

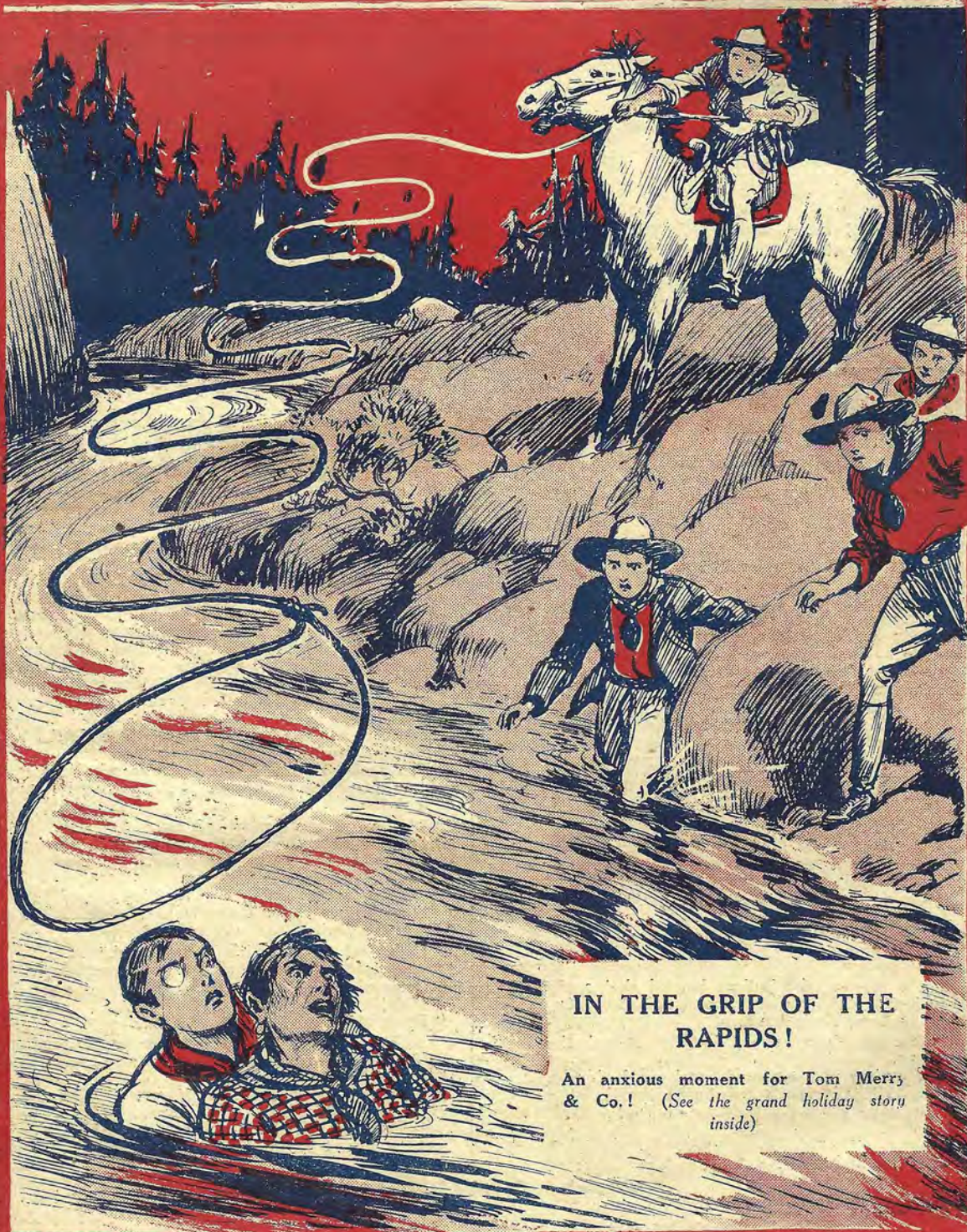
TAKE YOUR HOLIDAYS WITH TOM MERRY & CO. IN THE WILD WEST—THEY'RE THERE THIS WEEK!

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1927.



IN THE GRIP OF THE RAPIDS!

An anxious moment for Tom Merry
& Co.! (See the grand holiday story
inside)

A HALF-BREED'S GRATITUDE! Arthur Augustus D'Arcy has cause to bless the day that he saved the life of Black Louis, for when Tom Merry & Co. are helpless prisoners in the hands of a notorious gunman, it is Black Louis, the half-breed, who comes to their rescue!



A Rousing New Long Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co., the Chums of St. Jim's, dealing with their thrilling Holiday Adventures in British Columbia.

By Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

At the Boot Leg Ranch!

"WIPPIN'!"

That was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's verdict.

Tom Merry & Co. concurred.

It was ripping.

"Beats Margate for the vac!" remarked Monty Lowther.

And the St. Jim's juniors chuckled.

The morning was glorious.

The sun had come up over the distant Rocky Mountains, which lay eastward of the St. Jim's juniors now. It blazed down on hill and valley, on winding river and rolling grassland. Tom Merry & Co. stood in the wooden veranda of the Boot Leg ranch-house, and looked about them with untiring interest. Everything at the ranch in British Columbia was new to them—new and strange and keenly exciting.

"Wippin'!" repeated Arthur Augustus, polishing his celebrated eyeglass and jamming it into his noble eye. "Top-hole!"

Mr. Wildrake came out of the ranch-house and nodded and smiled to his son's guests in the veranda. He mounted his horse and rode away on the trail to Lone Pine. The juniors watched the big, bronzed rancher as he rode at a trot, till a fold of the prairie swallowed him up. Then they transferred their attention to Long Jim, the foreman of the ranch, who was in sight at a little distance towards the horse-corral. Long Jim's voice came to their ears—it was a powerful voice, and it was raised now in tones of anger.

"You pesky breed! Come outa' that!"

Long Jim apparently was addressing someone on the other side of the corral fence.

Crack!

"Bai Jove!"

For a moment the juniors fancied that a pistol had been fired. But it was only the crack of the long stock-whip in Long Jim's hand.

"Come out, you durned breed!" roared the ranch foreman.

The juniors in the veranda exchanged glances.

"Looks like a row!" murmured Blake.

"Pewwaps we had bettah wetiah!" suggested Arthur Augustus.

Crack!

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The stockwhip rang again.

The unseen individual in the horse-corral did not seem in a hurry to come out at the foreman's command.

Long Jim's bearded face was growing redder with wrath.

"The dear man's in a wax!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"I wegard his mannaahs as lackin' wepose," said Arthur Augustus. "I twust he is not goin' to wallop anyone with that howwid-lookin' whip."

"Looks as if he is," remarked Tom Merry.

"You hear me yaup?" bawled Long Jim. "Are you showing up, Black Louis, or do you want me to fetch you out?"

A dark-skinned face—the face of an Indian half-breed—showed over the corral fence. It was dark and sulky, and the black eyes gleamed. The man dropped over the pine fence, and stood before the foreman of the ranch, half crouching. The juniors, at a little distance from the scene, watched with intense interest. Arthur Augustus had suggested retiring from view while the row was on; but he did not carry out his own suggestion.

Long Jim advanced a pace or two towards the breed, his sinewy hand gripping the quirt.

"You pesky breed! I guess you've asked for it two or three times before, and now you're getting it—savvy?"

Swish!

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as the heavy whip sang through the air and came down with a crash on the half-crouching breed.

"Phew!" murmured Manners.

"What on earth's the man done?" muttered Lowther.

"Something serious, I should say," remarked Blake.

"Long Jim isn't a bad sort really."

"I do not agwee with you, Blake," said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard him as a wuff boundah. He has not tweated me with pwopah wespect."

Swish!

"By Jove! Look!" breathed Blake.

The half-breed had made a sudden spring, and something bright flashed in the sunlight as he hurled himself at the burly foreman.

"Look out!" shouted Tom Merry.

But the warning was not needed.

The knife went spinning through the air as the half-breed crumpled up in the powerful grasp of the ranchman.

The next moment Black Louis was flung to the ground, and the heavy quirt rose and fell with savage lashes.

"Bai Jove! I'm not standin' this!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, his eyes flashing. "Where's Wildwake? He ought to interfere."

Kit Wildrake was not with his guests.

"Wildwake!" called out Arthur Augustus.

There was no answer. The Canadian junior was elsewhere.

Lash! Lash!

The half-breed was squirming under the lashes of the quirt.

Arthur Augustus ran down the steps of the veranda.

"Gussy!" shouted Blake.

But the swell of St. Jim's did not heed.

He ran on the scene with lightning speed and grasped the sinewy arm of the ranch foreman as the whip was descending again.

"Stop it!" he panted.

Long Jim stopped in sheer astonishment. He turned an angry glare on the swell of St. Jim's.

"Stand aside!" he rapped out.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "You shall not touch that man again."

Louis, the half-breed, rose dizzily to his knees, swaying. Long Jim shoved the elegant junior aside and raised his right arm again. Arthur Augustus, undaunted, sprang between him and the breed. The ranch foreman just stopped the lash before it fell on D'Arcy.

"You pesky dude!" he roared. "Will you mind your own business and get out of the way?"

"No, I won't!"

"By hokey!" exclaimed the ranchman. "If you wasn't the boss' guest, you durned gink, I'd lay the whip round your hide, too."

"Wats!"

"Gussy!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"You need not chip in, Tom Mewwy. I will not allow that wuffian to beat a man like a dog undah my eyes."

"You won't allow!" gasped Long Jim.

"No."

"I tell you to stand aside!" roared the angry ranchman.

"I wefuse."

"Then I guess you'll be put."

"I warn you that I shall hit you, Mr. Long Jim, if you lay a fingah on me," said Arthur Augustus.

Long Jim, in spite of his anger, grinned. Arthur Augustus was a sturdy fellow, with all his elegance; but the top of his head did not reach the big ranchman's shoulder. One drive of Long Jim's enormous fist would have lifted Gussy off his feet and landed him yards away. But the swell of St. Jim's did not retreat an inch. He stood between the panting, squirming breed on the ground, and the towering ranchman, with his hands up and his eyes flashing over them. There was a laugh from five or six punchers who were looking on from the bunkhouse.

"Stand aside!"

"Wats!"

Long Jim wasted no more time in words.

He strode at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and grasped at him.

What happened next seemed like a miracle to the cow-punchers, who were grinning at the scene. With his left Arthur Augustus knocked aside the outstretched hand of the ranchman. The next moment his right crashed upon Long Jim's bearded chin. It was a hefty blow, and it was a surprise to the ranch foreman. Long Jim toppled back, and went with a crash to the ground.

CHAPTER 2.

A Little Hasty!

CRASH!

Long Jim lay on his back, blinking at the sunny sky of British Columbia and wondering dizzily how he had got there.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Blake.

Arthur Augustus stood like a rock, but he was rubbing the knuckles of his right hand with the fingers of his left. It had been a really terrific drive, and it had hurt Gussy more, probably, than it had hurt the hefty Canadian ranchman, though he had gone down under it.

Tom Merry & Co. came down from the veranda with a rush.

They reached the spot while Long Jim was still blinking at the sky. What would happen to Gussy when the burly ranchman got on his feet they hardly knew, but they realised that Gussy would need the help of his chums. It was doubtful, indeed, whether all Tom Merry & Co. bunched together could have handled Long Jim.

"Mon Dieu!" the breed was muttering. "Mon Dieu!" The fall of the big ranchman had astounded Black Louis.

D'Arcy turned to him.

"Cut and wun while you've got the chance, deah boy," he said.

The dark-skinned breed picked himself up. He was dizzy from the lashing he had already received, but he realised that this was his chance.

"Merci—mille fois merci!" he muttered.

"That's all wight!"

The breed broke into a rapid run, and disappeared along the wall of the corral as Long Jim sat up.

"Gee-whiz!" stuttered Long Jim.

"Hallo, here's Wildrake!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in great relief.

Kit Wildrake came out of the cookhouse, evidently having heard the uproar. He came towards the spot at a quick run.

"What the thump—" he exclaimed.

"Only Gussy!" said Blake.

"But what—"

"I am sowwy to have had to knock down your fathah's foreman, Wildwake, deah boy—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"But he was bwutally whippin' a chap, and I was bound to chip in," said D'Arcy. "I twust you will excuse me."

"The question is, will Long Jim excuse you?" murmured Monty Lowther. "Tell him not to break Gussy into more than six or seven pieces, Wildrake."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

Long Jim staggered to his feet. He was more surprised than damaged; indeed, but for the fact that he had been so surprised to receive that blow at all, it would scarcely have toppled him over. Wildrake hastily stepped in front of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Go easy, Jim!" he said. "What's the trouble?"

"I—I—I've been floored," said Long Jim, still in a state of great astonishment. "That pesky little critter has floored me."

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as a peskay little cwittah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I wegard you as a wude beast."

"Shut up, Gussy, old chap!" said Wildrake.

"Weally, Wildwake—"

"I was quirting that gink, Black Louis," said Long Jim, rubbing his chin. "He's been at his tricks again, ill-using a horse. I warned him afore what to expect, and I was giving him that same, when this queer little animal butted in. I s'pose your father would

be mad, Kit, if I put him across my knee and spanked him. Take him away; and make him understand, if he's got any brains in his cabeza, that he'd better not punch a ranchman with his toy fist. Next time he may get hurt."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy breathed hard and deep. His noble face was crimson with indignation. Certainly, it was fortunate for him that Long Jim was taking the matter so good-temperedly. But to be regarded as a little "critter" with a toy fist was greatly exasperating.

Long Jim picked up his quirt.

"Where's that pesky breed?" he snapped. "I guess he's going to be fired from the ranch, but I was going

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to give him a quirting first. Hyer, you ginks, look for that breed, and don't stand around there gobbling like a flock of turkeys!"

The chuckling cow-punchers proceeded to look for Black Louis. Long Jim, without another look at D'Arcy, tramped away, evidently thinking only of the breed and not of the swell of St. Jim's.

"I am sowwy this has happened, Wildrake, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "I twust you do not wegard me as buttin' into a mattah that did not concern me."

Wildrake gave him a rather curious look.

"What a trusting nature!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, Gussy," said Wildrake, "Long Jim runs this show when the popper's not around, and he had good reason for quirting that breed. You wouldn't stand for a galoot ill-using a horse, I suppose?"

"Bai Jove! Wathah not!"

"Hit a man your own size next time, Gussy," suggested Lowther. "Spare small fry like Long Jim."

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

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Trust old Gussy to put his foot in it," said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"I guess there's no great harm done," said Wildrake. "The breed's got clear, but I dare say he had had enough."

"He seemed to think so," remarked Lowther.

"Of—of course, I was not awah of the cause of the twouble," said Arthur Augustus hesitatingly. "If the man was weally cwel to a horse, of course, he ought to have had a feahful thwashin'. But—but—" It was dawning upon the powerful intellect of Arthur Augustus that he had indeed put his aristocratic foot in it.

"All serene," said Wildrake, smiling. "Long Jim is taking it more as a joke than anything else. Let it drop."

"Pewwaps I was w'ong—"

"Cut out the perhaps!" urged Blake.

"Pway dwy up, Blake! Pewwaps I owe Long Jim an apology for knockin' him down undah a misapprehension."

"That's all right," said Wildrake. "Let it drop."

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"Between gentlemen an apology is sufficient to set a mattah wight," he said. "I appeah to have made a mistake. I shall offah Long Jim my apology."

"Gussy, old man—"

Arthur Augustus did not heed. He realised at long last that his noble intervention had been uncalled-for, and the fact that he was deeply exasperated with Long Jim did not alter the other fact that an apology was due to that long-limbed gentleman. So Arthur Augustus hurried after him. He found Long Jim at the gate of the corral, in a wrathful mood. He had just discovered that Black Louis had departed from the ranch without waiting to be "fired," and he had departed upon a horse belonging to the ranch—which was never likely to be seen again at Boot Leg. Black Louis had escaped the remainder of the quirting which Long Jim considered his due, and he had put Rancher Wildrake to a loss of a hundred dollars. In the circumstances, Long Jim was not likely to greet the cause of the trouble politely.

"Mr. Long Jim!" said D'Arcy, with dignity.

The foreman did not heed him.

"Hyer, you Billy Pink, and you, Nosey Rogers, get on your critters and get after that durned horse-thief!" he shouted. "You get back that hoss he's stolen, and hide him with a trail-rope till he can't crawl. You hear me?"

The two punchers jumped on their horses and dashed away, Long Jim staring after them with a darkened brow.

"I was addressin' you, Mr. Long Jim," said D'Arcy.

The foreman glanced round impatiently.

"Git!" he snapped.

"I was goin' to say—"

"Do you think I'm spending this hyer morning listening to a tenderfoot chewing the rag?" bawled Long Jim. "Shut up and git!"

"Bai Jove! I considah—"

"Light out of it, pronto!"

"Weally, you wude boundah—"

"Run away and play!" snapped Long Jim. "Next time I ride into Rainbow I'll bring you some marbles and a pegtop. Now git!"

"I was goin'—"

Long Jim strode away without waiting for the St. Jim's junior to conclude. As a matter of fact, he was busy that morning and had no time to waste on Arthur Augustus.

The graceful manners of the swell of St. Jim's, in fact, were rather out of place on a Canadian ranch. Long Jim did not even know that Gussy had a graceful apology all ready, but he would not have stopped to listen to it in any case. There was plenty of work to be done on the Boot Leg Ranch, and the busy foreman had no time for "chewing the rag."

Arthur Augustus gazed after him through his eyeglass with a withering gaze. But that withering gaze had no perceptible effect on Long Jim's broad back as he strode away.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy.

And he walked back to the grinning juniors at the ranch house.

"Apology go off all right?" asked Monty Lowther, with a wink to the other fellows.

"Wats!"

"Everything in the garden lovely now?"

"Wats!" repeated Arthur Augustus. And Tom Merry & Co. chortled.

CHAPTER 3.

The Man in the Timber!

"WHAT about Pine Tree Patch?"

Tom Merry asked that question.

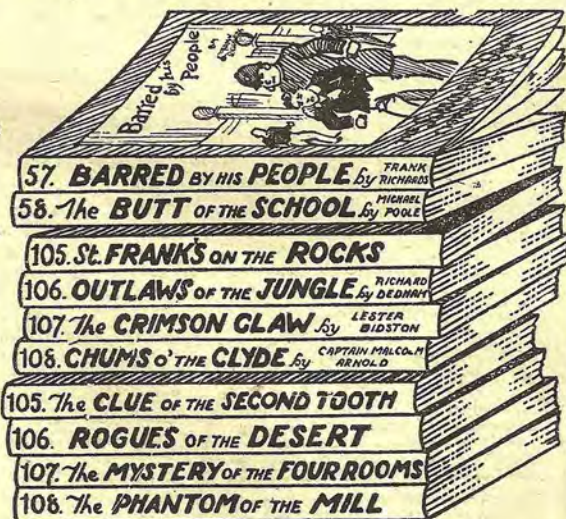
Wildrake and his comrades from school were riding across the sunny

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Long Jim shoved the elegant Arthur Augustus D'Arcy aside, and raised his right arm again. The swell of St. Jim's, undaunted, sprang between him and the half-breed. The ranch foreman just stopped the lash before it fell on D'Arcy. "You pesky dude!" he roared. "Will you mind your own business, and get out of the way?" "No, I won't!" said the St. Jim's junior. (See Chapter 1.)

grassland, far out of sight of the ranch. They were heading for a clump of live oaks and cedars across the plain, where they intended to dismount and camp for tiffin in the heat of the day.

Every day since they had arrived at Wildrake's Canadian home the chums of St. Jim's had ridden far and wide, exploring the extensive ranch lands. But they had not yet visited the Pine Tree Patch, the most outlying section of the Boot Leg Ranch, lying up in the foothills of the Porcupines, where the Rainbow River had its head-waters, and it was in that remote section that they were interested.

Since arriving at Boot Leg they had seen and heard nothing of Rube Redway, the gunman, who had sought to kidnap Wildrake in Sussex. They knew that Redway, for some mysterious reason known only to himself, desired to get possession of the Pine Tree section of the ranch lands, and had taken desperate measures to force Mr. Wildrake to sell, and Tom Merry & Co. were very keen to see the place.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "How fah is the Pine Tree Patch from the wanch, Wildwake?"

"Fifteen miles to the north-west," said Wildrake.

"That's not much of a wide."

Wildrake smiled.

"It's difficult country up in the foothills," he said. "It means camping out for the night in the hut there."

"We know how to camp out," said Manners. "We're Boy Scouts at home, you know, and we can rough it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I don't think popper quite likes the idea until that firebug Redway is roped in," explained Wildrake. "He hasn't been seen since he held us up on the trail from Rainbow, though the M.P.'s are out looking for him."

"The what?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "You don't mean Membahs of Parliament, old chap?"

"Ha, ha! No; the Mounted Police," said Wildrake. "They've been hunting for the galoot, and they haven't spotted him yet. It looks as if he's cleared out of this

section for good. Holding up the hack on the trail means some years in the pen for him if he's caught."

"In—in what?"

"In the penitentiary—prison, you know. It looks as if he's gone, but the popper thinks he may be hanging around. He's got some reason for wanting to buy that land from popper. Goodness knows why. It's never been considered of much value. There's hardly any cattle feed in the district, and the stockman's hut there isn't used half a dozen times in the whole year. But Redway offered popper a big price for it."

"And your patah wouldn't sell?"

"I guess he didn't want an American gunman for a neighbour," said Wildrake. "That was his chief reason at first. But when Redway started on threats, he just drove him off the ranch with a Colt. Then Redway tried the dodge of roping me in, to force the popper to sell by threatening me. It shows he's got some pesky good reason for wanting to get hold of that bit of land. Can't guess why, unless he's found signs of pay dirt there. And popper thinks he may still be hanging about, looking for another chance, though nothing's been seen of him."

"We could look after ourselves," said Lowther.

"Yes, but—"

"It will be all wight, Wildwake. I should be there!" said Arthur Augustus innocently.

Wildrake laughed.

"We're bound to explore the place," said Tom Merry. "If Redway has found signs of gold there, we may find what he's found. See? No end of a catch to strike gold."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I guess we'll make it to-morrow, if you galoots are keen," said Wildrake. "Popper agreed that we could camp out there if nothing was heard of that firebug Redway for a whole week, and the week's up to-day."

"Good!"

The juniors rode on at a trot towards the clump of trees. Even Kit Wildrake, keen as he was, did not suspect that a pair of keen, glinting eyes were watching them as they advanced from the cover of the timber.

A man with a clean-cut, hard face was crouching there, hidden by the timber, his eyes fixed on the riders as they came jingling on. There was a rifle in his hands, and once he raised it as if with the intention of firing on the advancing party.

But he lowered it again, shaking his head.

Tom Merry & Co. were not now the unarmed schoolboys who had been held up on the Rainbow trail a week before. The possibility that the gunman was still haunting the vicinity of the Boot Leg Ranch made them take precautions when they rode out of sight of the ranch buildings. Each of the juniors carried a rifle slung to his saddle. The man lurking in the timber would not, perhaps, have recked much of the shooting of the schoolboys from England, but Rube Redway had learned that Wildrake at least was a good shot. He could have shot the Canadian junior down from cover; but that was not what he wanted.

Once Wildrake was in his hands, he had no doubt that he could barter the boy's life and liberty for the land he coveted. Watching the party as they jingled nearer and nearer, Rube Redway debated in his mind whether to attempt a hold-up. But he shook his head again. And as the riders came trotting up to the timber and dismounted in the shade of the thick branches, the hidden gunman crouched closer into cover.

Tom Merry & Co. camped for lunch under the trees, little dreaming that Redway was within a few yards of them, watching.

They unpacked lunch from their bags and sat in the long grass under the shady branches.

Their talk ran on the Pine Tree Patch and the possibility that there was gold-bearing ground in the district—the only explanation they could think of to account for Redway's desire to possess it. Hidden in the thickets behind them, the gunman listened to every word.

Redway made no sound.

"I guess we'll make it to-morrow," Kit Wildrake's clear voice came to the ears of the hidden gunman. "We'll start bright and early in the morning, and get to the foothills in the afternoon. We'll take grub for a couple of days."

"Yaas, wathah! And if there is gold there we will woot it out," said Arthur Augustus. "Your patah would be vewy pleased to discovah a gold-mine on his pwopahty, Wildwake."

Wildrake chuckled.

"I guess so," he assented.

"Would you know paydirt if you saw it, Gussy?" grinned Blake.

"As a mattah of fact, Blake, I have not had any expewience so fah in such mattahs. But a fellow can learn, you know."

"Anyhow, it will be fun camping out," said Manners.

"What-ho!" agreed Tom Merry.

"I have wathah a feelin' that I shall woot out the secwet, whatevah it is," said Arthur Augustus. "There must be somethin' there, or that wuffian Wedway wouldn't be so keen on gettin' hold of the place."

"Sure!" assented Wildrake.

The man hidden in the timber grinned sourly.

It was an hour later that Tom Merry & Co. remounted their horses and continued their ride across the plains.

From the timber Rube Redway watched them ride, his eyes glittering and a grim smile on his hard face.

"To-morrow at Pine Tree Patch!" he murmured. "I guess this is a cinch!"

The gunman waited till the juniors were out of sight, then he led his hidden horse from the timber on the other side of the clump and mounted and rode away.

CHAPTER 4.

The Horse Thief!

"TAKE care of yourselves."

"You bet, popper!" said Wildrake cheerily.

It was an early hour the following morning.

The sun had just cleared the summits of the Rockies, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,016.

far away to the east, when Tom Merry & Co. turned out for their expedition.

"It's all wight, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I shall be lookin' after old Wildwake, you know."

The rancher smiled.

Mr. Wildrake had stepped out to see the juniors off, and Mrs. Wildrake waved her hand to the party as they started.

The juniors rode to the north-west, and half a dozen miles from Boot Leg they came on the Rainbow River. From that point they followed the river towards the foothills of the Porcupines, the stream dwindling more and more as they drew nearer to its head-waters. Away to the west the range of the Porcupines barred the sky, with bench after bench of rocky foothills rising one above another towards the mountains.

The grasslands lay behind the juniors now.

The ground was broken and stony, with rocky ridges cropping out of the soil. The Rainbow, a mere stream now, rippling over a stony bed, was their guide. As the sun rose higher the heat grew intense, and Arthur Augustus fanned himself with his new Stetson hat.

The pace was slow now, the ground rising more and more. Sometimes the juniors had to leave the bank of the stream, but they sighted it again after an interval. They were riding among great rocks and boulders, with here and there a scrubby clump of pines. Suddenly, as they rode into a narrow gulch, through which the Rainbow roared in a torrent, Wildrake uttered a sharp exclamation.

"By gum! The breed!"

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors reined in their horses. A man who had been camped in the gulch, close beside the roaring torrent, leaped to his feet and stared at them in surprise and alarm.

The juniors recognised Black Louis, the half-breed who had fled from the ranch on a stolen horse.

The man stared at them for a few seconds, evidently astonished to see the schoolboys in the lonely rocky wastes of the foothills. Then he rushed to a horse that was tethered near at hand.

Wildrake dragged the revolver from his belt.

"Stop!" he shouted.

"Wildwake, deah boy——"

"I guess that galoot's got a stolen horse!" rapped out Wildrake, and he spurred on after the breed.

Black Louis cast his steed loose and leaped on it and rode away recklessly.

"After him!" shouted Wildrake.

He rode fiercely in pursuit.

Tom Merry & Co. joined in the chase at once. Wildrake's revolver was in his hand, but, greatly to the relief of his comrades he did not use it. It was very probable that Long Jim, or any of the Boot Leg punchers, would have pulled trigger without hesitation to prevent a horse-thief escaping with his plunder. But the Canadian junior of St. Jim's held his fire.

"Bai Jove, you fellows!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I suppose we're bound to back up Wildwake and get that gee-gee."

"Yes, rather!" said Blake.

"Follow on!" gasped Tom Merry.

Wildrake was riding like the wind, and the juniors galloped helter-skelter after him. The half-breed glanced back over his shoulder, his dark, savage face darker with rage, his eyes gleaming like a snake's. Ahead of the riders the gulch narrowed to a mere gorge, with the roaring torrent of the Rainbow filling it almost from side to side. It was dangerous riding on the spray-swept ledge of rock, not more than three feet wide, that separated the torrent from the sheer wall of rock that formed the side of the gorge. But the half-breed drove his horse on furiously—behind him was capture and the punishment of a horse-thief.

"Look!" panted Blake suddenly.

The desperately-driven horse of the half-breed, only a dozen yards ahead of the pursuers, had slipped on the wet rock. The juniors saw the desperate effort the rider made to hold him—an effort that failed. A moment more and horse and rider had plunged into the torrent and were swept down past the juniors on the whirling water.

"Bai Jove, he will be drowned!" gasped D'Arcy.

Tom Merry & Co. halted and stared back over their

shoulders, striving to follow the half-breed with their eyes. The man was separated from the horse now—and the latter was swimming with the stream. But it was only too clear that the half-breed could not swim. With horrified eyes the juniors watched him plunge under the rushing waters. He came up again a dozen yards farther down the stream and grasped wildly at a jutting point of rock.

He clung there with both hands, his dusky face pallid with terror, the wild waters tearing at him like the hand of a giant seeking to wrench him away to death.

Arthur Augustus leaped from his horse.

"Gussy!" shouted Wil Drake.

Gussy was last of the file of riders. A horse could scarcely turn on the narrow, rocky path. Leaving his steed to its own devices Arthur Augustus rushed down the rocky bank to a point abreast of the jutting rock across the stream, where the despairing half-breed clung.

A moment more and Arthur Augustus had plunged in.

"Gussy!" yelled Wil Drake.

The stream was narrow; between the rocky banks it roared and foamed. But Arthur Augustus drove his way across and reached the half-breed—only just in time, for Black Louis' hands were slipping from the rock. He whirled out into the torrent helplessly with a faint husky cry, and at the same moment Arthur Augustus grasped him.

"Hold on to me!" gasped D'Arcy; but the roar of the torrent drowned his voice.

Holding the half-breed, Arthur Augustus fought for his life in the wild and whirling waters that swept him rapidly down the stream.

Tom Merry & Co. were rushing along the bank now, their faces white with apprehension for their chum.

"Stand clear!"

Kit Wil Drake was shouting.

Tom looked back. The Canadian junior had taken the coiled lasso from his saddle. Still sitting his horse Wil Drake made the cast, and the long rope uncoiled in the air as it flew. Tom Merry & Co. watched breathlessly. They could not reach their chum whirling away in the fierce grip of the mountain torrent, but the lariat flew with unerring aim and the loop dropped over Arthur Augustus' head.

What it was, what was happening, the swell of St. Jim's hardly knew; but he knew that his despairing grasp closed on something tangible in the waste of waters, he knew that he was pulled back and that the torrent was no longer tearing him away. He was dragged to the bank, and a moment later his comrades had seized him and dragged him from the water, still holding on to the half-breed.

CHAPTER 5.

The Pine Tree Patch!

"**B** AI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat up dizzily. He was streaming with water, and he gouged it from his eyes and blinked round him, quite dazed and bewildered.

"Oh, cwumbs! Oh, dear!"

"Oh, you howling ass!" panted Blake. "I thought you were gone! Oh, you frabjous fathead!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"What do you mean by scaring your pals out of their wits?" roared Blake.

"Gwooooh! I've swallowed a beastly lot of watah."

"You'd have swallowed a lot more if Wil Drake hadn't roped you in, duffer—a thumping lot more, fathead!"

"My clothes are wuined."

"Go hon!" said Monty Lowther.

"It is a wathah sewious mattah, Lowthah. I am fwightfully wet."

"Did you expect to find the water dry?"

"I wegard that question as asinine, Lowthah." Arthur Augustus blinked round at the exhausted half-breed lying panting on the rocky bank. "I hope that chap is all wight?"

"Right as rain," said Tom Merry.

"It's wathah wotten about the horse——"

"The horse is all right, I guess," said Wil Drake. "He was swimming, and he will get ashore lower

(Continued overleaf.)



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lown, and I guess he knows his way back to the ranch now that that thief isn't on his back."

The half-breed picked himself up.

Black Louis had recovered from his terror now, but he was still breathing hard and fast. He cast a quick look round him, but the juniors barred him in against the stream and there was no escape for him. His dark face set sullenly and savagely.

"Feelin' all wight, Mr. Louis?" asked D'Arcy.

The breed stared at him.

He was obviously astonished that one of the party had plunged into the mountain torrent to save him, and he knew the terrible risk that had been taken. But for Wildrake's lasso it was doubtful whether either D'Arcy or the breed would have emerged alive from the torrent. The black, savage look in his dusky face softened.

"You save my life, monsieur," he said in a low, muttering voice.

"All wight, deah boy."

"You're an ass, Gussy," said Wildrake. "He wasn't worth the risk. The galoot's a horse-thief!"

"I am not suah that he is a horse-thief, deah boy. Pewwaps he only bowwowed the horse to get away fwom Long Jim."

"Good old Gussy!" chuckled Blake.

The breed stared at D'Arcy again, and a grin flickered over his dark face for a second.

"Anyhow, I'm glad he wasn't drowned," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather."

"I guess I'm still more glad that the hoss wasn't drowned," said Wildrake. "This scallywag won't get hold of it again, anyhow. I guess it's half-way to the ranch by this time. You can clear, Black Louis—you're not wanted here. But I warn you to light out off my popper's land; you'll get short shrift if the Boot Leg outfit get hold of you."

The half-breed gave the rancher's son a black and bitter look, and scowled at the juniors. But again his evil face softened a little as he glanced at D'Arcy. But he did not speak. With an evil, sneering face he turned away and tramped down the bank of the stream and disappeared from view among the rocks.

"Good riddance to bad rubbish!" said Manners.

"I am feahfully wet," said Arthur Augustus dimly. "I shall have to get dwy somehow."

"Lend us your lasso, Wildrake," said Monty Lowther. "We can sling Gussy up on the end of it and hang him out to dry."

"You uttah ass!" hooted Arthur Augustus.

"If you will take a bath with your clothes on, Gussy, you must expect to get wet," remarked Blake.

"Wats!"

"Your rags will soon dry in the sun," said Wildrake, laughing. "Strip them off and lay them out on the rocks."

"And buck up!" urged Blake. "We're heading for the Pine Tree Patch, and we didn't bargain for your mixed bathing stunts on the way."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Buck up!" urged all the juniors.

The sun was blazing down on the gorge, and between the high walls of rock it was almost like an oven. It did not take long for Arthur Augustus' clothes to dry, but he eyed them very dubiously as he put them on again. Undoubtedly the immersion had rather dimmed their elegance. But Arthur Augustus had saved a life, though not a very valuable one, and that was a solace for the spoiling of his elegant clobber.

"Might have been worse, old chap," said Tom Merry. "Suppose you'd lost your eyeglass?"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors remounted their horses at last and rode up the gorge.

Higher and higher into the foothills they rode. Wildrake leading, by barren rocks and beetling cliffs. The Rainbow was in sight all the time, falling on its course in a series of cascades. The episode of Black Louis had caused considerable delay, and it was long past noon now. Tom Merry & Co. halted for lunch in the shadow of a great cliff that overhung the torrent.

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From that point they had to lead their horses over stony acclivities.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus remarked. "The Pine Tree Patch seems wathah off the map, Wildwake. I should not think it was visited vewy often."

"Very seldom, I guess," said Wildrake. "But there's another and an easier way, only it's twice the distance and takes longer, you see. Cattle can be driven by that trail. Sometimes a bunch of cattle is driven to the Patch for a few days' feed. The place hasn't been used this season, though, and we shall find the old hut deserted."

He mounted his horse again.

"We can ride from here, I guess; we're not far off now."

The steep journey had tired the juniors, and they were looking forward to a rest when they reached their destination.

An hour later a wide valley opened before their eyes; green and refreshing to the view after the barren rocks. Through the valley the Rainbow flowed, a shining, rippling stream, making a wide loop. In the loop of the stream a tall pine-tree stood, like a lonely sentinel keeping watch and ward, and close by the tall pine was a wooden hut.

"That's the stockman's hut," said Wildrake.

"That's where we're camping."

"Bai Jove! I shall be glad to sit down again," said D'Arcy.

"Same here!" grinned Blake.

The juniors rode through the grass, across the valley to the lonely hut. They dismounted at the hut and hitched their horses to the post outside. The door was closed, but it opened to Wildrake's hand, and the juniors followed him in.

It was a small hut, with a single room, the walls of timber the floor of earth. Three or four articles of furniture were inside—a rough trestle table and some pinewood benches of the roughest make. There was a rusty iron stove and a food safe of perforated zinc, and on a shelf a few utensils. The place smelled musty, and had evidently been deserted for a very long time.

"We're campin' heah, deah boy?"

"Sure!"

Arthur Augustus surveyed the hut through his eyeglass.

"Where are the beds?" he asked.

"The what?"

"Beds, deah boy."

Wildrake chuckled.

"I guess we've brought our bed-rolls on the horses," he said. "And I reckon we're rolling them out on the floor to-night, old scout."

"Bai Jove!"

"You're not at Eastwood House now, you know!" grinned Wildrake.

"Or at St. Jim's!" grinned Blake. "Gussy would expect to find a four-poster with silken hangings if he went to the North Pole!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus. "I fancy I can wuff it with anybody. I wegard this as wippin'."

"Top-hole!" said Tom Merry.

And the St. Jim's party proceeded to prepare for camping in the stockman's hut. Wood was gathered, and pine-cones, for the stove, the water-keg washed out in the stream and rolled back full of water, bed-rolls unpacked, the hut swept out, and all made trim and tidy. The little building measured only twelve feet by fourteen, and there was only one door, and no window at all. There was plenty of ventilation, however, as there were innumerable cracks and rifts among the logs of the walls and the planks of the roof.

The sun was sinking towards the western summits of the Porcupines, and the valley was bathed in golden glory. When all their preparations had been completed, and Wildrake was cooking supper at a fire of chips and cones in the rusty old stove, the juniors sat down on a bench outside the hut, resting and chatting. The horses, tethered by the stream, cropped the grass peacefully. Only one member of the party was inclined for further exertion that day, and that was Arthur Augustus. He was thinking of the secret of Pine Tree



The half-breed drove his horse on furiously; behind him was capture. "Look!" panted Blake suddenly. The desperately-driven horse of the half-breed had slipped on the wet rock. The juniors saw the desperate effort the rider made to hold him—an effort that failed. A moment more, and horse and rider had plunged into the torrent. "Bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "He will be drowned!" (See Chapter 4.)

Patch—of the possibility of a discovery of "pay dirt" in that remote section of the Boot Leg Ranch lands. It was not really probable that Gussy's aristocratic eye would have detected the indications of gold had they existed, but he was very keen to begin.

"You fellows weedy?" he asked.

"We are—but supper isn't," said Blake.

"I was not speakin' of suppah, Blake. I was weferrin' to lookin' for pay dirt."

"Pay dirt will keep till to-morrow."

"Yes, rather!"

"I twust that you fellows are not goin' to slack," said Arthur Augustus severely.

"We are!" yawned Monty Lowther. "We is!"

"I rather wish I'd brought up my camera from the ranch," said Manners thoughtfully.

"Bothah your camewah, Mannahs! I am goin' to look for pay dirt."

"Tell us if you find any, and we'll come and help you carry in the gold," said Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats!"

And Arthur Augustus, leaving his chums chuckling in a row on the pine bench, strolled away from the stockman's hut along the shining stream, with his eyes—and his eyeglass—ready to spot the pay dirt if he came on it—a contingency which was extremely improbable.

CHAPTER 6.

The Enemy!

"B AI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy halted suddenly.

He was about half a mile from the stockman's hut, and it was out of sight behind the hilly ground. It was not any indication of pay dirt which had caused the swell of St. Jim's to halt with that startled exclamation. It was a clearly defined footprint in the soft earth near the edge of the stream.

D'Arcy stared at it blankly.

He was the first of the party to explore the valley, and the track could not have been left by any of them. He knew from Wildrake that the Boot Leg punchers had not visited the place for a long time. But there, in the grassy earth close by the stream, was a track of a boot—obviously a recent one.

The swell of St. Jim's felt a thrill.

The St. Jim's party were not, as they believed, alone in the valley. And D'Arcy's thoughts ran at once to Rube Redway. Whoever had left that track was not a puncher of the Boot Leg outfit, that was certain. Possibly some wandering hunter or trapper had entered the lonely valley; but if so, he would naturally have shown up when the party arrived at the stockman's hut. The smoke from the iron chimney of the hut was visible all over the valley. Arthur Augustus,

gazing at the footprint, was thinking of the gunman, and his heart beat faster.

He looked round him quickly.

There was nothing to be seen save the stream, the waving grass, patches of trees and bush, and the encircling hills. He bent his head and examined the track and moved on slowly, watching the ground. Track after track was revealed now. The prints of boots and of horses' hoofs were mingled. A party of at least three or four had come down to the stream for water. That was clear enough.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus again.

There were tracks both coming and going, and the trail led from the stream to a clump of cedars at a little distance. That clump of trees concealed the party who had left the trail. D'Arcy had no doubt about that.

He paused again.

Whether to press on and make further discoveries, or to return to the stockman's hut with news of what he had found, was the problem he was considering. He did not realise for the moment that he was in full view of the timber island, and that if an eye was glancing in his direction he would infallibly be seen.

There was a sudden movement among the trees. A man in ragged buckskin with a Stetson hat emerged into view, coming at a run towards the swell of St. Jim's as he stood by the stream.

There was a revolver in his hand, but he did not raise it. D'Arcy stared at him for a moment blankly. The man was not Redway; but he looked a tough customer, and it was obvious that his intentions were hostile.

Arthur Augustus had not brought his rifle from the hut, and he was unarmed. There was only one thing to be done, and Arthur Augustus did it promptly. He turned and ran up the stream again at top speed.

Behind him thudded heavy footsteps in pursuit.

"Stop!"

D'Arcy did not heed.

He ran on, with the thudding footsteps behind.

"Stop, you young gink!" roared the rough voice behind him. "I guess I'll let daylight through you if you don't stop!"

D'Arcy panted on.

Still the man did not fire. It flashed into D'Arcy's mind that he was unwilling to alarm the party at the hut by a shot. The junior glanced back over his shoulder. The man was running hard and gaining on him fast, and beyond him D'Arcy saw three more figures that had emerged from the clump of timber. And among them was the hard, clean-cut face of the man he knew—Rube Redway, the kidnapper. There was no doubt now. The gunman was there, with a gang of his associates, and D'Arcy heard the gunman shouting.

"Collar that gink, Euchre Bill! Don't shoot!"

Euchre Bill shouted back and raced after the fleeing swell of St. Jim's.

D'Arcy panted on.

He knew that he was to be captured if possible without a shot. Redway and his gang were planning to take the party at the hut by surprise, probably after dark and while they slept. But for D'Arcy's discovery the plan would undoubtedly have been carried through without a hitch, for Tom Merry & Co. had no suspicion that the enemy were anywhere near at hand. A shot would have put them on their guard at once. But D'Arcy knew that if the ruffian failed to overtake him he would fire. At every moment, as he pounded on, he expected to hear the ring of the revolver.

But Euchre Bill was gaining fast. Closer and closer came the thudding feet behind the swell of St. Jim's, and he could hear the man's hurried breathing.

"Stop, you pesky young fool!" panted Euchre Bill, his hoarse voice close behind now. "By hokey, I'll hide you with a trail-rope for giving me all this trouble! Stop, I tell you!"

D'Arcy ran on desperately.

He felt a touch on his shoulder as the outstretched hand of the man behind barely missed a grasp.

A minute more, or less, and he would have been in the grip of the ruffian.

At that desperate moment D'Arcy's brain worked quickly.

He stopped suddenly and threw himself on the ground. Crash!

The ruffian, rushing on, tripped over the junior before he even knew that D'Arcy had stopped.

He crashed over the swell of St. Jim's and sprawled on the ground with a startled gasp.

In a flash D'Arcy was on his feet.

Euchre Bill was sprawling face down in the grass, and, with a spring, D'Arcy landed on him, driving his knees into the ruffian's back with all his weight and strength.

There was an agonised gasp from Euchre Bill, and he crumpled up helplessly. The next instant D'Arcy had snatched the revolver from his helpless hand, and the heavy barrel came down with a crash on Euchre Bill's head. Crash again, and the ruffian lay still, stunned.

D'Arcy leaped up and ran on.

Crack!

A bullet whizzed by, so close that it almost spun the Stetson from the junior's head.

Redway had pulled trigger, realising now that the junior was beyond the reach of capture. Euchre Bill lay senseless on the ground, and the rest of the gang were too far behind to hope to overtake the swell of St. Jim's.

"Oh!" gasped D'Arcy involuntarily, as he felt the wind of the bullet.

He ran desperately on, plunging through a thicket that for the moment screened him from his enemies.

A moment more and the stockman's hut, in the shadow of the tall pine, was in sight.

Tom Merry & Co., startled by the shot, were on their feet, staring blankly in D'Arcy's direction as he came racing up.

He had joined them in a few seconds more.

"Gussy, what——"

"Quick!" panted Arthur Augustus. "Into the hut—quick!"

"But what——"

"The gunman! Quick!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors rushed into the hut. D'Arcy staggered, breathless, against the wall. Tom Merry slammed the door shut.

Crack, crack, crack!

A bullet smashed on the door as it was slammed.

"The bars! Quick!" panted Tom.

Blake and Lowther had the bars in hand already. There was a shouting voice outside—a savage, threatening voice—and another bullet crashed on the door and another on the wall. The thick pinewood bars rattled into the rusty iron sockets. A moment later there was a heavy blow on the door, but it held fast.

CHAPTER 7.

The Attack!

"GEE-WHIZ!"

Kit Wildrake turned from the glowing stove, a frypan in his hand sizzling.

Crash! Bang! Crash!

A rifle-butt dashed on the pinewood door with such force that it almost made the stockman's hut rock.

The voice of Rube Redway shouted:

"Open this door and put up your hands, you ginks! I guess I've got you dead to rights now!"

"I guess not!" murmured Wildrake.

He laid down the frypan coolly on the stove, jerked the revolver from the holster at his belt, and stepped to the door. The juniors watched him breathlessly as he put the muzzle to a chink in the wood.

ANSWERS

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Crack!

There was a roar outside of rage and pain.

Hasty footsteps retreated from the hut. Tom Merry put his eye to a chink and saw Redway springing out of sight behind a knoll. The others of the gang were not in view, but he could hear calling voices.

Wildrake smiled grimly.

His bullet had grazed the gunman's shoulder, drawing blood.

"I guess they won't tap at that door again in a hurry," the Canadian junior remarked. "Rube Redway will have to use something more than bluff to get a footing in here."

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Crack, crack, crack, crack!

It was rifle-fire now, and the bullets spattered on the walls of the stockman's hut. But the wood was thick, and not a ball penetrated to the interior. Most of them glanced off, and others were buried in the timber.

Wildrake laughed contemptuously.

"That's to rattle our nerves," he said. "They're wise to it that their lead won't reach us."

"Bai Jove! I took it ffrom one of them, you know."

"What?" roared Blake.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Manners, staring blankly at the swell of St. Jim's. "You bagged that pistol from one of that gang?"

"Yaas."

"Gussy, old man——" murmured Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus explained how it had happened. Tom Merry & Co. gave him very curious looks. The glass of fashion and the mould of form in the St. Jim's Fourth was astonishing his comrades.

"Good man!" said Wildrake. "I guess the pesky scallywags were lying low till night; to rush the hut after dark. I rather reckon they'd have got away with it, too. I never knew they were on hand."

"Gussy saved the situation," said Tom Merry, with a smile.

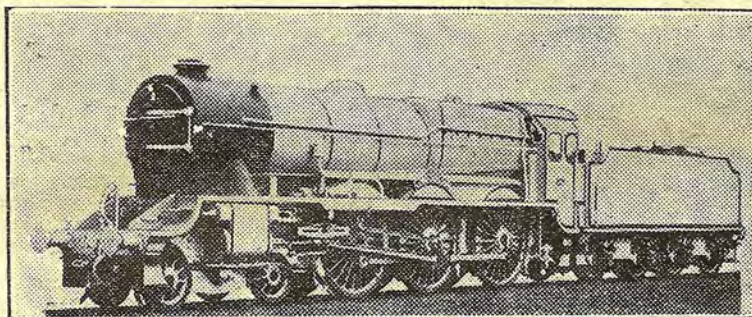
"Sure! They won't find it easy to get hold of us now that we know what to look for."

"Wathah not!"

There was no doubt that Arthur Augustus had saved the St. Jim's party from a surprise attack at night.

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"It's Redway and his gang," said Tom Merry.

"Sure! I know his yaup."

"It is Wedway," said Arthur Augustus. "I saw him and recognised him. There are four of the wascals at least!"

"Six of us," said Blake cheerfully.

Wildrake resumed his cooking for supper, undisturbed. The juniors had their rifles in hand now, and were ready for a rush from the gunmen. But they did not think a rush likely to come. The ruffians knew that there was at least one deadly marksman in the hut, and Wildrake alone could have picked them off one after another while they were seeking to break in the door.

"You lighted on the galoots, Gussy?" asked the Canadian junior, with his eyes on the sizzling frypan.

"Yaas, wathah! I found their twacks by the wivah about half a mile ffrom here," said D'Arcy. "I had to cut and run for it as I was not armed, you know. I left my wife here."

"Where did you pick up that six-gun?"

D'Arcy glanced at the big Navy revolver in his hand. He had almost forgotten that he was still grasping Euchre Bill's gun.

Certainly, they had not suspected that Rube Redway was in the lonely valley with a gang of rustlers. At the Boot Leg Ranch it was supposed that Redway had "vamoosed" from the section. The Mounted Police were hunting for him, and they had hunted in vain. Even now they knew he was at Pine Tree Patch, the juniors were puzzled. It looked as if he had known that their expedition was timed for that day, and they could not account for his knowledge.

"I guess he nosed out, somehow, that we were coming up into the foothills to-day," Wildrake remarked. "In fact, he must have, as he's here. May have watched us starting. Anyhow, he knew, and he's lost no time getting into touch with us. But he hasn't roped us in yet."

"I say, we're in rather a corner, though," Blake remarked. "They can't rush us in the hut. We can't get out, either. They could shoot us down like rabbits if we stepped outside."

"I guess we're not stepping outside, old scout. We're keeping behind these walls," said Wildrake. "We've got grub enough to last us, and water, too, and I guess we can stand them off as long as we like. And if we're

not back at the ranch to-morrow night, I reckon popper will be riding up with a bunch of cowboys to see what's become of us."

"Yaas, wathah! It's only a question of keepin' the wottahs off," said Arthur Augustus: "They won't take us by surprise now, at any wate."

"The horses—" said Manners.

"I guess they've roped in the critters already. That can't be helped. But it isn't the horses, it's us they want."

Tom Merry wrinkled his brow thoughtfully.

"Redway planned to take us by surprise at night, that's clear," he said. "But now that game's up and we're able to hold the fort, he's not likely to chuck up the game, Wildrake."

"Not on your life."

"Well, then, he knows as well as we do that we shall be looked for if we don't get back to the ranch."

"Sure."



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"That means that they'll attack," said Tom. "They'll try to rush us as soon as it's too dark for straight shooting."

"I guess so," said Wildrake. "But there's a moon to-night, and if they try the rushing game they'll find that there's a galoot here who can shoot straight by moonlight. What about supper now?"

The juniors were all ready for supper. The rifles of the gunmen were still ringing at intervals and bullets crashed on the timber walls; but the chums of St. Jim's did not feel their nerves affected thereby. They sat down to supper with good appetites.

The sun sank lower and lower behind the Porcupines; the golden glow in the valley deepened into dusk and then into darkness.

The night in the uplands was cold, but the fire in the iron stove was allowed to die out. Not a gleam of light in the interior was to help the outlaws when the shooting began. In the darkened interior of the stockman's hut the juniors were shadows to one another, and

they felt their hearts beating fast as the darkness intensified.

That the enemy would attack in the hours of darkness seemed a certainty; it could serve no purpose for Redway to besiege the stockman's hut until help arrived from the ranch, as was certain to happen if the party did not return when expected. With beating hearts but steady heads the juniors waited for the attack to come.

There was deep silence in the valley.

The desultory firing of the outlaws had died away, hardly a sound broke the stillness. Through the silence came the faint murmur of the waters of the Rainbow.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a call, so suddenly that it made the juniors start and thrill. It was the voice of Rube Redway.

"You-uns there!"

"Hallo!" called back Wildrake.

"I guess I'm giving you a chance to give in before you get worse trouble," came the gunman's voice. "We're not hurting you if you surrender. You know what I want, Kit Wildrake. The whole gang of you will be held prisoners in the hills till your popper agrees to sell me the Pine Tree Patch. When the deeds are put through in the surveyor's office at Rainbow you'll be toted home safe and sound."

"Tell us another funny story," answered Wildrake.

There was an oath from the gunman.

"I guess your popper will see reason, Kit Wildrake, when he finds that I'm goin' to hand you over to a tribe of Redskins in the North."

"I guess it won't come to that."

"Are you giving in?"

"Nope."

"I want you alive, not dead; but you'll take your chances if the shooting begins."

"You make me tired, old scout."

A curse answered and the gunman retreated. Kit Wildrake examined his rifle very carefully.

"You can look out for the music to begin now," he said coolly. "I guess nobody here is thinking of showing the white feather."

"Wathah not!"

"No jolly fear!" said Lowther.

"Hark!"

Crash! The door rang and shivered under the heavy blow of an axe, a blow so hefty that the gleaming steel penetrated the thickness of the pinewood and showed within.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Shoot," said Wildrake quietly. "Get your muzzles to the chinks in the timber and pump out lead. You can't take much aim till the moon's up, but I guess we'll make 'em sick."

Crack! Crack! Crack!

There were shouts and yells in the darkness outside.

Again the heavy axe crashed on the door, and it groaned and shivered. A chink in the door widened under the impact. Wildrake blazed with his rifle through the chink, shot after shot, and there was a fearful cry without and a heavy fall.

"I guess that's one galoot who's got what was coming to him!" muttered the Canadian junior.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

From the chinks in the timber incessant bullets spattered. Outside the door a man lay in the darkness, groaning deeply. Tom Merry gave a sudden cry, as he felt a bullet sear along his cheek. A rifle placed to a chink from without had sent the lead whizzing across the interior of the hut.

"Tom—" panted Lowther.

"Only a scratch."

Crack! Crack! Crack!

A sharp cry rang on the night, and another heavy fall was heard. Then there was a sound of retreating feet and a shouting of furious oaths. The firing was too hot for the gunmen, and they were gone. But in the gloom before the hut two men lay groaning. The sound was heard as the two wounded wretches crawled away in the darkness, groaning at every movement. Kit Wildrake reloaded his rifle.

"I guess we've got them beat," he said,

And a long silence followed.

CHAPTER 8. Burnt Out!

HIGH over the rocky benches of the foothills a crescent moon sailed, and silvery light gleamed down into the lonely valley and shone on the rippling waters of the Rainbow. It was drawing on to midnight, and the watchers in the stockman's hut at Pine Tree Patch were growing heavy-eyed, but they were not thinking of sleep. Occasionally a rifle cracked and a bullet crashed on the timber walls, but no further attack had come.

In the clear moonlight the gang of gunmen dared not show themselves. Kit Wildrake was watching for a chance with his rifle ready, but no chance came. Yet all the juniors felt that the fight was not over. It was

"I guess the shebang will burn like tinder, arter no rain for a month," went on the gunman. "I want you alive, you young scallywag, but you'll take your chance. What's your answer?"

Wildrake did not speak.

But his sunburnt face was very grim now.

"Bai Jove! Do you think the man is weally villain enough to set fire to the hut, Wildwake?"

"Sure!" said the Canadian junior. "We're up against a bad gang, Gussy. But I guess they haven't done it yet, and they won't get near enough to fire the hut without risking lead."

The juniors waited with throbbing hearts.

Rube Redway was right in his statement that the hut would burn easily enough once it was fired. The timber was dry as bone, the wooden roof cracked by the heats

CAMEOS OF SCHOOL LIFE!

BANK HOLIDAY!

THERE'S magic in the seaside air,
And all the world is jolly;
No schoolboy face is seen to wear
The mask of melancholy.
On this auspicious August day
St. Jim's is left behind us;
And, revelling in the sun and spray,
A cheery band you'll find us!

In cricket flannels we are clad,
And "straws" at rakish angles;
Arthur Augustus looks a "lad,"
A dapper cane he dangles.
Gaily we stroll along the prom,
With throngs of laughing trippers;
Manners and Lowther, Blake and Tom,
And several Third Form nippers.

Upon the sands we pause awhile
To listen to the pierrots;
They entertain us in great style,
Working away like heroes.
Some of their jokes are rather stale,
But really, what's it matter?
Good-humoured fellows never fail
To revel in their "patter."

Tom Merry then suggests a dip,
For Sol is shining brightly;
Into our bathing garb we slip,
And then, in manner sprightly,
We plunge into the seething surf,
And through the waves go skimming;
Few recreations of the turf
Compare with deep-sea swimming!

Later, we saunter on the pier,
Enjoying its attractions;
Merrily quaffing ginger-beer,
Care free in all our actions!
Bank Holidays are grand affairs,
They prove a ripping tonic;
Banishing all our schoolboy cares
And troubles that are chronic.

The time flies like a lightning-flash
On this unique occasion;
Off to the station then we dash,
At Merry's sad persuasion.
In breathless haste we catch our train
On this eventful, jolly day;
Then homeward to St. Jim's again—
Here endeth our Bank Holiday!



Rube Redway's last chance to effect his purpose, and if he admitted defeat now his game was up. He would never get another chance at the rancher's son; his scheme to get possession of the Pine Tree Patch would be at an end. And all the juniors realised that the desperate gunman was not the man to give up his game while a shadow of a chance remained to him.

"You, Kit Wildrake!"

The gunman's voice was heard calling suddenly. Wildrake did not answer.

From a chink in the timber he watched, with his finger on trigger. If the gunman showed himself a bullet was ready for him. But Rube Redway did not appear; he was calling from the cover of a grassy knoll, behind which he crouched, a dozen yards away.

"You hear me, Kit Wildrake! I guess you've got us beat at the shooting game. But I'm having you out of that shanty. I give you a chance to walk out and surrender afore I set fire to it."

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy.

of summer. But with watchful eyes within and the rifles ready the juniors did not see how the ruffians were to get near enough to fire the hut. There was no cover within a dozen yards, and at such a range in the clear moonlight any of the rascals who showed himself could have been shot down before he got near the building.

"Bluff, very likely," muttered Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Anyhow, they won't scare us into surrender, I guess," said Wildrake.

"No, jolly fear!"

There was another long silence. Then Tom Merry, watching from a wide chink, was aware of a sudden flash of light, describing an arc in the air. For the moment he was puzzled, and then he heard a light tap on the roof of the stockman's hut.

Another flash—and another!

"What—" began Tom.

Wildrake gritted his teeth.

"I guess those bulldozers have worked the riddle," he muttered savagely. "That's an arrow—and another! It's an old Indian game—burning arrows to set the fire going."

"Bai Jove!"

In the darkness of the hut the juniors looked at one another grimly. They had not looked for this—even Wildrake had not looked for it. It was a trick borrowed from the Red Indians, and Redway had availed himself of it in his desperate determination. A clumsy bow cut from the thicket, strung with a strand unpicked from a trail-rope, was all the gunman needed. The arrows, headless and unfeathered, were simply sticks cut and shaped by the knives of the gunmen, and to each was fastened a rag dipped in oil and set alight.

Tap, tap, tap! came the sounds from above, as

Clumsy arrow after arrow landed on the roof, and the smell of burning grew stronger, and smoke began to penetrate into the hut. The roof was like tinder from its long baking in the summer sun, and even a match dropped on it would have been dangerous. And now a dozen or more burning arrows were lodged upon it, and the flame was spreading fast once it had caught.

Smoke thickened in the hut below, and sparks fell. There were chinks in the sun-cracked wooden roof, through which the draught fanned the flame.

The interior of the hut grew warmer, till it was unbearably hot. Sparks scattered from above, and the juniors stamped them out as they fell. But they knew that they were only postponing the inevitable.

The voice of Reuben Redway shouted again, with a mocking accent of triumph in its tones.

"Will you rubes come out now?"



Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, sick at heart, peered round the rock. Crack! Crack! Euchre Bill lay on the ground, motionless, and Black Louis was aiming at Redway—

missile after missile dropped on the roof of the stockman's hut. Some of them rolled off, and burned harmlessly on the ground; others lodged on the roof, and the smell of burning soon showed that the flames were catching the dry wood.

"We can't stop that game!" muttered Lowther.

Tom Merry shook his head.

The juniors were utterly helpless to defend themselves against that new attack. There was no opening in the roof by which they could have reached the flames to extinguish them; neither could they have shown themselves in the open without drawing the fire of the gunmen, watching from behind the grassy knoll a dozen yards away.

The juniors could only wait, hoping against hope that the fire would not catch and spread.

But they soon found that that hope was delusive.

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Wildrake breathed hard.

"I guess this lets us out, you-uns," he said. "This shebang will be blazing soon. I reckon I'm plumb sorry I ever brought you fellows into this."

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Sink or swim together," said Tom Merry. "It's no worse for us than for you, old man."

There was a gap in the roof now, through which smoke rolled and tongues licked. The fire was spreading down one of the walls. It was only a matter of time before the burning roof fell in and the whole building caught. Wildrake gritted his teeth hard.

"You hear me?" shouted Rube Redway. "You can mosey out when you like; but come unarmed, with your hands up, or I guess you drop in your tracks!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Blake.

"What about making a rush for it, Wildrake?" asked Tom, in a low voice. "There's a chance—"

Kit Wildrake shook his head.

"The moment we show ourselves they pull trigger," he said. "They've got their rifles ready."

"But—" muttered Blake.

"In this light they couldn't miss if they tried. We've got to swallow it," said the Canadian junior grimly. "We shall have to get out when the hut catches—we ain't staying here to be roasted alive, I reckon. And we shall be shot down as we step out unless we surrender. I guess I could kick myself for landing you in this."

"Rot!" said Tom. "While there's life there's hope."

"Sure!"

Wildrake threw down his rifle.

His action was imitated by the rest of the party. They were at the end of their tether now, and the game was up for the defenders of the stockman's hut

"I guess I go first," he said. "You fellows follow on one at a time, and keep your hands up; they've got us dead to rights."

Wildrake put his hands above his head and walked coolly out of the hut towards the grassy knoll opposite the door.

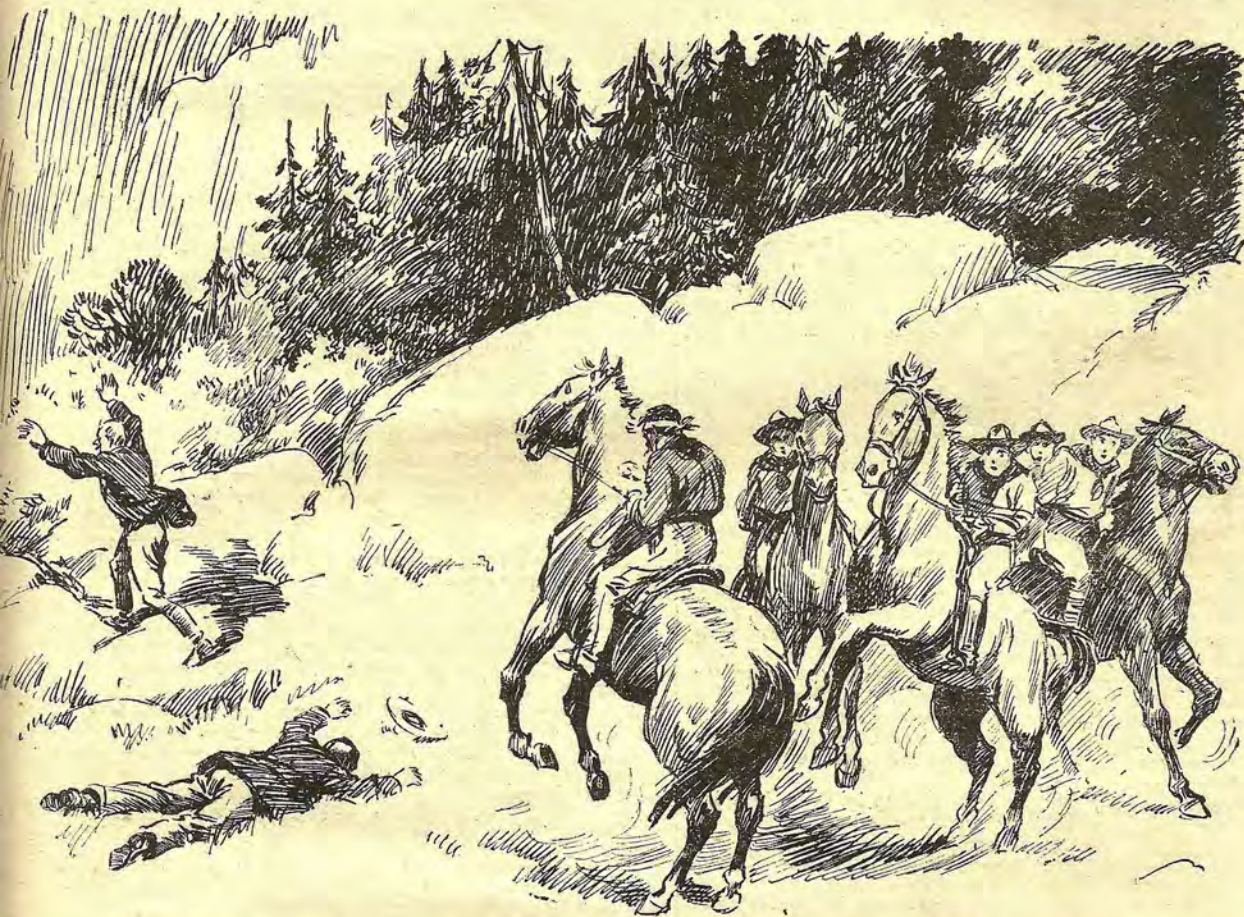
Not a sign of the gunmen was to be seen, but he knew quite well that at least one muzzle was trained on him from cover, and that a suspicious movement would have brought a whizzing bullet.

There was a clump of live oaks and straggling sassafras on the knoll. As Wildrake reached it Redway's hard face grinned at him from the cover.

"Keep him covered, Euchre Bill!"

"You bet!" growled the ruffian.

Tom Merry came out next, with his hands above his head, and his heart thumped as he felt himself under



—Meanwhile, the horses in the gorge were plunging wildly. Tom Merry & Co., bound to their saddles, could not control their mounts, while the wounded man, Dave, was clinging to his plunging horse, barely able to keep himself from falling. (See Chapter 11.)

at Pine Tree Patch. Once the door was opened they were a full mark for the rifles of the gunmen, already levelled, and they would be shot down like rabbits.

"Are you coming out, you ginks?" shouted Rube Redway. There was an anxious note in his voice now. It was no gain to the gunman if the juniors perished in the burning hut; Kit Wildrake, at least, he wanted alive. To the others he was more indifferent; but he wanted their surrender, not their death.

"I guess we're for it," said Wildrake, and he called back to the shouting gunman: "We're coming!"

"One at a time—unarmed—and with your paws up!" shouted Redway. "Look out for sudden death if you try any gum-games!"

"It's a cinch!" answered Wildrake coolly.

He unbarred the door and threw it open.

cover of an unseen weapon. He reached the knoll; and one after another the rest of the party emerged and followed him. They were none too soon. As the last of them reached the knoll there was a crash from the stockman's hut, as a large portion of the burning roof fell in, and a myriad sparks shot towards the sky.

Unarmed, their hands above their heads, Tom Merry & Co. stood with grim faces, at the mercy of the gunmen. Euchre Bill and another ruffian, whose head was bandaged, kept them under cover of their revolvers. Another man lay bandaged in the grass. Rube Redway grinned at his prisoners. The gunman was enjoying his triumph.

"I reckon you'll be safer with your fins tied, you-uns," he remarked.

"It's your game, Redway," said Kit Wildrake coolly, as the gun-man proceeded to bind the prisoners' hands behind them with lengths cut from a trail-rope. "Make the most of it while it lasts."

The gunman gave a jeering laugh.

"I reckon this is a cinch for me," he said. "You go up into the hills at sun-up, and I guess the best trailer on the Boot Leg Ranch will never find you there. Do you figure it out that your popper will sell the Pine-Tree Patch for a fair price, young Wildrake, or let his only son be sold to the Redskins in the north, way up in Mackenzie?"

Wildrake did not answer.

He had little doubt that, if rescue failed, the rancher of Boot Leg would think little of parting with the Pine Tree Patch as a ransom for his son. No stone would be left unturned to rescue the juniors, but it was certain that the gunman had a safe hiding-place prepared high up in the trackless rocky wastes of the Porcupines. It looked as if Rube Redway had won his long and desperate game at last.

The ruffian was grinning with satisfaction. Obviously he had no doubt on the subject.

Redway was taking no risks with his prisoners. Their arms were bound securely behind them with strong rope, and their ankles were shackled, and then they were thrown into the grass to get what rest they could for the remainder of the night. At dawn Redway intended to strike the upper trails for the mountains.

The stockman's hut was now ablaze from wall to wall. It glared red against the sky, and showers of sparks floated as the burning walls fell in. The mass of embers was still glowing red when Redway and his gang rolled themselves in their blankets and lay down to sleep till dawn.

CHAPTER 3.

A Friend in Need!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY stirred uneasily.

He was sleeping, as were his comrades. In spite of the bonds that shackled them, in spite of all discomforts, Tom Merry & Co. were sleeping the sleep of weariness.

They were too securely bound to dream of escape, and the gunmen gave them no further heed. Rube Redway and Euchre Bill had rolled themselves in their blankets and slept almost at once. The man with the bandaged head was slower to sleep, but he grunted himself into slumber at last. The more seriously wounded member of the gang had doped himself with whisky into a stupor. All the four ruffians were silent now. The stockman's hut had burnt itself out; only a faint red glow came from the mass of charred embers.

Weariness held the St. Jim's juniors in sleep, in spite of discomfort. But Arthur Augustus stirred and stirred again uneasily, and at last he opened his eyes. He had been dreaming fitfully, and it had seemed to him in his dream that a hand was pressed over his mouth, and as he awakened he found that it was no dream. His opening eyes stared blankly at the starry, moonlit sky, dotted with fleecy clouds. A shiver ran through him as he felt a rough hand over his mouth, and an involuntary cry would have escaped his lips but for that pressure.

D'Arcy lay shuddering. For that dreadful moment it seemed to him that the stealthy hand in the darkness was choking him, and he was bound and helpless to resist, and the grasp on his mouth prevented even a cry to the gunman.

Who—what was it? Not one of the gunman's gang—they had no need for stealth. Some creeping Indian! Recollections of what he had read flashed into D'Arcy's mind, of creeping Redskins who slew in silence the sleeping trapper by his lonely camp fire. It seemed to the shuddering junior that he could already feel the sharp edge of the scalping-knife. And yet—and yet—He knew, after a second, that it was not that—could not be that. But what—

"Taisez-vous!"

It was the faintest of whispers, barely audible, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,016.

though the lips that whispered almost touched the ear of the schoolboy.

D'Arcy wondered if he was still dreaming.

A half-seen lurking shadow had whispered, in French, that warning to be silent. Who was it that was speaking French to him—whispering in the deep silence of the mountain night? He felt his brain almost reeling.

"Taisez! Je suis ami. I am friend!"

The faint whisper was like the sigh of a breeze.

D'Arcy turned his eyes upon the shadowy form. The moon was low in the sky; the shadow of the live oaks and the thickets fell on the sleepers. Dim, undefined, the shadow lurked over the schoolboy. Who it was, what it was he could not imagine. But that whisper had reassured him. It could not be an enemy.

He understood, amazing as it was, that the Shadow was there, silent, stealthy, to aid him. The hand that was pressed over his mouth was not the hand of an enemy; it was pressed there to keep back any exclamation that might have awakened his enemies.

The swell of St. Jim's felt his heart thumping. It was amazing, but it was help, it was rescue, he comprehended at last.

"You be silent."

The faint whisper was in English now.

"I save you—not a sound, petit."

At any other time Arthur Augustus would certainly not have been pleased at being addressed as "little one." But he was only overjoyed now to hear a friendly voice.

The hand glided from his mouth.

He felt the keen edge of a knife slipping over the ropes that bound him. First his hands, then his feet, were freed.

He lay quite still.

His limbs were numbed from the bonds, and for some minutes he was unable to move them.

The Shadow evidently understood. He waited.

D'Arcy's eyes were fixed on him.

In the deep dusk, under the shadows of the trees, he made out the man's form vaguely. Vague as it was, there seemed something familiar. The glint of two gleaming black eyes struck him. He could see a dark hand that gripped the knife that had freed him. The knife was ready to strike if the gunmen awakened. Slowly, cautiously, D'Arcy began to stir his cramped limbs, setting his teeth to keep back a sound of pain. The glinting eyes turned on him questioningly. Slowly, cautiously, D'Arcy sat up in the grass.

A sinewy hand gripped his arm and helped him to his feet, in silence. The grip drew him away.

D'Arcy held back. He was free—free so long as the gunmen were not alarmed. But his friends were still prisoners.

"You come!" whispered the voice. "Venez avec moi!"

"My friends—"

"Come."

The grip on his arm drew him away.

Arthur Augustus yielded to the pressure. For the moment he was in the hands of the man who had rescued him.

Silently as a shadow the man crept away, drawing D'Arcy after him. The junior trod softly noiselessly.

They moved away from the knoll, and D'Arcy heard his half-seen companion give a panting breath of relief. The man was armed only with his knife, and he had risked sudden death in what he had done. Had Rube Redway or Euchre Bill awakened the knife would probably have been of little avail against a blazing revolver.

"Stop!" breathed D'Arcy. "My friends—"

"Come."

Again Arthur Augustus yielded, and the half-seen rescuer drew him further and further away from the camp of the gunmen.

The swell of St. Jim's was still in a state of bewilderment. Who his rescuer was he could not guess—nor what he intended. But it occurred to his mind that probably the man planned to rescue the prisoners one by one—indeed, that seemed the only explanation of



It was a desperate moment for D'Arcy, but his brain worked quickly. Stopping suddenly, he threw himself on the ground. Crash! Euchre Bill, rushing on, tripped over the St. Jim's junior before he even knew that D'Arcy had stopped, and sprawled on the ground with a startled gasp. (See Chapter 6.)

his actions. And D'Arcy yielded to the guidance of the glimmer, dusky hand.

The glimmer of the stream was under his eyes now. His unknown guide followed the bank for a little distance and halted at last. In the shadows his black eyes gleamed at the junior. D'Arcy scanned him curiously, and as the moon emerged from behind a cloud and the light gleamed for a moment on the dusky face, he recognised him.

"Bai Jove! Black Louis!"

The half-breed nodded.

"Louis le Noir," he muttered. "You did not know!"

"No."

"I have save you," the breed muttered. "It is you who come into the torrent for me, it is you who save me from the quirt. Black Louis did not forget."

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy.

He gazed at the dark face of the breed blankly. He had almost forgotten the existence of the horse thief. But the outcast of Boot Leg, hard and cruel and faithless as he was, had not forgotten. The man was little, if any, better than any ruffian in Redway's gang, yet he had risked his life to save Arthur Augustus.

"So it—it is you!" murmured D'Arcy. "Bai Jove! I'm awfully gwaterful, Mr. Louis. But—how did you know—"

Black Louis grinned.

"They came into the valley; they were before you, monsieur, and when you and your friends came I guessed," he said. "I knew that Redway was after young Wildrake; I knew you would be in danger as his friend. When the hut was burned I was watch-

ing from the hill. If I had had a rifle—" He shrugged his shoulders. "But with a knife, what could one do? I waited and watched. Now I save you."

"Thank you," said D'Arcy. "It was wippin' of you. And my fwriends—"

The breed shrugged his shoulders again.

"The others—they are nothing! It is you I save. Ecoutez! They have tethered your horses along with their own, but I shall find a way to cut loose a horse, and I shall guide you back to the plains—you will ride for the ranch."

D'Arcy stared at him.

"Not without my fwriends," he answered.

"You cannot help them."

"I'm not likely to desert them."

The breed made an impatient gesture.

"You can bring help from the ranch once you are safe there, petit monsieur. C'est tout—that is all you can do."

"That will be too late—they will be taken up into the mountains at dawn. I am stickin' to them."

"You can do nothing," muttered the breed. "You are mad to think of it. They will shoot you down."

"I am suaf you mean well, deah boy, but I am not desertin' my fwriends," said Arthur Augustus quietly. "If those wascals shoot me down, it can't be helped; bettah that than desertin' the othah fellows."

The breed pointed to the sky. From the east, over the mighty range of the Rockies, came a pale glimmer.

"Dawn is coming," said Black Louis.

"Then there is no time to lose."

"Oh, you are mad, mad!" muttered the breed. "I

have saved you for nothing if you throw yourself into their hands again."

"I am vewy much obliged to you," said D'Arcy. "Weally, I am gwateful. I will not ask you to do anythin' more. But I am goin' back to help my fwinds if I can."

Black Louis muttered an oath.

"Go, then, and your blood be on your own head!" he snarled.

"I am vewy much obliged to you, all the same."

And Arthur Augustus, leaving the breed where he stood, turned back in the direction of the gunman's camp.

The breed stood quite still, watching him, with a dark and gloomy face.

He had risked his life to save the junior who had helped him, but the rest of the party mattered nothing, less than nothing, to him. He was utterly indifferent to their fate. But as D'Arcy moved away in the shadows—to capture or death, as the breed knew—he stirred. With a bound he reached the swell of St. Jim's.

"M'sieur—stop! If you will not seek safety—"

"No feah," said Arthur Augustus emphatically. "Not while my fwinds are in dangah, deah boy."

"Then I will aid you!" muttered the breed sullenly.

"It is death to both of us."

"I am not askin' you—"

"Assez!"

The breed was sullen and angry, more than half-disposed to leave the schoolboy to his fate. But he had made up his mind.

"Stop!" he said. "Wait for me here! You will awaken them, and you will fall to the first bullet. Leave it to me."

"But—"

"Assez!" repeated the breed roughly. "You are helpless in this matter. Leave it to me, I tell you. Wait here and all that can be done I will do."

D'Arcy hesitated, but he nodded at last. He realised very clearly that Black Louis was right. He knew that he could never creep into the camp as the breed had done, stealthily as a creeping Redskin, without giving the alarm. It was doubtful whether Black Louis would have the same good fortune a second time.

"Let me come with you!" breathed D'Arcy.

"You would give the alarm and increase the danger. Wait!"

The breed hurried away towards the camp with that, leaving Arthur Augustus alone. The swell of St. Jim's stared after him. He knew that the breed was right—all that he could do was to wait. But as he waited he listened intently; at the first sound of an alarm he intended to rush back to the camp of the gunmen and share the fate of his comrades, whatever it was. With beating heart he listened.

But there was no sound of alarm.

The minutes passed on leaden wings. More than once Arthur Augustus made a movement towards the camp, and stopped again. Black Louis had vanished into the shadows like a shadow himself. Not a sound, not a sign! D'Arcy felt almost sick with the intenseness of his anxiety. What was the breed doing? He could never release the prisoners one after another without

giving the alarm. Fortune had favoured him once. But what was he doing? Long, long minutes dragged by.

There was a soft and stealthy sound close by the swell of St. Jim's, and he started with throbbing heart. The black eyes of the breed glinted at him. Black Louis had returned without a sound. With a grin on his dusky face he held up a rifle.

"What—?" stammered D'Arcy.

The breed had not attempted the impossible. He had crept into the camp and secured a rifle from one of the sleeping ruffians. D'Arcy stared at him blankly.

"Venez!" muttered the breed. "It is close on dawn—they may awaken any moment now."

"But my fwinds—"

"Can you help them by falling again into the hands of Redway?" snarled the breed. "Come, I tell you. Leave it in my hands."

There was a rosy flush in the east now. Dawn was very near. Arthur Augustus hesitated; but he realised that he had no choice but to trust the half-breed. In silence he followed Black Louis as the breed crept silently away.

CHAPTER 10.

The Mystery of the Night!

RUBE REDWAY threw off his blanket and grunted, and rose to his feet and stretched himself.

Dawn was flushing up over the valley in the rocky recesses of the Porcupine foot-hills.

"Wake, you galoots!"

Redway's rough voice awakened his companions. The St. Jim's juniors opened their eyes.

Euchre Bill and the man with the bandaged head rose to their feet. The fourth member of the gang lay where he was, muttering. This was the ruffian who had fallen to the bullet Wildrake had fired through the door of the stockman's hut, the man who had wielded the axe. He was severely hurt, and the whisky he had taken had stupefied him into slumber for the night, but he awakened in a semi-delirious state. He muttered and groaned in his blankets, and Redway looked at him with a scowling face.

The gunman had no intention of lingering in the valley, in danger of pursuit from the Boot Leg Ranch, for the sake of a wounded follower. There was little consideration in his hard heart for a "lame duck."

"I guess Dave's got his," remarked Euchre Bill, with a stare at the muttering, groaning man.

"I guess he'll have to pack on a cayuse and chance it," said Redway unfeelingly.

He turned to the prisoners.

"Great gophers!" he ejaculated.

Redway stared at the juniors blankly. Tom Merry & Co. were not yet aware that one of their number was missing. But the gunman noted the absence of Arthur Augustus at once.

"Where's that pesky dude?" he exclaimed.

Euchre Bill stared.

"By gum! He's vamoosed."

"He was tied up like the others," roared Redway. "He couldn't have got loose. What the thunder—"

Tom Merry & Co. sat up stiffly. Their eyes turned to the spot where D'Arcy had lain down to sleep.

"Gussy's gone!" breathed Blake.

"How on earth—" stuttered Tom.

The amazement in the faces of the juniors convinced Redway that they knew nothing of what had happened. They were utterly bewildered. But he examined their bonds, and found that they were still secure. The gunman's hard face was red with rage.

"Look hyer!" He pointed to the fragments of the rope that had secured Arthur Augustus. "Cut loose, by hokey! Who cut that dude loose?"

He glared suspiciously at his companions.

"Carry me home to die!" ejaculated Euchre Bill. "I guess you've got me beat, boss."

"You, Hank Peters—"

The man with the bandaged head only stared.

"Beats me to a frazzle," he said. "How did he get loose? Search me!"

Redway stared round him, bewildered.

For the moment he had suspected his followers, but

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he realised that they could not have freed the prisoner. Yet D'Arcy was gone, and in a few minutes it was discovered that a rifle was missing. The rifle had belonged to Euchre Bill, and had been by his side when he slept.

"He's vamoosed and taken my rifle!" said Euchre Bill, in wonder. "How did he get loose? You tied him yourself, boss."

"I tied him safe," hooted Redway.

"I guess it don't look like it, as he's gone."

"Fool! The rope has been cut—cut with a knife," hissed Redway. "There is someone in the valley—someone who has let him loose. We're not alone at the Pine Tree Patch."

"But who—what—"

Redway spat out a curse.

He strode to the top of the knoll and stared about him over the little valley shining in the dawn. Nothing met his eye but the trees, the grass, the rippling river, and the encircling hills. He came back to his comrades, puzzled and furious.

"I guess we can pick up his trail, boss," said Euchre Bill. "The young gink's on foot. He'll never make the ranch on foot."

Redway shook his head.

"We've no time to get after him. May be miles away by this time. We've no time to cut to waste. I guess the durned dude doesn't matter much, anyway. Wild-rake is our mutton."

"Sure!" assented Euchre Bill.

"Get your grub. We saddle up in a quarter of an hour," snapped the gunman.

The three ruffians breakfasted, still casting wondering and uneasy looks about them.

The escape of Arthur Augustus perplexed them deeply, and the juniors could see that it alarmed them as well.

It was clear that the prisoner could not have escaped unaided. The ropes had been sliced through with a knife, and the knife must have been wielded by another hand.

Obviously, some unknown individual had crept to the camp while the ruffians were sleeping and rescued the "dude," as they called the swell of St. Jim's. Who it was and why he had selected D'Arcy for rescue puzzled the gunmen. But the knowledge that an enemy had crept so near to them while they slept evidently alarmed the gang.

Tom Merry & Co. had their hands released to eat a hurried breakfast. They were tired and cramped; but the escape of their chum "bucked" the juniors very considerably. Evidently the captured schoolboys had a friend at hand, though they could not even begin to guess who it was, and D'Arcy at least was safe.

"I guess it's got me beat," muttered Kit Wildrake. "But I'm pesky glad that Gussy is out of this."

"Yes, rather!" said Blake.

"He's got clear, and he's not alone," said the Canadian junior. "It's a far cry to the ranch on foot, but Gussy will get home sooner or later. Once they know what's happened, I guess the Boot Leg outfit will be after these firebugs. It means a search for us to-day instead of to-morrow, if Gussy gets back to the ranch."

"If he finds his way," said Blake doubtfully.

"He's not alone. Whoever it was that cut him loose is with him, and I guess it's a galoot who knows his way about," said Wildrake. "It was no easy job to get Gussy away last night without giving the alarm. I'm not a deep sleeper, but I never heard a sound."

"That's so," assented Tom Merry.

Redway glared at the juniors.

"Stop chewing the rag, you-uns!" he snarled.

(Continued on the next page.)



Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me; you can be sure of an answer in return.

NOVEL FREE GIFTS OF METAL MODELS!

AS will be seen from the announcement on page eleven of this issue, the next grand number of our companion paper, the "Magnet," will contain a unique FREE GIFT of a METAL MODEL of a FAMOUS RAILWAY EXPRESS ENGINE—the LORD NELSON. Honestly, I have never seen a better free gift than this accurate, coloured, stand-up model of the Southern Railway's crack express engine. But there's more good news to add to that tit-bit, for the

"LORD NELSON."

is the first of a remarkable series of these metal models—each one a faithful miniature of its giant parent. In all there will be four Free Gifts. Their order will be—the "Lord Nelson"; the world-famous L.N.E.R. express, "Flying Scotsman"; the L.M.S. express engine, "Mogul" class; and finally, the much-talked of G.W.R. express, "Caerphilly Castle." You fellows will agree that a set like this will want some beating. Right, then; it's up to you to join in in this stupendous Free Offer. Remember, boys, the First Free Gift will appear in next week's bumper issue of the "Magnet," which, by the way, will be on sale

SATURDAY, AUGUST 6th.

Don't forget—that's Saturday of this week! Jump in now and order your copy of our topping companion paper before the newsagent sells out!

RIPPING NEW SCHOOL SERIAL!

In next week's GEM you chaps will find the opening chapters of a brilliant new serial featuring those inimitable juniors of Rookwood School, Jimmy Silver & Co. For a long time now readers have written in asking for stories of these famous schoolboy characters, and I have not forgotten. Those readers especially will be delighted to hear of the

good news, for they knew Jimmy Silver & Co. of old. And those of you who have never made their acquaintance before will be mighty glad to do so next week. They're real cheery chaps, full of sparkling fun and humour, and the author, Owen Conquest, is a master of his job. He runs your favourite, Martin Clifford, very close. You won't grudge him that distinction, I know. On the contrary, you will accept that as some guarantee of the quality of his latest story, which has been written specially for you. Don't miss the opening of this fine new serial, whatever you do, boys. Good things are rare, and we can't afford to miss them. 'Nuff said!

WEARING BELTS!

"Jimmy," of Portsmouth, wants to know if wearing a belt is unhealthy for him. Not a bit of it, providing he doesn't buckle it too tight. He'll soon discover if he's erring on this side when meal-time comes round. If he feels uncomfortable round the waist-line it's pretty evident that his belt is too tight. I don't recommend the habit of wearing a belt for a couple of days, we will say, and then returning to braces. That sort of thing often leads to colds, and colds are a nuisance.

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME:

"THE DUDE OF BOOT LEG RANCH!" By Martin Clifford.

That's the title of next week's grand long story of Tom Merry & Co. in Canada. You can guess that Gussy's the dude, but all the same for that, the noble Arthur Augustus is not so soft as he looks. He comes out trumps in this fine story, anyway. Don't miss it!

"THE CAMERA FIEND!"

The St. Jim's Rhymester has been pleased to be facetious at Harry Manners' expense next week, for he knows this junior's weakness for photography. A jolly poem this.

"THE ROOKWOOD DICTATOR!" By Owen Conquest.

And don't miss the opening chapters of this amazing new serial, chums. It's a winner all the way, believe me. Order early—saves disappointment.

Your Editor.

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"We——" began Blake.

A brutal kick from the gunman's heavy boot rolled Jack Blake over in the grass.

"Oh!" he gasped.

Redway glared down at him.

"I guess I'm not handling you-uns with kid gloves," he snarled. "Don't give me any more backchat!"

The juniors were silent.

The gunman turned savagely away and snapped orders to his men to saddle up the horses.

For D'Arcy, personally, Redway cared little; it mattered little whether the swell of St. Jim's went with the rest. The hostages in his hands were more than enough to force the rancher to come to terms. One more or less made no great difference so long as Kit Wildrake remained a prisoner. It was the mysterious escape of D'Arcy that enraged him and rattled his nerves.

D'Arcy and his unknown helper had vanished, and Redway had no doubt that they were on their way down from the foothills to the plains, heading for the Boot Leg Ranch. D'Arcy might very easily have lost himself in the hills, but the man who had saved him was obviously a man who could take care of himself. If the unknown man had a horse at hand, as was probable enough, it was a matter of only a few hours to the ranch. That meant danger for the kidnappers.

Redway bound the hands of the juniors again after they had snatched a hurried meal. Then he stood over them with a revolver in his hand.

"You Wildrake!" he snarled.

Wildrake looked at him quietly.

"I guess you came up here to explore this valley and show the Pine Tree Patch to your friends?"

"Correct."

"You figured on camping out here?"

"Sure!"

"And when was you to get back to the ranch?"

Wildrake did not reply.

He knew what Redway wanted to know. The party would not have been missed until they were expected back at the ranch but for the inexplicable escape of Arthur Augustus.

"Spill it!" snarled Redway.

"I guess we were going back this afternoon," said Wildrake. "We were expected home at sundown to-day."

"You wouldn't have been missed till to-night, then?"

"Nope."

"And now I guess that dude has loped back, and if there was a hoss they're maybe at the ranch already."

"I guess so," said Wildrake.

Redway gave him a searching look.

"That means a day less for us to get clear. And you-uns don't know who it was let the dude loose?"

Wildrake shook his head.

"It's got me beat," he said. "I never knew there was anybody else in the valley."

"Some galoot follered on from the ranch, maybe."

"I reckon not. If it was one of the Boot Leg men, I guess he'd have tried to get me first."

Redway nodded, with his brow wrinkled in thought. It was reasonable to suppose that a Boot Leg puncher—if the rescuer was he—would have thought first of releasing Kit Wildrake. But it was Arthur Augustus who had been so mysteriously rescued.

"I guess I can't get on to it," muttered the gunman. "If I reckoned you galoots knew, I'd hide you with a trailrope till you spilt it!"

"We know nothing about it," said Tom Merry quietly. "I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw that D'Arcy was gone."

"Same here," said Lowther.

"I guess that's straight," assented Redway. "And you don't know—you can't guess—who it was set the dude loose?"

"I haven't the faintest idea," said Tom.

"Some durned Injun," muttered Redway. "Looks like it, the way he crept into camp without waking a man. But what would an Injun want to let the dude loose for? That dude hadn't any Injun friends, I reckon."

"Not that I know of," said Tom. "So far as I know, he's never even spoken to an Indian."

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The gunman muttered a curse. The mystery of D'Arcy's escape had evidently shaken his nerves.

"If they had a hoss, they'd be pesky near the ranch by this time," he muttered. "No good picking up the trail. We ain't too much time to get clear, I calculate. But it's got me beat—it's got me beat!"

He made a savage gesture, as if dismissing the perplexing matter from his mind. The horses were saddled now, and the St. Jim's fellows were lifted to their saddles and bound there. Then the wounded, feverish man was placed upon a horse, Redway scowling at him. He looked upon the disabled ruffian simply as an encumbrance.

"I reckon you can hold on to that cayuse, Dave," said Euchre Bill.

The man nodded.

"I reckon you'd better!" snarled Redway. "If you fall off, no galoot in this outfit will stop to pick you up, you hear me?"

"We're ready, boss!" grunted Hank Peters.

"Get going!" snapped Redway.

He mounted his own horse and led the way. The cavalcade wound across the open valley towards a gorge in the hills on the western side, by which lay the route into the Porcupine Mountains. They rode at a gallop, the wounded man swaying on his horse. The whole gang were anxious to get clear of the Pine Tree Patch and to escape into the trackless fastnesses of the Porcupines.

Redway did not doubt for a moment that the escaped junior, and the unknown who had helped him, had headed for the Boot Leg Ranch, and he knew how rapidly Mr. Wildrake would be on the trail as soon as he knew what had happened to his son. The gunman had little doubt that pursuit from the ranch had already started, and he was anxious to place a tract of trackless mountain, where no trail could be picked up on the rocks, between him and his pursuers.

The horsemen dashed across the little valley to the western side, and slowed down as they entered the gorge. There the way was rough and rugged, and led steeply upwards towards the higher benches of the foothills. But as the riders entered the rocky gorge, a sudden, whip-like crack rang out on the still morning air, awakening a thousand echoes among the hollows of the hills.

Crack!

It was the report of a rifle.

There was a gasping groan from Euchre Bill, and he pitched from his saddle and crashed to the ground, and lay like a log.

CHAPTER 11.

Sharp Shooting!

"B AI Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gasped out that exclamation.

High up among the rocks, Black Louis, the half-breed, crouched, his black eyes glinting down at the rocky trail. Arthur Augustus was seated on a boulder near at hand, tired with the rugged climb from the valley.

Why the breed had led him to the high rocks at the opening of the gorge, D'Arcy did not know. But he had sagely placed himself in the hands of the man who had proved himself a friend in the hour of need. Black Louis was standing by him to the finish. He had said that he would save the junior's chums if he could, and D'Arcy left it at that. He was determined that he would not abandon the prisoners; but so long as Louis did not suggest that, Arthur Augustus was willing to leave him the lead.

He was resting on the boulder and munching at a chunk of dried meat the half-breed had produced from his wallet. He understood that if Rube Redway and his gang struck out for the Porcupines, as he knew the gunmen intended, they had to leave the valley by that gorge to the west, under the eyes of himself and the breed. The clattering of horses' hoofs came to his ears, but the sound was yet distant, and D'Arcy went on munching his tough breakfast. Louis gripped the rifle and crouched among the rocks, peering down into the



The group of cowpunchers looked up as the party of horsemen rode up to the ranch and halted. "Here we are again, Jim, you old cayuse!" called out Kit Wildrake. Long Jim's eyes were fixed on the gunman, who rode with his hands bound behind his back, in the midst of the St. Jim's party. "Great gophers!" he ejaculated, scarcely able to believe his eyes. "I guess that's Rube Redway." "Right in once!" said Wildrake. (See Chapter 13.)

gorge. And all of a sudden the report of the rifle rang out with a thousand echoes, and D'Arcy jumped up with an exclamation. He sprang across to the breed.

"What—" he began breathlessly.

The crouching breed grinned up at him.

"One!" he said.

"Bai Jove! What—"

D'Arcy stared down at the horsemen.

He saw his friends, bound to their saddles. He saw Rube Redway reining in his horse with a startled, furious face, the man with the bandaged head following his example. One riderless horse—and Euchre Bill on the ground, motionless.

A shudder ran through the swell of St. Jim's.

"You—you—you have—" he stammered.

"Keep in cover, m'sieur!" muttered the breed. "Look out for shooting!"

"Oh cwumps!" gasped D'Arcy.

His eyes were fixed in horror on the still form in the grass far below the rocks where he stood with the breed.

The ruthless warfare of the hills was new and terrible to the swell of St. Jim's. He knew that Euchre Bill would never move again.

"Cover!" breathed the half-breed.

Redway, revolver in hand, was glaring up the side of the gorge in the direction whence the bullet had come. Bang!

Black Louis grasped the St. Jim's junior and dragged him down among the rocks.

He was only just in time.

Redway's bullet missed the junior's hat by an inch as he was dragged into cover.

"Oh deah!" gasped D'Arcy, as he sprawled behind a boulder, breathless.

The breed had the rifle to his shoulder again in a twinkling, the muzzle peeping out through a cleft. He fired without showing himself.

Redway leaped from his horse at the same moment, seeking cover. He barely eluded the whizzing ball as he leaped.

Black Louis gritted his teeth.

"Louis! Stop!" panted D'Arcy, crawling to the breed's side in cover of the rocks and catching his arm.

"Taisez!" snapped the breed. "Do you want to save your friends?"

"Yaas—yaas!" panted the swell of St. Jim's.

"But—"

"It is our lives or theirs now!" growled the breed.

"This is what I planned—there is no other way."

He threw off D'Arcy's detaining hand roughly and fired again from the cover of the boulder.

"Keep your head down!" he snapped, as D'Arcy was about to rise and look over the rocks.

The swell of St. Jim's, sick at heart, peered round the rock.

The man with the bandaged head had leaped from his horse, seeking cover, but the bullet had struck him before he could reach it. D'Arcy saw him sprawling in the grass, face down, his arms outstretched.

Crack, crack!

Rube Redway was loosing off his revolver, and the bullets spattered on the rocks near the breed. The gunman had reached the cover of a boulder at the foot of the gorge. But he was not safe there, with his enemy so high above him, looking down. Black Louis aimed again, and D'Arcy's hand was stretched out to stop him, but he dropped it. It was a fight to the end now, and he knew it. The breed, staring down from the high side of the gorge, had a glimpse of Redway as he crouched, and his bullet tore through the gunman's Stetson hat, cutting a patch of hair from his head. A yell of rage from the gunman reached D'Arcy's ears, and Redway quitted his cover at once, dodging away among the boulders towards the open valley. Twice again the breed fired, but the gunman's rapid movements defeated him, and Redway escaped from the gorge and fled back into the grassy valley, out of which he had ridden only five minutes before.

Black Louis muttered an oath in French.

"Redway—he is gone! Pardieu!"

"Let him go!" breathed D'Arcy.

"But the other—"

The horses in the gorge were plunging wildly. Tom Merry & Co., bound to their saddles, could not control their mounts. The wounded man, Dave, was clinging to his plunging horse, barely able to keep from falling,

and it was upon him that the half-breed now turned his rifle. Arthur Augustus knocked up the barrel as he fired, and the bullet flew into the pines on the opposite side of the gorge.

Black Louis turned a fierce look on him.

"Stop!" said Arthur Augustus. "That man is wounded! He can do no harm—"

"Corbleu! It is safer to finish."

"Stop, I tell you!"

The breed shrugged his shoulders.

"Comme vous voulez!" he muttered.

He rose to his feet. Redway had vanished into the wide valley; his riderless horse was plunging with the others in the gorge. Arthur Augustus waved his hand to his friends below and started down the rugged, rocky slope to the bottom of the gorge at a breathless run. The breed, with the rifle under his arm, followed him more slowly.

CHAPTER 12.

The Fate of the Gunman!

"Gussy!"

"Old Gussy!" gasped Blake.

"Some dude!" grinned Wildrake.

The horses to which the juniors were bound were secured in a string for leading, Wildrake's horse in the lead. By the pressure of his knees the Canadian junior controlled his horse to some extent and prevented the startled animal from bolting. Arthur Augustus came plunging down the rocky slope in hot haste, falling several times and picking himself up again. He reached the bottom of the gorge breathless, and ran to his comrades.

Wildrake looked past him at the lithe figure of Black Louis, the half-breed, descending the side of the gorge.

"Gee-whiz!" ejaculated the Canadian junior. "It's the breed!"

Monty Lowther whistled.

"The man Long Jim was quirting the other day!" he exclaimed. "The man Gussy went into the river for yesterday!"

"Sure!"

"My hat! Then it was the breed let Gussy loose last night!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Looks like it."

"By gum!" said Blake. "Who'd have thought it?"

"Gussy, old chap—"

"Jollay glad to see you again, deah boys!" panted the swell of St. Jim's. "But you weally owe it all to my friend Mr. Louis. Bai Jove! Lend me your knife, Louis, deah boy."

The half-breed came up. He scowled at Wildrake and took no heed of the other fellows. But he handed his knife to D'Arcy, who quickly cut through the ropes that bound the juniors.

Tom Merry & Co. were glad enough to dismount and stretch their cramped limbs.

The juniors turned away their eyes from the two motionless forms that lay on the rocky ground. But Wildrake's first step was to secure a rifle from one of the fallen men. He had not forgotten that Rube Redway was still free and not far away. The gunman had vanished from sight; but he was on foot now, and if he was fleeing he could not have gone far.

Black Louis caught the plunging horses of the outlaws and secured them in a string with a trail-rope. The breed's manner indicated that he regarded the animals as a capture from the enemy, and his own plunder—and no one was inclined to gainsay him.

The juniors would have thanked the half-breed for the help he had given, but his look was dark and forbidding. It was quite clear that he had been utterly indifferent to their fate, and that it was only on account of D'Arcy that he had intervened. Some strain of good in the man's hard, savage nature had made him capable of gratitude to the fellow who had saved his life; but the other fellows were nothing to him.

"I guess we owe you a lot, Black Louis," said Wildrake, eyeing the dusky, sullen man curiously.

The breed gave him a dark look.

"It is for the petit monsieur that I chip in," he answered. "You owe me nothing."

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"You have saved us," said Tom Merry.

Black Louis did not answer that.

"I guess you can come back to the ranch if you want," said Wildrake. "I can square it with my father, after what you've done."

The breed's eyes glinted.

"No come back!" he said. "But you say a message to Long Jim when you see him. He quirt me. You tell him that the knife of Louis le Noir will find him one night when he sleeps."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Blake.

Wildrake knitted his brows.

"Cut out that talk, Louis!" he snapped. "If that's the programme, I guess you'd better keep clear of Boot Leg."

"Je m'en vais!" said the breed. "I go—I take zese horses. They are mine."

"Sure!" assented Wildrake. "Leave the one that that sick man is on—we shall have to get him back with us."

The breed nodded. He mounted Redway's horse and led on a rope the two that had belonged to the men now lying so still on the rocks. He turned his face up the gorge in the direction of the mountains.

"Bai Jove! You are not goin', Mr. Louis?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The breed nodded.

"I have save you," he said. "I am finish here. I go to my own friends in the Porcupines. Adieu, monsieur."

Arthur Augustus came up to him quickly and held out his hand. The breed looked at him with a strange expression on his hard, swarthy face.

"Good-bye and good luck, old chap!" said D'Arcy. "I shall nevah forget what you have done for me! I twust we shall meet again, old bean!"

The breed shook his head, but he gripped the hand of the swell of St. Jim's.

"Adieu, petit monsieur!"

And he rode away up the rocky gorge, leading the two horses.

Arthur Augustus stared after him through his eyeglass.

"Bai Jove, you fellows, that chap is wathah a queeah chawacter, you know!" he remarked. "He is wathah like a wild beast, you know; but he seems a vewy good chap in some ways."

"Jolly few, I should think," said Blake. "Still, he's done us a good turn, no mistake about that. You did a good job for all of us, Gussy, when you fished him out of the river yesterday."

"Yaas, wathah! I suppose he considahs that one good turn deserves anothah, you know," said Arthur Augustus. "I think it is vewy probable that I should not have been able to wescue you fellows without his help."

"Very probable indeed!" grinned Blake.

"Weally, Blake."

"I guess that galoot will make a good thing of it, selling those cayuses to the Indians," said Wildrake. "He's done us a good turn, but I'm glad he's gone. And I guess we're going to deal with that scallywag Redway before we mosey back to the ranch."

"Yaas, wathah! We will wope him in and take him back a pwisonah," said Arthur Augustus.

"He's on foot now," went on Wildrake. "I guess we shall run him down; but look out for his shooting-iron. Get into the saddle."

"But—" Tom Merry made a gesture towards the two fallen outlaws without looking at them.

Wildrake nodded.

"Yep! Lend a hand."

The two still forms were placed in a shallow gully and rocks piled over them, the only form of burial that was possible. The juniors' faces were pale and troubled as they turned away. Gladly enough they mounted their horses to ride out of the fatal gorge. D'Arcy's horse had been led along with the others by the outlaws. The juniors' own weapons had been left in the burning stockman's hut, but they secured rifles and revolvers from the fallen gunmen. They rode back into the grassy valley from the gorge, keeping their eyes well about them. Whether Rube Redway had fled, or whether he was lurking in the valley watching for them, revolver in hand, they did not know; but they knew that now he was dismounted he could not be far away. Wildrake

LOOK OUT FOR THIS COVER NEXT WEDNESDAY, CHUMS!

Rancher Wildrake can't make out how it is so many of his prize cattle mysteriously disappear. Long Jim, his foreman, too, is equally puzzled.

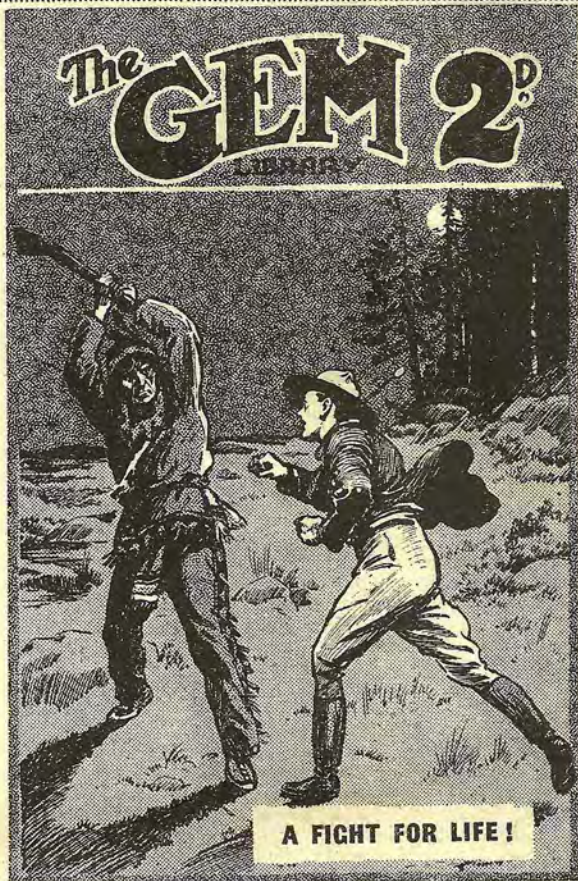
Then Arthur Augustus, in his usual optimistic fashion, declares that he will solve the riddle—a statement that raises a big laugh from the cowpunchers at the Boot Leg Ranch. But it turns out to be a case of he who laughs last, laughs longest—and the longest laugh goes to Arthur Augustus! You'll enjoy every line of

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led the horse upon which sat the half-unconscious wounded outlaw.

"By gum!" exclaimed Wildrake suddenly.

He pointed to the sky.

Overhead a great bird floated with outstretched wings, settling down slowly into the valley. The juniors glanced up at the vulture.

"I guess that means that we shan't have far to look for Redway," said Wildrake. "He must have been hit—I heard him yell when the breed was shooting."

With a swoop the vulture settled down and disappeared from the sight of the juniors beyond a clump of live oaks in the distance.

"I guess Redway's there," said Wildrake. "Ride on."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

The juniors rode round the clump of trees.

In the grass, beyond it, the black vulture was squatting and croaking, only a few feet from a still form that lay stretched in the grass. It was Rube Redway. That he was not dead was proved by the fact that the vulture had not touched him; the obscene bird was sitting and watching him. But he lay without movement.

The riders dashed up and the vulture, with a hoarse croak, hopped away and rose on the wing again. Tom Merry & Co. dismounted and gathered round the gunman.

There was blood on his face from a deep gash across his head, where the breed's bullet had torn away a lock of hair. It was not a dangerous wound, but the loss of blood had overcome the wretch as he fled, and he had fallen there and sunk into insensibility. There, wounded and helpless, he would probably have perished, to fall a prey to the mountain vultures, had not the juniors found him.

Wildrake removed his revolver and knife. Then he washed the wound and bandaged it, the gunman still lying unconscious, only meaning faintly at intervals.

"I guess he will pull through O.K.," said Wildrake. "But he won't do any further harm, I reckon. He will live to serve a long term in the pen." He rose from the side of the unconscious gunman. "I guess we'll camp here and wait till he comes to before we strike the trail for the ranch."

"Yaas, wathah."

And Tom Merry & Co. camped.

CHAPTER 13.

The Secret of Pine Tree Patch!

RUBE REDWAY opened his eyes.

He made an effort to rise, and sank back again with a groan.

"Bai Jove! He's comin' to, deah boys."

The juniors gathered round the gunman again. Redway's dilated eyes stared at them blankly. As he recognised them his hand went to his belt.

"Can it, Redway," said Wildrake. "I've got your gun safe."

The gunman muttered a curse.

Tom Merry placed a pannikin of water to his lips. The gunman drank, and then savagely dashed the pannikin aside.

"You've got me!" he muttered.

"You've said it," agreed Wildrake.

"A thousand curses!"

"One would be enough, if it was any good," grinned Wildrake. "But I guess your curses won't hurt anybody, Redway. You're laid by the heels now, you scallywag, and you're going back to Boot Leg with us. Next time we come up to Pine Tree Patch I reckon you won't worry us any."

The gunman gave him a savage look.

For some time he lay silent, his eyes gleaming at the St. Jim's juniors. The wounded man, Dave, lay

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on a blanket near him, muttering feverishly; but Redway did not glance at him. What had happened to the others he knew, and he knew that his game was up now. He was wounded and a prisoner, and his scheming and plotting were at an end. The gunman had gambled desperately, and he had lost.

He broke his savage silence at last.

"You're toting me back to the ranch, young Wildrake?" he muttered.

"Sure!"

"And then——"

"I guess you'll go to Rainbow to take your trial," said the Canadian junior. "You're wanted by the Mounted Police for a hold-up on the Rainbow trail, and for what you've done here at Pine Tree Patch. I reckon you'll be safe for ten years to come. Your gunman game isn't wanted on this side of the border, Rube Redway."

Again the gunman lay silent. His expression showed that busy thoughts were working in his brain.

"The game's up," he said at last. "But I reckon I've still got a trump card in my hand. You never knew why I wanted to buy the Pine Tree Patch from your popper?"

"Nope."

"I am weally wathah cuwious on that subject, Mr. Wedway," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy politely. "Now that you are goin' to pwison, pewwaps you will be obligin' enough to tell us the secwet. You see, it will not be any use to you when you are in chokey."

The gunman stared at him for a moment, while the juniors grinned. They did not suppose that Rube Redway was in an obliging mood.

"I guess I'm open to trade, Kit Wildrake," said Redway.

"Spill it," said Wildrake briefly.

"This Pine Tree Patch ain't worth five hundred dollars to your father for ranching; but——"

"But I reckon it's worth more than that to you," chuckled Wildrake. "You haven't played this game for five hundred dollars."

"I guess it's worth twenty thousand to me."

"Gold?" asked Wildrake.

Redway gave a bitter, scoffing laugh.

"My secret for my liberty," he said. "Put me on a horse and let me ride, and I guess I leave the secret in your hands. Is it a trade?"

Wildrake shook his head.

"I guess that's for my popper to decide," he said. "You can make him the offer when we get to Boot Leg."

"Fool! I tell you——"

"Cut it out!" said Wildrake decisively. "I guess we're not letting a firebug like you loose again now we've got you by the short hairs. A galoot of your calibre is only safe behind the bars."

The gunman gritted his teeth.

"Listen to me," he said. "I found the secret by accident while I was hunting. You'll never find it—your father will never find it. But it's worth a fortune to the man who owns the Pine Tree Patch."

"I guess it's a temptation," said Wildrake. "I'm plumb keen to know the secret. But it's my father's land, and it's for my father to decide. You can put it to him, but I reckon he will hand you over to the Mounted Police all the same. You can't buy off the law."

"Fool!"

"Thanks!" said Wildrake, laughing. "You galoots agree with me, I guess?"

He glanced inquiringly at the St. Jim's juniors.

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry.

And the other fellows nodded.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "That wottah has bwoke the law, and we have no wight to set him free. I am suah your patah will not listen to his offah, Wildwake."

"I guess he's plumb sure of that."

"Fool!" hissed Redway. "If I go to the pen my secret goes with me, and you will never find it out."

"Let it go at that," said Wildrake carelessly.

The gunman's eyes blazed at him.

"I tell you it's gold!" he hissed. "There's pay-dirt

in this valley, where no prospector will ever find it. I tell you I found it by chance. I can make you rich. I tell you, if the secret's known, there will be a mining-camp in this valley, and thousands and thousands of dollars turned out of the rocks. Twenty thousand dollars—fifty thousand perhaps—you're throwing away a fortune."

The juniors looked at one another. The temptation was strong to take the gunman at his word. That in some remote recess of the Pine Tree Patch, or the hills surrounding it, there was rich pay-dirt, they could not doubt—Redway's desperate attempts to make himself master of the valley were a proof of it. And Redway knew the secret and was willing to barter it for his liberty.

But Kit Wildrake shook his head again.

"I guess you can put it to the popper at Boot Leg!" he said. "But there's nothing to it; it's you for the pen, Rube Redway. We'll take our chance of getting at the pay-dirt without your help."

A torrent of curses from the gunman answered him.

"Can it!" snapped Wildrake. "If you-uns are ready we'll hit the home-trail and put that fire-bug where he belongs."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And when Tom Merry & Co. rode out of the valley and struck the trail for the Boot Leg Ranch Rube Redway rode with them, a prisoner, with his hands bound behind his back.

Long Jim jumped.

"Waal, carry me home to die!" he ejaculated.

The sun was setting over the plains, and the shadows lengthening at the Boot Leg Ranch. Outside the bunk-house a group of cowpunchers were lounging, and they heard, without heeding, the clatter of hoof-beats on the trail, till a party of horsemen rode up to the ranch and halted.

"Here we are again, Jim, you old cayuse!" called out Kit Wildrake.

Long Jim's eyes were fixed on the gunman, who rode with his hands bound behind his back, in the midst of the St. Jim's party.

The foreman of the Boot Leg Ranch seemed scarcely able to believe his eyes.

"Great gophers!" he ejaculated. "I guess that's Rube Redway."

"Right in once," said Wildrake.

"You've got that fire-bug?"

"Looks like it."

"Well, I'll tell the world!" ejaculated Long Jim.

Wildrake laughed.

"We've got Rube Redway, and this other scallywag is one of his gang," he said. "I guess I'll hand them over to you, Jim, till they can be passed on to Sergeant Macgregor at Lone Pine. We've had a high old time up in the foothills, Jim."

"Shooting?" asked the ranch foreman.

"You've said it."

Long Jim grinned.

"And where was the dude while the shooting was on?" he asked.

Arthur Augustus crimsoned.

"Weally, Mr. Long Jim——" he began hotly.

"It was the dude pulled us through," said Wildrake quietly. "I guess we should all be prisoners now way up in the Porcupines if the dude hadn't been along. So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it, Long Jim!"

"Waal, search me!" ejaculated Long Jim, evidently much astonished. "Anyhow, I guess I'm plumb glad to see that fire-bug Redway roped in. We'll sure keep him safe till he's handed over to the Mounted."

The punchers gathered round the prisoners, and Tom Merry & Co. dismounted and turned their horses into the corral and walked to the ranch-house. Arthur Augustus' noble brow wore a frown.

"I wegard that long-legged boundah as a wude bwute," he confided to Blake. "I object vewy stwongly to bein' alluded to as a dude—a howwid American expression. But I suppose that I had bettah not thwash the fellow."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Blake. "Much better not, old bean. Very much better not."

(Continued on page 23.)

THE TRUTH COMES TO LIGHT! For years now Walter Beavan has lived the life of a recluse, for he had a terrible secret to hide from his fellow men. But it turns out now that he's lived this hermit's existence all these years for nothing; that he has blamed himself for something he has never done!

BEYOND *the* SILVER GLACIER!

The Concluding Chapters of this
Grand Serial Story.

By **ARTHUR S. HARDY.**

According to Muta's Prophecy!

WALTER BEAVAN, standing well back in the shadow, with arms folded, stared from one to another in blank amazement. He seemed puzzled, all at sea.

"It is clear," said the professor, "that there is matter here which needs investigation. I think we will make inquiry into this, Del Rivo."

Captain John Skinner had no compunctions whatever. He had hated having Del Rivo aboard his airship; could have hurled him overboard for all the liking he had for him.

"Get a move on, lads!" he cried, turning to the members of his crew, who came crowding close to the veranda. "Arrest that Portuguese!"

The professor, moving aside, left the man Symes in a dead line with the revolver which Del Rivo swung up to the level of his eyes.

Instantly a report rang out, and to the flash of the flame and the drive of the bullet Symes fell face downward on the boards.

"Take that—dog!" snarled Del Rivo.

Unnoticed, he had untethered Walter Beavan's horse.

He held the tethering rope in his hand, and with a spring he cleared the rail, dropped upon his feet, rebounded upwards, and was in the saddle in a flash.

In another moment he had lashed the horse into its stride and, dashing amongst the natives, who fled to left and right as the horse galloped madly down the clearing, rode straight towards the forest.

Not one man there had a rifle handy. To use a revolver on the fleeing man would have been a risky business, for it would have been a hundred to one on hitting a native rather than striking the target made by the rascally dago on the fast moving horse.

Julian Del Rivo had not the courage to face the situation after what the man Symes had said.

His shooting of the poor fellow a second time almost proved that the charge brought against him by the man Symes was true.

Among all those present, Walter Beavan was about the only man who sprang to instant action. Running to the veranda rail, he vaulted over it and sped after the fugitive as fast as he could run.

The remainder could see the horse and rider making a bee line for the trees, in front of which the row of bonfires blazed in the night.

"He's mad!" shouted Captain John Skinner. "He doesn't stand much of a chance riding a horse in that tangle of trees with

no moon or stars to guide him, no food or water to drink, and only the clothes he stands up in. The wild beasts will get him. By George, he's down!"

As Skinner spoke, Adam saw the horse swerve as it galloped close to one of the big bonfires. The next moment the horse had fallen, and was rolling over, its four legs thrashing in the air. They saw the dust spurned by its hoofs fly from the dry ground—they saw Del Rivo hurtled from the saddle and slither down some yards away. And with one accord they commenced to run.

And then a cry of horror burst from the lips of the white men. Rosa drew back with a shudder. The natives of Baruda, uttering piercing cries and gesticulating wildly, watched in terror.

And the thing that happened was enough to have frightened any man. As Del Rivo's body struck the ground, that which had caused the horse to shy and stumble and to throw its rider—and it was not the fire—leapt from where it lurked among the trees and pounced upon the fallen man.

It was a full-grown lion!

The piercing scream of horror which burst from Del Rivo's lips caused Adam and the rest of the white men to halt in dismay. They could not help him. They could only see what happened.

The lion which leapt upon Del Rivo was a magnificent beast, with great dark mane. Even the head of the lion at the Grange, Studley, which the professor had shot on his first big game hunt in Southern Africa, big as it was, bore no comparison to this.

"The man-eating lion!" cried John Skinner. "I have seen the brute before—whilst we were waiting here—before we started in search of Hokahulaland. By George, the beast has got him!"

They saw Del Rivo tear himself from the jaws of the lion, saw him strike at it in a frenzy, then stumble and fall because he was sorely hurt—having no chance of drawing his revolver.

And next they saw the huge beast grip him in its jaws and bear him away into the forest at a jog-trot, its tail swishing as it went.

It was then that Adam remembered Muta's prophecy that Del Rivo would die an unnatural death and be devoured alive by wild beasts.

He started to run. Others followed him. Torches were lit, and a search party roamed the forest half the night through.

But it was not until the early hours of the morning, and

THE STORY IN BRIEF:

Having been rescued from the Hokahulas—an African tribe inhabiting the secret city of Barcoomba—Professor Byrne and his party eventually reach Baruda. They are welcomed by Walter Beavan, a white settler, who has lived the life of a recluse for many years in the firm belief that, in a fit of delirium, he killed his best chum, George Holden. Del Rivo, a Portuguese in the professor's party, taunts Beavan with his crime. Then, unexpectedly, a man named Symes declares that if anyone killed George Holden it was Del Rivo. What is more, Symes holds proof to back his statement. Del Rivo, taken aback, declares that Symes is mad, but it is obvious that the Portuguese is lying.

(Now read on.)

after the dawn broke that they found the mangled remains of the Portuguese a mile and a half from the spot where the man-eater had struck him down.

"The remains of a very bad man, James Brown," said Sandy McTavish, as he doffed his cap and stared down at what had lately been Julian Del Rivo. "But you ken what the Guid Book says: 'As a man sows, so shall he also reap.'"

They buried Del Rivo where they found him, and then marched back to Baruda.

The Delayed Truth!

ADAM, who had been out with the search party all night, expected to find when he returned that the man Symes, too, was dead.

Instead of which he was greeted by the surprising news that Symes was not only alive but sitting up and taking nourishment.

The bullet which Del Rivo had fired at him in the first instance had cut a groove in the flesh on the right of his forehead, and Symes had been so frightened that he had pretended to be dead—which Adam supposed had caused Del Rivo to stay his hand and hurry to Walter Beavan's bungalow as a sort of blind. The second bullet fired from the veranda had missed its mark altogether. They found the hole it had cut in the clearing when they searched for it in the broad light of day.

When Symes heard that Del Rivo was dead he recovered his spirits as if by magic, and, eager to tell his tale, sought the professor and Walter Beavan.

"Julian Del Rivo is dead," he said, raising his hand solemnly, "so that now you have only my word for what happened when Walter Beavan believed he murdered his friend George Holden. We had had a terrible time. I honestly believe had it not been for the liquor Mr. Beavan insisted upon us drinking, we would all have died. Perhaps Mr. Beavan would never admit it, but he was as badly stricken by the fever as any of us. His friend was not so strong and couldn't withstand it as well—that was the only difference between them.

"Day and night, Walter Beavan nursed his friend like a brother. And it was while we were all lying sick in the camp where Mr. Holden was killed, Julian Del Rivo being the soundest of the lot of us, that the Portuguese told me he intended to steal the diamonds from the dying man. We urged Mr. Beavan on to drink more than usual.

"Mr. Holden was dying—I believe he would have died of

the fever within twenty-four hours in any case. I couldn't sleep. I was afraid if I closed my eyes that Del Rivo might murder me. I lay awake by the fire we'd built, watching. I saw Del Rivo crawl to where George Holden lay and unfasten his belt. I saw him slip his hand into the pocket that contained some of the diamonds. Then Mr. Holden awakened. He was dying, and they had given him drugs, but he had his wits about him—and knew that the Portuguese was robbing him. He began to scream and fight like a tiger-cat. Del Rivo, shaking him off with ease, because the poor fellow was so weak, snatched Mr. Beavan's revolver from its holster and shot Mr. Holden dead—then, as Mr. Beavan awakened, startled by the report, I saw Julian Del Rivo thrust the smoking revolver into his hand. That, gentlemen, is the truth."

Staring at the man Symes wide eyed, Walter Beavan drew back with a startled cry.

"If I could only believe it—if I could only believe it! But the diamonds were in George Holden's belt—they were buried with him," he muttered. "I saw that."

"Only some of them," answered the man Symes, shooting a frightened glance at the settler. "Del Rivo kept the batch he'd stolen. And he had the others afterwards, for he returned some days later, dug up the body, and stole them."

Ignoring the horrified ejaculations with which this news was received, the man Symes turned to the professor.

"I know the evil of this man—he terrified me—and yet he fascinated me. It was because he told me he would kill me no matter where I fled, if I tried to get away from him, that I always worked with him, travelled with him. It was in trying to get away from him I was captured by the Hokahulas—and even now, when he is dead, I can hardly bring myself to believe that I am free. Professor Byrne, you remember you appointed a day of meeting with him at Pocatella. Well, you were there to time. He hung back purposely. He wanted the trophies and the valuables you had amassed. It was he who set the natives to attack you and your baggage train. Muta, the black, was right when he called Julian Del Rivo the Killer."

"Then he was the villain responsible for all our troubles, Rosa, my girl!" sighed the professor. "Truly, it is an extraordinary world. But there are compensations in almost everything. Had it not been for him we would never have entered the kingdom of the Hokahulas, I would never have been crowned their king, and my son Adam might still be rusting at Studley. Above all"—and he turned to Beavan, giving the settler his hand with a gracious smile—"our friend, Walter Beavan here, might have remained an outcast all his days, firm in the belief that he had murdered his best friend in a fit of delirium. Now, happily, he knows that he is innocent."

Walter Beavan smiled sadly.

"Can I believe what the man Symes says even now?" he asked brokenly. "Is it true?"

"Why ask the question?" answered the professor. "Why did Del Rivo try to murder Symes in Barcoomba? Why did the man Symes wear that shirt of steel, save that he was afraid of Del Rivo? Why did Del Rivo try to kill him when he told us the truth? Why did Del Rivo flee if what Symes said was false?"

Walter Beavan turned to Symes.

"And you swear that Del Rivo shot you because you declared you were going to tell the truth about the killing of poor George Holden?" he asked.

"I swear it!" answered the man Symes. "I have been a cheat and a liar most of my life through; but it is the truth I am speaking now."

Raising his bearded face towards the sky, Walter Beavan, drawing a deep breath, spread his arms full stretch wide.

"Praise be the Lord!" he murmured fervently. "George—my friend, my brother—I did not slay you—I am unshackled—free at last!"

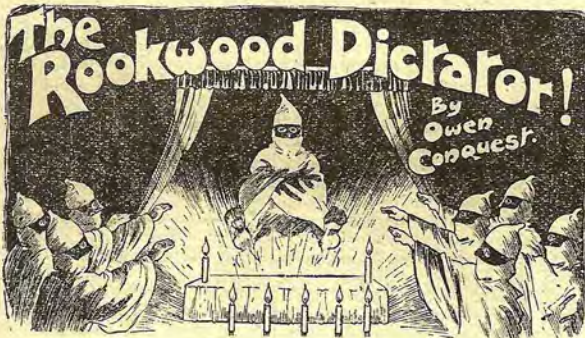
Then away he strode into the shelter of his bungalow. Adam, turning to speak to his father, saw that the tears were coursing down his furrowed cheeks. The boy, understanding, walked quietly away.

The Land that is England!

PROFESSOR GEORGE WILLIS BYRNE did not start his homeward journey through the air. He preferred to make the long journey overland to the coast, with Walter Beavan for company—and, of course, Adam and Harry, Rosa and Jimmy Brown, Sandy McTavish, and the man Kyhte, the guide, went with them, as well as a huge baggage train.

Symes preferred to remain behind in Baruda, giving as his reasons that he was too old and too steeped in crime

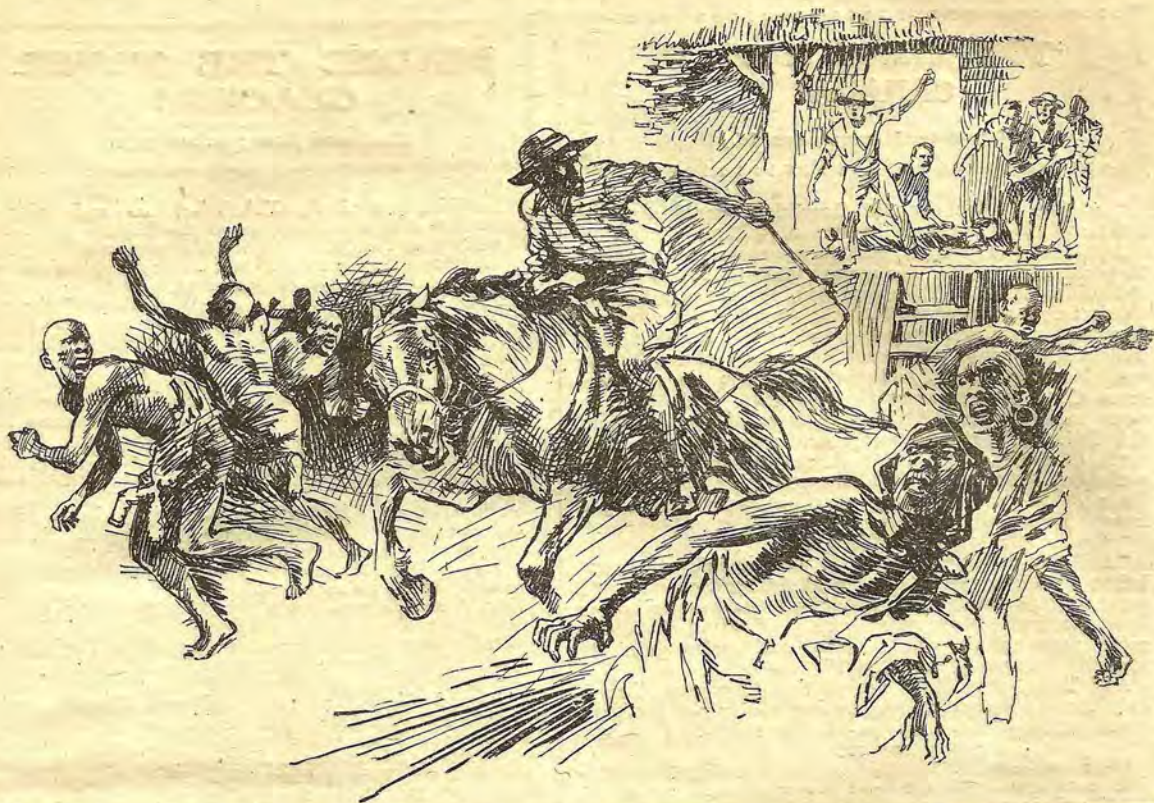
RIPPING SCHOOL SERIAL STARTS NEXT WEEK!



This is a story of the famous Rookwood Chums, Jimmy Silver & Co., written specially for the GEM by

OWEN CONQUEST.

Every lover of school stories should make a point of reading this masterpiece, the opening chapters of which will appear next Wednesday.



Del Rivo was in the saddle in a flash; in another moment he had lashed the horse into its stride and, dashing amongst the natives, who fled to right and left, he rode straight for the forest. (See page 25.)

to want to return to his old haunts. Besides, most of his friends and relations would shun him, he said.

"Baruda will, one of these days, be a fine and flourishing town," he informed the professor. "I am going to stay here and help build it."

Before he left, Captain John Skinner, optimistically convinced that the airship was in every way sound enough to bear him to his proper base of harbourage at Cheelonga, imparted a piece of news that surprised the professor.

"Of course, as you know," he said, "I started upon the exploration of unknown Central Africa, by air, financed by the syndicate which built the Mirawala. The ship is a fine one. Four separate bases were constructed and I had already flown north, south, east, and west. Then, when I was contemplating a flight from the Cape to Cairo in the silver airship, I had cabled out to me an offer from a Mrs. Byrne which made me change my mind. I discovered that she was a woman of substance. She had placed a big credit at a South African bank, and signified that she was willing to sell up her home, lock, stock, and barrel, and spend the last penny of her very big fortune in an endeavour to rescue you and your daughter Rosa from the city of Barcoomba, which lay beyond the Silver Glacier and beneath the Mountain of the Hidden Crest. The report had reached home that her son Adam, and his friend, Harry Franklin, together with James Brown, engineer, and Sandy McTavish, the Scotsman, had perished in their attempted flight to the unknown kingdom of the Hokahulas. That, Mr. Byrne"—and John Skinner smiled broadly as he spoke—"is how I happened to get there."

"Then I owe our rescue to my dear wife?" ejaculated the professor, deeply moved.

"It would seem so!" smiled the skipper of the Mirawala. "God bless her!" murmured the professor.

The next day they started upon their long journey home. Three months passed before they set foot on English soil, and by that time Walter Beavan was a changed man. Clean-shaven, as handsome as an Adonis, stalwart and strong of heart and mind, clad in well-cut clothing, his eyes bright with hope and happiness, and young below his years, he was a different man.

He was going home! More than that, relations who loved him were awaiting him there, and a girl who had

long believed him to be dead, and yet had hoped, was counting the days and the very hours until he returned.

"I have no stain upon my conscience now, Mr. Byrne," said Beavan in a gentle voice as he leaned upon the deck rail and saw the white cliffs of England loom up. "I no longer need drink to raise my spirits or to drown my thoughts. I can look into a woman's eyes and tell her that I am innocent. She is waiting for me—there!" And he pointed across the white caps towards the coastline.

Mrs. Byrne did not come to the dock to meet them when the liner swung into the quay. She wanted to greet them at home.

When the cars that bore the party drove up to the doors of the Grange, and the butler opened them, greeting them gravely, for all the world as if they had left only yesterday, Mrs. Byrne was standing in the great hall, surrounded by the trophies which the professor had won in former expeditions into the Unknown.

There was no bunting fluttering about the grounds. Studley village was gay with it, they had been told, but they were to sample that later.

Rosa flew into her mother's arms, and tears of joy were shed. Then Harry Franklin bore her apart, and Adam followed. Then it was the professor's turn.

Heads were turned aside as husband and wife met after many years.

The professor's voice was husky, his eyes were dim, and he sniffed uncomfortably as he introduced, first of all, Jimmy Brown, then Sandy McTavish, and, last of all, the Hokahula, Kyhte the guide.

"I understand, my dear," he remonstrated, "that you have been squandering a deal of money upon running an airship. From what I have seen of him, my son Adam would have managed very well without it. Yet we might have delayed our home-coming another month or two, perhaps; and there were, indeed, numberless compensations in our early rescue. I thank you! Kyhte"—here he turned to the Hokahula—"will you be so good as to strip—"

"My dear George—" protested Mrs. Byrne.

"Only to the waist, my dear," the professor added. "Remark now how even and regular are the markings of the skin of these Hokahulas. I have already been informed by jealous colleagues of the Geographical Society—ahem—I need mention no names—that there is no such kingdom

(Continued overleaf.)

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TOM MERRY & CO. IN CANADA!

(Continued from page 24.)

"As that Indian chap at Greyfriars would say, the betternotfulness is terrific!" murmured Monty Lowther. And Tom Merry & Co. went in to supper and to relate their adventures over the supper-table to Mr. and Mrs. Wildrake. As they fully expected, the rancher did not think for a moment of bargaining with the gunman. The next morning a puncher rode away to Lone Pine with a message for Sergeant Macgregor, of the North-west Mounted Police, and that afternoon the sergeant came along to take away the prisoners. Rube Redway went to his trial and the long term of imprisonment that followed it, and his secret went with him, unspoken.

"But, affah all," Arthur Augustus remarked to his comrades, "we know that there is gold at the Pine Tree Patch—and the only question is to find it, you know. That's all, deah boys."

"That's all," agreed Wildrake.

"And I'm jollay well goin' to woot it out, you know, before we leave the wanch," said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard it as bein' up to me, affah the hospitality we have received from your patah, Wildwake. We're goin' pwospectin', you fellows, and we're goin' to unearth that gold-mine, what?"

And Tom Merry & Co. agreed that they were, though only Arthur Augustus was feeling absolutely confident of unearthing the treasure of the Pine Tree Patch.

THE END.

(Now look out for "The Dude of the Boot Leg Ranch!"—next week's splendid holiday story of Tom Merry & Co. You'll enjoy every line of it, chums!)

BEYOND THE SILVER GLACIER!

(Continued from previous page.)

as the Kingdom of the Hokahulas, no such city as Barcoomba, that the Mountain of the Hidden Crest does not exist, that the Silver Glacier is a wash-out."

Kyhte turned to show his magnificent proportions and his wonderful markings of brown and white.

"Next Wednesday evening, at eight o'clock," the professor went on, "I shall mount the platform and tell my story, my dear, and Kyhte shall bear witness to the truth. Kyhte, put on your clothes again."

Then the professor turned to Adam.

"Adam, dear boy—my son!" he cried, in a voice which shook with emotion. "You are all, and yet no more than I always believed you to be! It is due to you, to your faith, your courage, and the persistence with which you pursued your quest, that we have all been brought safely home."

With a laugh, Adam pulled from his pocket a cap of skin, with pieces of burnished metal adorning it. He stuck it sideways upon the professor's head.

"Howh! Whowh!" he called aloud, whilst Kyhte dropped upon his knees in reverential worship. "Harry, Rosa, Sandy, Jimmy Brown, salute your king!"

And the professor, after polishing the lenses of his horn-rimmed glasses, beamed upon them proudly as they cheered.

"My faithful, loyal subjects," he cried, "I thank you!"

THE END.

(All good things come to an end some time or another, but take comfort, chums, for in next week's bumper issue there's a grand new school serial starting, which deals with the frolicsome adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co., the Chums of Rookwood. This new story is entitled: "The Rookwood Dictator!" Don't miss the opening chapters, whatever you do!)

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