

SPECIAL STORIES by MARTIN CLIFFORD & OWEN CONQUEST inside!

EVERY WEDNESDAY

The GEM 2^d

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THE RED MAN'S VENGEANCE !

Powerless to stay the hand of the treacherous Redskin, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy awaits his fate!
(See "Secret of Pine Tree Patch," inside.)

ALONE IN THE FOOTHILLS! When a Redskin has a grudge against a white man nothing will shift him from his purpose! In this case Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is the unfortunate "paleface" who has incurred the enmity of Hawk Nose, the cattle-thief. And Hawk Nose vows to win the St. Jim's junior's scalp, to level matters!

THE SECRET OF PINE TREE PATCH!



A Grand, New Long Complete School Story, dealing with the further thrilling adventures of Tom Merry & Co. on holiday in British Columbia.

BY
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1. Gussy's Peril!

"**L**OOK out!"
"Gussy!"
"Wake up!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, turned his head in a sedate and leisurely manner.

At St. Jim's, in far-off Sussex, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the glass of fashion and the mould of form, and he set the Lower School an example of the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. On the Boot Leg Ranch, in British Columbia, Arthur Augustus had not changed his manners and customs.

Voices shouted to him from all sides in tones of alarm.

From the veranda of the ranch-house Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther shouted in unison. From the doorway Blake and Kit Wildrake yelled to him. From the bunkhouse three or four punchers roared. From the cookhouse Bunchy, the cook, yelled.

Arthur Augustus, who was strolling sedately at a little distance from the buildings, did not allow himself to be disturbed.

He only glanced round in a leisurely manner to ascertain the cause of the disturbance.

"Gussy! Look out!"
"Run for it, you ass!"
"Quick!"

"Oh, you chump! Move!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "There seems to be a fearful lot of excitement!"

Thud, thud, thud!

From his leisurely manner, Arthur Augustus might have been strolling in the old quad at St. Jim's.

But that was only till he had looked round.

The next moment he jumped.

"Gweat Scott!"

A wild-looking longhorn was charging in from the

plain with a horseman on its track. The horseman was Long Jim, and he had just cast his lariat and missed. A sudden leap of the escaping steer had caused the rope to slide off over its back, and Long Jim was pulling in the trailing rope savagely. And the steer, charging on unchecked, was rushing right at Arthur Augustus, and was only a dozen yards distant from him.

Arthur Augustus stared blankly at the thudding steer for a second. Then, with a total disregard of the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere, the swell of the Fourth made a wild leap to escape.

He just dodged the charge of the longhorn.

The huge, heavy animal thundered by him with lowered head.

"Gussy!" gasped Blake.

"Hoof it!" roared Wildrake.

"Oh cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus did not need telling to hoof it now that he had seen his danger.

The savage animal was turning on him, and D'Arcy had not a second to lose.

A "bad" steer is a dangerous animal at close quarters, and one look at the red savage eyes, the foaming mouth, the tossing horns had been enough for Arthur Augustus. He ran for his life.

Thud, thud, thud!

The horse corral was the nearest shelter, and Arthur Augustus made for it at a frantic speed, with the wild steer thundering behind.

His comrades came running towards the spot, but they were too distant to render aid. Long Jim's lasso whizzed in the air again, but again the tossing head escaped the rope. Close behind Arthur Augustus as he ran thudded the hoofs of the steer. Before him was the high timber wall of the corral, and it was a matter of seconds now. Arthur Augustus, gathering all his strength for the effort, made a wild leap to reach the top of the corral wall.

His hands clutched the top of the timber fence, and he hung on.

Crash!

It was only a moment later that the lowered head of the steer crashed on the corral fence.

Strong and stout as it was, the fence shook under the terrific shock.

"Oh cwikey!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

There was a fearful bellow from the steer as it backed off the timber. Arthur Augustus made a desperate effort to drag himself higher. But his fingers slipped on the wood and his hold was lost.

Bump!

"Oh!"

Arthur Augustus dropped at the foot of the fence, and all the breath that was left to him escaped in a gasp.

Bellow!

The enraged steer whirled round on him. There was a cry of horror from the juniors.

Crack!

It was the sudden report of a .45. The steer gave a sudden lurch, and the lowered head thudded to the ground, and the great beast toppled over. It crashed down only a yard from the panting swell of St. Jim's.

Bunchy, the cook, in the doorway of the cookhouse, held a smoking Colt in his fat and greasy hand and grinned.

The steer shivered and lay still.

Arthur Augustus sat up dazedly. Instinctively he groped for his eyeglass and jammed it into his eye.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped faintly.

Tom Merry & Co. came tearing up breathlessly. But their help was not needed now. The steer lay still.

"Gussy!" panted Blake.

"Safe?" exclaimed Wildrake.

He helped the gasping junior to his feet.

"Yaas, wathah!" panted Arthur Augustus. "All wight, deah boys! Wight as wain!"

"I thought you were a gener!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! It was wathah a nawwow escape, you know. Did—did somebody shoot the steer?" stuttered Arthur Augustus, staring blankly at the huge body stretched on the plain.

Long Jim rode up, lasso in hand.

"I guess you've got fool's luck, kid!" he said. "If Bunchy hadn't dropped that steer, I reckon you'd be goin' up to the sky now. You sure shouldn't walk about a ranch with your eyes shut."

"I was not walkin' about with my eyes shut, deah boy," gasped Arthur Augustus. "But I did not see that howwid animal, you know, as I was lookin' anothah way. Oh deah! I have been thwown into quite a fluttah!"

"Good shot, Bunchy!" called out Long Jim.

Bunchy grinned and nodded.

Arthur Augustus collected up his Stetson and replaced it on his noble head. He was still very breathless, and he had some severe aches in his noble person. A drop upon the hard ground from a ten-foot wall was not a slight matter. Arthur Augustus felt as if all his aristocratic bones had been jarred out of place.

He limped over to the cookhouse, where Bunchy the cook grinned at him cheerily. Bunchy the cook hitherto had not found much favour in Gussy's eyes. Bunchy was fat, and he was greasy, and he was shiny, and he had a weakness for fire-water. More than once the juniors had seen the punchers rag the ranch cook when they had come in hungry from the range and found that dinner was not ready, owing to that little weakness of Bunchy's. Once they had seen the Boot Leg outfit trail Bunchy through the horse-pond at the end of a lariat to sober him up. More than once they had heard Mr. Wildrake threaten to "fire" him if he was found drinking again. But Bunchy, with all his faults, was a wonderful cook, and popular with the outfit on that account at least. Arthur Augustus had felt a considerable distaste for a man whom he had seen under the influence of fire-water. But that feeling was banished now by the service Bunchy had rendered him.

"I am feahfully obliged to you, Mr. Bunchy," said Arthur Augustus. "I should have been goahed if you had not chipped in."

"I reckon that steer would have damaged you some," said Bunchy, with a nod. "You want to keep your eyes peeled on a ranch, kid."

"Yaas, wathah! Thank you vewy much, Mr. Bunchy."

Bunchy grinned and nodded, and went back into the cookhouse. Arthur Augustus walked to the ranch with his friends. He limped as he went.

"Hurt?" asked Wildrake.

"Only a bwuise or two, deah boy—nothin' to speak of."

"I wonder," said Blake reflectively—"I really wonder whether there's any trouble in Canada that Gussy won't hit against during this vacation?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"First he gets lost on the prairie—"

"I was not lost on the pwaiwie, Blake, as I have explained to you a lot of times. I merely missed my way."

"Then he walks under the nose of a mad bull—"

"It was not a mad bull, Blake, and I did not walk undah his nose. I wegard you as an ass!"

"I think we'd better leave Gussy behind when we ride up to the Pine Tree Patch to-morrow," said Blake, shaking his head.

"I should wefuse to be left behind, Blake. Besides, what would become of you youngstahs if I were not there to take care of you?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy limped into the ranch-house, leaving Tom Merry & Co. chuckling.

CHAPTER 2.

An Alarm in the Night!

"WOTTEN!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

It was close on midnight.

A dim moonlight glimmered over the Boot Leg Ranch. Long since the ranch-house had sunk into silence and slumber; every light was extinguished; all was still. In their rooms, Tom Merry & Co. were sleeping the sleep of healthy youth, dreaming perhaps of the expedition into the foothills that had been planned for the morrow. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, generally a sound sleeper, was restless.

It was his adventure of the afternoon that had done it. In several places, Arthur Augustus had blue bruises, and they ached considerably. Gussy was not the fellow to make a fuss about such matters, and he had not groused. But those little lingering aches disturbed his slumber. He wanted very much to get a good night's sleep, for there was a long and hard ride before the juniors the next day. But the more he tried to sleep, the more wakeful he found himself. He dropped off several times, but only into little "cat-naps," and woke up again. Finally he gave up the attempt, and turned out of bed, and pronounced that it was "wotten."

There were two beds in the room, one of them occupied by Jack Blake. From Blake's bed came a sound of steady breathing. Jack Blake, at least, was not troubled by sleeplessness. Arthur Augustus bumped into a chair and set it rocking, and tripped over a boot and uttered an exclamation without disturbing Blake. Blake was sleeping as soundly as he had ever slept in the old dormitory in the School House at St. Jim's, rather to Gussy's disappointment. He would have been rather pleased had Blake awakened also, to keep him company in the small hours.

It was dimly lonely for the hapless Gussy, as the only fellow awake in a sleeping household. He walked to and fro in the room, in his pyjamas, and then went to the window and stared out into the moonlight. The window was a french window, and opened on the wooden veranda which ran round three sides of the house. It

stood open to admit the fresh air; the night in the Canadian summer was very warm. Standing at the open window, D'Arcy could see the bunkhouse in the distance, where the punchers were asleep. Had a light shown in the bunkhouse, Gussy would have been tempted to sally forth, and seek the company of the punchers, among whom he had made many friends since coming to Boot Leg. But the bunkhouse was dark and silent under the moon.

"Oh, wotten!" mumbled Arthur Augustus.

He rubbed several aching spots, and yawned dimly. Then he went to Blake's bedside.

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"Blake, deah boy!" he murmured.

Only a deep and steady breathing answered him.

"Blake, old chap!"

"Mmmmmmm!"

D'Arcy took Blake by the shoulder and shook him. Jack Blake's eyes opened, and he blinked in the gloom.

"Mmmmm!" mumbled Blake. "Wharrer marrer? Mmmmm!"

"Are you awake, deah boy?"

"Oh! That you, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What's the matter?"

"Nothin', old chap!"

"You frabjous fathead! Have you woke me up because there's nothing the matter?" hissed Blake.

"Weally, old fellow——"

"You foozling idiot——"

"Bai Jove! The fact is, old chap—pway keep your tempah—I was wonderin' wethah you would care for a game of chess."

"A—a—a what?" gasped Blake.

"Chess, deah boy. I have a set of pocket chess, you know, and we can light a candle. What do you think?"

Jack Blake did not explain what he thought. He was tired, and he was sleepy. But he was not too tired or sleepy to deal with a fellow who woke up at midnight to ask him to play chess.

He sat up in bed and grasped his pillow with both hands. Arthur Augustus, peering at him in the gloom, received a sudden shock. The pillow met his features with a startling concussion, and Arthur Augustus uttered a startled ejaculation and sat down on the floor.

"Ow! Gwoooogh!"

Blake, still grasping the pillow, glared down at him ferociously.

"Gerrup, you fathead! Come here, you chump! Have another, you blithering idiot! Waking a fellow up in the middle of the night! I'll give you chess! Just you come in reach, you foozling chump!"

Arthur Augustus backed away before he scrambled to his feet. He did not want any more of the pillow.

"Gwoogh! You fwightful waffian!"

"Shut up!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Go to sleep, you footling fathead!"

"But I cannot sleep, deah boy——"

"Let me sleep, then, you blithering cuckoo. Do you want any more of this pillow, you putty-headed chump?"

"I wefuse to listen to such oppwobwious expwessions, Blake, and I wegard you as an uttah beast."

"Shurru!"

"Wats!"

Obviously, Blake was in no mood to sit up and play chess. Arthur Augustus gave up that idea, and Blake settled down to sleep again. He was fast asleep in two minutes, and D'Arcy drifted to the window and stared out into the moonlight. He was bared with his own company, but he did not want Blake's now; and though he thought of visiting the other fellows' rooms to see whether they were awake, he gave up the idea.

"Oh, wotten!" he repeated dismally.

He threw on some clothes at last, and stepped out on the veranda. It occurred to him that he might induce a

slumberous mood by pacing up and down in the fresh night air. The firm planks made no sound under his feet as he shuffled along in his slippers. He reached the end of the veranda, and stood looking over the pine rails. The fresh wind from the Porcupine Mountains was cool and refreshing. The swell of St. Jim's gave a slight start, as he stood looking over the rail. In the quiet stillness of his surroundings something had moved, like a shifting shadow, though no sound had come to his ears.

"Bai Jove! What was that?" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Close by the house, the shadows were deep, and the interior of the veranda was in darkness. But there was something stirring in the shadows, and D'Arcy, with a quick beating of the heart, wondered what it was. Something, or somebody, was moving close by the wooden veranda in stealthy silence.

Arthur Augustus stood quite still and watched. The shadow stirred again, this time on the steps of the veranda. With a thrill at his heart Arthur Augustus realised that he was not alone on the veranda now—only a dozen feet from him that stealthy shadow lurked and lingered. Who or what it could be the junior could not guess; but he knew that the newcomer, whoever he was, could mean no good. His silence and stealth were proof enough of that.

A dim form loomed in the shadows, and a gleam of moonlight fell for an instant on a dark, coppery face.

It was an Indian!

The shadow moved again and stopped at the open window of the room D'Arcy had left ten minutes before. There it remained motionless, the head bent, listening. D'Arcy was aware of something that glimmered and gleamed in the shadows. He knew that it was a bared knife. His heart beat almost to suffocation.

In the Boot Leg Ranch none dreamed of danger; all was silent and buried in slumber. Yet there on the veranda, close to the open window, lurked a stealthy Redskin, knife in hand. From the bottom of his heart Arthur Augustus was thankful that he had been sleepless that night. He had had but an instant's glimpse of the coppery face, but something familiar in it had struck him. He knew who the man was—it was only a week since he had seen Hawk Nose the Chilcoat.

It was Arthur Augustus who had captured Hawk Nose, the cattle-thief. The Redskin had been allowed to go after the stolen cattle had been recovered. Arthur Augustus had remembered for several days the bitter, black look of hatred that the cattle-thief had given him when he went. He knew why Hawk Nose was creeping stealthily into the ranch-house, knife in hand. Hawk Nose, now an outcast from his tribe, was seeking his enemy.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus faintly.

Hawk Nose, standing half in the open window, was listening with bent head. Obviously the Redskin had not the faintest suspicion that anyone was out on the shadowy veranda. He was listening to the deep and steady breathing from the room—the breathing of Jack Blake. Arthur Augustus came on tiptoe along the veranda, behind the listening Redskin. His eyes were gleaming.

Crash!

A hard-clenched fist, with all Arthur Augustus' strength behind it, struck the Redskin on the side of the head as he was about to step into the room.

"Ugh!"

Clatter!

The knife dropped on the veranda and the Redskin staggered into the room and fell, taken utterly by surprise by that sudden hefty blow. The next moment Arthur Augustus' voice rang out:

"Wake up! Wake up, you fellows! Dangah! Help!"

Even as his voice rang out the alarm the Redskin leaped up and sprang out upon the veranda again. Arthur Augustus made a clutch at him, but the agile Redskin eluded him and rushed to the rail and leaped over it. There was a rapid patter of running feet and Hawk Nose was gone, vanishing into the night.

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Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, gathering all his strength for the effort, made a wild leap to reach the top of the corral wall. His hands clutched the top of the timber fence, and he hung on. Crash! The next moment the lowered head of the steer crashed on the corral fence. "Oh, owieky!" gasped Arthur Augustus. (See Chapter 1.)

CHAPTER 3.

The Trail of the Moccasin!

"WHAT the thump—"
"Gussy—"
"What—"

A light flashed in the house. Jack Blake rolled out of bed in startled amazement. Voices called from various directions. Arthur Augustus' shouts had awakened the whole household. A shout from the bunkhouse announced that the punchers had been awakened also. Kit Wildrake, in his pyjamas, dashed into the room with a lamp in his hand.

"Gussy, what—"

"He's gone!" panted D'Arcy.

"He—who—what—"

"The Indian!"

"The—the Indian!" repeated Kit Wildrake blankly.

"What Indian?"

"That howwid Wedskin!" gasped Arthur Augustus breathlessly.

"Gee-whiz! What Redskin?"

"You've been dreaming, you silly owl!" hooted Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"What was it—nightmare?" asked Tom Merry, looking in at the doorway with Manners and Lowther.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Of course it was!" hooted Blake. "This is the second time the fathead has woke me up!"

"It was a Wedskin!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Bosh! Where is he, then?"

"He's gone."

"Gone back to dreamland, where he came from!" grunted Blake. "Go to sleep and dream again, fathead!"

"Weally, you uttah ass—"

"Are you sure, Gussy?" asked Wildrake doubtfully.

"Yaas, wathah! I was not asleep, deah boy—"

"What's the trouble?" came the deep voice of Mr. Wildrake. The rancher came to the door of the room with a lamp in one hand and a revolver in the other.

"What is it, Kit?"

"D'Arcy thinks there was a Redskin here—"

"I wepeat that there was a Wedskin!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus hotly. "It was that wottah Hawk Nose! I wecognised him. You see, I walked along the vewandah, as I was unable to sleep, and the howwid wottah came cweepin' up with a knife in his hand—"

"Nightmare!" said Blake.

Mr. Wildrake gave the swell of St. Jim's a rather searching look.

"I guess we'll search, anyhow," he said. He strode through the room and stepped out on the veranda. Two or three half-dressed punchers came running from the direction of the bunkhouse.

"What's the row, boss?" called out Billy Pink.

"Seen anything of an Injun?"

"Oh, holy smoke! No."

"Look round and see if there's any sign of him. Mr. D'Arcy thinks that that Red rascal, Hawk Nose, is hornin' in here."

"I guess we'll root him out if he's anywhere around, boss."

Half a dozen punchers proceeded to search about the ranch-house. Mr. Wildrake watched them from the veranda. He was strongly inclined to suspect that it was a case of nightmare. Tom Merry & Co. had no doubt about that.

"Nerves, old man," said Blake. "Just nerves, you know."

"You silly ass!" howled Arthur Augustus. "If you insinuate that I am nervous, Blake, I will punch your sillay nose!"

"Well, where's your giddy Redskin?" asked Manners. "He has bolted, you ass—as soon as I gave the alarm!"

"Sure you were awake?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"I am quite suah, Lowthah."

"Well, you know what a howling ass you are, Gussy," said Blake in an argumentative tone.

"Weally, Blake—"

"But what happened, Gussy?" asked Tom Merry.

"I stwuck the beast a feahful blow, and he dwopped his knife and wolled ovah," said Arthur Augustus.

"But he was up like lightnin' and boltin'."

Blake chuckled.

"He dropped the knife?" he asked.

"Yaas."

"Did he stop to pick it up?"

"Certainly not. He was off like lightning."

"Then the knife's still there, in that case," grinned Blake.

"Bai Jove, I nevah thought of that!"

"Let's look for it," chuckled Blake. "If we don't find it—I mean, when we don't find it you'll admit it was just a nightmare, Gussy!"

"I wegard you as an ass, Blake!"

"Come on!" said Wildrake, and the juniors went out on the veranda, Kit Wildrake flashing his light to and fro.

There was a sudden gleam in the light of the lamp.

"Great Scott!" gasped Blake.

With an extraordinary expression on his face Blake stooped and picked up a knife. It was a short, keen Indian knife, with crude carving on the buckhorn handle. Blake held it up.

"Any of you fellows drop that here?" he asked.

Kit Wildrake took the knife with a very grave face and examined it. Then he crossed the veranda to his father and handed it to him. Mr. Wildrake's bronzed face set hard as he looked at it.

"That's an Injun knife, popper."

"Sure!" assented the rancher.

"I guess there was a Redskin here, just as Gussy says."

"You've said it, Kit."

"My only hat!" murmured Blake.

"Do you still think it was a nightmare, Blake, you ass?" asked Arthur Augustus crushingly. "Do you think I dweamed that knife, you duffah?"

"There was a Red here," said Wildrake, rejoining the juniors. "I'm going to get my clobber on and look for the villain."

"Same here!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors hurried on their clothes and hurried out of the ranch-house. All the outfit were awake and up now, and voices called from various directions. Long Jim was heard shouting from the corrals.

"There's an Injun's track here, you 'uns."

"This way!" called out Wildrake, and the juniors rushed to the spot.

Long Jim, lantern in hand, pointed out the footprint. It was the mark of an Indian moccasin.

"I guess that clinches it," said Wildrake.

The Canadian junior picked up another footprint a few minutes later, and then another and another was picked up. The juniors and the punchers followed the track in an excited crowd, every hand grasping a weapon now. It was clear that the Redskin had crept up to the ranch-house under the shadow of night with murderous intent. Had Hawk Nose been spotted by the eager searchers, undoubtedly he would have been riddled with bullets. But the Redskin was gone.

The track of the moccasin was picked up again and again, and it led out on the plain and was lost at last on the well-trodden trail, trampled by thousands of hoofs, that led away across the prairie to Lone Pine. In the midst of innumerable tracks, the print of the moccasin was hopelessly lost.

"I guess he's made his get-away," said Long Jim. "But we'll sure round up the dog-goned scallywag to-morrow."

And the juniors returned to the ranch, though there was little more sleep for them that night.

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CHAPTER 4.

Up in the Foothills!

"Gussy, old man!"

"Yaas."

"Not feeling nervous?"

"What about, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus innocently.

Kit Wildrake smiled.

It was a sunny morning, and after breakfast Tom Merry & Co. turned out to prepare for the expedition they had planned for that day. The incident of the night had been rather a shock to the St. Jim's juniors, but Arthur Augustus was certainly showing no sign of nervousness. Undoubtedly it was a shock to him to discover that a savage Redskin was after his scalp; but the discovery had no effect on his noble nerves.

"I guess the boys will get that scallywag," said Wildrake. "Popper's sent out a dozen men to ride for him."

"What will happen to him if they catch him, deah boy?"

"Well, if he surrenders pronto, I guess he will be roped in and handed over to the Mounted Police at Rainbow," said Wildrake.

"And if not—"

"If he gives any trouble, he will stop a bullet, and I guess it won't be any loss," answered the Canadian junior. "Anyhow, I reckon you needn't worry about the cuss, Gussy."

"I am not wowwyin' about him, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "I suppose he cannot help feelin' wevengeful, bein' a savage. Wevengeful feelin's are shockin' bad form, but I suppose a Wedskin would not undahstand that."

"You see, he's got it in for you," said Wildrake, smiling. "You made him a prisoner when he was stealing cattle, and we forced him to guide us to recapture the stolen steers, and his tribe have turned him down for giving them away. He's an outcast from his tribe now, and he wants your scalp to set the matter right, as he looks at it."

"Sort of consolation prize," remarked Monty Lowther.

"He seems to me a vewy howwid chawactah," said Arthur Augustus. "But I hope the punchahs will not shoot him. Pewwaps he has cleahed off."

"I hope so," assented Wildrake.

But Wildrake did not think so. It was clear that Hawk Nose, now an outcast from his tribe, had set his savage mind upon the scalp of his enemy, and he was not likely to quit the trail of revenge unless he was roped in and put where he could do no harm. The punchers were riding far and wide hunting for him; but if he was not captured, it was only too probable that he would haunt the vicinity of the Boot Leg Ranch, looking for another chance.

"Well, if he hangs around the ranch again, he won't find Gussy here," said Blake. "We shall be far enough away for some time to come."

"That's all the better, in the circumstances," remarked Tom Merry.

"Sure!" assented Wildrake.

"Oh, bothah the fellow!" said Arthur Augustus carelessly. "I am not wowwyin' about that beastly Wedskin. I am thinkin' of the gold-mine we are goin' to discover at the Pine Twce Patch, deah boys."

"Perhaps!" said Wildrake, laughing.

"Anyhow, it will be fun, camping out in the foothills," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Bunchy came out of the cookhouse and grinned at the juniors as they were saddling up.

"All ready, you 'uns!" he said.

And Bunchy went for his horse.

Mr. Wildrake had given his consent to that expedition into the foothills, but perhaps he had not so great a faith in the ability of the schoolboys to look after themselves as the juniors had. Bunchy the cook was assigned to accompany them. It was a busy time at the ranch, and all the punchers had plenty to do; but Bunchy could be spared, his half-breed assistant taking his place in the cookhouse during his absence. Bunchy had been a prospector for gold in his earlier days, and he had the knowledge of the subject which the St. Jim's

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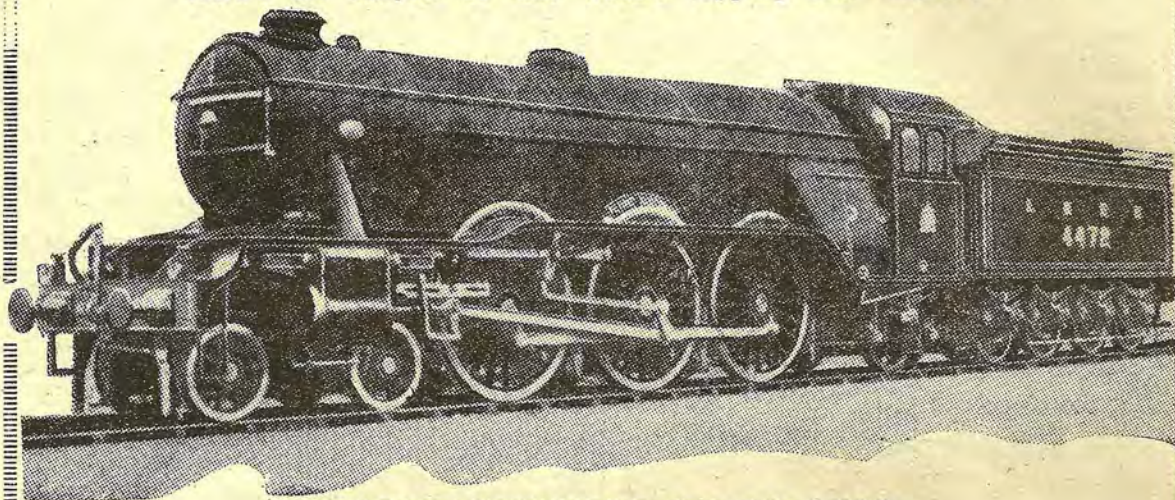
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fellows decidedly lacked. They were keen enough to search for the supposed gold-mine in the foothills; but it was quite possible that they might have walked over it without knowing that it was there. Of the St. Jim's party, only Wildrake had had any experience in that line.

That the gold-mine existed somewhere in the valley in the foothills known as the Pine Tree Patch, all the juniors were assured. Rube Redway, the American gunman, knew where it was located; but Redway was in prison now, and he had kept his secret. Redway's desperate attempts to get possession of the Pine Tree Patch were a proof that his belief in the gold-mine was well founded. The American gunman was out of the game now; and with an experienced prospector in the party, Tom Merry & Co. had every hope of locating the "pay-dirt."

They saddled their horses and examined their rifles with care. Bunchy packed the baggage on the pack-horse, and the juniors noticed that Kit Wildrake kept a rather watchful eye on him.

"No fire-water in that pack, Bunchy?" said the rancher's son rather sharply.

"Nary a drop!" said Bunchy.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

The juniors were well aware of that little weakness of the ranch cook. They rather liked Bunchy, who was fat and good-tempered and always cheerful. But cer-

tainly they would not have liked the ranch cook to indulge in one of his "benders" while they were camping out in the mountains.

"I guess I'll look through the traps, Bunchy," said Wildrake. "We don't want to take too little—and I guess we don't want to take too much."

Bunchy grinned.

"If you find a drop of pizen in them bags, young Kit—"

"I guess I'm going to make sure about that."

And Wildrake went carefully through the packs. On all matters but one Bunchy was to be trusted. But on the matter of fire-water it was impossible to be too careful.

However, there was no trace of a supply of fire-water in the baggage, and Wildrake was satisfied.

The juniors mounted at last and took the trail to the north-west, Bunchy leading the pack-horse as he followed them.

"Oh, thunder!" exclaimed Bunchy suddenly. "I guess I've forgotten my gun! You 'uns keep on; I'll be arter you."

"Buck up, then!" said Wildrake.

"Sure!"

Wildrake took the led horse and Bunchy dashed back to the cookhouse for his "gun."

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A few minutes later he came galloping after the party, with his big Colt in the holster at his belt.

The party rode up the course of the Rainbow River and followed the gorge into the foothills.

It was in the afternoon that they rode into the valley where, a few weeks before, they had encountered Rube Redway and his gang of gunmen.

In the summer sunshine the valley in the foothills stretched green and welcoming after the rough rocky trail the party had followed from the plains. All was silent and solitary there—silent save for the murmur of the Rainbow over its rocky course. In a loop of the stream stood the tall, solitary pine from which the valley took its name, and near it were the burnt remains of the old stockman's hut.

"I guess this is where we're camping," said Kit Wildrake, drawing rein near the burnt hut. "I guess we've got the valley to ourselves this time. Rube Redway and his gang won't be horning in to give us any trouble. We'll put in a week here looking for the mine."

"I guess if there's any pay-dirt in this valley I'll nose it out, young Kit," said Bunchy. "I guess I've prospected for gold from the Yukon down to Colorado. You leave it to me."

"Grub first," said Wildrake, with a laugh.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus.

And the schoolboy gold-seekers camped, a camp-fire was built, and Bunchy soon produced an excellent meal. After which Tom Merry & Co. rested in the grass as the sun sank lower behind the Porcupine Mountains and discussed their plans for the morrow.

CHAPTER 5.

"Sign!"

"BUNCHY!"

"Yep?"

"Look after the camp, old-timer, while we take a stroll round the valley," said Wildrake.

"Yep!"

Tom Merry & Co. detached themselves from the grass. After the rough journey up from the plains they were not disposed to begin the search for "pay-dirt" in the valley. But they were disposed for a stroll round the Pine Tree Patch before turning into their blankets for the night.

Bunchy, the cook, eyed them rather curiously. There was a sly, surreptitious expression on the cook's fat face which made Wildrake give him a sharp look. But for the fact that he had ascertained that there was no "fire-water" in the baggage, Wildrake would have suspected that Bunchy was glad to see them go in order to give him an opportunity to sample his favourite stimulant. But Wildrake had made sure on that point, and after a sharp look at Bunchy, he turned away with his comrades.

The round red ball of the sun was almost touching the line of mountains in the west, sinking away towards the Pacific. A golden glow filled the valley, shut in on all sides by towering cliffs, split by deep, shadowy gorges and ravines. The juniors sauntered away cheerily, Wildrake glancing back once or twice at the fat figure of the cook seated on a log by the camp-fire. The day had been very hot, but as night came near, it was chilly in the mountain air, and

Bunchy had banked up the fire with pine cones and logs.

"What's the trouble, Wildrake?" asked Tom Merry, noticing the somewhat uneasy expression on the Canadian junior's face.

"I guess that pesky galoot Bunchy has got something on his mind," said Wildrake. "I don't quite make him out!"

"He's a jolly good cook!" said Tom, with a smile.

"Sure. I guess popper would have fired him before this if he hadn't been!" said Wildrake. "But he's a man, and we all like him, only—well, I reckon I made sure about the juice."

"Bai Jove! It is wathah howwid for a man to have dwinkin' habits!" said Arthur Augustus. "Puttin' an enemy in his mouth to steal away his bwains, you know, as Shakespeah says."

"I guess he wouldn't put it into his mouth if he had any brains," said Wildrake. "Bunchy's a good man, but he's a born fool. Still, I guess he hasn't any of the muck with him now, so it's all right!"

He looked back again, but the camp was out of sight now, only a column of smoke in the distance indicating where it lay.

Wildrake led the way towards the narrow, rocky gorge by which the party had ridden into the valley. There the Rainbow stream splashed on its way to the plains, leaping from rock to rock in a series of sparkling cascades. Wildrake stopped at the head of the gorge and stood staring down along the course of the leaping Rainbow. The valley was still golden in the glow of the sunset, but the narrow gorge was growing deeper and deeper in shadow.

"Looking for something?" asked Tom Merry, rather puzzled.

Wildrake nodded.

"I guess I was thinking of that Injun," he replied.

"Hawk Nose?"

"Yep!"

"Oh!" said the juniors all together. They had almost forgotten the existence of the outcast Chilcoat.

"Of course, it ain't likely," said Wildrake slowly.

"But an Injun on the trail is a good bit like a blood-hound. It's just on the cards that Hawk Nose may have spotted us starting for the hills, and if he spotted Gussy in the outfit, I guess he would follow on. You see, he's got it in for Gussy. He won't let Gussy go back to St. Jim's with his roof on if he can help it. When an Injun gets an idea like that fixed in his cabeza, nothing short of a bullet will knock it out!"

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's removed his Stetson hat and ran his hand over his well-brushed, carefully-parted hair. The thought of an Indian scalping-knife circling his noble head gave Arthur Augustus quite an uncomfortable feeling.

"Gussy is really in want of a hair-cut!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"It's not a joking matter if that scallywag Hawk Nose has really hit the trail after us, though!" said Wildrake. "I guess it's not likely; but, all the same, we'll keep watch at night while we're in the hills."

"Yes, rather!" said Blake.

Wildrake scanned the gorge with keen eyes, but there was nothing to be seen save the great rocks and the leaping stream. The juniors moved on at last, tramping through the rich grass of the lonely valley. The bare possibility that a vengeful Redskin might be on their trail gave them rather a thrill. Wildrake's eyes were keenly on the ground, and they knew that he was looking for sign.

The Canadian junior stopped suddenly.

His lips set hard.

He dropped on his knees, carefully scanning the grass. Tom Merry & Co. followed his glance, but the grass told them nothing.

Wildrake drew a deep breath.

"I guess we've got to keep our eyes peeled, you-uns," he said quietly. "Whether it's Hawk Nose or not, there's been an Injun here recently. That print was made by a skin moccasin."

"Bai Jove! I weally do not see the pwint, Wildwake."

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Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood quite still, and watched. A dim form loomed in the shadows of the veranda, and a gleam of moonlight fell, for an instant, on a dark coppery face. It was an Indian! The shadow stopped at the open window of the room D'Arcy had left ten minutes before, where it remained motionless, the head bent, listening. D'Arcy was aware of a bared knife that gleamed in the shadows, and his heart beat almost to suffocation! (See Chapter 2.)

Wildrake smiled.

"It's there, all the same," he said. "An Injun treads lightly—and I guess Hawk Nose has blinded the trail after him. That's the only track I can pick up."

He rose to his feet again and stared about him in the falling shadows. The sun was below the mountain ridges now, and night was setting in. Tom Merry & Co. examined the faint mark the Canadian junior had discovered. But for Wildrake's assurance, they would not have believed that it was made by a human foot.

The Canadian junior moved about the spot scanning the grass. But he shook his head at last.

"It's Hawk Nose right enough!" he said.

"Some other Indian may have wandered here," suggested Tom Merry.

"Sure! But any other Red wouldn't have blinded his trail so carefully. I guess the Injun who passed this way was careful to stir up the grass behind him to obliterate his trail. I reckon only that scallywag Hawk Nose had any reason to do that. He doesn't want us to be wise to it that he's on our track."

"Oh!" said Tom.

"I reckon he followed us up the gorge from the plains—no good looking for tracks there, on the rocks; but I guess he wasn't far behind us when we rode into the valley. Being an Injun, he would figure it out that we might look for sign, and so he blinded his trail after he struck the grass. I dare say I could pick up more sign, if the light lasted, cunning as he's been; but we know

enough. We know there's an Injun in the valley, and it's all Klondike to a Mexican centavo that he's Hawk Nose. We want to keep our eyes peeled from now on. I reckon the galoot is watching us from cover as like as not."

The juniors started rather uneasily, and glanced round into the deepening shadows.

It was a startling thought that the keen, watchful eyes of the vengeful Chilcoot might be upon them in those very moments, from some hidden cover.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "This is gettin' wathah too excitin', you know."

"Just a few!" said Manners, with a slight shiver. "I say, let's get back to the camp."

Wildrake nodded.

"Let's!" he said.

And Tom Merry & Co. walked back to camp, keeping their eyes well about them in the gathering gloom. They were glad to get within sight of the cheerful blaze of the camp-fire again.

CHAPTER 6.

Bunchy Breaks Out!

"BUNCHY!"

"Bai Jove!"

"What the thump—"

Kit Wildrake gritted his teeth.

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"The dog-goned fool! He's been at it!" he muttered.

Bunchy the cook was standing in the radius of the light of the camp-fire. Even at a distance the juniors noticed something unusual in his looks, and as they came closer, they had no doubt what it was. The fat cook had been drinking; somehow or other, it was evident, he had tricked Wildrake, and had brought a supply of the potent fire-water up into the foot-hills.

Bunchy stood a little unsteadily, staring with fixed eyes at the schoolboys as they came up.

His face was no longer the fat, good-humoured countenance they knew. There was a sullen, suspicious expression on it, and a glint in his eyes that boded trouble.

"Gee! You've moseyed in, have you, young Kit?" he growled.

"Yep, you skunk!" rapped out Wildrake. "You gold-darned son-of-a-gun, where did you get the fire-water from?"

Bunchy grinned sarcastically.

"Did you reckon I was hitting this hyer trail without my pizen?" he jeered. "I guess not, young Kit. You see me go back for my gun, hey? I sure put the stuff in my rags then. Savvy?"

And the cook laughed. In his present state, he was pleased and proud of the trick by which he had deceived Wildrake's watchful eyes.

"I see!" said Wildrake. "You left your gun behind on purpose, you gink."

"You've said it!" grinned Bunchy.

He lurched towards the juniors. They surveyed him with grim distaste. Bunchy under the influence of liquor was not a nice-looking man. Arthur Augustus could not help feeling disgusted, but at the same time, he remembered how Bunchy had saved him from the steer the day before. Unpleasant as he now looked, the hapless cook was nobody's enemy but his own.

But Bunchy looked like trouble now. He raised a hand, and pointed unsteadily to Kit Wildrake.

"You've called me names!" he said accusingly.

"I guess I'll call you some more," said the rancher's son scornfully. "You're a dirty, low-down scallywag, Bunchy, and I guess I'll ask popper to fire you off the ranch when we get back."

"I guess Old Man Wildrake will think twice!" said Bunchy. "There ain't a cook like me between Mackenzie and the border. But who cares? I don't want any back-chat from you, young Kit. I want you to savvy this—that I'm boss here. You get me?"

"I guess not, you boozy hobo!" said Wildrake, contemptuously. "Roll yourself in your blankets and sleep it off."

"Who's taking your orders?" roared the cook.

"You are, I reckon. Turn into your blankets instanter, or I'll turn you in, with a trail-rope tied round your legs!"

Bunchy leered uncertainly at the rancher's son. It was obvious that during the absence of the juniors, he had consumed a large quantity of the potent "pizen." An unreasonable rage, born of the liquor that addled his brain, darkened his fat and shiny face.

"You giving me orders!" he hiccuped.

"Yep! Turn in!"

"Don't I keep on telling you that I'm boss here?" roared Bunchy belligerently. "I don't give a continental red cent for you, Kit Wildrake, nor for your pepper, nor for Long Jim, nor for the hull caboodle. I should smile! Put 'em up!"

With a sudden movement, Bunchy dragged the revolver from the holster buckled to his belt.

The weapon flashed up to a level, and, intoxicated as he was, Bunchy's fat hand was steady enough.

"Oh, bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

Bunchy glared at the schoolboys over the levelled revolver.

"Put 'em up!" he roared.

Wildrake set his teeth hard. He measured with his eye the distance between himself and the cook, calculating a spring. But he shook his head. Bunchy was as dangerous at the present moment as any "bad man" who had indulged in "shooting up the town," at Lone Pine. His finger was on the trigger, and it was plain

that he was ready to shoot. The revolver bore on the group of juniors, with a drunken man's finger on the trigger!

"You puttin' 'em up?" snarled Bunchy.

Kit Wildrake raised his hands above his head. Tom Merry & Co., staring at the cook, followed his example.

Bunchy nodded with satisfaction.

"I guess that's better," he said. "I allow I'm a bad man when I'm riled, young Kit. Why, for a red-cent, I'd let daylight right through the lot of you. You hear me?"

He glared at the schoolboys suspiciously.

"You got it that I'm boss here?" he demanded.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, humoring him.

"Any old thing," said Biake.

"Am I the king-pin in this hyer crowd, or ain't I?" demanded Bunchy.

"Sure!" assented Wildrake.

"I guess that's better," said the cook. "Now you galoots sit down, and you can put your paws down. But if you touch a gun, look out for sudden death. I'm watching you."

The juniors sat down on the logs in the light of the camp-fire. They did not think of touching a gun. It would not have been a difficult matter for Wildrake to beat Bunchy at gun-play in his present state; but he did not, of course, want to hurt the ranch cook. But he was deeply and intensely angry, and he was watching for a chance to get the revolver away from the fat cook who had so suddenly and unexpectedly developed into a dangerous "bad man."

Bunchy sat on a log, blinking at the juniors over the gun he still held in his fat hand.

In his muddled and bemused state, he was indignant. Tom Merry & Co. watched the revolver with a rather painful intentness. They were prepared to dodge very promptly if Bunchy began burning powder.

"S'arching a man's traps," said Bunchy indignantly.

"I guess I wasn't coming on this hyer trip without my pizen, young Wildrake. I guess I pulled the wool over your eyes. What?"

"You did!" assented Wildrake.

Bunchy gave a fat chuckle.

"Last time I filled up, what did the boys do?" he said. "They hooked me on to a lasso and trailed me through the horse-pond. You fellers see them. You was laughing, young Wildrake."

"Was I laughing?" asked Wildrake.

"You was! You hear me?" said Bunchy impressively. "Arter this trip I'm goin' back to Boot Leg to shoot up Long Jim. He kicked me. Landed his cowhides right on my pants, I guess. I'm going to shoot up Long Jim!"

"Bai Jove!"

"What about supper, Bunchy?" asked Wildrake.

"I guess you're going to cook the flapjacks for my supper," said Bunchy. "Ain't I boss hyer?"

"Sure!"

"Are you going to cook them flapjacks?" demanded Bunchy, flourishing the revolver.

"I guess you hold all the cards, Bunchy. Where's the fry-pan?"

"Look for it!" said Bunchy. "And look sharp, young Wildrake. I guess you'll be coyote's meat if you raise my dander. You got that?"

Wildrake rose from the log and looked round for the fry-pan. He picked it up, and Bunchy nodded approval. Nothing could have been more submissive than Wildrake's look, and Bunchy was satisfied that he was monarch of all he surveyed. Wildrake began to prepare the flapjacks, Bunchy watching him with drunken gravity. What happened next came with the rapidity of lightning. Wildrake's movement was so quick that it took Tom Merry & Co. by surprise, as well as Bunchy. There was a crash as the fry-pan suddenly knocked the revolver from Bunchy's hand, and the Colt flew through the air and dropped three or four yards away.

"By gum!" gasped Bunchy.

He lurched after the fallen revolver. The next moment the fry-pan came down on his head with a crash, and Bunchy rolled on the ground.

CHAPTER 7.

In the Dead of Night!

WILDRAKE was on the fallen cook with the spring of a jaguar. Bunchy, rolling dazedly on the ground, found himself suddenly pinned down by a sinewy knee.

"Bear a hand here, you-uns!" shouted Wildrake. Tom Merry & Co. did not need calling. They were already rushing forward to help secure the cook.

Half a dozen pairs of hands grasped Bunchy, and he struggled in vain in the grasp of the whole party.

"Gee-whiz! I guess I'll wipe out the hull crowd!" roared Bunchy. "You gimme my gun! I guess—Ow! Oooch!"

Bunchy's struggles were terrific, but they were of no use against the crowd of juniors. He was grasped and secured, and Wildrake picked up a trail-rope and knotted it round the cook's fat wrists. Then he knotted the other end round the cook's ankles, and Bunchy was released. He lay on the ground, blinking dizzily at the juniors.

"Oh! Ow! Ooooch!" he gasped.

the morning as soon as he's able to look after himself. We'll have to leave him tied up for the night, or else he might walk into the river—not that it would be much loss, I guess. He would be a decent galoot if it wasn't for the fire-water, but I'm fed-up with him!"

"I feel wathah sowwy for the poor chap, you know," remarked Arthur Augustus. "He is a disgustin' beast, of course, but he must have a vewy weak chawatah. Pewwaps it would do him good if I was to talk sewiously to him in the mornin'."

"It would serve him right, anyhow," remarked Blake. "Weally, Blake—"

"Jolly good idea!" said Monty Lowther. "Let Gussy talk to him in his well-known bedside manner."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"He's all right for to-night," said Wildrake. "Now, what about turning in? I'm going to take first watch."

"Keeping up the fire?" asked Tom Merry.

Wildrake shook his head.

"Nope. If that pesky coyote, Hawk Nose, is loping around, I guess we'd better not. I don't suppose he's got a gun; but he might have, and I guess we don't

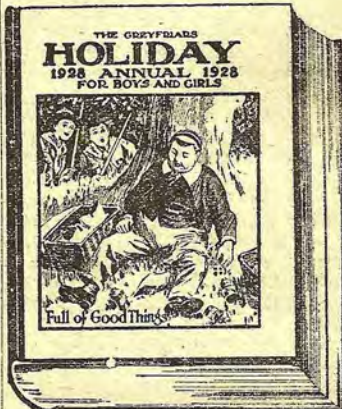
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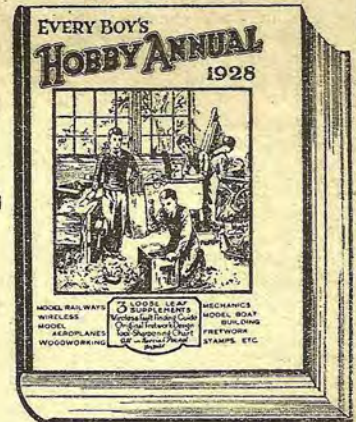
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"I guess that fixes you, you scallywag!" growled Wildrake. "If you had sense enough to know what you're doing, I guess I'd lay my quirt round you, you pesky galoot! Now you're safe till morning."

"You lemme go!" roared Bunchy.

"I guess not."

"Bai Jove, I am weally shocked at you, Mr. Bunchay!" said Arthur Augustus. "Your conduct is absolutely howwid!"

"Roll the pesky scallywag in his blankets," said Wildrake. "I guess it's up to us to look after him till he comes to his senses. We'll talk to him in the morning."

"Yaas, wathah."

Bunchy was rolled in his blankets to sleep, and after a few inarticulate grunts he closed his eyes and snored. Kit Wildrake began to search among the packs for the fire-water. A half-empty bottle was found, and a full one. Bunchy had evidently supplied himself liberally. Wildrake smashed both bottles on a log, and the poisonous liquor ran away and soaked into the earth.

"I guess Bunchy won't get fresh again this trip," said the Canadian junior. "We'll start him home in

want him to be puttin' in target practice with us for the targets."

"Bai Jove, no!"

And the juniors stamped out the embers of the campfire and rolled themselves in their blankets to sleep.

Kit Wildrake sat up to keep watch, his back to the tall pine close by the rippling stream. He had his rifle ready across his knees, and his eyes were very much on the alert. That Hawk Nose was in the lonely valley he was assured, and it was much more likely than not that the vengeful Redskin would approach the camp stealthily in the hours of darkness. If he did so he would find the Canadian junior on the alert.

Over the lonely valley in the Porcupine foothills a crescent of moon sailed, shedding a dim light on the grass and the rippling stream and the great cliffs that enclosed the Pine Tree Patch. From the distance sounded occasionally the wailing cry of a coyote.

The hours passed. Tom Merry & Co. were sleeping soundly, and Wildrake did not call any of his comrades to take turns in watching. With danger hovering over the lonely camp the Canadian junior preferred to trust to himself. His comrades were new to the perilous life

of the foothills, but it was not the first time by many a one that Kit Wildrake had watched through the hours of darkness with danger lurking near.

The Rainbow stream, tumbling over its rocky bed, cut off approach to the camp from one side. On the other side the grassy valley, broken up by innumerable knolls and hillocks and folds of ground, stretched away to the hills. Here and there bushes and clumps of live oaks or cedar loomed up dim in the gloom.

It was long past midnight, and Kit Wildrake, scarcely moving for a moment, was still on the watch, when a sudden glint came into his eyes and his finger sought the trigger of the rifle under his hand.

The slightest stirring of a dim bush a score of yards from the camp had caught his watchful eye. Certainly the St. Jim's juniors would not have been likely to observe it had they been on the watch. But it told its own tale to the keen-eyed Canadian.

Save for the touch of his finger on the trigger of his rifle Wildrake did not stir.

For ten minutes or more there was no motion in the bush that had stirred. Then a shadow moved.

Only a keen eye would have distinguished the almost imperceptible shadow in the dim grass. But Wildrake watched it intently. There was no sound—the figure that was creeping towards the camp moved as noiselessly as a snake. The grass close by the camp was not long, but it almost hid the stealthy form that crept in silence, worming a way along.

Within three yards of the sleeping juniors a head was partly raised at last, and a pair of black, scintillating eyes scanned the camp. Wildrake did not stir. He looked, as he sat there with his back to the pine trunk, as if he had fallen asleep at his post. His face was in deep shadow; under the wide brim of his Stetson hat his eyes watched. The head was wholly raised now, and he could see the dark, coppery face, the bunch of head-feathers, of Hawk Nose, the cutcast Chilcoat. The Indian's face was savagely ferocious, his black eyes gleamed and scintillated as a ray of moonlight caught them. He remained quite still for several minutes, watching; and still Wildrake did not stir.

The Redskin was satisfied at last. He rose on his knees and crept forward.

Crack!

Wildrake stirred at last, and with startling suddenness. His rifle was thrust forward and fired at the same moment. The sudden report rang almost like thunder in the stillness of the night.

A wild, savage yell pealed from the Redskin.

Swift as Wildrake's movement had been, the Redskin's had been as swift. But he had not been able to dodge the rapid bullet. For a second a face splashed with blood glared at the Canadian junior, and then the Redskin was gone.

CHAPTER 8.

Bad for Bunchy!

CRACK! Crack! Crack!

Tom Merry threw aside his blankets and sprang to his feet. The other juniors started up into wakefulness.

"Wildrake—"

"What—"

Wildrake was pumping bullets into the darkness after the fleeing Redskin.

But Hawk Nose was gone. He was wounded, but evidently not disabled, for he had vanished into the night with the swiftness of a deer.

"Wildrake—who—what—"

"All serene, you 'uns," said Wildrake coolly, dropping the butt of his rifle to the ground. "I guess I've winged him, but he was as quick as a rattler. He's gone."

"He—who—what—" stuttered Blake.

"The Injun."

"Bai Jove! Has he been heah?"

Wildrake smiled grimly.

"I guess he was just at your elbow, Gussy, when I pulled the trigger."

"Oh cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus cast a startled look round.

"All O.K.," said Wildrake. "He hadn't a look in—"

I was watching him all the time. I guess I nearly got him—he's got the mark of my bullet across his ugly face to take away with him. But he was as quick as a rattlesnake, durn his copper hide! I guess he didn't stop this time to blind his trail, either," Wildrake chuckled. "We may be able to pick it up in the morning and run him down. I guess I want to make it the last sickness for that pesky red."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Blake. He stared at Wildrake. At that moment the rancher's son did not seem much like Wildrake of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. "You—you—you fired to kill, old chap?"

"I guess if he hadn't been so quick there would be a dead Injun lying about here right now," said Wildrake composedly. "Why, you galoot, if he had had a chance he would have wiped out the whole party and taken seven scalps away with him into the mountains."

"Grooogh!"

"I wathah think I will wemain awake for the west of the night," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a shudder.

"I guess he won't come back," grinned Wildrake. "Anyhow, I'm going to keep watch. Tuck into your blankets, Gussy!"

"I do not feel vewy sleepay now, deah boy."

The rest of the juniors shared Arthur Augustus' feelings. Nobody was inclined for sleep after what had happened. From the blankets that covered Bunchy, the cook, came a querulous voice:

"Hyer, you 'uns, what's the pesky row? Who's been and tied me up like this yer?" howled Bunchy.

Wildrake stepped across to him and looked down grimly at the dazed face of the cook.

"Oh, you're sober now, are you?" he grunted.

Bunchy gave a groan. The shooting had awakened him, and he had awakened sober; and he looked as if he was suffering from the effects of the potent fire-water. He groaned dismally.

"I guess I'm sober as a jedge, young Kit. I say, I've got a head on me like thunder!"

"Serve you right, you pesky gink!"

"I only took a taste of it, young Kit. I never meant for to go and get filled up," groaned Bunchy. "Look here, you let me loose. Look at me—sober as an old jedge!"

"You can stay like that till morning, all the same," said Wildrake coolly. "You asked for it, Bunchy, and you're getting it, plumb sure!"

"Yaas, wathah! You have acted in a vewy shockin' mannah, Mr. Bunchay," said Arthur Augustus. "You were in a disgustin' state. You must be a sillay ass to put an enemy in your mouth to steal away your bwains, you know!"

"My brains sure feels like a sizzling flapjack," groaned the wretched cook. "Oh, what a head I've got on me! Young Kit, give me jest a pannikin of the stuff to pull me round. Jest a tiny pannikin."

"I guess I wouldn't give you a thimbleful to save your life, Bunchy," answered Wildrake, "and I reckon I couldn't, anyhow, because I've thrown it all away."

Bunchy gave a deep, deep groan.

"Not a drop left?" he mumbled.

"Not a suspicion of a drop!"

Groan!

"You can lie there in the ropes and think it over till morning," said Wildrake. "Then you can mosey back to the ranch to be fired, you pesky scallywag!"

"I—I—I guess—"

"Can it!" snapped Wildrake, and he turned away from the hapless Bunchy, who moaned dismally.

Wildrake looked at the juniors.

"You 'uns are sure turning in again?" he asked.

Tom Merry & Co. shook their heads.

"Nothing to stay awake for now," urged Wildrake. "That Red won't come back for another bullet."

"Probably not, deah boy, but I do not feel inclined to go to sleep again, for one," said Arthur Augustus.

"Same here," said Manners.

"Well, if you're staying awake, I guess I'll get some sleep," said Wildrake. "Keep your eyes peeled, though I reckon there's no more danger to-night. Shoot if you see a shadow move."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Wildrake rolled himself in his blankets and was fast asleep in less than two minutes. The startling incident

of the night had had no effect on the Canadian junior's iron nerve.

Tom Merry & Co. sat on the logs with their rifles on their knees, and kept watch. At intervals there came a groan from the wretched Bunchy, who was unable to sleep.

"Do you feel vewy bad, Mr. Bunchay?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at last.

"Yep!" groaned Bunchy.

"You should weally not be such a howlin' ass, you know."

Groan!

"Can I give you somethin' to dwink?" asked D'Arcy. Bunchy jerked himself into a sitting posture, with a hopeful face.

"Yep! Jest a drop of the stuff——"

"I mean watah," explained Arthur Augustus.

"Water!" groaned Bunchy.

"Yaas, watah! Some nice pure watah fwom the stveam. I will get it for you with pleasuah, deah boy!"

mountains to the east, while Bunchy groaned and mumbled, and Kit Wildrake slept peacefully. Very soon after sunrise Wildrake threw off his blankets and rose and stretched himself.

"You 'uns still awake?" he said, with a smile. "I guess we can build a fire now and see about brekker. You awake, Bunchy?"

Bunchy answered with a dismal groan.

Wildrake bent over him and unloosed the rope from his hands and feet. Bunchy sat up, blinking at the juniors. He looked thoroughly wretched, and was evidently ashamed of himself. Wildrake eyed him with a grim expression.

"I guess I ought to lay this trail-rope round you, you pesky scallywag!" he grunted.

"I say, young Kit, I'm pow'ful sorry!" mumbled Bunchy. "I guess I'm going to sign the pledge next time I hit Rainbow!"

"Bai Jove! That is a weally good ideah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy approvingly.



CAMEOS OF SCHOOL LIFE!

The Punishment Room!

This grim apartment stands alone
In solemn isolation;
There is no friendly telephone
To hold communication!
No wireless set is in the room
To make the captive cheerful;
It is as silent as the tomb—
Forbidding, dark, and fearful!

A single bed, a single chair,
These are its sole possessions;
And no apartment anywhere
Could cause such deep depressions.
I rather think a prison cell
Contains more warmth and cheeri-
ness;
In fact, no words of mine can tell
Its utter, dismal dreariness!

Many a schoolboy in disgrace
Has paced its barren flooring;
And felt a loathing for the place
So deadly dull and boring.
Upon its walls, on every side,
Names have been carved in plenty;
The latest name is "Richard Hyde,"
Expelled in Nineteen-twenty.

There have been fellows, doomed to stay
In this most cheerless prison,
Who have contrived to get away
Before the sun had risen,
By making ropes of knotted sheets
And by their aid descending;
But these are most unusual feats,
Risking a tragic ending!

I should improve, if I were Head,
This place of dull detention;
I should instal a feather bed,
And also, I might mention,
A wireless set, a gramophone,
And lots of books and papers;
So that the captives, on their own,
Could cut delightful capers!

Or, better still, I'd lock the door,
And bar the place up tightly;
Leaving its ghosts to pace the floor,
And make weird wailings nightly.
Never again (if I were Head)
Should fellows, for their folly,
Be locked within that room of dread,
So drear and melancholy!

The expression on Bunchy's face, as he looked at Arthur Augustus, made the juniors grin. Bunchy wriggled in his bonds.

"If I could get my hands loose!" he murmured. "Jest let me get a hand loose and let me get at that pesky dude! I'd give him water! Water!"

Evidently a cooling draught from the clear water of the Rainbow did not appeal to Bunchy. His thirst was of a very different kind.

"Bai Jove! I wegard your wemarks as vewy un-gwateful, Bunchay," said Arthur Augustus, "and I am suah that pure watah would do you eval so much more good than that filthy whisky you have been dwinkin'. Are you suah you would not like a cup of watah?"

Bunchy groaned. The mere mention of water seemed to make him feel worse. Evidently the hapless cook was in a suffering state, but Tom Merry & Co. had not much sympathy to waste upon him. Bunchy was finding the way of the transgressor hard.

The juniors watched till the sun came up over the

"Better sign two, while you're about it," said Monty Lowther.

Bunchy blinked at him.

"In case you break one," explained Lowther. "A thing that's jolly likely to happen, in my opinion." Bunchy grinned feebly.

"Turn out and get your feed, Bunchy," said Wildrake. "You're hitting the home trail this morning pronto!"

"I ain't going back and leaving you 'uns yere alone!" said Bunchy. "I wouldn't do it."

"I guess you will, you ornery galoot!"

"Didn't the boss send me along to take care of you?" urged Bunchy. "I ain't going back on that. What will Old Man Wildrake say?"

"I guess he will boot you off the ranch, and serve you right!"

"I ain't going on the home trail," said Bunchy. "I'm hyer to take care of you 'uns, and hyer I stay!"

"And you take care of us by mopping up fire-water and flourishing a six-gun at us!" snorted Wildrake.

"D-d-d-did I do that?" mumbled Bunchy.

"You did, you gink!"

"I never meant for to do it," said Bunchy earnestly.

"Search me! Don't you get rusty with an old pard, young Kit. I ain't going to tell Old Man Wildrake I've left you in the foothills on your own. Not much! Suppose that Injun got you!"

"Can it! You're going!"

"I ain't!" roared Bunchy.

"We're going out to look for that Injun," said Wildrake. "If you're still here when we get back to camp, Bunchy, it's you for bootleather! Chew on that!"

"I tell you——"

"Cheese it!"

And Tom Merry & Co. breakfasted, Bunchy blinking at them with pathetic looks. There was no doubt that the hapless cook was repentant, and that he dreaded returning to the Boot Leg Ranch to face the wrath of Mr. Wildrake. The juniors would doubtless have overlooked Bunchy's outbreak, but Wildrake's face was stern and uncompromising. Wildrake was a kind-hearted fellow enough, but he had "no use" for a man who could not keep sober. Bunchy endeavoured again and again to catch his eye, but the Canadian junior ignored his existence.

After breakfast the juniors prepared to leave the camp. Bunchy sidled up to Arthur Augustus as he was saddling his horse.

"Mister Dude!" he whispered hoarsely.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass on the cook.

"Weally, Bunchay, I have wathah an objection to bein' addressed as a dude!" he said mildly. "It is a howwid American expression."

"Put in a word for me," urged Bunchy. "Didn't I stop that longhorn the other day when you was cornered, mister?"

"You did, deah boy, and I was vewy much obliged."

"Then you put in a word for me," said Bunchy.

"You see, I ain't deserting you 'uns hyer in the foothills. I'm too fond of you."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Old Man Wildrake will be mad!" mumbled Bunchy.

"It's a dollar to a cent that he boots me off the ranch. I guess I don't want to quit Boot Leg. I like the boys too much, savvy?"

Arthur Augustus grinned. He could not help thinking that Bunchy should have thought of this affectionate attachment before he indulged in the potent fire-water.

"I should be vewy pleased to put in a word for you, Bunchay," he said.

"Good for you!" said the cook.

"Only, you see, it is Wildwake's bizney, not mine, and it would be wathah bad form for me to butt in."

"Look hyer——"

"Othahwise I would speak to Wildwake with pleasuah. But in the cires it is imposs for me to do so," said Arthur Augustus. "I assuah you Mr. Bunchay, that I vewy much wegwet bein' unable to intahfeah."

"You pesky jay!" growled Bunchy.

"Weally, deah boy——"

"You ornery dude!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You slab-sided, wall-eyed tailor's dummy!"

And with that the cook left Arthur Augustus to himself.

"I guess some of us will have to stay in camp and guard the traps and the hosses," said Kit Wildrake. "We've got to get that dog-goned Red before we start prospecting for the mine. Two of you fellers had better come with me, and three hang on in camp."

"You can leave the camp to me, young Kit!" urged Bunchy.

"You're hitting the trail for home, you fat guy!"

"I ain't!" roared Bunchy.

"Shut up!"

Tom Merry & Co. were all keen to join in the trail-ing of Hawk Nose, but they realised that the camp had to be guarded. After a little argument, it was

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arranged for the three Shell fellows to remain in camp, and Blake and Arthur Augustus started with the Canadian junior. In the bright morning sunlight they left the camp, Bunchy the cook blinking after them dismally as they went.

CHAPTER 9.

Tracked Down!

KIT WILDRAKE had no difficulty in picking up the trail of the Redskin.

Hawk Nose had fled wildly from the camp, and the prints of his moccasins were plainly marked, and here and there the Canadian junior picked up a trace of blood.



Kit Wildrake's movement was so quick that it took Tom Merry as the fry-pan suddenly knocked the revolver from Bunchy's hand away. "By gum!"

For a considerable distance the trail was followed rapidly enough. At a quarter of a mile from the camp Wildrake stopped and scanned the ground keenly.

"I guess the Redskin stopped here and bound up his wound with some of his rags," he remarked. "He knew we should be after him at daylight, and it won't be easy to follow. But we've got to get him."

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus. "We can't go pwospectin' for the mine with that wottah wootin' aaround on our twack."

"Perhaps he's had enough and cleared out for good," suggested Blake.

Wildrake shook his head.

"I guess not. But we shall see, I reckon. Follow on."

From that point the trail was more and more difficult to follow. The Redskin had obviously expected pursuit when daylight came, and he had trodden lightly, leaving scarcely a sign behind him. But the faintest sign was enough to guide the keen-eyed Canadian junior.

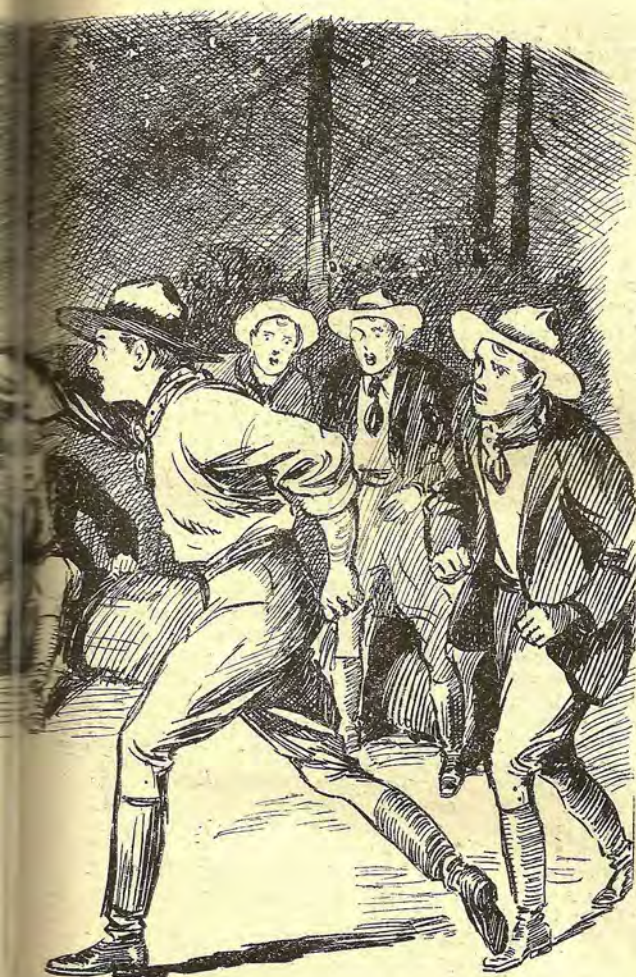
Wildrake was proceeding at a slow walk now, D'Arcy and Blake following him. All three held their rifles ready for use.

The trail led them to the bank of the Rainbow, half a mile below the camp, near the spot where the stream entered the gorge that led to the lower plains.

Wildrake stopped on the water's edge.

"I guess the pesky guy took to the water here," he said. "That's an old Injun trick to blind a trail."

"Then the game's up," said Blake. "Even you can't pick up a trail in running water, Wildrake."



Co. by surprise, as well as Bunchy. There was a crash and the Colt flew through the air, to drop three or four yards from Bunchy. (See Chapter 6.)

"Wathah not!"

"I guess we're getting that Red, all the same," said the Canadian junior quietly. "You galoots hang on here for a bit, while I try along the bank."

Blake and D'Arcy waited while the indefatigable Wildrake scouted along the stream.

They watched him as he disappeared and reappeared among the rocks and boulders of the rugged water-course.

At last he waved his hand to them from a distance down the stream, and they hurried to rejoin him.

The expression on Wildrake's sunburnt face showed that he had picked up the trail again.

"Got it?" asked Blake, scanning the rocky bank.

"Sure!"

"Blessed if I see any sign."

Wildrake smiled.

"The guy left the water here," he said. "There's yellow sand in the bed of the stream, as you can see. He left a wet trail when he left the water, but that's dried up, of course. But there are specks of the river sand among these rocks, and they sure never got there by themselves. He picked them up on his wet moccasins. We can follow the villain from here."

"Lead on, old bean," said Blake.

Wildrake led the way into the narrow, gloomy gorge.

The Rainbow, leaping and tumbling on its rugged way to the plains, filled the gorge almost from side to side.

On one side it foamed and splashed against a sheer wall of rock. On the other was a narrow rocky path, narrowing in places to a mere ledge, three or four feet wide. In places it was only a foot above the water—in other spots it overhung the torrent in steep, precipitous cliffs.

In single file, Wildrake in the lead, the juniors followed the rugged path.

They held their rifles ready now, their hearts beating rather fast. They felt that they were drawing near to their quarry.

Wildrake stopped where a deep cave opened in the cliff at the side of the rugged path. Four or five feet of rough rock separated the mouth of the cave from the torrent that roared by.

"Keep your eyes peeled," muttered the Canadian junior.

"Bai Jove! Do you think—"

"I reckon that's a likely place," Wildrake stood at the opening of the cave, staring intently into its gloomy depths. The roar of the torrent was behind the juniors, but from the cave came no sound. The interior was dark, almost black, and Blake and D'Arcy could see nothing. But a sudden gleam in the darkness caught Wildrake's eye, and he knew that the fugitive was watching him from the shadowy recess in the rocks.

"I guess we've followed him home," said Wildrake coolly. "He's hiding there like a prairie-dog in its hole. His game is to keep hidden in cover and watch us from a distance, waiting for another chance. You won't take your scalp home with you to St. Jim's if that gink can help it, Gussy."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus shuddered.

"But I guess we've got him dead to rights now," said Wildrake. "The ornery cuss figured it out that his trail was lost when he took to the water. I guess he's got his blankets and grub cached in this cave. Anyhow, we've run him down, and I guess he's as good as a dead Injun."

Wildrake had his rifle to his shoulder now, the muzzle within the opening of the cave.

His eye gleamed along the barrel.

Still there was no sound or movement from the shadowy recess. Arthur Augustus touched the Canadian junior on the arm.

"Pway do not shoot, deah boy. Give the wottah a chance to suwwendah."

"Yes, rather!" said Blake hastily. "Wildrake, old man, you can't shoot him down like a dog."

"I guess he's booked for the happy hunting-grounds," growled Wildrake, "but I'll give him a chance." He shouted into the cave. "Hawk Nose!"

There was no answer, save the reverberating echoes of his shout.

"I guess we know you're there, you skunk," called out Wildrake. "Come out with your hands up, you galoot. I give you one minute before I burn powder."

There was a flash of glittering eyes in the gloom of the cave, and the juniors, listening intently, heard a deep-drawn breath. But there was no movement or word from the Redskin.

Crack!

Wildrake pulled trigger, and the report of the rifle awoke a thousand echoes. The bullet crashed on the rocky wall of the cave.

The next instant a figure in ragged buckskin came leaping from the shadows, and the juniors saw a savage coppery face, with burning fierce eyes, and the flash of a knife.

The barrel of Wildrake's rifle crashed on the Indian as he leaped from the cave, and Hawk Nose staggered, his knife dropping on the rocks.

But he recovered himself in a moment and sprang away desperately.

"Shoot!" yelled Wildrake.

Blake and D'Arcy fired hastily at the leaping figure, but both bullets missed in their haste. Wildrake's rifle was at his shoulder again.

Crack!

Even as he fired, the Indian leaped into the boiling torrent, and the water closed over him and swept him away.

"Oh cwumbs!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Wildrake rushed fiercely along the bank, finger on trigger. The Redskin was whirling away in the rushing water, and as he came to the surface again, Wildrake fired. Whether the Redskin was hit or not he could not tell. A dozen yards on the Rainbow fell in a cascade, and the Indian, struggling wildly in the water, was swept over the fall, and disappeared from sight.

"Hang it!" snapped Wildrake.

He clumped the butt of his rifle angrily on the rocks. Blake and D'Arcy hurried to join him, and they stood staring at the sea of foam where the stream roared over the fall.

"He's gone!" muttered Blake, his face a little white.

"I guess I missed him in the water," growled Wildrake. "An Injun has as many lives as a pesky cat, or the fall would be the end of him. Still, I reckon it's ten dollars to a cent that he's drowned or smashed on the rocks below the fall."

"Oh deah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I—I—I hope he'll get away somehow, deah boy."

Wildrake grunted.

"Not much chance of that, luckily," he said. "Your scalp won't be safe on your head, Gussy, so long as that Red is loose. Let's look below the falls."

The juniors moved along the rugged path and scanned the rocky bank below the waterfall. But there was no sign to be seen of Hawk Nose. Dead or alive, he had been swept away by the rushing torrent and had vanished. Wildrake gave another grunt.

"Well, I guess this lets us out," he said. "He may be at the bottom of the water below the falls, or a mile away down the stream by this time. I guess there ain't much chance of even that pesky galoot pulling through alive. Anyhow, this lets us out. Let's get back to camp."

And the juniors tramped back up the gorge to the mountain valley; Blake and D'Arcy with grave faces, Wildrake looking dissatisfied. But whatever had become of the Indian, the trail was at an end now, and the trailers returned to the camp by the tall pine.

CHAPTER 10.

Bunchy Hits the Trail!

BUNCHY, the cook, greeted the juniors with an ingratiating grin as they arrived at the camp. Bunchy evidently was not gone. Over the campfire an iron pot was slung, and from that pot came a most appetising smell. It was a scent that was extremely welcome to the juniors returning from the trail. Bunchy, with a red and shiny face, grinned at them.

"You 'uns come in hungry?" he asked.

"Yes, rather!" said Blake, with a smile.

"What about you, Mister Dude?"

"Weally, Bunchy—"

"I mean Mister D'Arcy," said the cook hastily. "Sharpset, eh?"

"What has happened has wathah taken away my appetite," said Arthur Augustus. "But I am quite weady for lunch, deah boy."

"You ready, young Kit?"

"Can it!" answered Wildrake.

"Look yere—"

"You're not gone!"

"Ain't I come here to cook for you, and help you prospect for pay-dirt?" demanded Bunchy. "Course I ain't gone."

"You dog-goned galoot—"

"You set down on them logs an' let me help you to this stew," said Bunchy. "This is some stew, I'll tell the world."

The juniors could not help grinning. Bunchy had prepared that wonderful stew as a means of making his peace. Five members of the party would probably have overlooked Bunchy's fault and allowed bygones to be bygones. But Kit Wildrake was adamant. He had told Bunchy to "get," and Bunchy had to get. Undoubtedly the party were likely to miss the cook when he departed. Bunchy was a great cook. Bunchy was seeking to make that fact clear.

"Seen anything of the Redskin?" asked Tom Merry. He had noted the rather disturbed looks of Blake and D'Arcy.

"Yep! Seen the last of him, I hope," said Wildrake.

"He's gone down the Rainbow over the falls."

"Phew! Then you found him?"

"Sure."

"It was wathah howwid," said Arthur Augustus. "I twust the wottah got away somehow, but it does not seem pwobable."

The juniors told what had happened in the gorge. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther listened with grave faces; but if the tragic fate of the Indian gave them a shock, they could not help feeling relieved to know that the relentless savage no longer had to be reckoned with.

"I guess that's good news," said Bunchy. "There ain't no good Injun but a dead Injun! You 'uns setting down for grub?"

"You're quitting, you fat gink!" exclaimed Wildrake angrily. "Don't I keep on telling you that we've no use for a drunken hobo about the camp?"

"And don't I keep on telling you that I ain't quitting?" demanded Bunchy. "Didn't yore popper send me along to look arter you? Just a few. I ain't going back to tell Old Man Wildrake that I've left you kids up here in the foothills or your lonesome. No, sircie!"

"You'll get booted, I warn you!"

"Here's your grub, young Kit," said Bunchy. "You eat your oats and don't slang an old pard!"

The juniors did full justice to the meal. The mountain air gave them keen appetites.

Bunchy had excelled himself in the preparation of that meal. It really was, as Bunchy had said, "some" stew. The cook handed out many helpings, and watched the juniors with a fat and beaming face.

But it was all in vain.

Kit Wildrake was a fellow of his word; and after all Bunchy's attempts to ingratiate himself, the order was still to "hit the trail."

"Time you pulled up stakes, Bunchy," said Kit Wildrake. "I'm sorry, old-timer, but you've torn it, you see, an' you've got to travel. Get on your cayuse now and you'll raise the ranch before sundown."

Bunchy blinked at him, more in sorrow than in anger.

"You mean it, young Kit?" he asked.

"From the word go."

"What are you going to do without a cook?"

"Rats!"

"How are you going to spot pay-dirt without me to help you? Ain't I prospected for gold from Klondike to Sonora, and don't I know every sign of pay-dirt with my eyes shut?"

"I guess you can't teach me so much about that as you figure out, Bunchy. Anyhow, we'll chance it!"

"You'll never find that mine," said Bunchy. "You'll miss the grub. You'd better think over it again, young Kit."

"Good-bye!"

"You really mean it?" asked Bunchy sorrowfully.

"Sure! Vamoose and give us a rest."

Bunchy gave a deep sigh and proceeded at last to fasten up his bed-roll and saddle his horse. Tom Merry & Co. could not help feeling sorry for the cook; but they knew that Wildrake was right. Bunchy had his preparations made at last, and he turned to the juniors with a very dejected air.

"I'm hitting the trail, you 'uns," he said. "But I ain't going back to the ranch. You hear me, young Kit?"

"You can go to the ranch, or go to Jericho!" said Wildrake. "Go to the dickens, if you like! Anyhow, hit the trail!"

"I ain't going back to Boot Leg to tell Old Man Wildrake I've left you 'uns hyer," said Bunchy, with dignity. "Why, as like as not he'd fire me off the ranch. What about the outfit then? Think they want to lose the best cook between Mackenzie and the border? Not on your life! And what about me? I ain't quitting the ranch. I tell you, young Kit, I ain't going back till you 'uns go back. When you want me, jest loose off a couple of shots, and I shall be in hearing, and I'll come back. Bad as you've treated me, I'll come back!"

"You'll get boot-leather if you do!"

Bunchy turned away and mounted his horse. He raised his Stetson to the juniors and rode away across the valley. At a little distance he turned in his saddle and looked back.

Apparently he was looking for a sign of relenting on the part of the rancher's son. But Wildrake made no sign.

Bunchy rode on again and disappeared behind a fold of the valley. Arthur Augustus' eyeglass lingered on him till he was out of sight.

"Poor old Bunchy!" he said. "I suppose he is weally goin' back to the wanch, isn't he, Wildwake?" Wildrake smiled.

"I give that one up," he said. "He may hang about till we hit the home trail. I guess he doesn't want popper to know that he was turned out of the camp for mopping up tanglefoot. Bother him! He was trusted to behave himself on this trip, and he wants a lesson."

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus.

Wildrake rose from the log.

"I guess we're clear of that Injun Hawk Nose now, and we can get down to business," he said. "What about prospecting for pay-dirt?"

"Hear, hear!"

And Tom Merry & Co. lost no more time.

CHAPTER 11.

Seeking Gold!

TOM MERRY & CO. were very busy during the next two or three days.

They had come up to the Pine Tree Patch to hunt for the supposed gold-mine, and prospecting for gold was now their chief business. That the mine existed they were quite certain. Rube Redway knew where it was located, and so far as they knew Redway had discovered it by chance. If chance had favoured the gunman, there was no reason why it should not favour the chums of St. Jim's in their turn. At least, they hoped so.

But the mine, if it was there, was not easily to be discovered.

From dawn till dark every day the juniors hunted through the recesses of the Pine Tree Patch, but not a gleam of "pay-dirt" met their eager eyes.

They explored the gorges and canyons in the hills that shut in the lonely valley; they explored the course of the mountain stream. Sometimes together, sometimes separated, they carried on the search tirelessly. Although success did not reward them, they thoroughly enjoyed the sunny days as they passed. They cooked their own meals and ate them with keen appetites, and they slept soundly rolled in their blankets under the stars. Although it seemed that there was no longer danger to be feared in the valley, they were careful to keep watch in turns at night. Of Hawk Nose, nothing more was seen in those busy days; but once or twice the juniors found signs of Bunchy.

The cook had not gone back to the ranch.

Obviously the fat Bunchy did not want to present himself before Mr. Wildrake before the gold-seekers returned. Doubtless he hoped that by the time Tom Merry & Co. returned to Boot Leg his offence would have been forgiven or forgotten.

At all events, it was certain that he was still hanging

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about in the vicinity of the Pine Tree Patch, though he did not come into contact with the party.

Once Tom Merry sighted him, eyeing the party mournfully from the distance, his little fat figure perched on a high rock. Two or three times his trail was picked up. But the cook was keeping his distance, though the juniors could guess that he intended to join up again when the day came for their return to the plains.

Bunchy was assured that he was the best cook in the Canadian West, and that his services were inestimable; but at the same time it was clear that he did not want to be "fired" from Boot Leg. His berth on the Boot Leg Ranch was too prosperous and comfortable for Bunchy to want to part with it if he could help it. Often and often, when the punchers had ragged him for keeping them waiting for dinner, Bunchy had threatened to vamoose the ranch and find a new billet on one of the many ranches that, according to Bunchy, would have welcomed him with open arms. But he never carried out his threat, and he had been a fixture at Boot Leg ever since Kit Wildrake could remember, though perpetually on the point of transferring his valuable services elsewhere. As a matter of fact, it was doubtful whether Bunchy, with his weakness for fire-water, would have kept any other berth for more than a week, and the fat cook was probably well aware of that.

The juniors, however, gave little thought to the fat cook who was haunting their vicinity like a podgy ghost. All their thoughts were fixed upon the discovery of "pay-dirt."

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But as day followed day, and nothing was discovered, they began to wonder whether, after all, there was gold anywhere in the Pine Tree Patch.

Rube Redway, the gunman, had undoubtedly believed so. His desperate determination to get possession of that section of Mr. Wildrake's land proved it. He had risked his life, and lost his liberty, in his lawless attempts. His belief in the mine was certain; but Tom Merry & Co. began to wonder whether he had been mistaken.

"It's like looking for a needle in a bunch of hay," Tom Merry remarked one evening as they sat round the camp-fire. "I'm beginning to think that Redway dreamed it, Wildrake."

"Yaas, wathah!" assented Arthur Augustus.

Wildrake shook his head.

"I guess Redway knew what he was talking about," he said. "He risked too much not to have made sure about it. There's gold in the Pine Tree Patch, if we can hit it."

"But where?" asked Manners.

"Ask me another, old scout."

"O where and O where can it be?" sighed Lowther.

"It's not a placer, anyhow," said Wildrake. "If it had been a placer, I guess Redway and his gang would have washed the gold out of the stream and said nothing; that wouldn't have made him keen to buy this land. The place isn't visited sometimes for months together, and there would have been plenty of time to wash all the dust out of a placer. Besides, if there was gold in the Rainbow we'd have found it before now. But where Redway struck pay-dirt is a mystery."

"Anyhow, we're having a jolly time here," said Blake. "This is the rippingest vacation we've had since I've been at St. Jim's!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We're not in a hurry, either," said Manners. "We're enjoying ourselves, and we'll jolly well keep on till we find what that ruffian Redway found."

"You bet!" assented Wildrake.

And the next day the juniors were on the trail of gold again, cheery and contented though the gold did not materialise. Tom Merry wondered whether Bunchy was on the same trail. If so, it was certain that he had been no more successful than the juniors, for had he made a discovery it was quite certain that he would have announced it at once, as a means of making his peace. That Bunchy was also searching for the elusive gold they soon had proof, for they came on signs where sand had been washed out of the river-bed, evidently in search of pay-dirt. And once, among the gorges, they heard the sound of a clanging pick on the rocks.

A week passed by cheerily enough, but without bringing Tom Merry & Co. any nearer their goal. But they were not disposed to give up their quest. Their explorations had extended far and wide, but there were still innumerable recesses of the Pine Tree Patch into which they had not penetrated.

"You-uns getting fed-up?" asked Wildrake one morning as the juniors prepared to break camp.

"No feah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Not the least little bit," said Tom Merry. "We're jolly well going to bag that pay-dirt somehow!"

"If any!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"I guess we'll give it a few more days then," said the Canadian junior.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Mr. Wildrake would be no end backed if we found a gold-mine on his property," said Tom Merry, with a smile. "It's up to us, if we can work it. We'll leave no giddy stone unturned, anyhow."

"We've turned a good many," grinned Monty Lowther; "but if we're going to turn all the stones in these jolly old hills, we've got our work cut out."

"Tom Mewwy was speakin' metaphowically, Lowthah," explained Arthur Augustus gently.

"Go hon!" said Monty.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, wats!"

The juniors left the camp, taking different directions. The horses were left tethered to trail-ropes near the stream, and the supplies packed carefully out of reach of wandering animals. The gold-seekers did not consider it necessary to keep a guard on the camp; it was very unlikely that any stranger would traverse the Pine Tree Patch. The camp, too, was in sight from any rising ground in the valley and from the hillsides that enclosed it. As for Hawk Nose, the party had forgotten him by that time, and if they thought of him they had no doubt that the vengeful Redskin had found a grave in the wild waters of the Rainbow.

Even Wildrake, keen and alert as he was, did not guess that the chums of St. Jim's were not yet done with the revengeful cattle-thief.

The juniors took their various ways cheerfully. Tom Merry and Lowther went together, Wildrake and Blake in company, while Manners, who had been seen to pack his celebrated camera, was probably thinking more that morning about photographs than gold-seeking. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a pick over his shoulder, followed the course of the leaping stream for a little distance and turned off to explore a narrow canyon which the juniors had not yet visited. The swell of St. Jim's was soon out of sight of his scattered comrades.

The canyon that D'Arcy had entered opened between great cliffs of rugged rock, crowned far above by firs and pines. Above a strip of blue sky could be seen, but the sides of the canyon were too steep for climbing. Arthur Augustus proceeded along the rocky way, his eyeglass gleaming in his eye, no doubt hoping to discover some sign of the elusive gold deposit with the aid of his celebrated monacle. It was the opinion of the other fellows that if Gussy walked right on to the hidden mine he would not know that it was there; but that opinion Arthur Augustus did not share in the very least. His experience of mining matters was extremely limited, but his confidence was unbounded.

The canyon wound onward into the hills, like a great crevice splitting the hillside from top to bottom. Arthur Augustus followed it hopefully. But he stopped at last. The narrow canyon walls closed in till the passage between them was only three or four feet wide, and here a thicket of pines grew and barred the way.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

He sat down on a boulder to rest and fan himself with his Stetson. The almost vertical rays of the sun filled the narrow canyon with heat, and it was a good deal like an oven. Perspiration bedewed the forehead of the swell of St. Jim's and ran down his noble nose.

Gussy's expedition had come to an end. The thicket of pine-trees barred the end of the canyon, and it seemed hardly worth while to force a way through them to the rocks beyond. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy decided to rest for a while, and then to retrace his steps to the valley, which he had left a quarter of a mile behind.

Suddenly, as he fanned himself with his hat, a slight sound came to his ears. It was the faint sound of a stealthy footstep on the stony ground behind him.

Arthur Augustus turned his head.

Even as he turned a lithe figure sprang, and a pair of arms that seemed like iron bands closed on the swell of St. Jim's. And Arthur Augustus, with a gasp of utter horror and dismay, found himself struggling in the grasp of Hawk Nose.

CHAPTER 12.

Bound to the Stake!

"O H, cwikey!"

Amazed and dismayed as he was by the unexpected encounter, Arthur Augustus struggled desperately.

He had no chance to get at a weapon; the Redskin's savage grasp was round him. He was dragged over to the ground and went down heavily, and the Redskin's knee was planted on him.

He stared up dizzily at the savage, coppery face that glared down upon him. The eyes of the savage Redskin

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gleamed with hatred and triumph. Arthur Augustus gave himself up for lost. He expected the death-blow from the Indian's knife, and he was helpless to escape it. One husky cry rang out from his lips.

"Help!"

The next instant the Redskin's sinewy fingers were grasping his throat, choking his utterance.

"No help!" muttered Hawk Nose, with a savage grin. "No can hear! No come help little brave with glass eye."

"Gwooooh!"

Hawk Nose, pinning the St. Jim's junior down with his knee, laid a hand on the knife in his girdle. His head was bent to listen. Arthur Augustus knew that at the sound of approaching footsteps the knife would be drawn and driven home in his breast, and he listened as eagerly as the Indian. But there was no sound. Tom Merry & Co. had set out in quite different directions, and probably not one of the party was within a mile of Arthur Augustus at that moment.

"No come!" muttered the Indian

He released the knife.

"Little paleface no die quick!" he said, between his teeth, snarling like a wild animal.

He dragged the junior's hands together, and bound them with a hide thong. Then the swell of St. Jim's was dragged to his feet. Hawk Nose picked up his rifle and slung it on his own shoulder, and unbuckled the pistol-holster from D'Arcy's belt. Then he grasped the junior's arm and dragged him towards the apparently impenetrable wall of pines that shut in the narrow end of the canyon.

"You come with Injun!" he snarled

"Oh, deah!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Hawk Nose plunged into the thicket, finding some hidden path that was not visible to D'Arcy's eyes. Still grasping the junior, he dragged him on through the tangled trees. What his object was in plunging into the thicket, Arthur Augustus could not guess; but in a few minutes he made a startling discovery. The pine-thicket did not, as he had supposed, mark the end of the narrow canyon. Beyond the trees, the canyon opened out wider again, extending farther into the hills.

Evidently, Hawk Nose was acquainted with that hidden and unsuspected recess, and had selected it as a hiding-place. It was as secure a hiding-place as could have been found, for few, coming up the canyon from the valley, would have suspected that it extended farther than the bottle-neck which was choked by the pine-thicket.

A spring bubbled up among the rocks at a little distance, with grass and trees growing by it; a fertile spot in the midst of the waste of lifeless rocks and sand. By the stream was a little hut of branches, which D'Arcy guessed to be the Redskin's camp. The dead embers of a camp-fire lay near it, and several strips of meat were hung on the branches near at hand to dry in the sun.

The Indian forced the junior onward, to a tree near the spring. He backed him up against the trunk and proceeded to bind him there with deerskin thongs. Arthur Augustus was powerless to resist; but his heart was like ice as he was secured to the tree. He had wondered why the Redskin had spared his life even for a moment; but he knew now that it was from no motive of mercy. Having leisure to deal with his enemy, Hawk Nose was bent upon glutting his cruelty in the spirit of the traditions of his race. Arthur Augustus realised that he was to be put to the torture. He was bound securely to the tree, and Hawk Nose began to gather pinecones and twigs, and stack them

round him—D'Arcy divined only too clearly for what purpose.

His face was white.

It seemed like some terrible dream to him, as he strained hopelessly at his bonds, and the stack of fuel around him grew higher and higher. The look on the Indian's coppery face was ruthless. When his black eyes rested on D'Arcy, they gleamed and glinted with hatred and malice. There was no mercy to be expected from the savage Redskin, and no help, as he knew, from his comrades. Tom Merry & Co. believed that the revengeful Chilcoot had perished in the falls of the Rainbow, and did not dream that there was an enemy lingering in the valley, watching for his chance of revenge. The juniors had arranged to meet again in camp at sundown; not till the end of the day would they even miss Arthur Augustus, and it was barely noon now. There was no help—there was no hope—and Arthur Augustus with despair in his heart, could only strive to nerve himself to meet his fate with courage.

In spite of the heat, the hapless junior felt chill. His face was drained of colour, as he stood there, bound and helpless, the stack of fuel growing round him.

Hawk Nose grinned at him savagely over the twigs and cones stacked round him.

"Little paleface fear!" he sneered.

D'Arcy set his lips.

"You wotten wascal, I am not afwaid!" he said steadily, though his voice was husky. "I am sowwy I did not shoot you when I had a chance."

"Injun no forget!" said Hawk Nose, showing his teeth in a snarl. "Hawk Nose is driven from the lodges of his people. He treads a lonely trail, and when the Great Spirit calls him, there will be no brave of his race to bury with him his bow and his spear, that he may be armed for the chase in the happy hunting-grounds. But Hawk Nose will listen to the death song of the little paleface, while the flames are eating him. Ugh!"

"You are a savage beast!" said Arthur Augustus. "Oh! If only one of the fellows would come along!"

The Redskin laughed grimly.

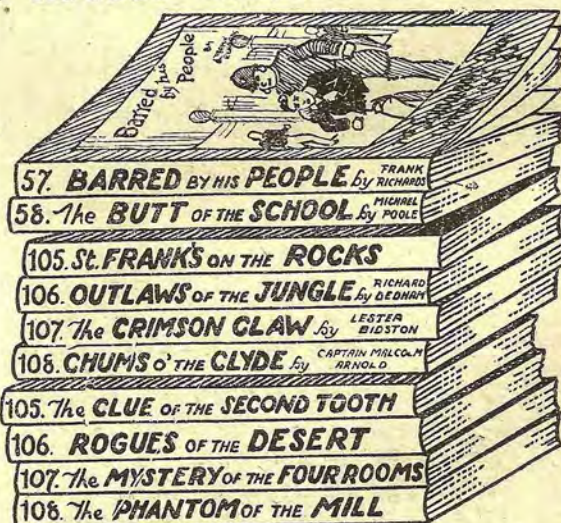
"Injun watch! Little paleface's friends far away. Once they find Injun, and Hawk Nose fall in water—Hawk Nose think him die, but no die. Hawk Nose live to hear the death song of his enemies. First the little brave with the glass eye—then all the rest—one by one—"

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"You wotten wascal!" said Arthur Augustus faintly. "Hawk Nose see if little white brave die like a Red man, singing his death song in the fire!" grinned the Redskin.

The savage crossed over to the dead camp-fire, and began raking in the embers. The fuel was stacked high round D'Arcy now, and Hawk Nose was seeking for a live ember to set it in flame.

D'Arcy's despairing eyes wandered round him. There was no help.

His friends were far away, unsuspecting his danger, unsuspecting that the Redskin was still living and on the trail of vengeance. Even if they missed him and sought him, even if they suspected danger, they were never likely to find that hidden recess in the heart of the hills. There was no hope—no hope!

Arthur Augustus' heart was like lead. But he strove hard to keep his nerves steady. If he was to fall a victim to the Redskin's savage vengeance, at least he would die game.

Before his eyes, at a distance, was the pine-thicket that barred off the lower canyon. Round him were sloping hillsides; closer at hand, the spring and the grass and trees. His eyes fell on an object he had not noticed before—it was a broken miner's pick, lying among the stones near the spring. The junior stared at it. Obviously, it did not belong to the Indian; it was old and rusted, and looked as if it had lain there for months, if not for years. It was a proof that white men had trodden that hidden recess at some time, evidently in search of gold, or the pick would not have been there. For a moment it brought a beat of hope to the junior's heart. But it was only for a moment. If white men had trodden the hidden canyon, it was long since they had been there; the fact that the Redskin had chosen it for his hiding-place was proof enough of that. Yet the eyes of the bound junior lingered on that rusty, broken pick.

For it came into his mind what it meant. Someone had sought gold in that hidden canyon in the hills that shut in the Pine Tree Patch. Was this, then, the hidden spot where Rube Redway had located the mine? The gunman had made his discovery by chance, and he had been confident that it would never be found by others. Certainly, but for Hawk Nose, Arthur Augustus' eyes would never have fallen upon that hidden recess.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus faintly.

He was sure of it now. In that hidden canyon, screened from all eyes, was the clue to the unknown mine; and he had made the discovery in the very hour when he was to fall a victim to the Redskin's revenge. The rocks about him were rich in gold—this was Redway's secret, and he had discovered it. Too late—too late! All the gold in the hidden canyon, if gold there was, could not save him now.

The Indian was bending over the dead fire; he had found a live ember now, and was blowing it into flame. D'Arcy's eyes caught the glimmer of the flame, and he watched the Indian setting it to a torch of pine. With strained eyes he watched, as the ruthless savage blew on the flame, and the pine torch caught the blaze. Hawk Nose rose to his feet, and came back towards the tree to which Arthur Augustus was bound. The torch flamed and flickered in his coppery hand.

D'Arcy closed his eyes.

The harsh, jarring laugh of the savage came to his ears.

"Little paleface fears to look on the fire."

Arthur Augustus opened his eyes again. He set his teeth, summoning all his courage. The savage should not see him falter.

"You wotten wascal!" D'Arcy's voice was hoarse but steady. "I am not afraid!"

The coppery hand was stretched out to set the flame to the pile. At the same moment, the stillness of the mountain canyon was broken by a sound that seemed, to D'Arcy's startled ears, like the roar of thunder. It was the report of a rifle, ringing out suddenly from the pine-thicket.

Like a fellow in a dream, Arthur Augustus saw the Redskin crumple up under his eyes.

A second before, Hawk Nose had stood savage, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,018.

triumphant, ruthless, his hand outstretched to fire the pile. Stricken down in the very act, he rolled on the ground, one hoarse wild cry breaking from his lips. Then he did not stir again. And the pine torch falling, burned harmlessly a few inches from the death-pile.

CHAPTER 13.

Striking Gold!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY gazed at the fallen form of the Redskin, crumpled in the grass a few yards away. His brain was swimming. The Redskin did not stir. The pine torch had fallen in the grass, and the grass, dry as tinder in the hot summer sun, was catching. Wisps of smoke floated in the air as the flame spread. From the pine thicket, at a little distance, a figure bounded, smoking rifle in hand—a fat figure that D'Arcy knew well.

"Bunchay!" he whispered.

It was the cook.

He came at a waddling run towards the junior, his fat face grinning, waving a fat hand.

D'Arcy stared at him—stared dazedly and dizzily—almost overcome by the sudden change in his fortunes. Never in his life had the swell of St. Jim's been so glad to see anyone as he was to see Bunchy, the cook, at that moment.

"Bunchay!" he repeated faintly. "Oh, well done, deah boy!"

Bunchy came up breathlessly.

He stopped a moment to stare at the fallen Redskin, his rifle ready for use if Hawk Nose stirred. But Hawk Nose did not stir. Then the cook began to tramp out the torch and the smouldering dry grass. He was none too soon, for in a few minutes the flame would have spread to the pile of fuel surrounding the bound junior.

Having extinguished the last spark, Bunchy came up to the swell of St. Jim's and dragged away the stack, chuckling gleefully as he did so.

"You glad to see old Bunchy, eh?" he chirruped.

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped D'Arcy.

"I guess you're some pleased that ole Bunchy never lit out for the ranch after all—what?" chuckled the cook.

"Yaas, deah boy!"

"Didn't I tell young Kit that you 'uns couldn't get through without ole Bunchy?"

"You did, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, with a faint smile.

Bunchy was evidently greatly pleased with himself, and his fat face glowed with fatuous self-satisfaction. Still, he was hardly as pleased as was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Arthur Augustus was shivering with the horror of his narrow and fearful escape.

Bunchy drew his knife and sliced through the thongs that secured the junior. D'Arcy tottered away from the tree and sank down limply on a grassy knoll.

Bunchy stood with his arms akimbo, grinning at him complacently.

"Some shot—what?" he chuckled. "I guess I drew a bead on him and he got his. Yep, sir!"

"How did you find me heah, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus.

Bunchy chuckled.

"I ain't been fur away," he said. "I reckon I saw you 'uns break camp this morning. I was taking a siesta among the rocks below when you came up the canyon, and I guess you must have passed me and I was asleep and never saw you. I woke up when you yauped."

"When I called for help, you mean—when that howwid Wedskin collahed me!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Sure! I guess I kept in cover and looked around, but the rocks must have hidden you, and I never heered anything further," said Bunchy. "I wondered whether I had sorter dreamed it, but I figured it out that I'd look round some."

D'Arcy shivered.

"I'm vewy glad you did, deah boy!" he said.



Wildrake rushed fiercely along the bank, finger on trigger. The Redskin was whirling away in the rushing water, and as he came to the surface again, Wildrake fired. Whether the Redskin was hit or not the St. Jim's junior could not tell. A dozen yards on, the Rainbow fell in a cascade, and the Indian, struggling wildly in the water, was swept over the fall. (See Chapter 9.)

"Lookin' round and about, I came on your sign," said Bunchy. "Your pick was left where the Injun collared you, and when I saw that I knowed one of the party had been up here. But where'd you got to—that beat me to a frazzle. I knowed you hadn't gone down the canyon on the back-trail, 'cause why, you hadn't passed me going back. Yet you was gone, and the pine-trees yonder looked as if they was growing at the end of the canyon and nary a sign of anything farther on. But I figured it out," grinned Bunchy. "You wasn't there, and you hadn't gone back, and so you must have gone on—see?"

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"So I tried hunting through the pines, and then I found sign enough," said Bunchy. "I follered your trail through the trees and found this hyer canyon on this here side—never supposed there was anything this side but solid rocks. And when I looked out on this side and saw you tied up to the tree and that gold-darned Red jest going to put a light to the fire, you can bet your Sunday boots that I didn't waste time. I guess that Red never knowed what hit him!"

"You have saved my life, Bunchay!"

"Correct!" grinned Bunchy.

"I am feahfully obliged to you!"

"I guess you are," agreed Bunchy. "But don't you worry. Old Man Wildrake sent me along with this hyer party to look arter you-uns, and that's what I'm doing. I guess young Kit will be sorry he talked to an old pard about boot-leather now. Where'd you be but for old Bunchy, eh?"

Arthur Augustus smiled. Bunchy, the cook, had saved him from a terrible fate and was entitled to the

credit of it, and it was clear that Bunchy meant to have all the credit to which he was entitled. Bunchy was not the man to leave anyone in doubt of his merits. But Arthur Augustus was too full of relief and gratitude to criticise. Bunchy had saved him, and Bunchy was welcome to sing his own praises to his heart's content.

"Some luck for you me happening along!" went on Bunchy gleefully. "You take a rest, kid, and I'll look arter you. You trust ole Bunchy. I guess I'm goin' to tote you back to camp safe and sound, and you'll tell young Kit what Bunchy's done—what?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Evidently Bunchy counted upon his rescue of Arthur Augustus to make his peace with the rancher's son. There was no doubt that it would have that effect. With all his faults and weaknesses, Bunchy had certainly been the right man in the right place.

"I guess we'll hit the trail together," said Bunchy. "That Red won't trouble anybody agin, I guess. He's got his. When you're ready, Mister Dude, we'll be hitting the trail back to the valley."

"Not just yet, deah boy!"

"Why not?" demanded Bunchy.

Arthur Augustus smiled cheerily. He was recovering from the terrible strain he had been through. And he was thinking of the discovery he had made—which seemed certain to his mind—that this hidden canyon was the spot where Redway had struck gold.

"We're goin' to look wound heah befoah we go back to camp, old bean," said Arthur Augustus. "I wathah think we may have news for the fellows!"

"I guess I don't catch on," said Bunchy, staring at him.

"The gold-mine, deah boy!"

"Eh?"

"I wathah think that we shall stwike the pay-dirt in this canyon if we look for it!" explained Arthur Augustus.

"What's put that into your cabeza, kid?" asked the cook, in astonishment.

Arthur Augustus pointed to the broken pick that lay near the stream. The cook stared at it and went to it and picked it up and turned it over in his fat hands.

"I guess white men have been hyer before us," he said. "Queer, too! I reckon nobody would have found out this place at all unless maybe he was hunting and follered an animal up here. Might be that! Anyhow, somebody's been here before us!"

"Yaas, wathah! And I think it was Wedway," said Arthur Augustus. "He said he found the place by chance, and we have done the same. You know more about lookin' for signs of gold than I do, Bunchay!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the cook. "Just a few!"

"Well, then, you begin pwospsectin' wound about heah," said Arthur Augustus. "I've got a feelin' that we're wight on the spot."

Bunchy looked at the broken pick again and nodded thoughtfully. He realised that it was probably a clue to the hidden mine known only to the American gunman.

"You jest roost a bit while I take a little pascio round this hyer canyon," he said.

"Wight-ho!"

Bunchy started on his quest, his fat face eager now. Arthur Augustus covered the body of the Indian with loose stones, and turned away from the spot with a rather white face.

He rejoined the cook.

Bunchy's fat face was blazing with excitement now. He had run handfuls of the sand from the bed of the spring through his podgy fingers, and glittering, yellow particles among the sand had caught his eye at once. As Arthur Augustus joined him, the cook's pick was ringing on the rocks near the spring.

"Found anythin', deah boy?"

Bunchy did not reply. He was too excited to speak. But the look on his face was enough for Arthur Augustus.

The pick rang again and again.

Then Bunchy collected up fragments of the broken rock in his hands and examined them with glistening eyes.

"Dude!" he stuttered huskily.

"Yaas, deah boy."

"I guess we've struck it rich."

Bunchy held out the specimens in a shaking hand. Arthur Augustus gazed at them in some disappointment. From the cook's excited manner he had expected to see a golden nugget at least. Certainly, he could detect the golden grains in the rock that Bunchy displayed, but equally certainly he would never have guessed the value unaided. But Bunchy was trembling with excitement.

"I guess this hyer quartz is rich in gold, thicker'n fleas in a breed's dorg," said Bunchy. "I reckon this is where Redway struck it. You can see there's been a pick handled hyer—signs of it in a dozen places. Dude, we've got it."

"Bai Jove! We'll jollay well take back a bag of it to show the fellows in camp—what?" said Arthur Augustus gleefully.

Bunchy chuckled.

"We'll take these hyer specimens," he said. "This ain't a placer, kid. I guess it will want a stamp-mill to get the gold out of this hyer quartz. I guess Old Man Wildrake will have to put twenty thousand dollars into machinery before he raises ten cents from this mine."

"Oh!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"But if I'm any judge, and I guess I am, they'll take twenty thousand dollars a week out of this canyon when the mills get going," said Bunchy. "No wonder that galoot Redway wanted to buy up the Pine Tree Patch. Kid, this is going to be the biggest strike between the

Coast Range and the border. Afore this summer's out there'll be a mining-camp in the Pine Tree Patch. I guess things will be humming hyer. Let's get back to camp. And I reckon young Kit will whoop when he sees these hyer specimens. I guess he'll be glad to see ole Bunchy. Pronto."

And Arthur Augustus started back to camp with the cook in an extremely satisfied frame of mind.

CHAPTER 14.

Luck at Last!

TOM MERRY & CO. came back to camp as the sun was setting. They found Arthur Augustus and Bunchy in camp and supper ready. Wildrake gave the fat cook a rather grim look.

"So you've turned up again, Bunchy?" he said.

Bunchy grinned.

"Little ole me," he said. "Hyer I am. Ain't you glad to see me?"

"I guess I've got a boot for you, Bunchy."

"Wildwake, deah boy, we've got somethin' to tell you," said Arthur Augustus cheerily.

"Found the giddy gold mine?" grinned Blake.

"Yaas."

"What?" roared all the juniors together.

Arthur Augustus smiled serenely. He had expected to surprise his comrades, and undoubtedly he did so.

"Gammon!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Gussy, old man—" murmured Tom Merry.

"It's twue, deah boy. But that isn't all. Wildwake, old chap, I wequest you to forgive my fwient Bunchay. But for Bunchay you would nevah have seen me in this camp again."

"Lost your way—what?" asked Lowther.

"Wathah more scawious than that, deah boy. I should not be likely to lose my way, I twust. But I vewy neahly lost my life."

"What the thump—" said Wildrake.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy proceeded to explain what had happened in the hidden canyon.

Bunchy stirred the stew in the iron pot over the fire, and grinned cheerily during the recital.

"My only hat!" said Tom Merry, his face quite pale.

"Gussy, old chap! Gussy—"

Blake gave the fat cook a thump on the shoulder.

"Good man!" he said.

"Thank Heaven Bunchy was still around," said Manners.

Bunchy gave a fat chortle.

"Didn't I tell you that you 'uns wouldn't never pull through without ole Bunchy?" he demanded.

"I guess you're the real white article, Bunchy," said Wildrake. "Thank goodness you horned in."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Bunchay was the wight man in the wight place. It was a feahful expwience, deah boys, and I don't mind admittin' that it thwew me into quite a fluttah—"

The juniors grinned.

"I assuah you, deah boys, that I was feelin' absolutely wotten when Bunchay butted in and wescued me," said Arthur Augustus. "But it has turned out all wight, as I should certainly nevah have discovahed the place if the Wedskin had not dwaggwed me there."

"Let's see the specimens," said Wildrake soberly.

Bunchy, with a flourish, handed out the quartz specimens from his wallet. The juniors watched Wildrake's face with keen interest as he examined them. The Canadian junior's eyes gleamed, and his expression told what he was thinking. Wildrake drew a deep breath.

"I guess if the mine's anything like these specimens it's some mine," he said. "You got these on the surface, Bunchy?"

"Yep. I guess it only needs to drive an adit into the side of the canyon to turn it out by the ton," said Bunchy. "I calculate when the stamps get going, sonny, they'll crush out so many ounces to the ton that it'll make your head swim. Search me!"

"I guess this will be some news for popper," said Wildrake. "Fancy Gussy being the man to locate the mine!"

"Wonders will never cease!" grinned Lowther. "It's a jolly old miracle!" said Blake. "Weally, deah boys, I do not see anythin' surpwisin' in it," said Arthur Augustus. "The fact is, I had a feelin' all along that I should stwike pay-dirt, you know. But it was weally Bunchay who found the gold, you know. I only found the place and requested him to look for it."

Wildrake smiled.

"Anyhow, we've hit on the mine," he said. "We know now what that firebug Redway could have told us if he'd liked. I guess we'll root round that canyon to-morrow morning and see for ourselves, and then we'll hit the trail for Boot Leg. The sooner this news is told the better."

"Yaas, wathah!"

It was a very cheery party that sat down to supper round the camp fire that night. Tom Merry & Co. had enjoyed their days in the foothills, seeking gold, but their hope of success had almost dwindled away. Now it had come all of a sudden. The secret of the hidden mine was a secret no longer. They had great news to tell when they returned to the Boot Leg Ranch. Bunchy, the cook, no longer in disgrace, wore a perpetual grin of satisfaction on his fat face. The episode of Bunchy and the fire-water was quite forgotten and forgiven now.

At the first gleam of the sun the following morning Tom Merry & Co struck camp, and Arthur Augustus and Bunchy led the way to the hidden canyon. The juniors examined the place eagerly. Even their inexperienced eyes could discern the signs of gold, though only Wildrake could gauge the richness of the discovery.

"I guess this is some strike!" said Wildrake. "The popper will be no end bucked to hear of this. That gunman Redway knew what he was about when he tried to buy up the Pine Tree Patch. It was worth the galoot's while to run some risks to get hold of a claim like this. And I reckon there will be shares all round for us when the mine gets going. Bunchy will be able to float himself up to the neck in fire-water."

"Bai Jove! I twust you will do nothin' of the sort, Bunchay," said Arthur Augustus anxiously.

Bunchy shook his head solemnly.

"Nary a drop," he said. "I guess when we hit the ranch, fust thing I shall ask the boss for a day off to ride into Rainbow to sign the pledge at the tin mission."

"Bwavo, deah boy!"

In cheery spirits the juniors saddled up for the ride back to Boot Leg. It was sundown when they rode up to the ranch-house, and Mr. Wildrake came out to meet them. There was a smile on the rancher's bronzed face as he asked them what luck they had had. Certainly, "Old Man Wildrake" did not expect to hear that they had discovered the gunman's secret and located a rich mine.

"I guess we've worked the raffle, popper," said Kit Wildrake. "That is to say, Gussy has, with Bunchy's help. Look!"

Mr. Wildrake looked at the quartz specimens.

"Holy smoke!" he ejaculated.

"I guess it's a big strike, popper," said Wildrake. "You want to ride up to Pine Tree Patch and see for yourself. I guess that gunman Redway will swear some when he hears about it. Wasn't it a lucky day when I brought Gussy along to Boot Leg for the holidays?"

"It sure was," said the rancher; "and if the mine turns out a success, all you lads will sure come in for a fair share. And Bunchy, too."

All Boot Leg was greatly excited by the news of the discovery at the Pine Tree Patch. That evening Mr. Wildrake rang up a mining engineer at Rainbow, and in the morning he started for the foothills with the engineer. A few days later mining operations were already started in the hidden canyon, and a mining-camp was beginning to grow up in the lonely valley in the foothills. And Tom Merry & Co. felt and looked exceedingly pleased with themselves; while Bunchy, the cook, swelled with so much importance that he really seemed in danger of reaching bursting-point.

THE END.

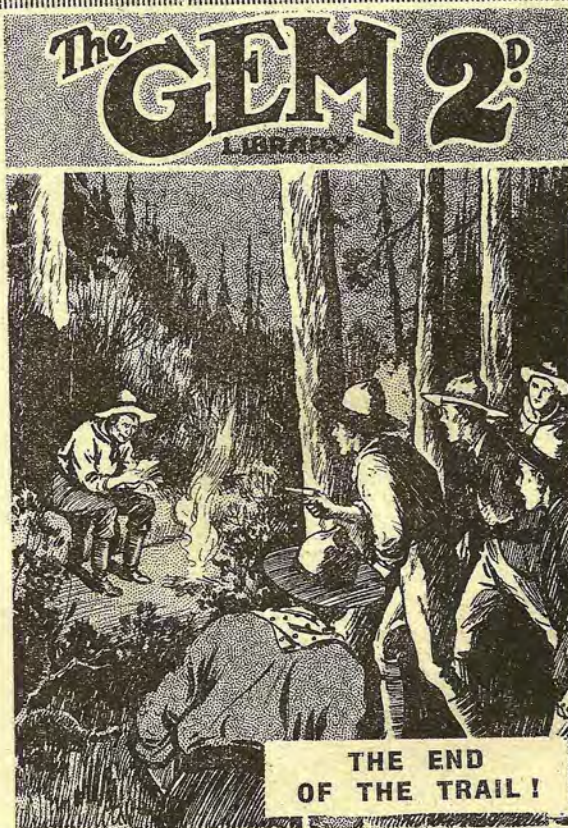
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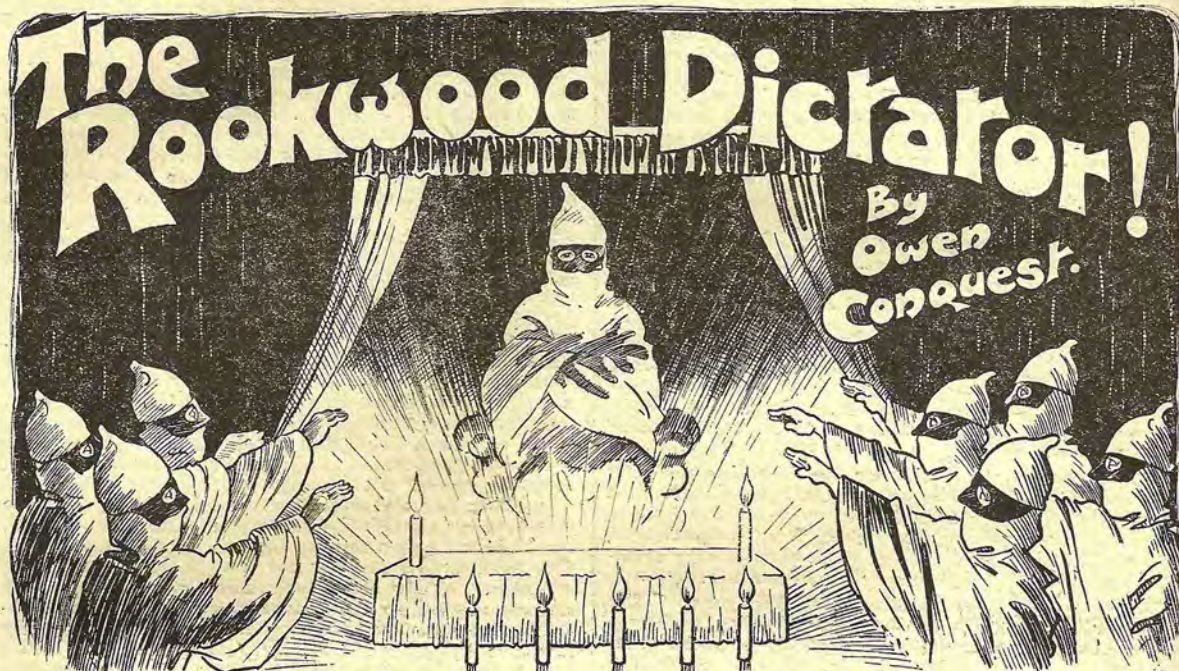
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UP AGAINST CARTHEW! Having to "bend over" before all his chums—just for helping a slacking duffer to keep himself fit—is a pill too big for Arthur Edward Lovell to swallow! And when the Fourth-Former's pride is ruffled it spells trouble for someone!



THIS IS A STORY EVERY "GEMITE" WILL REVEL IN.

(Introduction on page 25.)

In the Tolls!

"**W**HA-A-AT!" gasped Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Hold out your hand," repeated Carthew, with enjoyment.

"What on earth for?"

"Insolence!" explained Carthew grimly. "And as you're so keen on efficiency, I think I may as well make it five. Bend over!"

"Wha-a-a-at?" shrieked Lovell. "Me—bend over?"

"And quick!" snapped Carthew. "I've no time to waste. Bend over and take your five, unless you want me to lay it across your shoulders!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Hard luck, Lovell!"

"Better knuckle under, old man," whispered Jimmy Silver. "You'll only get it worse if you don't."

"But—but I haven't done anything!" hooted Lovell indignantly.

"You've usurped authority, and added insolence to a prefect!" rapped Carthew. "Now, bend over, before I lose my temper!"

For a moment Lovell hesitated, and his chums wondered anxiously if he were going to add defiance to the list of crimes Carthew had outlined. Undoubtedly Carthew was "going it" steeply, but there were occasions when discretion was the better part of valour.

"I give you two seconds!"

Carthew swished his asplant suggestively.

Lovell set his lips, and bent over.

Swish!

With keen satisfaction Carthew laid on the strokes. In his state of worry, it was some consolation to take it out of Lovell. He would rather have given Captain Punter "five," but that was hardly feasible. So he laid on the strokes with great vim.

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

Lovell was a little pale after that infliction, but it was more the paleness of anger than of pain. It was only with difficulty that the junior kept himself in hand as Carthew smiled mockingly at him.

"Let that be a lesson to you, and remember, there's plenty more where that came from!"

And, with a grin on his face, Carthew headed for the gates. That he left Lovell in a state of seething rebellion did not occur to him. It would have been dismissed from his mind even if it had. He had an appointment with Captain Punter for three-thirty by the old stile. Of the appoint-

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ment with Lovell minor at three precisely, Carthew knew nothing. As he strode up the lane he had no inkling that the Fistical Four had not long returned from giving the captain the thrashing of his life—a thrashing ten times as severe as Carthew had given Lovell.

The birds were twittering in the trees overhanging the lane, and it was warm and shadowy, and the hum of the bees filled the air. But Carthew neither heard nor saw any of these things; his thoughts were concerned solely with the debt which he had contracted with the captain over Blue Diamond.

A figure was lounging on the stile as Carthew came up, and the prefect steeled himself for the interview. He stared a little as he drew closer, and then he gasped.

"It is I, Carthew. Don't stand there staring like a fool!"

"My only hat! What on earth's happened to you, Punter?"

"I want to speak to you about it. Hang it, do I look as bad as all that?"

Carthew grinned. He could not help it. The Captain Punter of his acquaintance was a debonair, pale-featured gentleman, nattily attired, and to the last degree aloof. It was partly the captain's aristocratic manner that had induced the prefect to trust him. He knew now how much that manner was worth.

But the man presented a changed appearance—a sadly changed appearance—as he lounged on the stile. His face was no longer pale. It was marked in several places, and it was red and swollen. His natty suit was covered with dust and torn. His patent shoes were scratched, and his malacca cane was gone. His velour hat had collected a good deal of mud from the ditch whence it had been rescued. Altogether, he looked a wreck, and there was little sympathy in Carthew's breast.

"You look as if a cyclone had struck you," he remarked. "Apart from that, there isn't much wrong. However did it happen?"

"I've been through it!" said Captain Punter, with a glint in his beady eyes. "And I'm going to make them pay for it dearly, too! But that isn't the point. How much have you brought me?"

"You see—" began Carthew. He coloured up as the other's lip curled.

"Same old story, I suppose. Hard up—what? No remittances? Pay in a week or two at the outside? Well, I'm telling you flat—it won't do!"

"Look here! You must give me time!" protested Carthew, in alarm. "I can't pay now. But you won't get anything out of splitting. Don't be a fool, Punter!"

"I tell you I'm fed-up!" snapped the captain savagely. "You owe me twenty pounds! I don't suppose you'll be able to pay for weeks."

"I'll—I'll manage somehow," promised Carthew. "Your money's safe enough, Only I must have a little time."

"Always the same old tale!" sneered the captain derisively. "But the time never comes! You've had a fortnight already, and I haven't seen a shilling. Look here! Are you willing to do a little job for me and call the debt settled?"

Carthew's eyes narrowed at the suggestion. But he felt a tinge of fear. He could not imagine anything he could do to wipe out a debt of twenty pounds. But it was an avenue of escape, and he could not afford to throw away the chance.

"What do you want done?"

"It isn't very hard," said Captain Punter quietly. "Do you know a fag at the school—a kid named Lovell?"

Carthew nodded.

"I've been doing business with him, and he owes me ten pounds."

"What! A fag owing ten quid!" ejaculated Carthew.

"Mind, this is strictly confidential. I'd have got it out of the kid, but his elder brother and three other young ruffians—"

"Silver, Raby, and Newcome," remarked Carthew.

"They came to see me at three here," continued the captain reminiscently, "instead of the kid. If I'd had any warning, I'd have smashed them; but—"

"Great Scott! They handled you?" gasped Carthew.

"And took the kid's I O U!" snapped the captain grimly.

"I shall be sore for weeks. They thrashed me with my own cane!"

"Well, I'm jiggered!" breathed Carthew.

"I've lost my proof—and my money! But the matter doesn't end there!"

"I gave Lovell major a licking just before I came out, if that's any comfort to you!" grinned Carthew.

Captain Punter nodded appreciatively.

"That's not enough—not by a long chalk!" he snapped.

"No man handles Captain Gerald Punter without regretting it! I'm going to make those young hooligans wish they'd never been born, I tell you!"

"Yes. But how?" asked Carthew uneasily.

"With your help, if you know what's good for you!" said the captain. "You haven't any chance of paying off what you owe, and I'm offering you an easy way out. You'll be a fool not to take it!"

"I dare say," agreed Carthew. "But what have I got to do? I'm jolly well not getting mixed up in any villainy, that's flat!"

"If you ached all over like I do, you wouldn't worry about that!" retorted the captain. "I've been tanned like a dog, and they're going to pay for it! By gosh, I winged a man once for less! See here!"

"I—I say, I'm not standing for any shady—"

"You'll do as you're told!" rapped the captain, his eyes glinting dangerously. "I've got friends at the Bird-in-Hand. I can get them to help me deal with the youngsters. All four are going to get the lambasting of their lives, you can take it from me! I look to you to lure them into a convenient place—that barn over there, say!"

"Look here! This is rank hooliganism!" snapped Carthew, his temper beginning to rise. "You can count me out of your rotten schemes, Punter! I'll pay up in a week or two. I'm expecting a lot of cash for my birthday. How does that suit you?"

Captain Punter eyed the prefect grimly for a few moments. But he could see that for once Carthew was firm. Deliberately handing over four Rookwood juniors to the gentle mercies of an out-and-out ruffian and his friends was an action from which even Carthew, rascal and bully as he was, shrank in disgust.

And the captain knew enough not to press his suit at once.

"A fortnight," he agreed coolly. "Not a day longer. If you don't pay up then, the offer will still be open. If you refuse it, your headmaster will learn something he doesn't know about you. Think it over!"

And with a curt nod, Captain Punter hastened along the lane. Carthew turned back towards Rookwood with mixed feelings.

He had a breathing-space, but he had little hope of raising the money. The birthday was pure fiction, and before he reached the school,

Carthew found himself half regretting that he had been so quick to refuse the loophole that was offered him.

It was with a preoccupied mind that Carthew called his fag and partook of tea.

Up Against Carthew!

"TUBBY!"

Tubby Muffin glanced round rather apprehensively.

It was Arthur Edward Lovell who had called him, and the sight of Lovell did not appear to be reassuring.

Prep was in full swing, or should have been. But neither Lovell nor Muffin was thinking of prep. And Tubby had a feeling that he knew why the former was not.

"It wasn't me, you know. I never took 'em!"

"Eh? Took what?"

"The—the tarts. I mean, there weren't any tarts. That's what I really meant. You—you see?"

Lovell stared, and then burst into a laugh.

"Oh, the tarts! Jimmy was saying somebody had bagged them. Never mind the tarts now, Tubby. I want to speak to you."

It was Tubby's turn to stare at that.

Fascinating fellow though he was, fellows did not usually seek him out solely for the joy of his conversation. And Tubby was not to know yet that Lovell was being diplomatic. So he stared rather suspiciously at Lovell.

"You know everything, old man," went on Lovell indulgently. "Not much that goes on at Rookwood without your knowledge, Tubby—what?"

"Well, that's so," assented Muffin. He chose to take that remark as a compliment. "I keep my eyes peeled, you know!"

"Just so," agreed Lovell. "I dare say you know that Carthew is going on the randan to-night—what?"

Lovell eyed Tubby very closely as he said that. He did not know that Carthew was going on the randan that evening. It was a shaft at venture—part of his exceedingly diplomatic proceedings.

"Eh? How did you know?" demanded Muffin, in surprise.

"Isn't he?"

"I happened to hear Catesby and Frampton discussing a little party in Knowles' study to-night," admitted the fat junior. "Not that I should call that going on the randan. I believe Carthew's hard-up, as a matter of fact."

Lovell nodded, his eyes gleaming. He knew what he wanted to know now.

"Thanks, old fat man!" he remarked carelessly. "About those tarts—"

"I say, you know! I never touched 'em!" ejaculated Tubby, in alarm.

"I was going to kick you for wolfing them," said Lovell coolly. "Now I won't. Think yourself lucky!"

And Lovell strolled along the Fourth Form corridor to the end study, leaving Tubby Muffin slightly mystified.

Jimmy Silver glanced up unhappily as Lovell entered the study. Three juniors were dutifully doing their prep. Only Lovell was scorning the reckoning with Mr. Dalton in the morning. And when Lovell chose not to work it was difficult to carry on in the same room with him.

"Sit down and tackle this giddy exercise," advised Jimmy, shoving a chair forward. "It's a corker! You'll wish you'd given it a look-over to-morrow with Dicky."

Lovell sat down, but he did not start on the exercise. More important matters than Latin exercises were occupying the mind of Arthur Edward Lovell at that moment.

"Better get on with it," remarked Raby.

"Plenty of time to settle with Carthew to-morrow," said Newcome.

"Here's a pen," said Jimmy Silver kindly.

Lovell gave his chums a glance.

"You fellows weren't told to bend over in front of half the school, were you?"

"No, old chap. Carthew's a Prussian, a Hun, a vandal—or anything you like to call him. But Dicky will expect this exercise done in the morning."

"Let him expect, then!" said Lovell charitably. "I've found out what I wanted to know—from Muffin."

The scratching of pens was the only response.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

In debt to CAPTAIN PUNTER, who has made quite a nice little living out of the "sportsmen" of Rookwood, LOVELL minor, a fag in the Third Form, appeals to his major, ARTHUR EDWARD, for the loan of ten pounds to square the debt. Lovell major bluntly refuses, but in company with his faithful henchmen, JIMMY SILVER, RABY, and NEWCOME, commonly known as the Fiscal Four, he meets the rascally Punter, whom he roughly handles and forces to part up with the incriminating I O U. Shortly after this Lovell minor is caught ragging one of his Form-fellows by CARTHEW of the Sixth, another victim of the astute Punter. Anxious to vent his spite on someone, the angry Sixth-Former approaches Arthur Edward.

"You cheeky young rascal!" he cries, taking a firm grip on his ash-plant. "What you want is a dose of this! Hold out your hand!"

(Now read on.)

"Carthew is going across the quad for a little party in Knowles' study to-night," continued Lovell thoughtfully.

Scratch, scratch, scratch!

"And that's when I'm going to settle with him," observed Lovell grimly. "Fancy making me bend over before all the fellows—just because I was helping a slacking duffer keep himself fit! Huh!"

"Oh, give your jaw a rest and get on with this!" grunted Raby. "How's a fellow to work with you mumbling all the time?"

Lovell breathed hard.

"If I could have just two minutes with the johnny that invented the ablative absolute—" remarked Newcome contemplatively.

"Silence all round!" rapped Jimmy Silver. "We shall never get done to-night; and there's a meeting to pick the team against Bagshot afterwards. Get on!"

And for half an hour there was silence in the end study while the Fistical Four—Lovell at last deigning to take up a pen—ploughed unhappily through the exercise that Mr. Dalton had set them.

Jimmy Silver was the first to finish, and Raby and Newcome threw down their pens a moment later. Lovell was still lost in the intricacies of the ablative absolute—and likely to remain so. Lovell's thoughts were much more on Carthew than on Latin just then.

"Meeting in ten minutes," warned Jimmy Silver, turning to the door. "If you've got anything to say, better be there, Lovell. Come on, you men!"

Jimmy and Raby and Newcome left the study and descended to the Common-room, where a crowd of fellows awaited them. The ten minutes elapsed, and Lovell had not turned up. The door was closed, and the cricket meeting progressed, not without argument.

An end was put to it by Bulkeley rapping on the door.

"Bed-time, kids! Chuck that row and come out!"

"Right-ho, Bulkeley!"

The meeting broke up—a number of fellows still trying to force their claims to inclusion in the team on Jimmy Silver. Uncle James of Rookwood turned a deaf ear to them and ran up to the end study.

As he expected, Lovell was still there, reading.

"Bed-time, old chap! Done your prep?"

"Is it? Oh, good!"

Arthur Edward Lovell seemed quite pleased at the prospect of bed. He accompanied his chums to the dormitory in a very cheery mood.

"Decided to give Carthew a rest, what?" asked Raby.

"No."

"Oh! I thought you seemed more cheerful, old man."

"Little boys shouldn't ask questions if they don't want to be told stories," said Lovell, grinning.

The subject of Carthew was dropped among the Fistical Four after that. Evidently Lovell still nursed his grievance, in spite of his improved spirits. Jimmy Silver slipped into bed, hoping that by the morning some of his chum's wrath would have evaporated.

"Good-night, Lovell old man!"

"Good-night, Jimmy! Yaw-aw! I'm tired."

Which remark was exceedingly diplomatic of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Deep and regular breathing soon told him that his chums were slipping into the arms of Morpheus, unsuspecting of any intentions he might have. And sleep was not the next item on Lovell's programme.

Alone in the end study he had thought it out. Carthew had taken an unwarrantable liberty with him; had made him a laughing-stock before a crowd of fellows on the cricket-field. The actual physical hurt of that "five" did not sting Lovell half so much as the hurt to his pride. For that he had to be avenged—and it was for revenge that he lay awake in the darkness, listening to the quarters as they chimed from the ivied clock-tower.

Carthew would be thinking of slipping across the quad for his party with Knowles and Catesby and Frampton—probably via the passage connecting the Classical and Modern sides of Rookwood. It would not be difficult for a prefect to secure the key of the dividing door.

Lovell gave Carthew plenty of time. His programme depended on that. But he rose at last and dressed swiftly. Wearing rubber-soled shoes, he slipped out of the dormitory and headed for the Sixth Form corridor.

He approached Carthew's study with great caution. The Sixth Form corridor was silent and shadowy, and Carthew was evidently gone or was not going. Lovell's fingers closed on the door-handle and he turned it. The door remained fast.

"My hat! He's locked it and taken the key!" he muttered.

Lovell bent down and applied his eye to the keyhole. Through it he could see the moonlight streaming in at the window opposite. There was no key. That pointed plainly enough to the fact that Carthew was already gone to the Modern side.

For a moment Lovell hesitated. Then he crept along the corridor to the end, where he knew there was a study empty—a senior who had left only a few weeks before. The door gave to his touch, and he slipped to the window. The Sixth Form studies were all on the ground floor, and it was the work of a few moments only for Lovell to push up the sash and drop into the quad.

Approached from the outside, Carthew's window was shut and the catch fastened. But Lovell had come prepared. He drew a Scout's knife, and using the thinnest blade worked it against the sash. It gave, and the window slid up silently. A second or two later, and Lovell stood in the prefect's study.

He did not waste time once he had arrived there.

The light of the moon was sufficient to make out the furniture, and that was all Lovell needed. He was handicapped by the fact that he could not make a noise, for the seniors sleeping on either side would have heard it immediately. But a lot could be done in silence, or nearly so, and Lovell set about accomplishing it.

The contents of the study cupboard—jam and condensed milk and butter and cakes—were distributed liberally round the room, on walls, pictures, carpet—everywhere they would stick.

By this time the study had taken on a most remarkable appearance—enough to startle Carthew violently when he arrived home and caught sight of it. But Lovell had not finished yet. With a happy inspiration, he took down the pictures and removed the glass from each. With the aid of his knife, he ripped each picture from its frame and made them all into a roll. This he stuffed into a crevice up the chimney.

"My hat! It's beginning to look something like!" grinned Lovell, surveying his handiwork.

He had almost a mind to go, but a last thought occurred to him. A few shovelfuls of soot from the chimney, scattered around the study in generous sweeps, added to the chaos which was to greet Carthew's eye on his return.

The Fourth-Former took a last look before leaving via the window.

The denuded walls, the jam, and the soot, combined in an effect that defied description. It was doubtful if even Carthew would be able to find words to express himself when he saw it.

Lovell burst into a chuckle.

He was tempted to leave a card on the table, or inscribe a farewell message on the looking-glass, but he realised that that would not do. Carthew might suspect, but he had to find out who did all this himself.

Grinning cheerily, Lovell dropped from the window and re-entered the House through the window of the empty study. A hasty visit to a bath-room rendered him clean again and rid him of the last evidence of guilt.

With infinite caution he opened the dormitory door and crept to his bed. There was a sleepy grunt as he undressed.

"Hallo! Who's that moving?"

No reply.

A figure sat up in bed, and Lovell recognised it. It was Jimmy Silver.

"Shut up, you ass! It's me—Lovell."

"Where on earth have you been, you ass?" ejaculated Jimmy.

"Ragging Carthew!"

"Wha-a-a-at? What do you mean?"

"I've paid off what I owed him," said Lovell, grinning in the dark and slipping into bed.

"Oh, you fathead! What potty game have you been up to now?"

"I've ragged his study," answered Lovell coolly. "He'll lose ten years' growth when he catches a glimpse of it. Ha, ha, ha!"

And Lovell burst into a fresh chuckle as he thought of it.

"Ragged—ragged his study!" repeated Jimmy Silver dazedly. "Oh, you ass! You fathead! He'll be down on you like a ton of bricks for this, you idiot!"

"Let him!" remarked Lovell carelessly.

"You ass!"

"Thanks!"

"You—you imbecile!"

"Yaw-aw! I'm going to sleep. Give your lower jaw a rest, Jimmy, old man."

"You—you—"

Jimmy Silver stuttered.



Arthur Edward Lovell burst into a chuckle as he surveyed his handiwork. "My hat! It's beginning to look something like," he murmured. "Carthew will be pleased when he comes in!" (See page 26.)

He felt unable to express his opinion of Arthur Edward Lovell at that moment.

Lovell is "For K!"

"MY dear chap—" "Carthew will skin you!" "My dear chap—" "Not that he doesn't deserve it," admitted Jimmy Silver. "A rotter like Carthew deserves all that comes to him—and he laid into you a jolly sight too thick. But, all the same, he will tear his hair when he sees that study—or, rather, I suppose he has done by now." "Must have done," remarked Raby. "It's only a few minutes to brekker-bell. I'm expecting a visit from Carthew at any moment myself."

"A stormy one," agreed Newcome. Arthur Edward Lovell drew a patient breath. It was early; breakfast was due in a few minutes. And Lovell had just, in the privacy of the end study, informed his chums of the havoc wrought overnight in the study of Carthew of the Sixth. Hence a difference of opinion among the Fistical Four.

Lovell was cool and confident; his chums apprehensive and suspecting that Lovell's excitement had taken him a little too far.

"You see, he will be bound to report it," explained Jimmy Silver. "And the Head will look on it as an outrage—"

"My dear chap," interrupted Lovell serenely, "if you could see an inch in front of your nose, you'd see that whatever Carthew wants to do he won't dare to do it!"

"Why not?" "Where was he while I was wrecking his study?" inquired Lovell coolly.

"Playing cards with Knowles and his set, I suppose."

"Just that. Can't you see now, you asses?"

"Phew! I'm beginning to see daylight," remarked Jimmy Silver thoughtfully. "Carthew can't very well report that a lot of damage was done while he wasn't in his study—when he ought to have been fast asleep like a good little boy. My hat! He's in a corner!"

"Exactly," assented Lovell complacently.

"By Jove, something in that!" agreed Raby. "Man can't complain of what goes on in his study while he's on the giddy razzle. Did you think all that out yourself, Lovell?"

"Why, you ass—" began Lovell sulphurously.

"Steady, old man," said Jimmy Silver soothingly. "I believe you're right—Carthew won't dare to kick up a shindy. What a score for the Fourth. You're developing

into quite a brain worker, Lovell old bean. Of course, Carthew will suspect—"

"He can," said Lovell, grinning. "There's no charge!"

"Lovell!"

A fat face appeared in the study doorway, and the podgy figure of Tubby Muffin rolled, uninvited, through it.

Four hands were raised simultaneously, and four index fingers were directed at the open door.

"Scat!"

"Scuttle!"

"Travel!"

"Hit the trail, Fatty!"

"Lovell! Is Lovell here? Oh, there you are!" ejaculated Muffin, breathing hard with excitement. "Shut up scating, you silly asses! I say, Lovell, you're for it, you know!"

"I'm what?" exclaimed Lovell.

"For it!" said Muffin, with emphasis.

"What for? Cough it up, you fathead!"

"Carthew," said Muffin. "Carthew says he's going to skin you, and flay you, and then boil you in oil—"

"Nice man," remarked Lovell.

"And all for wrecking his study!" finished Muffin, almost bubbling with excitement.

"Not really?" asked Lovell, affecting a yawn.

"Aren't you going to hide?" ejaculated Tubby, as Lovell continued to swing his legs from the study table, whereon he was sitting. "I know I should, if Carthew was after me looking like he was just now. You must be an ass—I looked into the study. Did you make all that mess, Lovell?"

Arthur Edward Lovell grinned.

His chums were looking serious. In their opinion, the situation was becoming serious. It was not a question of what Carthew could or could not do, but what he would do, now that he had seen the state his study was in.

But Lovell did not regard the matter seriously at all.

Muffin's wonder at his daring made him chuckle.

"Alone I did it," he answered, grinning. "Did it look pretty in daylight, old fat bean?"

"Like—like—I can't describe it!" gasped Muffin.

"Ha, ha! And Carthew's coming here, raging, what?"

"Foaming at the mouth and twisting his ashplant," said Muffin impressively. "Oh, my hat! Here he is!"

Tubby had been standing near the door. But as Carthew loomed up in the passage he skipped across the study and took refuge behind the table. Tubby Muffin did not want to break the fury of the storm, as it were. He left that unpleasant task to the imperturbable Lovell.

(There will be some startling developments in next week's grand instalment, chums, so look out for it.)



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.

THOSE MAGNIFICENT ENGINE MODELS!

OUR popular Companion Paper, the "Magnet," has made the most tremendous hit with its novel and magnificent series of Free Gift Model Engines. I don't remember any Free Gift scheme ever having made such a sensation before. To everyone who has seen the first of the "Magnet's" Free Model Engines, this fact will come as no surprise at all; it was a real dandy metal model of the wonderful Southern Railway Express Engine "Lord Nelson," handsomely enamelled in the smart green livery of that Company. But, of course, you all secured one of these splendid models for yourselves, I hope, according to the advice I gave you in these columns last week.

The second model in the "Magnet's" wonderful series of famous express engines is none other than the famous "Flying Scotsman"—the crack loco. of the great L.N.E.R. group. This model is a real stunner, and can be obtained, of course, by everyone who purchases a copy of this week's "Magnet," which is now on sale at all newsagents and bookstalls. Obviously, every one of you must have the "Flying Scotsman"—so you know what to do! The only thing to remember is, be sure you are not too late to get your "Magnet"! The supply of these wonderful Free Gift issues is, of course, not unlimited, and owing to the rush for them, it is sometimes unavoidable that the later applicants "get left"—so see your newsagent about it quickly, before he is sold out of them!

While you are about it, it will be safer to put in a regular order with him to keep the "Magnet" for you every week, for there are more Free Gifts to come.

For instance, on Saturday a new issue of the "Magnet" will appear, containing Model No. 3—namely, one of the gigantic new "Mogul" class locomotives of the London,

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NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME:

Now a word about our own programme, which is, after all, one that is mighty hard to beat! The chums of St. Jim's continue their topping holiday adventures in British Columbia in next Wednesday's yarn, entitled:

"THE DOLLAR TRAIL!"

and, as Kit Wildrake would say, "I'll tell a man," that this story is a real rip-snorter! Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is the witness of an outrageous robbery, and so the whole party of chums decide to go out on the trail of the missing dollars. That means they go looking for trouble, for even to-day in Western Canada, folks who go trailing round after bank robbers are liable to get hurt! The chums find more than their fair share of danger and adventure, as a matter of fact, but once started, they never "let up" till they have brought

"THE DOLLAR TRAIL"

to a successful conclusion. This is a tale no one between the ages of four and ninety could read without being thrilled! Another ripping instalment follows of our new serial:

"THE ROOKWOOD DICTATOR!"

By Owen Conquest,

and here I should like to say how pleased I am with the right royal welcome all my reader-chums have given to this talented author. Literally hundreds have written in glowing terms on this subject, and it seems to be the opinion of very many that to have an Owen Conquest in our columns was the one thing needed—the finishing touch, as it were—to put the good old GEM way up at the top of the tree and out-of-reach of all competitors and inferior substitutes, once for all! So that's splendidly satisfactory, chums, isn't it?

Your Editor.

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