said Morny. "I know! But—"

"Tell me what you think, my boy."

"Well, Captain Lagden has two rooms at Rookwood. One of them, his sitting-room, is called the Oak Room, because the walls are panelled in old oak."

"That is where I saw him," assented Mr. Brown.

"That room had been disused for years, but it was specially prepared for Captain Lagden," went on Mornington. "He must have asked the Head specially to let him have it, for all that trouble to be taken."

"Why should he wish for that room especially?"

"Well—"

Morny hesitated. "There's an old story at Rookwood of a secret passage from the School House to the abbey vaults. When that fellow Baumann was at the school he used to get in and out without anybody knowing how he came and went, and some of the fellows think he knew of the secret passage, since there's been a lot of talk about him, you know. Well, Lagden was Baumann's study-mate when they were both at Rookwood, a dozen or fifteen years ago. If Baumann knew of the secret passage he may have told his study-mate."

Mr. Brown looked very curiously at Mornington.

"Then you think Captain Lagden knows of a secret passage, of which the opening is in the Oak Room?"

"I—I know it sounds thick," said Morny fatterly. "But—Lovell first, and then Raby, then Newcome, now Jimmy Silver, vanished—in the Oak Room or near it?"

"Is that so?"

"Lovell had gone there one night to play a trick on the captain," said Morny. "He never came back. Raby was last seen outside the door of that room. The last

The 5th Chapter.
Brought to Book.

"Really, sir—" exclaimed Dr. Chisholm warmly.

Mr. Brown, plump and podgy and smiling, opened the door of the Oak Room without a knock and stepped in.

The Head was in the captain's sitting-room, chatting with Lagden. He had called on Basil Lagden to accompany him down to lunch.

He rose from his chair with an indignant frown as Mr. Brown came in unasked and unannounced.

Captain Lagden also rose, his sharp eyes on the detective.

"Really, sir—"

"Please excuse me, Dr. Chisholm," said Mr. Brown calmly. "I have called on rather important business with your guest."

"That is no excuse for this intrusion!" exclaimed the Head.

"I am afraid the business could not be deferred," said Mr. Brown, with a smile. "I am sure you will admit it when I explain. You are aware, sir, that I have been for some time in this neighbourhood, under the belief that Baumann, the forger and counterfeiter, was somewhere in the vicinity of Rookwood."

"What of that now?"

Captain Lagden's brows came together in a knitted line.

He moved, as it were carelessly, from his chair, along the panelled wall, and stood with his back leaning against a tall panel.

Mr. Brown did not appear to note it.

"I have already asked Captain Lagden if he could give me any information regarding Baumann, who was his study-mate at this school many years ago," Mr. Brown continued.

"I have replied that I was sorry I could not, Mr. Brown," remarked the captain.

"That is very curious," said Mr. Brown, with a cheerful smile. "I have reason to believe that Baumann's career is not quite unknown to you."

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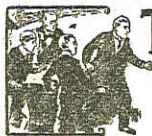
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THE SECRET OF THE VAULTS!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

(Continued from the previous page.)

kidnapper among the rest. Captain Lagden lost his life in Flanders, and that rascal assumed his name. And now, if some of you care to come with me, I will show you where to find Silver and the other boys who have been missing."

"What a!"

A crowd of fellows, in utter amazement, followed the detective back to the Oak Room. But Mornington and Erroll had been before them.

The 6th Chapter. At Last!

"Hark!"

Jimmy Silver uttered the word.

In the dim vault the captain of the Fourth hurried to the grating, his chains clanking as he moved.

There was a sound of hurried footsteps somewhere in the darkness beyond the iron grate.

And from the darkness came the sound of a voice—a voice that sent a thrill to the hearts of the kidnapped juniors.

For it was not the voice of the kidnapper—the only voice they had expected to hear in those gloomy depths.

It was the voice of Valentine Mornington of the Fourth Form.

"This way, Erroll! There's a light!"

"Morny!" roared Lovell.

"Morny!" shouted the four together, in joyous amazement.

Mornington's voice came ringing back from the shadows:

"Jimmy Silver! Where are you, Jimmy?"

"Here!"

"This way!"

Into the radius of the lamplight came Mornington and Erroll, breathless and excited.

The Fistical Four stared at them through the iron grate, scarcely able to believe their eyes.

The sight of their friends seemed too

good to be true to the kidnapped juniors of Rookwood.

"Morny!" panted Jimmy Silver.

Mornington grinned through the grating.

"Here we are, old bird! How goes it?"

"Look out for that rascal!" panted Jimmy. "Captain Lagden—he will attack you if he—"

"All serene, Jimmy!" said Erroll, smiling. "Captain Lagden is a bit too busy to think of us just now! He's trying to get away."

"And you're all here?" exclaimed Mornington.

"All of us!" said Newcome. "Oh, by gum, it does us good to see you fellows here!"

"It's like a dream," said Raby. "I'd given up hope! But what's happened? How did you find us?"

Mornington was shaking the iron grating, but he could not open it.

"We shall have to wait till we get the key," he said. "That villain will have it about him, and he's bagged—bagged as safe as houses!"

And Morny explained to the amazed prisoners what had happened.

"He's not Captain Lagden at all; he's that Hun beast Baumann!" he said.

"Lagden was killed in Flanders, and that rotter borrowed his name to come here—his face being disfigured made it all safe. Even Brown talked with him without guessing who he was, though he has arrested him twice. The Head never had the slightest suspicion. Nobody might ever have had, if Lovell hadn't blundered into his hands and been kidnapped, and if the rotter hadn't thought to make all safe by bagging Lovell's pals after him."

"My hat!" said Lovell. "And now he's—"

"Now he's scudded off by the secret panel," grinned Mornington. "There's a way out in the abbey vaults, of course,

and there's two bobbies waiting there for him—in fact, they've got him before this."

"Hurrah!"

"We came up to the Oak Room after Browney. There's a bobby in charge there, and he didn't want us to get through the secret door; but we insisted," grinned Mornington. "We were rather in a hurry to see you chaps, so we pushed him out of the way, and came. Ha, ha!"

"I don't think I've ever been so jolly glad to see anybody!" said Jimmy Silver, with a deep breath. "Good old Morny! If you hadn't gone to the detective—"

"But I did!" chuckled Mornington. "Clink, clank! Clank, clink!"

The chains rattled and rang as the Fistical Four executed a war-dance in their cell in the exuberance of their delight.

A light gleamed, and there were voices and footsteps.

The podgy gentleman from Scotland Yard came up to the grating, with Bulkeley and Neville and a crowd of other fellows at his heels.

There were exclamations on all sides as the Fistical Four were seen behind the grating.

"Good-morning, Mr. Brown!" sang out Lovell.

Mr. Brown grinned.

"We'll soon have you out of that!" he said.

He produced a bunch of rusty keys which he had taken from the handcuffed rascal above.

The grating was unlocked, and the Rookwood fellows swarmed into the vaulted cell, surrounding the kidnapped juniors with loud congratulations.

Mr. Brown unlocked the fetters one by one.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were free again at last.

It seemed almost like a happy dream to Jimmy—and more especially so to Lovell & Co., who had been so much longer in the hands of the ruthless kidnapper.

Mr. Brown left the cell, evidently to make investigations in the hidden vaults, of which the existence had not been previously known at Rookwood, save to Baumann in his school-days—the result, probably, of an accidental discovery.

The former Rookwooder had remem-

bered that discovery in later years, and undoubtedly it had been the cause of his coming to Rookwood, under an assumed name.

In the next vault was found the handiwork of the counterfeiter—the dies and stamps and other appliances with which he had produced the forged notes.

In addition, bundles of notes, ready to be passed as soon as opportunity came—opportunity that would never come now.

That was the work upon which Lovell & Co. had so often heard the kidnapper engaged, and which had so puzzled them.

But while Mr. Brown, in a state of simmering satisfaction, was taking possession of the counterfeiter's outfit, and making his notes, Jimmy Silver & Co. were conducted to the upper air by the crowd of delighted Rookwooders.

Dr. Chisholm met them when they emerged into the Oak Room.

The Head shook them by the hand, and welcomed them in a voice that trembled with emotion.

The juniors had never seen the good old Head so deeply moved.

And after that, the Fistical Four were given a tremendous ovation when they reappeared among their schoolfellows.

Only Tubby Muffin looked a little blank.

"So you hadn't run away, after all, Jimmy?" said Tubby.

"Not quite!" grinned Jimmy.

"You've really been kidnapped?"

"I fancy so."

"Jolly queer!" said Tubby Muffin, shaking his head. "I must have been mistaken, then!"

"Go on!"

"I mean, that on second thoughts, I really began to think that you must have been kidnapped," said Tubby. "The fact is, after turning it over in my mind, I felt pretty certain that you hadn't barked off to try and squeeze into the Army, and so I thought—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I thought you must have been kidnapped, and I was getting suspicious of Captain Lagden! You remember I said something of the sort to you, Morny—"

"That I jolly well don't!" chuckled Morny.

"Perhaps it was to you, Erroll."

"No, it wasn't!" said Erroll laughing.

"Well, I'm jolly glad you're out again,

Jimmy!" said Tubby Muffin hastily. "And if I happened to be in funds, I'd stand a study spread to celebrate it. If you could lend me half a sovereign, Jimmy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tubby Muffin did not get the half-sovereign. But he got a good deal of satisfaction, for he soon convinced himself that he had suspected the real facts all along, and he called upon a good many fellows to admit that he had told them so—which they wouldn't do, in the least.

The mystery of Rookwood was a mystery no longer.

The Fistical Four were restored to their friends, and that evening there was a tremendous celebration in the end study which overflowed into the passage—Moderns as well as Classics coming in crowds.

Meanwhile, "Captain Lagden," alias Baumann, was in the hands of the law, and not likely to escape them again for a good ten years to come.

Mr. Brown had departed in a mood of supreme satisfaction.

He had bagged his man, and he admitted that he owed his success in part to Jimmy Silver & Co., and especially Mornington.

The Fistical Four felt the effects of their imprisonment for some days; but they soon pulled round, and they were quite fit again by the time the Bagshot match came round.

By that time the kidnapping and the imprisonment in the secret vault seemed like an evil dream of the past to the chums of the Fourth. But they were never likely to forget that it was mainly due to Mornington that they had recovered their freedom, and that the kidnapper had been brought to book.

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY.

"TUBBY MUFFIN'S BENEFIT!"

By OWEN CONQUEST.

DON'T MISS IT!

DUNCAN STORM'S AMAZING NEW SERIAL!



FOR NEW READERS.

THE KAISER is determined to obtain possession of the Mahdi's huge treasure which is hidden in the heart of the continent of Africa, and to do so, he employs three desperate Germans named BARON VON SLYDEN, CAPTAIN STORM, and VON SNEEK.

The papers, however, containing the secret of the whereabouts of the treasure are in the possession of

CAPTAIN HANDYMAN and CY SPRAGUE, who decide to go in quest of the treasure, and to take with them the boys of the Bombay Castle, chief among whom are DICK DORRINGTON, CHIP, ARTY DOVE, SKELETON, PORKIS, and PONGO WALKER.

LAL PATA, a cheery Hindu, TOOKUM EL KOOS, a native wrestler, FLINT PASHA, a member of the Sudan Police, are also amongst the party, as well as the boys' pets, CECIL, the orang-outang, HORACE, the goat, and GUS, the crocodile.

So far Baron von Slyden and his confederates have made several endeavours to secure the papers containing the secret of the Mahdi's treasure, and on each occasion have met with defeat.

In recent instalments Artie Dove received a challenge to a boxing match from a native king named Obob el Mook. The fight came off, and Artie was not long in landing an effective blow. But Obob el Mook did not mean to lose that fight. He had secreted a lump of lead in one of his boxing-gloves, and last week's instalment concluded with him rushing at Artie, determined to give the boy a tremendous blow with his loaded glove.

(Read on from here.)

King Obob's Defeat!

King Obob did not catch Artie Dove napping.

Artie suddenly lifted his right knee, and King Obob's flat nose came into collision with it with a soft thud which sounded like the smack of a cricket-bat on a sweet pudding.

At the same moment Artie stopped that terrible right fist with his left, and punched up at the bullet head.

The impact was terrific.

Artie went flying, but King Obob had the worst of the collision.

He turned a complete somersault, and came down flat on his huge back, with a thump that shook the great barn to its foundations.

A yell went up from the niggers as they saw their master stretched on the ground with his flat nose spread all over

his face, and his great chest heaving slowly.

Artie was on his feet in a second. He knew what he was up against now, for in stopping the nigger king's right he had felt that mass of steel-bound lead which was hidden in his opponent's glove.

Obob sat up and put his glove to his nose.

He got up on his hands and knees and crawled across the beaten-earth floor towards Artie, making noises like a wild animal.

These noises were supposed to frighten Artie.

Obob had used them before with great effect on frightened niggers, whom he intended to murder.

But Artie refused to be frightened.

With a smile on his face, he backed away round the ring, King Obob crawling after him like a fat black crab, slapping the ground with his huge glove, and roaring like a hyena.

"Look out, Artie, boy!" yelled Lal Pata. "He is most dangerousome fellow! Behold, he roars like one who has swallowed lions! Hit him some jolly good kicks in his stomachs!"

The boys looked on spellbound. They had never seen a fight like this.

On the throne lay the famous diamond belt, its huge stones glimmering and glittering in the red flare of the crescents, as though the belt itself were aflame.

And round the ring backed Artie, followed up by that huge crawling shape that looked more like some antediluvian monster than a human being.

"My hat!" muttered Porkis, as he watched the crawling, crablike king with fascinated eyes. "Did you ever see such an ugly brute? He'll soon get tired of playing bears like that!"

The words were hardly out of Porkis' mouth when King Obob, finding that he could not manoeuvre Artie into a corner by his usual tricks, suddenly rose from the ground with a tremendous leap.

The boys gasped as they saw a huge black foot shoot out, kicking at Artie's head with a force that would have felled an ox, whilst the huge right-hand glove whistled through the air with the stroke of a steam-hammer.

Artie took punch after punch in this wild flurry.

Some of the wild kicks he dodged; others he stopped. But that fatal right-hand glove never touched him.

Obob's niggers were yelling now like madmen. They thought that their redoubtable master was winning.

They clapped their hands, they laughed and smacked their stomachs with their hands in token of applause.

And behind the screen of these niggers

Baron von Slyden stared at the fight, grinning.

It seemed impossible to him that the boy could withstand the onslaught of this nigger hooligan.

"Achi!" he muttered. "These English, who are so fond of the box, shall find their master here in der nigger. Obob shall der boy kill! Und Obob shall answer for it. So we shall not appear in der matter. Achi! Goot!"

This exclamation was drawn from the baron as, peering over the shoulders of the niggers who swayed in front of him, he saw Artie stagger before a terrific blow from Obob's left.

"Obob he vin!" said the baron, gazing at the lighted arena as though he were witnessing some thrilling play at the theatre.

HURRY UP, BOYS!



And Buy
WAR SAVINGS CERTIFICATES
To-day!

Von Sneek, to whom he spoke, shook his head.

Von Sneek had had some experience of Artie and his friends.

He would not admit that Artie was beaten till he was laid out flat.

"Keep back, Herr Baron!" he pleaded, plucking at the baron's coat-sleeve as the German craned forward to see more of the contest. "Keep back! It is not good that the English shall see us here."

The baron shook his arm free of his companion's grasp.

He was not afraid of being seen.

It was dark at this end of Obob's great hall, and the blinding flare of the crescents was between them and the little group of boys.

The baron was excited by the fight.

German though he was and contemptuous of boxing, he could but admit that Artie was making a splendid fight of it against his giant antagonist.

But Obob's weight and power were telling now against the boy.

Artie had taken some heavy punishment, and his breath was coming fast and thick.

He had, it is true, not encountered the blow of that terrible right glove, but he had taken kicks and punches and butts sufficient to smash up a powerful fighting-man.

Yet he was still smiling as he faced Obob for a last round.

Obob was sure he was going to win, and, nigger-like, all his vanity came to the top.

"Hoosh!" he yelled, waving his huge arms. "Behold, my people, I, Obob, eater of elephants, am about to destroy the white boy who has dared to meet me!"

Then, standing in the middle of the wide, earthen floor, he pumped with that tremendous black arm, at the end of which the loaded glove swelled like a pumpkin.

He mocked Artie, who stood panting and heavy-eyed, but still watchful.

"Come, English boy!" he laughed, pointing to the great diamond belt which lay on the throne. "Yonder is the belt of Obob! Why take ye not the belt? Ye have but me to pass, Obob, the terrible, Obob, the manslayer! Hoosh!"

And Obob capered like a madman.

He was tempting Artie to come on for his death-blow.

Artie watched the swing of the right-hand glove as Obob waved his great arms like a windmill.

He noticed that Obob's huge right arm was muscle-bound and fat, so that the mighty glove swung in a certain circle.

Artie had eyes only for this fact.

He felt groggy and shaky, but there was still some fight left in him.

With a great effort he pulled himself together, and a yell went up from the niggers as they saw him advance to the great figure which barred the throne and the flaming belt.

Artie moved quickly, and the yelling Obob had scarcely time to receive him.

But the nigger's great face split with a grin of triumph as he swung up his huge right arm.

Down whistled the glove with the blow of a pile-driver.

But Artie, with a swift movement of the head, avoided it, and in the next second Obob, the manslayer, doubled up like a cheap jack-knife, rolling on the ground helplessly.

Artie had accepted his invitation to take the championship belt of all Africa.

With the last of his strength he had given Obob a drive in the solar-plexus that would have crumpled a sheet of boiler-plate.

"Wooff!"

The word came out of Obob like a punctured motor-tyre as he rolled over and over, grabbing at Artie's feet.

But Artie slipped away, and, stepping up to the throne in the face of all the nigger assembly, took the huge belt of diamonds.

Then, throwing it over his shoulder, he staggered down the hall towards his friends.

What a cheer went up from the boys as they saw the nigger bruiser rolling over and over, slapping the ground with gloves and feet, and trying to rise.

"Bravo, Artie!" yelled Porkis.

"Three jolly hearty cheers for Artie!" shouted Lal, throwing his turban up to the rafters, and catching it on his head again. "That's the stuff to give 'em! Hit him jolly good kick punches in stomach, he did! That makes him cough! And the belt is ours!"

The crowd of negroes at the far end of the hall seemed to be paralysed by the fate which had befallen their champion and their king.

They simply could not believe their eyes as Obob el Mook tossed and turned and rolled on the floor, trying to get back his wind.

They had made so certain that the white boy would be killed.

But a harsh, grating voice, shouting in their own tongue, brought them to their senses.

It was Von Slyden, who, crouching down under the shelter of the throne of piled boxes and carpets, pulled them together.

"Traachery!" he cried. "Men of Be-loo, stop the white men! They steal the belt of your lord, and with the belt you the strength of Be-loo!"

Immediately a shout rose in the back of the hall.

"Death to the white men!"

Obob, who had been sprawling and gasping in the midst of the wide earthen floor, suddenly got his wind back and rolled over on to his hands and knees.

He was quick to pick up the cry.

"Stop them! Death to the white men!" he bellowed. "O-o-o-o! They have stolen my belt! They take my beautiful diamonds. The white boy did magic against me. He has made my liver turn to water, and has stolen my strength of elephants!"

This was Obob's explanation of the drive which had knocked him out.

But it was good enough for his followers.

There was a rush out at the back door of the great hall, for, in obedience to the Royal decree, which forbade any arms to be brought into the Royal palace of King Obob el Mook, they were all unarmed.

But spears and clubs and clumsy gape guns were leaning close at hand against the outer walls of the palace.

In a second the mob came streaming back again.

Obob, still on his hands and knees, was mouthing and roaring at the little group, which had drawn closer together around Artie and the captured belt.

"Kill them!" he wheezed. "Oh, my liver and my lungs! My breath return to me. I will fight again!"

And Obob was just about to spring towards Artie, to wrest the flaming belt from him, when there came a sudden clatter of hoofs at the far doorway of the hall behind the little group of white men and boys.

"Great Scotch!" groaned Lal. "We are in some very tight places. And here is Horace! He has made his escape from boats, and come to see fun!"

And, sure enough, it was Horace, who, having nibbled through his bonds, had leaped ashore from the whaler at the

BARKER, THE BOUNDER!

(Continued from the previous page.)

committally. "He may be able to tell you." "I'll tell him!" roared Dicky Turner, jumping to his feet. "I'll slaughter the silly ass! I'll—"

"Hold on, Dicky, old son!" urged Bob Travers, taking his chum by the arm.

"But—"

"Dear me!" said Bunny, with a sigh. "It seems that I have made a mistake. Perhaps I should not make a good forward, after all. I have not read enough about the duties of a forward. I rather fancy I should do better as a ballkeeper."

"Goalkeeper, fathead!" corrected Bob Travers.

"Yes, that's right," said the duffer. "If you have no objection, Travers, I will take that position, and—"

"Do," said Dicky Turner promptly. "Get into goal, fathead! I'll be a forward for once, and I'll show you what it's like to have a ball banged at your head."

Bunny was quite unperturbed by Dicky's veiled threat.

He took up his position between the posts, determined to stop the ball as Dicky drove it towards him.

Strange to say, the duffer did stop the ball, but not in the orthodox manner, however.

Dicky was one of the best shots in the junior team, and, taking careful aim, he sent the ball through the air at lightning speed.

It was doubtful whether Bunny saw the ball after it left Dicky's foot. Nevertheless, he felt it, for it landed with terrific force full in his face.

Bunny landed with a bump in the back of the goal.

The juniors roared with laughter. "That serves you right, you silly chump!" exclaimed Dicky Turner. "It'll teach you not to bung balls at other fellows' heads again!"

"Ow! Groooogh! Yooooop!" muttered the duffer, as he scrambled to his feet.

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

"D-d-d-did I do right?" stuttered Bunny, rubbing his head ruefully.

There was another burst of hilarious laughter.

"Look here, Bunny," said Bob Travers, "you're jolly keen on picking up the game, aren't you?"

"Very keen, my dear Travers."

"Well, the best thing you can do is to stand on the touchline," said Bob Travers kindly. "You will pick up the game much quicker if you watch it a bit."

"Oh, good!"

Bunny took up his position on the touchline, and grinned at the junior footballers in spite of an aching head.

The juniors recovered from their merriment, and very soon the practice commenced.

Bob Travers kept his eyes on the footballers, watching Jack Jackson and Wade particularly.

The vacant place in the eleven was to go to one of these juniors, and, being captain of the School House Eleven, it was up to Bob to choose the better man.

There was still a serious, anxious expression on Jack Jackson's face; but, nevertheless, he played up well.

He was very anxious to secure a place in the junior team, and he was now play-

ing his best in the hope of being included.

The practice continued to within ten minutes of the time for dinner, and then Bob Travers brought the game to an end.

He walked over to Jack Jackson, and patted him on the back.

"Jackson, old son," he said cheerily, "I shall want you this afternoon. Appleby will drop to right-half, and you'll take his place at inside-right."

Jack Jackson smiled pleasantly.

He had achieved his ambition and obtained a place in the School House side.

He resolved to do his very best in the House match that afternoon, with the hope of securing a trial in a junior match.

With this resolve firmly fixed in his mind, he marched back to the school with his chums.

He went up to the dormitory to change, and was coming downstairs alone when he came face to face with Barker, the bouncer of the Fourth.

Barker grinned at him sardonically.

"Cheer!" he said. "I understand you're in the team to play against the New House this afternoon?"

"Yes," replied Jack Jackson, giving the bouncer a hard look.

"H'm!" said Barker, pursing his lips. "It's rather unfortunate that you won't be able to play."

"Won't be able to play?" faltered Jack Jackson.

"No," said the bouncer coolly. "I'm going to the Plough, and Harrow this afternoon, and I want you to accompany me."

"Oh!"

"You don't mind, of course?" said Barker cynically.

"You rotter!" exclaimed Jack Jackson hotly. "I shall have to play. I've promised Travers, and—"

"Travers will have to get out of the difficulty as best he can," said Barker.

"You're coming with me."

Jack Jackson's eyes gleamed with anger.

"I won't come!" he cried. "I—"

"You will, my dear chap," said the bouncer coolly. "Unless, of course, you want me to carry out my threat!"

Jack Jackson started, and his face paled noticeably.

(Another magnificent long instalment of this splendid new serial in next Monday's issue of the BOYS' FRIEND. I should be glad if readers would write and let me know what they think of this new story.)

THE REBELS' SURRENDER!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale, Dealing with the Barring-Out at the School in the Backwoods.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

The 1st Chapter.

No Grub for Yen Chin!

"Pool lill! Chinee velly hungry, oh, yes!"

Thus Yen Chin, the Chow of Cedar Creek, in piteous tones.

The Chinese was sprawled on the floor of the lumber schoolhouse.

Frank Richards & Co. were in deep conversation by the window, and did not hear Yen Chin's remark.

There were serious expressions on the faces of the three chums.

The present state of affairs at the school in the backwoods gave them plenty of food for thought.

The lumber school had gone "on strike" against the dismissal of Miss Meadows.

Mr. Gunten and Mr. Peckover—the master who was to take the place of the schoolmistress—had endeavoured to force the juniors into surrender, without success.

Frank Richards & Co. had held the fort against all comers, and were prepared to do so in the future, providing they could obtain sufficient food to satisfy their appetites.

Had Chunky Todgers been there the situation would have been far more serious, for Chunky always ate enough for four or five.

It was Chunky who had created the food shortage.

The fat junior had succeeded in spending a short time alone in the kitchen.

But, however short the time had been, it had been sufficient for Chunky to "polish off" pretty nearly all the remaining stock of food.

With wrathful indignation some of the juniors had suggested lynching Chunky Todgers.

Yen Chin proposed killing him, and, for the sake of a little humour, the other juniors had backed him up.

Needless to say, Chunky had become terror-stricken at such a suggestion.

In fear of his life, he dashed away from the school, and streaked for home as fast as his fat legs could carry him.

He had left the juniors roaring with laughter, but the smiles soon disappeared from their faces as they discussed the present food situation.

If they were to carry on with the siege, and force Old Man Gunten to accede to their demands, then food must be obtained—and quickly, too.

During the previous night Frank Richards & Co. had made an effort to get away from the school for the purpose of replenishing the larder.

They had had the misfortune, however, to fall foul of two rascals named Four Kings and Dave Dunn, and had been forced to return.

Now day had dawned once again, and the fear of being captured by Old Man Gunten made it risky to make another attempt to get away before nightfall.

Meanwhile, there were aching pains in the juniors' stomachs, and not enough food to pacify them.

Small wonder, therefore, that Frank Richards and his chums were looking very serious.

Suddenly Frank Richards felt a clutch at his arm, and turned round, to find Yen Chin standing beside him.

"Chinee hungry," said Yen Chin meekly. "Well, you're not the only one!"



"Ow! Yow! Yaroooh!" yelled Mr. Peckover, as Bob Lawless planted his broom in the middle of the new master's back.

"Pool lill! Chinee velly hungry!" sighed the Chow of Cedar Creek.

"I guess poor little Chinee will have to remain hungry!" said Bob Lawless, with a grin. "Grub's short, and—"

"Poor lill! Chinee velly, velly hungry!" said Yen Chin. "Wanteee fooddee velly badee! Bob gettee me some, oh, yes?"

"Look here, kid," said Bob Lawless firmly, "it can't be did! We've got just about enough for one meal. We shall have to hold on to that till we get some more."

"I guess that's hoss 'sense!" said Eben Hacke.

"If we eat up all our grub, how the merry dickens are we going to hold out?" said Bob Lawless grimly. "We shall have to chuck in our checks to Old Man Gunten then."

"We're going to do nothing of the kind, Lawless!" said Eben Hacke. "If you suggest—"

"I don't," broke in Bob Lawless. "I'm merely telling the Chink what will happen if he starts scoffing the grub."

"Pool lill! Chinee fallies ill if no eatdee!" whined Yen Chin. "Gettee velly badee—pelhays die!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Bob Lawless. "We shall have to risk that!"

"Handsome Bob no wantee pool lill! Chinee to die!"

"Might be a good thing!"

"Velly badee thing!"

"I guess I'm not so sure about that!" said Bob humorously. "If you kicked the bucket, we should have one less to feed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Handsome Bob no tellee the truth," said Yen Chin. "Handsome Bob velly funny! Gettee me some grub."

"Come back again this afternoon," said Bob Lawless. "We'll see what we can do for you then."

"Poor lill! Chinee helpee himself to grub, then!" said Yen Chin. "Lill! Chinee know where grub keppee. Chinee goee and—"

Bob Lawless made a grab at the Chow's shoulder and dragged him back.

"I guess you'll do nothing of the kind!" he said emphatically.

"Lettee me go!"

"You're staying with us!"

Yen Chin turned a pleading look in Frank Richards' direction.

"Handsome Planksee gettee me grub?" he asked.

"Sorry, kid; grub's too short!"

"Handsome Beau," said the Chinee, smiling affably at Vere Beauclere, "you gettee pool lill! Chinee grub?"

Vere Beauclere grinned, and shook his head.

"Better ask Bob," he replied. "He's in charge of the kitchen."

"Ugly Bob velly obstinate," said Yen Chin. "No gettee—"

"What's that, you blessed heathen?"

demanding Bob wrathfully. "What am I?"

"Velly obstinate," said the Chow of Cedar Creek. "Ugly Bob! Yah!"

"By gum!" exclaimed Bob Lawless fiercely, making a clutch at the Chinee.

"I'll show you whether I'm ugly!"

Bob made a dash towards the Chinee.

But Yen Chin was wily. He dodged between the desks, taking care that he did not get near the fellows grouped by the window.

"Yah!" he shouted. "Bob no cathee pool lill! Chinee! Bob no see! Eyes allee squintee! No lookee straight!"

"You let me catch you, you blessed heathen!" yelled Bob Lawless. "I'll lynch you! I'll—"

"No lynchee!" said Yen Chin. "Ugly Bob too muchee silly! Got lats in belly!"

"I'll show you whether I've got rats in my belly!" roared Bob savagely.

"I'll slaughter you! I'll— Ow! Yow! Yooooooop!"

Bob Lawless uttered a piercing shriek.

In taking a quick turn, his knee had caught the edge of a desk.

Next moment Bob stood on one leg, holding the other with his hands, and uttering deep lamentations.

"Hard luck, Bob!" said Eben Hacke sympathetically. "I guess the galoot deserves lynching!"

"I'll lynch him!" shrieked Bob Lawless. "I'll— Ow! My leg! Yow-ow-ow!"

"He, he, he!" choried Yen Chin. "Servee ugly Bob right! Allee own fault fol nettee gettee pool lill! Chinee grub!"

"Come here, you little beast! I'll—"

"My hat! Look!" exclaimed Frank Richards, pointing out of the window.

"They're going to attack again!"

"What?" ejaculated Bob Lawless, forgetting about his aching knee and darting towards the window.

"There's somebody coming along the trail," said Frank Richards. "It looks like—"

"Jerusalem crickets!" said Eben Hacke, in surprise. "It's an Indian!"

"It is, by gum!" ejaculated Bob Lawless. "It's Injun Dick! What the merry dickens does he want?"

"I wonder," said Vere Beauclere.

The juniors waited eagerly by the window, whilst Injun Dick jumped off his horse and strolled towards the schoolhouse.

The 2nd Chapter.

Two Fateful Messages.

"Great jophers!" exclaimed Eben Hacke, as the Indian, drawing his tattered blanket round him, neared the window.

"He's got a note."

Injun Dick waved a letter in his hand.

"Perhaps Old Man Gunten's given in, and sent us a note to say so," suggested Vere Beauclere.

"Cheer-ho, Injun Dick!" sang out Frank Richards. "What's the game?"

"Injun thirsty," said the Redskin, moistening his dry lips with his tongue.

"Oh, rats!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "You're never otherwise. What's that note you've got in your hand?"

"Letter for young white chief," said Injun Dick, pointing a grubby forefinger at Bob Lawless.

"For me?" exclaimed Bob.

"Co-rect!"

"Hand it over, then."

Injun Dick made no attempt to do so.

"Injun thirsty," he said.

"Plenty of water in the creek," said Bob Lawless shortly. "If that note is for me, you'd better hand it over."

"Give Injun twenty-five cents," said the Redskin. "Injun bully boy with glass eye. Ride like the wind to bring note to young white chief."

"I don't think!" said Bob Lawless disbelievingly.

"Injun hire horse in Purville," went on the Redskin, still holding the note firmly in his hand.

"What the dickens were you doing in Purville?" demanded Frank Richards. "That's twenty miles away, isn't it, Bob?"

"Nearly," said Bob. "I guess Injun Dick's pulling our legs. He doesn't usually get much farther than the Red Dog at Thompson."

"Injun work," said the Redskin. "Injun meet white chief's father."

"You met my father?" demanded Bob incredulously.

"Co-rect," said the Redskin. "Great white chief's father meet with accident. Bully boy with glass eye try save him. Injun too late."

"What?" ejaculated Bob Lawless, his face turning pale.

"Injun too late to save great white chief," went on the Redskin. "Fell off horse. Horse kick great white chief in stomach. White chief bad—write note for Injun."

"By gum!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "You're dreaming—you're—"

"Injun tell frozen truth," said the Redskin. "Young white chief read note. See Injun speak truth."

Bob Lawless' face was deathly pale now.

"Well, hand the note over," he said impatiently.

"Injun thirsty," said the Redskin. "Hang your blessed thirst!"

exclaimed Bob Lawless irritably. "If you don't give me that note, I'll jolly well come out and take it from you."

"Injun want drink," insisted the Redskin. "Injun dry."

"By gum!" cried Bob Lawless. "I'm not going to put up with any more of this!"

Bob slid his leg over the window-ledge. Injun Dick backed away.

"Injun take twenty cents," he said.

"Come here, you coyote!" roared Bob, slipping to the ground.

"Injun take fifteen cents."

"You'll take a thump on the cabeza if you're not careful!" exclaimed Bob, making a grab at the Redskin. "Give me that note! D'you hear?"

"Young white chief welcome to note," said Injun Dick, realising that further argument would avail him little. "Injun still thirsty!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Bob Lawless, snatching the note from the Redskin's hand, and commencing to read the words it contained.

Next moment he staggered back, dropping the note from his hand.

"Bob!" muttered Frank Richards. "What—what's the matter?"

Bob Lawless pulled himself together quickly.

"My popper!" he muttered.

"It's true, then, Bob, what Injun Dick said?" murmured Frank Richards.

"Every word," said Bob Lawless, in broken tones. "He's been kicked in the stomach by his horse at Purville. He's not expected to live, and—"

"Bob!"

"I—I must go to him at once," said Bob Lawless quickly. "My mother!" he added, turning to Injun Dick. "Have you told her? Have—"

"Injun tell young white chief's mother," said the Redskin solemnly. "She go see great white chief."

"Oh, dear!" moaned Bob Lawless. "I shall have to go home for my horse, and—"

"Injun lend young white chief horse," said the Redskin, with unusual willingness.

Bob Lawless brightened up at once.

"Good!" he said. "Where is it?"

"Injun want ten dollars," said the Redskin craftily. "Injun poor man. Lose work if no horse."

"Ten dollars," said Bob Lawless, feeling in his pockets. "I—I've only got five. Will you take these?"

"No take less," said the Redskin, shaking his head. "Injun poor, but Injun generous."

"Oh, dear!" groaned Bob Lawless. "How the dickens—"

"Here you are, Bob!" sang out Frank Richards, holding out a handful of money to his chum. "Take this, old son."

Bob Lawless took the money eagerly, and gave his cousin a grateful look as he did so.

"I—I don't know when I shall get back, you fellows," he said, in broken tones. "But whatever you do, stick it out. Don't give in to that galoot Gunten."

"No fear!" sang out the juniors.

Frank Richards reached out of the window and gripped his chum's hand.

"Good luck, Bob, old son," he said as cheerfully as possible. "I—I hope you won't find uncle so bad as Injun Dick says."

"I hope not," said Bob Lawless.

But as he followed Injun Dick to the gate there was no doubt that Bob's hopes were feeble ones.

All thoughts of the barring-out were dismissed from Bob Lawless' mind.

His one aim was to get to his father as soon as possible, and very soon he was cantering down the trail at a quick speed, hoping against hope that he would find his father still alive when he reached Purville.

Meanwhile, there were anxious faces in the lumber schoolhouse at Cedar Creek.

Bob Lawless' trouble was shared by all the juniors.

Raucher Lawless was a favourite with them all, and the thought that Bob's father was ill—might even die—weighed heavily on their minds.

"Oh, Jerusalem!" said Eben Hacke.

"I guess I didn't expect this!"

"It's rotten—jolly rotten!" said Frank Richards dismally. "I do hope Bob's popper will pull through."

"So do I," said Vere Beauclere.

"It ain't much good going on with the strike," said Eben Hacke miserably. "There ain't many of us left, and—"

"We're going on with it," said Frank Richards determinedly. "D'you think we're going to knuckle under to that rotter Gunten just because we've lost old Bob?"

"No; but—"

"If you've had enough, Hacke," said Frank Richards, "you can buzz off!"

"I guess I ain't vamoosing the ranch yet awhile," said Eben Hacke at once.

THE REBELS' SURRENDER.

(Continued from the previous page.)

"Me velly hungry. Handsome Flanky, get me grub, and—"
"Well, I think we may as well have a little," said Frank Richards. "We shan't be able to fight Gunten and his gang on empty stomachs."
"That's true."

"It won't be much of a feed," said Frank Richards. "It'll fill a corner, though, and help us to carry on for a while."

The juniors trooped into the kitchen, and partook of a little of the stock of food remaining.

It could hardly be called a meal, but, nevertheless, it helped to appease the rebels' pangs of hunger.

The spirits of the schoolboy strikers were at very low ebb, but under Frank Richards' cheery influence they improved wonderfully.

And when at length the "meal" concluded, the juniors were resolved to carry on the strike until their demands were acceded to and Miss Meadows was reinstated as schoolmistress at Cedar Creek.

The 3rd Chapter. Surrender!

"Jerusalem crickets! Here's that Injun again!"

Eben Hacke made the remark as the juniors arrived at the window of the schoolhouse once again.

Injun Dick was not walking as straight as before.

There was a decided lurch in his gait, which told the juniors only too plainly that he had been imbibing in firewater with the money he had received from Bob Lawless.

He pulled up before the window, and gave the juniors a sickly grin.

"Injun come again," he said.

"Well, what the dickens do you want this time?" asked Frank Richards sharply.

"Injun walk 'long trail," said the Redskin, swaying unsteadily on his feet.

"Injun meet beautiful missy. Beautiful missy call Injun."

"Oh, stop that rot!" growled Frank Richards. "Come to the point!"

"Injun coming," said the Redskin. "Injun tell frozen truth. Beautiful missy give Injun note. Injun take note."

"Who the merry dickens are you referring to?" demanded Frank Richards.

"Missy Meadows," said Injun Dick. "She wait for buggy take her to Thompson. She in great hurry—going long journey. Wah! I have spoken!"

"You've spoken a lot of rot, if that's anything," said Frank Richards.

"Injun speak words of wisdom. Injun bring note for young white chiefs."

"A note from Miss Meadows?"

Injun Dick nodded his head in assent.

"Well, hand it over, then," said Frank Richards firmly.

"Injun thirsty," said the Redskin. "Injun want twenty-five cents," said Injun Dick determinedly.

"Miss Meadows say young white chiefs give Injun twenty-five cents. Injun wait. Injun Dick bully rook!"

"Oh, rats!" said Frank Richards disdainfully. "Miss Meadows wouldn't ask us to give you money."

"I guess not," said Eben Hacke.

"Beautiful missy write down on paper," said the Redman. "All O.K. Injun tell truth; you bet!"

"Well, show us the note, then," said Frank Richards. "If Miss Meadows says you're to have the money, we'll give it you. If not—"

Frank Richards paused as Injun Dick drew a piece of paper from the folds of his blanket, and proceeded to double it in half.

Then he held the folded note in front of the juniors.

Frank Richards read the words on the paper, words which had been scrawled in pencil, and which were hardly legible.

A serious frown came over his face as he at length deciphered the last word in the note, for this is how the message ran:

"Give Injun Dick twenty-five cents. Injun thirsty."

"My hat!" exclaimed Frank Richards, giving the Redskin a hard look. "Miss Meadows didn't write those words."

"Missy write," said Injun Dick. "Missy in hurry—write quickly."

"Bosh!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "Miss Meadows could write better than that with her eyes shut. You've written those words yourself."

"Injun no can," said the Redskin, backing away slightly. He did not quite like the angry gleam in Frank Richards' eyes.

"Well, you won't get a penny out of us," said Frank Richards. "You're a scheming rascal, Injun Dick, and I guess you'll find yourself in the calaboose one of these days if you aren't careful!"

"Injun honest. Injun bully boy with glass eye," said the Redskin.

"Don't talk such utter rot!" snapped Frank Richards. "Give me that note you've got there, or—"

"Injun wait for twenty-five cents," said the Redskin. "Young white chief give—Yow! Yooooooop!"

Before Injun Dick could move Frank Richards had shot through the window, and hurried himself at the Redskin.

With a thud the two landed on the ground, Frank Richards uppermost.

Frank made a snatch at the note in Injun Dick's hand, and, rising to his feet, commenced to read the message it contained.

Next instant his face changed colour, and he uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"What's the matter, Frank?" asked Vere Beauclerc.

"My hat!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "This note's from Miss Meadows, and she says—"

"Miss Meadows," said Eben Hacke. "Then that thaire Injun was tellin' the truth, after all."

"Well, about the first part of the letter," said Frank Richards slowly. "That's in Miss Meadows' handwriting. The bit about the money Injun Dick wrote himself."

"Injun Dick no write," said the Red man. "Injun no can."

"I guess you'd better vamoose the ranch, Injun Dick," said Eben Hacke. "You ain't exactly welcome hyer. Read out the note, Richards!"

"Right-ho!" said Frank. "This is how it runs: 'My dear boys,—Whilst I very much appreciate your loyalty to me, I must say how much I resent the means you are adopting to get me reinstated as schoolmistress at Cedar Creek. In fact, were you successful in your efforts, I could not think of returning to the school after the way you have behaved. I have accepted a post at Montreal, and, therefore, am leaving Cedar Creek for good. I should advise you to cease your disgraceful behaviour, and accept Mr. Peckover as your headmaster. Otherwise, your actions may have most unpleasant results.—Yours sincerely,

"E. Meadows."

For a few moments none of the juniors spoke, so thunderstruck were they at the tone of the letter Frank Richards had read out.

"Surely Miss Meadows didn't write that?" asked Vere Beauclerc, at length.

"Can't be much doubt about that," said Frank Richards dolorously. "Have a look at it. It's her writing right enough."

The juniors at the window took charge of the note and inspected it closely.

They shook their heads sadly, for there was no doubt in their minds that the note had been written by Miss Meadows.

"Young white chiefs no like letter," remarked Injun Dick.

"Jerusalem crickets!" exclaimed Eben Hacke, looking up. "Why ain't you vamooseed the ranch, Injun Dick?"

"Injun stony," said the Redskin. "Injun wait for twenty-five cents."

Eben Hacke grabbed at a broom which rested against the wall, and held it in front of the red man in a threatening manner.

"Now are you going to absquatulate?" he demanded.

"Injun absquatulate if young white chiefs give Injun twenty-five cents. Injun—Ow! Yow! Yooooooop!"

The broom caught the Red man full in the face, bowling him over.

Injun Dick did not stop to press his claims any further. He drew his tattered blanket round him, and darted towards the gate.

"Now that gopher's gone, we'll discuss things," said Eben Hacke. "Hev you decided what to do, Richards?"

"Don't see what we can do," said Frank Richards dismally. "If Miss Meadows refuses to come back, it ain't much good carrying on the strike."

"I guess that's so," said Eben Hacke. "We shall have to put up with that rotter Peckover!" said Frank Richards.

"I suggest that we give him a trial, and if he comes it too much we might chuck him out, and strike for a new master."

"Not a bad notion," agreed Eben Hacke. "I guess—Jerusalem! If I ain't blind that's Kern Gunten coming in at the gate."

The juniors looked in the direction of the gate, and observed a boy of their own age crossing the quadrangle.

"It is Gunten," said Frank Richards. "I wonder what he wants."

"Perhaps he thinks he's coming back to school."

"We won't have him!"

"No fear!"

Gunten, the fellow Miss Meadows had expelled from the school for blackguardism, came striding towards the rebels, quite unperturbed by the angry expressions on the juniors' faces.

"I've come back, you see!" he said, with a confident air.

"You can jolly well buzz off!" said Frank Richards firmly. "We're done with you, you cad, and we refuse to have you here!"

"I guess you haven't much choice in the matter," said Gunten triumphantly. "Mr. Peckover is coming along now to take charge. He—Here he comes!"

At that moment there was a clatter of horse's feet outside, and an instant later Mr. Peckover and his horse entered the playground.

The 4th Chapter.

Mr. Peckover Surprises the Juniors.

"Good-morning, boys!"

Mr. Peckover jumped off his horse and greeted the juniors in a most affable manner.

On the previous occasion on which he had spoken to the juniors he had addressed them most abruptly. The change in his manner therefore came as a great surprise to Frank Richards & Co.

"I understand that Miss Meadows has departed from the district," said Mr. Peckover, in kindly tones.

"We knew that already!" said Frank Richards brusquely.

"Quite so—quite so!" said Mr. Peckover. "No doubt you boys are very disappointed."

"We are!" said the juniors.

"I quite appreciate your disappointment," said Mr. Peckover, in his polite manner. "At first I was inclined to blame

you for taking the course you did, but now I understand how annoyed you must have been at the dismissal of your schoolmistress."

"We were!"

"I must say I disapproved of the way in which you treated me," said the new master, smiling genially. "But I will forgive all that under the circumstances, and I hope you will accept me as your new headmaster."

"Oh, Jerusalem!" muttered Eben Hacke, astounded by Mr. Peckover's affability.

"I trust that you will not bear me any malice," said the new master, "and that we shall always remain on the best of terms. If one of you boys will open the door we will prepare the school for afternoon lessons."

Frank Richards hesitated.

"There's one thing we've got to settle first," he said. "Is that cad there going to return to the school?"

Frank Richards pointed to Kern Gunten, whose face still bore a cynical smile.

"Don't you wish him to return?" asked Mr. Peckover.

"I guess not!" said Eben Hacke. "He ain't the sort of galoot we want here! The calaboose is the place for him, and—"

"Very well, my boys," said Mr. Peckover condescendingly. "I will grant your wishes. Gunten shall leave the school at once, and not be allowed to return."

"I say—" began Gunten, giving the new master a savage look.

"That is sufficient, Gunten," said Mr. Peckover, turning to the cad of Cedar Creek. "I must uphold these boys in this matter. If they do not want you here I cannot allow you to remain."

"But my father—"

"Your father has nothing to do with this matter!" said Mr. Peckover sharply. "Take your departure at once, my boy!"

Mr. Peckover pointed towards the gate, and at the same time he gave Gunten a meaning glance.

The juniors did not observe the look. Had they done so their suspicions might possibly have been aroused.

The look was sufficient for Gunten, however. He understood what it meant, and, after giving the juniors a savage glare, he turned on his heels and strolled disconsolately towards the gates.

Mr. Peckover beamed on the juniors.

"Bad boy, that!" he said. "It isn't right that he should mix with boys like you. He shan't come here whilst I'm master!"

"But—supposing his father kicks up a row?" remarked Frank Richards.

"My dear boy, I'm quite capable of dealing with Mr. Gunten," said the new master firmly. "He is a braggart and a bully, and I shall certainly not allow myself to be dictated to by him. Would one of you boys mind opening the door so that I may enter the school?"

The juniors did not move.

Mr. Peckover gave Frank Richards a beaming smile.

"Why do you hesitate, my boy?" he asked.

"I'm wondering what will happen, supposing Old Man Gunten comes along, and—"

"—and—" Frank Richards paused.

"You're afraid that Mr. Gunten will want his revenge for the manner in which you have handled him?"

"Y-y-yes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Mr. Peckover broke into a hearty laugh. "My dear boy, he said, 'you have no need to be concerned on that score. I do not think Mr. Gunten will give the matter further thought.'"

"He will when he learns that you won't have his son in the school," said Frank.

"You must not worry about that, my boy," said the new master.

"We're not worrying about it," said Frank Richards grimly. "We're quite capable of dealing with Mr. Gunten if he starts browbeating us again. All the same, we don't want to give him an advantage."

"An advantage?" said Mr. Peckover slowly. "I don't understand what—"

"I mean that if we shift away the things from the door we shan't be able to defend ourselves against Mr. Gunten," explained Frank Richards.

"My dear boy, you have no need to feel anxious about that," said the new master, patting the junior on the shoulder. "We can soon barricade the door again if Mr. Gunten makes an attempt to attack."

"We!" ejaculated Frank Richards, in surprise.

"Yes, we," said Mr. Peckover promptly. "I shall be only too pleased to assist you in dealing with Mr. Gunten. I am standing by you, boys, no matter what happens."

"Jerusalem crickets!" exclaimed Eben Hacke. "I guess that's straight talk. Open the door, Richards!"

"Right-ho!" said Frank Richards, moving towards the window. "Will you lend me a hand, Beau?"

"Certainly!" said Vere Beauclerc. And he and Frank Richards climbed through the window of the lumber schoolhouse.

The rest of the juniors remained in the playground conversing with Mr. Peckover.

Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc did not find it an easy job to remove the barricade in front of the door.

That barricade had been built to withstand any form of attack.

Forms and desks and chairs were piled one on top of the other, but Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc set about clearing a path to the door in an earnest manner.

"Well, this is a nice finish to our barring-out!" remarked Frank Richards regretfully.

"Can't be helped," said Vere Beauclerc. "I had no idea Miss Meadows would give in like that."

"Neither had I," said Frank Richards. "And neither did I think that old Peckover was such a decent sort."

"You think he's decent, Frank?"

"Well, he seems all right," said Frank Richards. "Far different from when he

came up with Old Man Gunten. We must have been mistaken, Beau."

"I don't know," said Vere Beauclerc thoughtfully.

Frank Richards looked at his chum in surprise.

"Surely you don't think that Peckover's taken us in?" he said.

"I shouldn't like to say," said Vere slowly. "He seems all right, but—but I can't forget what a brute he seemed when we wouldn't let him and Old Man Gunten enter the school."

"Well, the chap might have been a bit wild, you know," said Frank Richards. "We weren't exactly kind to him, and—"

"Are you ready, boys?"

The two chums looked up, and observed Mr. Peckover looking at them through a broken panel in the door.

"Shan't be a minute, sir!" said Frank Richards; and he proceeded to clear away the remaining articles of furniture.

At length the door was opened, and Mr. Peckover and the rest of the juniors entered.

The new master was looking as affable and cheerful as he possibly could.

"Lend a hand, boys!" he said. "If you have no objection we will tidy up the class-room and place the forms in position for afternoon school. I understand that most of the boys and girls will be returning then."

The juniors lent their assistance, and very soon the schoolhouse was perfectly tidy.

This task finished, the juniors partook of the remaining stock of food in the kitchen, and at Mr. Peckover's suggestion they went out into the playground to wait for their schoolfellows to arrive for afternoon school.

Although they were disappointed at the result of the barring-out, the juniors were considerably comforted by Mr. Peckover's affable manner.

The new master was by no means the tyrant they had thought him to be.

The 5th Chapter.

No Luck for Mr. Peckover.

"Vere!"

Vere Beauclerc looked round as he heard his name called to find Frank Richards strolling towards him.

Vere was standing at the gate, a thoughtful look upon his brow.

"I wondered where you'd got to, old son!" said Frank Richards cheerfully.

"What the dickens—"

Frank Richards paused as he heard the sound of horse's feet on the trail.

He looked out of the gate, and next instant he uttered an exclamation.

"My hat!" he cried. "It's Bob Lawless! I wonder—"

Frank Richards did not have time to say anything more, for Bob Lawless came tearing up, and jumped off his horse in front of his chums.

There was a set and anxious expression on Bob's usually sunny face.

"What the dickens are you galoots doing here?" he said breathlessly.

"How's your father, Bob?" asked Vere Beauclerc, feeling that this matter was far more important than their being outside the school.

"Popper's right as rain!" said Bob Lawless quickly. "It was all a put-up job. I'll lynch that galoot of an Injun when I see him again!"

"A—a put-up job!" stammered Frank Richards in perplexity.

"I guess so," said Bob Lawless. "I shouldn't be surprised if that galoot Gunten wrote that note, and paid Injun Dick to bring it here, so as to get me away. Has Gunten made an attack?"

Frank Richards shook his head.

"No," he said. "The barring-out is over, old son."

"Over?" gasped Bob incredulously.

"We had a note from Miss Meadows, saying that she had gone to take a job at Montreal," explained Frank Richards. "She advised us to give in, and we thought it best to do so. Old Peckover's arrived, and—What's the matter, Bob?"

Bob Lawless' face was a study.

"You underheaded galoots!" he roared. "Who's in there?"

Bob Lawless pointed towards the schoolhouse.

"Mr. Peckover," said Frank. "The school's ready for afternoon lessons, and—"

"Great gophers!" broke in Bob Lawless. "I never met such a lot of simple galoots in my life! You've been taken in, and—"

"Taken in?" gasped Frank Richards.

"Yes, taken in!" said Bob Lawless. "Miss Meadows hasn't gone away. I met her on the trail, and she said that she hoped to be back at the school soon."

"But—but we had a note from her saying—"

"Great pip!" roared Bob. "That must have been a forgery, like the one I received! It's Gunten's work, and—"

"Bob!"

"Old Man Gunten's done this, I'll bet!" said Bob Lawless. "I saw a lot of those Red Dog scoundrels in Thompson talking to Gunten. I'll bet you anything you like that they're coming here to take charge of the school, and force us to give in!"

Frank Richards was flabbergasted by Bob's statements.

"But Bob," he said, "Peckover's a pretty decent chap, really. He says that if we have any trouble with Old Man Gunten he'll take our part!"

"What!" roared Bob. "Peckover—that chap who behaved like a blessed tyrant when he came here with Gunten?"

"Yes; but—"

"You simple jay!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "That galoot has taken you in! He's put on his best manners in order to get into the school. I suppose you've moved all the desks and forms?"

"Yes."

"Well, we've jolly well got to put them back again!"

"But—but what about Mr. Peckover?"

"You leave that galoot to me!" said Bob Lawless. "I'm going to put a few questions to him. You get all the fellows together, and come in after me. There may be a bit of a dust-up."

Next instant Bob Lawless darted towards the lumber schoolhouse, leaving Frank Richards bewildered and thoughtful.

Meanwhile, Bob had entered the school. He walked in quietly, and found Mr. Peckover, a grim, set expression on his face, standing by the window.

Bob coughed as the master did not hear him approach.

Mr. Peckover turned round at once, and gave Bob a savage glare.

"Well, what do you want?" he exclaimed sharply.