

GRAND CHRISTMAS STORIES FOR ALL INSIDE.

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The POPULAR

2^d

GRAND
CHRISTMAS
NUMBER!



The
**NIGHT-
RIDER!**
BY
MORTON PIKE

THE DARING ESCAPE OF CLAUDE DUVAL, HIGHWAYMAN!

(A Dramatic Episode from the Wonderful, New Highwayman Story in this issue.)

TO BE OR NOT TO BE—A HERO!

Chunky Todgers makes the unpleasant discovery that the price of his "heroism" is far more than he expected it would be. Too late he regrets having made that astounding rescue—now the consequences of his folly have to be faced!



More Adventures of Frank Richards & Co., The Cheery Chums of the School in the Backwoods

THE FIRST CHAPTER.**Mr. Bowers Makes a Morning Call!**

MORNING, gents!" Mr. William Bowers, of Thompson, greeted Frank Richards & Co. very affably, as they rode up to the school gates in the sunny summer morning.

The three chums drew rein, regarding the dusty "pilgrim" rather curiously.

Mr. Bowers was leaning against the gatepost when they came in sight. He detached himself from the post and touched his rag of a hat in salute, and then backed to the post again. Mr. Bowers generally was leaning up against something. As a rule, it was the post outside the Red Dog saloon in Thompson town. For reasons best known to himself, the dusty tramp was honouring Cedar Creek School with his presence that sunny morning.

He was chewing tobacco, occasionally ejecting a brown stream of juice, which had marked the ground round him in a circle. Mr. Bowers was not exactly a pleasant object to behold. In the bright sunshine he looked even more frowsy and untidy than usual.

"Nice morning, gents!" beamed Mr. Bowers.

"The morning's nice enough," answered Bob Lawless curtly.

"This hyer reminds me of my young days," confided Mr. Bowers, with a nod towards the lumber schoolhouse, and the boys and girls in the playground. "Happy—happy times!"

"What are you doing here?" asked Vere Beauclerc.

"Waiting for Mister Todgers!" said Dry Billy cheerfully. "He ain't come along to school yet."

"And what do you want with Chunky Todgers?" asked Bob.

"He'll be glad to see me," explained Mr. Bowers. "Didn't that brave young gent—brave as a lion—jump into the creek to reskoo me from drowning? Didn't he risk his life—his precious life—to save me from going over the rapids? I tell you, gents, words can't express how much I admire and respect that brave young feller."

"Does that mean that you're here to get some more money out of him?"

Mr. Bowers looked pained.

"Oh, sir!" he murmured.

"Chunky pulled you out of the creek

yesterday," said Frank Richards. "He surprised us all by doing it. You seem to have been sticking him for money on the strength of it. Is that what you call cricket, Billy Bowers?"

"That young gent," replied Mr. Bowers, "is generosity itself. My clothes, sich as they are, was spiled by going in the water. Mister Todgers stood me two dollars for it. Wasn't that generous of him?"

"Here comes Chunky," murmured Vere Beauclerc.

There was a trotting on the trail, and Chunky Todgers came in sight on his fat little pony, from the direction of Thompson. Molly and Tom Lawrence were riding with the fat Chunky.

Chunky Todgers' fat face did not wear its usual cheery expression. He seemed in a doleful mood, and his usually active tongue was still. He had hardly spoken a word during the ride to school, much to the surprise of Molly and her brother. Molly was unusually gracious to Chunky on account of his gallant deed the previous day; and graciousness from Molly ought to have translated the fat youth to the seventh heaven of delight. But now he was so preoccupied that he seemed scarcely to notice it.

At sight of the dusty loafer leaning against the gatepost, Chunky Todgers became first red, and then quite pale.

A hunted look came over his chubby face, and he drew rein, and glanced to right and left, almost as if he were seeking an avenue of escape. Which was serious, to say the least, considering that he had saved Mr. Bowers' life the previous day, and that the dusty "hobo" was apparently bursting with affectionate gratitude.

But if Chunky was thinking of eluding the interview with the grateful Mr. Bowers, the latter certainly was not. He jerked himself away from the gatepost, and ran to meet his fat rescuer, with a beaming face. He took Chunky's bridle and held his horse with one hand, and swept off his ragged hat with the other.

"Morning, young sir—morning!" he beamed. "It's a sight for sore eyes to see you ag'in, Mister Todgers. How are you feeling, sir, arter what you went through yesterday—jumping into the raging flood, sir, like a real hero in a story-book, to reskoo the helpless and drowning."

"Oh!" gasped Chunky.

He slid from his fat pony into the trail, his face dismayed and troubled. Mr. Bowers regarded him affectionately.

"Feeling all right this morning, sir?" he asked.

"Ow! Oh, yes!"

"Not caught any cold, sir, arter what you did, arter that brave action, sir?"

"Nunno!"

"I guess I'm glad to hear that," said Dry Billy solemnly. "I guess it does me good, sir, to hear that you ain't suffered for that very brave action, sir."

"Are you coming in, Chunky?" called out Frank Richards.

"Eh? Oh, yes!"

"Well, come on; the bell goes in a few minutes."

"I—I've got to go in to school, Bowers," faltered Todgers.

Mr. Bowers gave him a look.

"If you can't spare me a minute or two—" he began. There was a peculiar ring in the loafer's voice that sounded like a threat.

Chunky seemed to shiver.

"I—I guess I—I can!" he stammered. "It—it's all right, you chaps. You go in. I'll come in a minute. It—it's simply a private affair. It's all right. You fellows go in."

Frank Richards & Co. looked at Chunky, and at Dry Billy Bowers, and then at one another. They were perplexed; and they were uneasy and suspicious. If anything in the wide world was plain and clear, it was that Chunky Todgers was afraid of the dusty loafer; though why he should be afraid of the man whose life he had saved was a deep mystery.

"Look here, Chunky—" began Bob.

"You go in," gasped Chunky. "Lemme alone! It's all right, I tell you! Can't you give a galoot a rest?"

"Oh, all right!"

There was nothing more to be said after that. Frank Richards & Co. led their horses in at the school gates, leaving Chunky Todgers alone with the loafer of Thompson.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.**Under His Thumb!**

CHUNKY TODGERS blinked helplessly at Dry Billy Bowers as the chums disappeared in at the school gates. The fat and dismayed Chunky seemed a great deal like a hapless bird fascinated by the glittering eye of a serpent. Billy Bowers sneered quite agreeably. "Now we'll get our little tork!" he remarked.



THE HERO OF CEDAR CREEK UNMASKED! "How dare you bother Todgers like this, after he saved your life!" said Molly Lawrence. Mr. Bowers snorted. "Saved my life, did he?" he exclaimed. "Does he look as if he could save my life? Why, he only gave me a dollar to say so!" (See Chapter 4.)

"Oh!" groaned Chunky. "I—I say, there—there's nothing to talk about, you know. N-nothing at all."

"Ain't there?" said Mr. Bowers significantly. "I guess there is. Some! Just a few! I calculate!"

"We—we settled up yesterday, you know," said Chunky feebly. "I—I gave you the dollar agreed on—"

"Wot's a dollar?"

"And—and I gave you two more—"

"Wot's two dollars?"

"Oh dear!" said Chunky dispiritedly.

"Two dollars—three dollars!" said Mr. Bowers scornfully. "Lot, I guess, for a galoot to tumble into the water for, and get hisself drenched. Three dollars! Why, a job like that is worth fifty dollars, if it's worth a Continental red cent."

"You—you agreed—"

"I may have said, good-natured-like, that I'd do the job for a dollar," said Mr. Bowers. "Well, I did the job. I never said nothing about holding my tongue afterwards, did I?"

"No-no-nunno!"

"Well, then," said Dry Billy, in an aggrieved tone, "do you want me to hold my tongue, or don't you?"

"Yes," gasped Chunky.

"If you want me to hold my tongue, are you going to pay for it, or do you expect to get it for nothing?" demanded Mr. Bowers indignantly.

Chunky Todgers only groaned by way of reply. He seemed incapable of speech.

Mr. Bowers regarded him with sorrowful indignation.

"I call this hyer ungrateful," he said, "I do, reely! Plump I goes into the creek, with me clothes on, to give you a chance of pretending to reskoo me and showin' off to your school fellers. You dips into the water to make your duds wet, lookin' as if you'd been in the creek arter me. I hollers for help. Up they comes, and finds us drenched and drippin', and me spinnin' a yarn that you've reskooed me at the risk of your precious life. Did I pile it on thick, or didn't I? I asks you the question!"

Another groan from Chunky Todgers.

"I played up, I did, like a real white

man," pursued Dry Billy, with increasing indignation. "I piled it on, and your mates carried you off shoulder-high, makin' no end of a fuss of you! You've showed off to them, and made them believe you've got heaps of pluck. And you offers me a dollar!"

"You—you agreed—"

"The question is," said Mr. Bowers, "whether I'm to keep up this hyer yarn. I'm pore, and I'm down on my luck! I've been lookin' for work for years, and never found any. But I've got a conscience, Mister Todgers. And it's heavy on my conscience tellin' them lies to the galoots—makin' out that you reskooed me at the risk of your life, when it was all a stunt from start to finish. I feel bound to tell them the truth."

"Oh dear!"

"I s'pose they'd think a bit different of their pesky hero if I did?" sneered Mr. Bowers.

Chunky Todgers groaned deeply.

If ever an unhappy spoofer sincerely repented of his spoofer, Chunky Todgers did at that moment.

It had seemed such an easy, simple "stunt" at the start. He had completely convinced Cedar Creek School that he, Chunky Todgers, was really a hero of the first water, though a very plump one. He had basked in the sunshine of general admiration and praise.

He had enjoyed it—till his next meeting with Mr. Bowers. Now he was not enjoying it at all.

The utter ridicule that would fall upon him, and overwhelm him, if the facts about that rescue came out, made Chunky shudder to think of it.

Dry Billy grinned genially as he watched the varying expressions in the fat school-boy's face. He congratulated himself on having "struck" the softest thing in his unscrupulous career.

"Well?" he rapped out suddenly.

Groan!

"Don't you worrit, Mister Todgers," said Dry Billy kindly, "I ain't giving you away. I'm a good chum, I am—I ain't never gone

back on a galoot. But there's my conscience—I got a conscience. It goes ag'in the grain to be keepin' up this yarn. I guess there's only one thing to drown a man's conscience when it's troublin' him, and that's tangle-foot. That's why I'm hanging round here to see you this morning, Mister Todgers."

There was the clang of the school-bell.

Chunky started.

"I—I've got to go in," he stammered.

"Let's get our leetle business over afore you go in," said Mr. Bowers. "I'm only asking you for a loan of five dollars, Mister Todgers."

"Five dollars!" stuttered Chunky.

"That's all!"

"I—I haven't got five cents."

"I guess," said Mr. Bowers, "that you'd better get it from somewhere."

"I—I can't!"

Mr. Bowers shrugged his shoulders.

"Then I reckon I don't stifle my conscience any longer," he said. "Have your own way, Mr. Todgers."

Dry Billy swung round towards the school gates.

Chunky stared after him, in blank dismay, for a moment, and then ran after him, and clutched him by the sleeve.

"Where are you going?" he panted.

"Into the school, o' course!" answered Mr. Bowers darkly.

"Wha-at for?"

"To get them lies off my conscience, by makin' a full confession about that little stunt, I guess."

"You—you villain!" gasped Chunky.

"What!" roared Mr. Bowers. "Calling me names now, because a galoot has got a conscience, and wants to own up to the truth. That finishes it. Not another chirp, Mister Todgers—I'm going in. I'm disgusted at you, that's wot I am, and I'm done with you!"

And Mr. Bowers, breathless with indignation, started for the gates, with long strides.

The alarmed Chunky kept pace with him, hanging on to his arm, and hopping to keep up.

"D-d-don't!" he gasped. "I—I say, I—I didn't mean to call you names, Mr. Bowers! I take it back!"

"That's enough!"

"You—you're not going to give me away?" groaned Chunky.

"Don't you talk to me, Mister Todgers. I ain't got nothing more to say to you! You're unscrupulous—that's what you are!"

"I—I say—"

"That'll do!"

"I—I'll get you five dollars!" panted Chunky, in terrible alarm, as he hopped through the gateway, hanging on to the loafer's arm. "I—I say, I'll find it, somehow. I—I will, reely."

"It's too late!" said Mr. Bowers surlily. "I'm going to tell the truth, and ease my conscience. That's wot I'm going to do!"

"Stop!"

"Nary a stop. You let go my arm!"

"I'll find the money!" moaned Chunky. "Do stop, Mr. Bowers! I'll bring it out to you after lessons, I will, reely!"

Mr. Bowers condescended to pause at last. They were in the playground now; but as all the Cedar Creek crowd had gone into the lumber schoolhouse, there was no witnesses of the peculiar scene. As a matter of fact, Dry Billy Bowers had not the remotest intention of carrying out his threat, and thus killing the goose that he desired to lay golden eggs for him. He only wanted to scare Chunky—and in that he had succeeded perfectly.

"How long am I to wait?" he demanded, as he yielded to Chunky Todgers' entreaties, and stopped at last.

"After morning lessons!" gasped Chunky.

"That means hanging about the whole morning!" grunted Billy Bowers. "And I guess I'm looking for work this morning, too! Howsundever, to oblige you, Mister Todgers, I don't mind doin' it; I always was an obliging galoot—it's my weakness. I'll be hyer ag'in at half-past twelve—hey?"

"Yes," moaned Chunky.

"That's a cinch, then?" said Mr. Bowers.

He turned back to the gates, and Chunky

watched him disappear, with a relief too deep for words.

The dreadful exposure was staved off, at all events.

But it was only staved off, as Chunky realised; for where on earth was he to raise five dollars after morning lessons, to satisfy the extortionate rascal?

Five hundred dollars, or five thousand, would have been almost as easy for the impetuous Chunky to raise, so far as he could see.

And if the promise of payment was not kept, it was certain that Dry Billy—drier than ever by that time—would be simply furious.

Chunky Todgers almost tottered into the schoolhouse.

He was five minutes late for class, and Miss Meadows spoke to him very sharply. But Chunky hardly heard the admonishing voice of the schoolmistress. He would not have cared much, just then, if he had been caned.

He was thinking of much more serious matters—of the disastrous—indeed, catastrophic—result of his hapless attempt to pose as a hero in the eyes of Cedar Creek School.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Poor Old Chunky!

TODGERS!
The fat boy did not answer Miss Meadows; he did not even hear her when she addressed him a little later.

"Todgers, I was speaking to you, and you have not answered me!" exclaimed the Canadian schoolmistress severely.

"Eh! Yes! No!" gasped Chunky. "Were you really, Miss Meadows?"

"What is the matter with you this morning, Todgers?"

"Mum-mum-matter?"

Miss Meadows glanced at him in surprise.

She could see that there was something wrong with him, though she had no idea what it was; and she was very lenient with him, and he had little to do, which was a relief.

But there was no real relief for Chunky, unless he could have received the news that Mr. William Bowers had been suddenly carried off by the Red Indians—that, certainly, would have restored the fat contentment to Chunky's face. But that was not likely to happen.

As a rule Chunky welcomed the close of lessons—he had never been able to see any good in lessons, excepting the fact that, sooner or later, they came to an end. But on the present occasion, with Mr. Bowers waiting for him outside Cedar Creek, he would have been glad for class to continue indefinitely. His fat face was a picture of worry and woe as he marched out with the rest of the fellows.

Frank and Bob and Vere Beauclerc looked at him, going into the playground.

He rolled up to the trio, who met him with curious looks. His fat face was very red.

"I—I say, you galoots!" he began. "C-c-can you—c-can you lend me five dollars?"

"A pound!" exclaimed Frank Richards, in amazement.

"Yep! C-c-can you?"

"What the blump do you want a pound for?"

"I-I want it, you know?"

"Look!" murmured Beauclerc, with a nod towards the gates.

In the gateway appeared a dusty form, surmounted by a rag of a hat. The coppery face of Dry Billy Bowers looked into the playground.

"Is it for Dry Billy that you want five dollars?" demanded Bob Lawless.

"The—the fact is—the—the fact—fact, you know—"

"Well, what is the fact?" inquired Frank Richards.

"The—the fact is—" gasped Chunky.

"Go ahead! That boozey loafer is squeezing money out of you, and you want to squeeze it out of us. Is that it?" asked Bob Lawless.

"Nunno! Oh, no!"

"Then what's the game!" demanded Bob.

"You—you see—" Chunky cudgelled his brains for a reason to give anything but the real reason. "I—I—I think—I mean—that is—I—I—" His voice trailed off helplessly.

"Keep it up," said Bob encouragingly. "This is quite entertaining. You don't know how funny you are, Chunky!"

"I—I want—to—to help him, you know!" gasped Chunky. "He—he's looking for work, you know, and—I want to help him. I—I've promised to hand him five dollars. If you'll lend me—"

"Well, we won't!" said Bob, very decidedly. "You must be off your roof, I should say, to think you can clear us out of all our money, to give that boozey loafer to spend at the Red Dog. Tell him you can't give him any!"

"I—I can't—"

"Then I'll tell him for you!" growled the rancher's son, and he made a stride towards the gates.

Chunky caught him by the arm in terror.

"D-d-don't!" he gasped.

"Rot! I'm going to give him some plain Canadian, and clear him off!"

"Stop!" shrieked Chunky. "Stop, I tell you! Mind your own business, can't you, Bob Lawless?"

Bob stopped at that.

"I guess I can," he answered, "and I will! Go and chop chips, you fat clam! Come on, you fellows!"

Bob walked away with his chums, leaving Chunky perspiring. Dry Billy was coming in at the gates, and Todgers ran to meet him.

The dusty loafer was attracting a great deal of attention, and at any moment Miss Meadows might have come out to warn him off the premises.

"Got the rocks?" asked Dry Billy rather unpleasantly.

"Nunno!"

"Wot!"

"I'll make it six dollars, if you'll wait!" said Chunky, in a hollow voice.

He would have promised six hundred to keep the rascal's tongue quiet. Dry Billy paused.

"Well, how long has a galoot got to wait?" he asked discontentedly.

"After lessons—"

"I'll be lyer at five o'clock," said Mr. Bowers, "and that's the last chance, Mister Todgers. Six dollars, down on the nail, or you know what will happen!"

"Wait for me on—the trail—in the timber, and—and I'll be there!" moaned Chunky.

"It's a cinch!"

Chunky stared after the dusty gentleman as he went with hopeless dismay in his face. He groaned as he turned away. Six dollars were required now, as the price of Mr. Bowers' silence, and Chunky had not the remotest idea where they were to come from. He was realising, too, that if the demand were met, it would be followed by another as soon as the six dollars had flowed away in firewater at the Red Dog. And another demand—and another—in fact, there would be no end to it as long as Chunky could raise money by hook or by crook. And when he could raise no more—

That afternoon was a long-drawn-out horror for Chunky Todgers. He was still basking in the glory of the gallant deed which had proved to all Cedar Creek what a hero he was. But it afforded him no satisfaction now. The price was a little too high!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Light at Last!

FRANK RICHARDS were a thoughtful expression as he crossed towards the corral after lessons that day with his chums to take out the horses for the ride home. He paused in the playground.

"You chaps in a hurry to get home?" he asked.

"Not specially," answered Beauclerc, and Bob shook his head. "Anything on?"

"I was thinking of Todgers."

"The fat duffer!" growled Bob.

"He's in trouble," said Frank. "I can't understand what's the matter with him, but he's jolly queer. That loafer, Bowers, is threatening him somehow, and bullying him for money."

Bob Lawless nodded.

"A lot of the fellows think so," he answered. "It's clear enough for a blind Chinaman to see."

"It's a mystery how the man can have any hold over him, especially as Chunky saved his life," said Frank. "But there it is! And I think Chunky wants helping out. He's looking quite ill. Look at him now!"

Chunky Todgers was in the playground, and undoubtedly his face was pale and sickly. He dared not go out of gates, because he knew that Dry Billy was waiting on the trail; and he dared not remain where he was, lest the loafer should enter the school grounds in search of him. His state of mind, therefore, was unenviable. Look which way he would, Chunky could see no way out of the terrible scrape he had landed himself in for the sake of vain glory. The hopeless wretchedness in his usually sunny face touched the hearts of the chums of Cedar Creek.

"Poor old Chunky!" murmured Vere Beauclerc. "He does look in a bad way, and no mistake. We ought to do something for him, if we can."

"Let's speak to him, anyway," said Frank. "Right-ho!"

The three chums approached Chunky Todgers, who did not even see them coming, as he watched the gates with dismayed, expectant eyes. Bob Lawless clapped him on the shoulder, and Chunky started.

"Oh, you villain!"

"What?"

"Oh, it's you, Bob!" gasped Chunky. "I—I thought it was—was some—"

"Dry Billy—eh?"

"Oh dear!" groaned Chunky. "I—say, be a good chap, Bob, and lend me six dollars!"

"Six!" repeated Bob. "Has the price gone up?"

"Yep! I—I mean that—"

"What do you want to give Bowers six dollars for?" asked Frank Richards quietly.

"Tell us the facts, Chunky, and if you're in real need we'll do our best to see you through."

Chunky Todgers blinked at them hopefully. He certainly couldn't tell them the facts. The six dollars were required to keep them from learning the facts. Chunky cudgelled his fat brain. Fortunately—or perhaps unfortunately—Chunky's imagination was a lively one, and was fed fat on the novels in the Thompson circulation library.

"I—I—I guess I'll tell you the secret," he stammered at last.

"Oh, it's a secret, is it?"

"A dread secret!" said Chunky impressively.

"A which?" howled Frank Richards.

"A dread secret, you know?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bowers," continued Chunky, in a thrilling tone, "knows the secret of my birth!"

Frank Richards & Co. gazed at him. They could do nothing else. Chunky had deprived them, for the moment, of the power of speech.

"He knows the dread secret!" whispered Chunky. "Unless I hand him six dollars this evening at the haunted tower—I—I mean, on the trail—he will reveal the truth!"

"The secret of your birth!" babbled Bob Lawless, finding his voice at last.

"That's it!"

"But there isn't any secret!" howled Bob.

"Everybody in the Thompson Valley knows that you're Joe Todgers, the son of John Todgers, one of a family of six, all as fat as pumpkins!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That is the story that was given forth—"

"Which was whatted?"

"Given forth to hide the dread secret!" murmured Chunky. "In me you see—you see—the missing son—"

"The what?"

"The missing son of a powerful nobleman," said Chunky Todgers. "If the secret were revealed—"

Chunky was interrupted by a yell of laughter. His explanation of the "facts"

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ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2:

was rather too much for Frank Richards & Co.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Look hyer, you galoots—"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three schoolboys roared and howled and yelled. They could not help it. Chunky Todgers as the missing son of a nobleman with a dread secret attached to his birth was too much. They shrieked.

Chunky regarded them indignantly. He could not see why there was anything comic in his explanation. Missing sons of noblemen were as common as blackberries in the novels that came up to Thompson from the railway town south. But, for some reason or other, it was clear that Frank Richards & Co. did not believe his remarkable statement.

"I don't see what you fellows are howling about!" Chunky exclaimed at last peevishly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Look hyer, you howling jays—"
Bob Lawless wiped his eyes.

"Don't, Chunky," he gasped—"don't! You're giving me a pain in the ribs, you know!"

"I'm telling you the facts—"
"The facts! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Todgers," roared Dick Dawson, from the gates, "here's your friend coming to see you!"

"Ow!" gasped Chunky.

Mr. Bowers was evidently tired of waiting on the trail.

His dusty and frowzy figure loomed up in the gateway, and he looked round for his gallant rescuer.

Mr. Bowers was not looking good-tempered. It was his second tramp along from Thompson, and he had his doubts about the six dollars. He felt indignantly that Chunky Todgers was fooling him, and he intended to come down very heavily if the dollars were not forthcoming.

"Oh, hyer you are!" he exclaimed, striding towards the unhappy Chunky.

"Here I am!" flattered Todgers.

"I've been waiting for you on the trail."

"I—I—I was just coming out!"

"Well, I calculate I've just come in," said Dry Billy grimly. "Now, if you'll hand over the six dollars agreed on, Mister Todgers—"

"I—I—I—"
"Are you going to pony up?" demanded

Dry Billy, in a voice that could be heard over the Cedar Creek playground.

"I—I—I—"

"What's the row?" asked Tom Lawrence, coming up with five or six other fellows.

Dry Billy, of the Red Dog, was rather a remarkable figure at Cedar Creek, and was quite certain to attract attention there.

"Blessed if I know!" said Frank Richards. "Bowers seems to want Chunky to pay him for having his life saved, so far as I can see."

"How dare you bother Chunky like this, after he saved your life?" exclaimed Molly Lawrence warmly. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

Mr. Bowers snorted.

"Saved my life be blowed!" he exclaimed. "Does it look as if that fat clam could save my life?"

"But he did!" exclaimed Molly. "You said so yourself!"

"He give me a dollar to say so!" was Mr. Bowers' unexpected answer.

"What?"

"Chunky!" roared Bob Lawless.

All eyes were turned on Chunky. That unhappy hero was crimson as a beet-root, and his eyes were on the ground. He was overwhelmed. He had realised that it must come—and it had come!

"He—he—he gave you a dollar to say so?" babbled Frank Richards.

"Correct!"

"He didn't save your life!" howled Bob.

"Nary a save!" grinned the loafer. "It was Mr. Todgers' stunt, to show off; that's wot it was, and I helped him out like a good-natured galoot. And now be wot'n't even square a man for the damage to his clothes."

"Oh, Chunky!" gasped Molly.

"My only hat!" said Frank Richards, comprehending at last. "It was only one more of Chunky's stunts, then?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chunky, you fraud—"

Chunky Todgers gave a deep groan. His brief glory was gone now with a crash! Shorn of his glory, Chunky cast a haggard glance round at his schoolfellows. They were yelling with laughter, and poor Chunky groaned again as he saw that Molly Lawrence was laughing, too.

He rushed away towards the corral, followed by a roar of laughter from all Cedar

Creek and a deep chuckle from Mr. William Bowers.

He dragged out his fat pony, and scrambled on it out of sight. He was relieved of Mr. Bowers and his demands now, and doubtless that would be a comfort later. But for the present the unfortunate Chunky was only conscious of the utter, overwhelming ridicule he had brought upon himself.

He disappeared at a gallop up the trail, with the laughter ringing in his ears as he went.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Bowers, "I've eased my conscience by telling the truth. 'I'm a badly-used man, gents. Twice I've tramped here from Thompson, and that unscrupulous young feller ain't handed out the rocks. Gents, is there any young gent present who will stand a galoot a dollar to help him home, and see him through till he can find work?"

Bob Lawless looked at him.

"So you helped Chunky to fool us, and since then you've been sticking 'im for money to keep it secret," he said. "I see now, Chunky is a silly ass, and you're a thundering rogue, Mr. Bowers. You've been in the creek once, and you're going in again! Collar him!"

"Hyer, hands off!" exclaimed Mr. Bowers, in alarm, as the schoolboys closed round him. "I—I say— Help! Hands off!"

Don't you chuck me in the creek—I never could stand water! Oh, Jerusalem! Yooop!"

Espostulating frantically, Mr. Bowers was rushed down to the creek, and there was a terrific splash as he went into it head-foremost. A yelling crowd watched him struggle out on the other side, drenched and dripping. Mr. Bowers took his homeward way to Thompson, a sadder, if not a wiser, loafer.

Chunky Todgers had to face a fire of chaff and chipping the next day at Cedar Creek. It lasted for several days. Indeed, it seemed to the unhappy Chunky that his schoolfellows would never, never forget that story of the heroic rescue of Mr. William Bowers.

THE END.

(There will be another grand long story of the school in the Backwoods next week.)

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