

ANOTHER TALE OF THE SCHOOL IN THE BACKWOODS!

The fun commences when Mr. Penrose, the enterprising editor-printer-journalist of Thompson, offers a handsome prize for all literary aspirants of the Valley. There are literary geniuses in the Backwoods town and at the neighbouring school, and this competition reveals lots of unexpected things!



The Backwoods Authors!

A ROARING, ROLLICKING
TALE OF FRANK RICHARDS'
SCHOOLDAYS IN THE
BACKWOODS OF CANADA.

**THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Chunky's Latest!**

"SPLENDID!"

It was Chunky Todgers' voice, in tones of enthusiasm, and Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc stopped as they heard it.

"Oh, splendid!" repeated Chunky Todgers. "The real goods!"

Chunky was in the school-room at Cedar Creek.

It was after morning lessons, and the school-room was deserted by all save the fat Chunky. He was sitting close by the log fire that blazed at one end of the big room, with an exercise-book open on his knees, and a stump of pencil in his fat fingers, and quite a rapt look upon his plump features.

Bob and Beauclerc looked in at the open doorway. They were looking for their chum, Frank Richards, who had disappeared after lessons, and was not to be found.

"Splendid!" went on Chunky Todgers, blissfully ignorant of the two grinning faces looking at him from the doorway. "If this doesn't work the rifle, I guess it will be funny! Some! Why, it's splendid!"

"What on earth is he up to?" asked Vere Beauclerc.

Bob shook his head.

"Give it up! He can't be putting on all that steam over exercises, I guess. It wouldn't be like Chunky."

"Ha, ha! No."

"Chunky!" shouted Bob.

Todgers looked up with a start.

"Eh? What? Well?"

"Seen Frank Richards?"

"Eh? No. Bother Frank Richards! Don't interrupt!"

"What are you up to?" demanded Bob. "What's splendid?"

"Oh, you run away and play!" answered Chunky Todgers. "You don't understand literary work, Bob Lawless."

Bob jumped.

"Literary work!" he yelled.

"Yep!"

"Oh, great gophers!"

Bob strode across to the fire, Beauclerc following him. They were rather interested in literary work—by Chunky

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Todgers! Chunky's exercise-book was thickly scrawled, his literary work was evidently going at a great rate. So far as quantity went, it was all right, though possibly the quality was quite another matter.

"Let's look, old scout!" grinned Bob. "This is rather a new stunt for you!"

Todgers hesitated.

"Look here, you won't bag it?" he asked.

"Bag it?" repeated Bob.

"Yep! If you're not going in for the competition I'll show it to you."

"Never even heard of the competition," yawned Bob Lawless. "What is it, and what's it about?"

"Oh, you don't hear anything!" said Chunky Todgers scornfully. "Don't you read the 'Thompson Press'—Mr. Penrose's paper?"

"Nope!"

"Well, it's in that. The editor—old Penrose, you know—is offering a prize for a story—ten dollars!" said Chunky, his eyes glistening. "Ten dollars isn't much, of course, but it will come in handy. I'm going to get a new sled with it."

"You're going to get the prize, then?" asked Beauclerc.

"Correct!"

"I don't quite see how you can know that in advance," said Beauclerc, rather perplexed.

"It's practically a sure thing," explained Chunky. "You see, old Penrose offers the prize for the best story dealing with Canadian backwoods life. He undertakes quite plainly to shell out the prize to the best stuff sent in to his office. Mine's the best stuff—"

"Oh, I—I see!"

"How do you know that?" grinned Bob Lawless.

Chunky smiled serenely.

"I've got the literary gift!" he explained.

"Phew!"

"There are fellows who are born authors," said Chunky condescendingly. "I happen to be that kind. I'm not bragging of it. It just happens, you know. Just as it happens that you're born rather a duffer, Lawless—"

"What?" ejaculated Bob.

"No offence, you know. I was merely giving that as an illustration."

"You'd better find some other illustration, if you don't want your fat nose punched, Chunky!" grunted Bob.

"So you're writing a story?" said Vere Beauclerc, smiling.

"Sure! I don't mind letting you fellows see it, if you're not going in for the prize."

"That's all right; we're not. Let's see the literary work," said Bob Lawless. "It must be a regular sock-dolager, I guess, if you did it!"

"I'll read some out!" said Chunky modestly. "Listen!"

"Heave ahead!"

Chunky blinked at the scrawl in the exercise-book, and started. Bob and Vere Beauclerc listened, with smiling faces. They had never suspected Chunky Todgers of being a literary genius before. They did not suspect him of it now, as a matter of fact.

"The shades of night were falling fast," began Chunky, in a most impressive tone.

"Is that original?" asked Bob.

"Oh, sure!"

"I guess some American chap has written that already."

"Oh, rot!" answered Chunky. "Let me get on. The shades of night were falling fast, when Cholmondeley de Vere—"

"Chumley de whatter?"

"Cholmondeley de Vere. I believe in having a good name for a hero. None of your Smiths and Browns for me!" said Chunky loftily.

"Or Todgerses?" grinned Bob.

"Oh, do listen, and don't chin-wag! The shades of night were falling fast, when Cholmondeley de Vere mounted his gallant steed, and galloped at full speed through the forest. Terrific darkness wrapped him on all sides—"

"Did he break his neck?" asked Bob.

"Eh? No."

"Lucky he was the hero of a story, then," chuckled Bob. "Any other galoot that rode full speed in a forest in the dark would have come an awful cropper!"

"Oh, you're a silly jay, Bob Lawless! You're not romantic," said Chunky scornfully. "You don't know what literary work is. Common-place considerations don't matter in literary work. Let's get on. 'The terrific darkness wrapped him on all sides. Suddenly there was a cry for help, and Cholmondeley de Vere saw a beauteous maiden and—'"

"How did he see her?"

"With his eyes, of course, fathead!"

"But he couldn't use his eyes in the dark, especially if it was terrifically dark, as you said it was."

Chunky Todgers snorted.

"Of all the silly jays," he said, "you cap the stack, and no mistake! This is literary. Don't you understand? Literary!"

"Does literary mean that it's not supposed to have any sense in it?"

Snort!

"Just you listen!" said Chunky. "The beauteous maiden was struggling in the grasp of a dozen painted, ferocious Redskins braves—"

"She must have been rather a hefty young lady to take a dozen Injuns to hold her!"

Snort!

"Come on, Cherub! We've got to find Franky," said Bob. "Chunky, old man, I guess you won't get that gorgeous yarn into the 'Press' unless you pay for it at advertisement rates."

"Listen to this bit!"

But Bob Lawless did not stay to listen to that bit. He left the school-room with Beauclerc, leaving Chunky Todgers to pursue his literary work undisturbed, and Cholmondeley de Vere to rush to the rescue of that ill-used beauteous maiden.

THE SECOND CHAPTER!

Frank Richards, too!

FRANKY!"

"What the Dickens—"

Frank Richards' chums had found him at last.

Frank was seated on a stack of logs near the stables, and he had a book on his knee, and a sheaf of paper spread on the book; and he was busy with a pencil. An open copy of the "Thompson Press" lay on the logs near him.

He glanced up as his chums arrived.

"Hallo, you chaps!"

"What on earth are you up to?" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "Exercises?"

"Oh, no. Look at that paper."

Frank indicated the Thompson paper, and went on scribbling. Bob picked up Mr. Penrose's enterprising periodical. That sheet, of which Mr. Penrose was editor, proprietor, printer, and publisher, was more than half filled with advertisements. But there were editorial notes and literary contributions, mainly the work of Mr. Penrose.

"MacGahan's Whisky," stared from the front page in huge type; the back page recommended the reader to drop in at Macnab's Dance Hall for a real good time. Mr. Chop's Chinese laundry was inside; with Gunten's Store, the Thompson Valley Emporium; and "The Red Dog for a Razzle!"

There were horses for sale, and dogs, and even parrots. There was a matrimonial column; and wherever the column required filling to the bottom there was poetry.

There was news—local news: Four Kings had been taken up by the sheriff for going on a "bender"; and a horse had been stolen from the Thompson Valley Ranch; the post-wagon, up from Kamloops, had shed a wheel on the Silver Creek trail, and been "stuck up" for half a day; and Mr. Penrose's

editorial comments on things in general filled a column and a half—which looked as if advertisements were short.

Possibly because of that shortage there was a new "stunt" in the Thompson paper.

It was a literary competition. Mr. Penrose had a regular supply of papers from the railway towns, and he was not above borrowing any "stunt" that looked like being good business. His latest was borrowed from a Montreal magazine.

Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc read it together with much entertainment.

"A PRIZE OF TEN DOLLARS IS OFFERED FOR THE BEST

short story not more than 10,000 words, submitted to the Literary Editor before Saturday. Stories must be original, dealing with life in the Canadian backwoods. Are there any undiscovered literary geniuses in the Thompson Valley? Here's your opportunity! As the poet remarks: 'Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest!' Let him wake up, and put in for our

TEN DOLLAR PRIZE."

There was a good deal more of it, enough, in fact, to fill all the space in the "Thompson Press" that Mr. Penrose was unable to fill with advertisements that week.

"So that's the game, is it?" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "You're putting in for the ten dollars, Franky?"

Frank Richards laughed.

"You've got a rival," said Beauclerc, laughing.

"I dare say I've got a good many."

"But there's one here—Chunky's on the same stunt!" chuckled Bob.

Frank Richards laughed.

"Let him go ahead," he answered. "Best man's going to win!"

"But I say, ten dollars isn't much for ten thousand words, is it?" asked Bob. "That will jolly nearly half fill the paper. Looks to me as if old Penrose is looking for a big bargain."

"Oh, never mind the money," said Frank. "That doesn't matter. I like scribbling, and it would be rather ripping to put a yarn into the "Thompson Press"—if I could. I—I don't know whether I can do it well enough, but, after all, there can't be many chaps in the Valley who can write. It isn't as if the competition was held in Montreal or Quebec, or New Westminster."

"I guess you'll have earned that ten dollars, if you get it!"

"Well, I want to earn it!"

"I guess you can do that, if it comes to that—haven't I often told you that your stuff was good," said Bob. "You've read me lots—"

"And you've generally fallen asleep."

"Well, that doesn't mean that the stuff wasn't good," said Bob cautiously. "I always said it was good. You go ahead, Franky, and rope in the ten dollars. Can I help you?"

Frank Richards laughed.

"I'm afraid not, old chap."

"Well, perhaps I oughtn't to, as Chunky has been reading me his story," said Bob. "Chunky's is a regular sock-dolager. What's the name of your hero?"

"Jones."

"Oh, good; that's all right. There's more Joneses than Cholmondeley de Veres in the backwoods, I guess. But you'd better chuck it now, Franky. You must be getting cold feet sitting there."

"Buzz off, old chap."

"Ain't you getting cold?"

"Yes, but it doesn't matter. Buzz off!"

Bob Lawless shook his head.

"We were looking for you to come skating," he said. "Let the literary work wait. You can always scribble, and you can't always skate!"

"Fathead! I—"

"Take his other arm, Cherub!"

"Look here—" roared Frank Richards.

"My dear old hoss, literary geniuses have to be looked after," said Bob. "You'll catch a cold as well as a ten dollar prize—and the cold's more certain than the prize. Kim on!"

"I say—"

"This way, old hoss!"

Bob Lawless jerked his chum off the logs, and started off with him at a run. Frank Richards stuffed his manuscript into his pocket. There was no resisting the exuberant Bob. Besides, Bob was quite right—it was too cold for literary work out of doors, though the schoolboy author had been too deep in his subject to think of that.

Probably skating was better than amateur authorship, for Frank Richards on that frosty day. He certainly felt better when he came glowing in to dinner. At dinner in the lumber school, Chunky Todgers wore a sweet and satisfied smile, which indicated that the proceedings of Cholmondeley de Vere were going on quite to his satisfaction.

Chunky brought his sheaf of paper into the dining-room with him, and at intervals during the meal he made a dab at it with his pencil, on his knee, not allowing even dinner to stop the inspirations that flashed into his fat but powerful brain.

Miss Meadows, who was at the head of the table, observed Chunky's peculiar motions for some time, and at last called to him. Chunky, with his mouth full, was pencilling away at a great rate on his knee—both his jaws and his brain very busy at the same time.

"Todgers!"

Chunky started.

"Grooh! Yes, Miss Meadows," he gasped. Speech was a little difficult with his mouth rather overloaded.

"What are you doing?"

"Oooouch—eating my dinner, ma'am."

"You should not be greedy, Todgers. You have too much in your mouth," said Miss Meadows severely. "You are also scribbling, I think."

Chunky made an effort, and disposed of his cargo. Then he gasped out an explanation.

"Only my literary work, ma'am."

Miss Meadows stared.

"Your what?" she ejaculated.

"Literary work, ma'am. I'm writing a story for the 'Thompson Press,'" said Chunky Todgers modestly.

"Bless my soul!"

"Shall I read you out some of it, ma'am?"

"You need not trouble, Todgers."

"No trouble at all, ma'am," said Chunky eagerly. "I'll read it out with pleasure. The shades of night were falling fast—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Todgers, put that away at once, and kindly do not bring it into the dining-room again!"

"Oh! It's really splendid, you know, ma'am, though I say so. M-m-may I read you the bit about Cholmondeley de Vere killing the Redskins—'he gripped them in his red, ruthless hand, and—'"

"Put that nonsense away at once, Todgers!"

"Oh, my eye!" murmured Chunky.

His valuable literary work was put away. After dinner Chunky came out with Frank Richards & Co., looking very serious.

"What do you think of that?" he

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asked. "I always had rather a respect for Miss Meadows, but really—j'ever hear such rot? Schoolmistress, you know, and doesn't know really good literary stuff when she hears it!"

Frank Richards & Co. walked away chuckling, and Chunky Todgers returned to the school-room fire—to proceed with the thrilling description of Cholmondeley de Vere's adventures in the Canadian Backwoods.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Literary Rivals!

"HALLO, Richards!"
"Hallo, Chunky!"
It was a couple of days later, and the shades of night were falling fast, as Chunky would have said, when two horsemen, coming from different directions, stopped outside Mr. Penrose's office in Main Street, at Thompson.

They were Chunky Todgers and Frank Richards, and each of them had a little roll in his hand, recognisable as manuscript.

Chunky Todgers blinked suspiciously at Frank's little roll.

"What's that?" he asked.

"Story!" answered Frank.

"Well, you must be an ass!" commented Todgers.

"What's that?" asked Frank, indicating Chunky's roll.

"My splendid story of backwoods life."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank Richards tethered his horse, and walked into the office, where Mr. Penrose was setting type by lamplight. Chunky Todgers followed him in.

Mr. Penrose nodded to them, without leaving off his occupation.

"I've brought my story, Mr. Penrose," explained Frank.

"Same here!" said Todgers.

"Good!" said Mr. Penrose. "Chuck them on the bench, along with the others. That heap. That's right."

"Oh! You've got a good many already!" remarked Frank.

Mr. Penrose grinned.

"I guess every galoot in the Thompson Valley calculates he can write a story," he answered. "Dozens! I guess I've let myself in for something this journey. Wasn't expecting school-kids to mosey in with manuscript! But chuck it there. The more the merrier."

Frank and Chunky added their rolls to the pile.

"I say, Mr. Penrose," began Todgers.

"Well?"

"Could you let me have the ten dollars now?"

"Hay?"

"It will come to the same thing, you know. Look here, I'll read my story to you, if you like."

"See that door?" said Mr. Penrose.

"Eh? Yes."

"Get on the other side of it, will you?"

"Oh!" said Chunky Todgers.

Mr. Penrose was left to set type in peace. The two schoolboys mounted in the street.

"Silly jay, isn't he?" said Chunky.

"I could jolly well tell him that there isn't any galoot in the Thompson Valley able to write a story, excepting one."

"Thank you, Chunky!" said Frank Richards gravely.

"Eh? What are you thanking me for?"

"You're so flattering!"

"Why, you jay, I mean me, not you!" exclaimed Chunky. "You can't write, old chap. You'll never be able to."

Frank Richards laughed and trotted

away for the Lawless Ranch. Chunky Todgers trotted off on his fat pony, looking quite satisfied. He would rather have had the money down; but he felt that there was little doubt as to who would capture the ten dollars. If Mr. Penrose had any literary taste at all, he could not fail to be struck by the adventures of Cholmondeley de Vere. Chunky felt convinced of that.

Frank Richards rode homeward in a far less confident mood.

He had had a story accepted by a New Westminster magazine before, and that was the only literary success he had scored at that stage of his career. But he had a good deal of manuscript in his room at the Lawless Ranch. He spent a great deal of his leisure time in "scribbling," as his cousin Bob called it. Bob was a great admirer of Frank Richards' literary productions, and he often asked Frank to read them to him, though it cannot be denied that Bob sometimes fell asleep on such occasions.

Frank at least had the saving gift of common-sense, and he wrote of what he knew and understood, and did not pen weird romances of knights in armour, and Saracens, or terrific sea-fights. Chunky Todgers had with great difficulty restrained himself from making Cholmondeley de Vere a knight in shining armour. He felt that mere backwoods did not give him full scope for his genius. Frank believed that his work was good—considering his youth, at least; but he had little expectation that it would "bag" a prize. He lacked the lofty confidence of Todgers, but he hoped for the best.

The next day, when they met at Cedar Creek School, Chunky honoured Frank Richards with a friendly and compassionate smile.

"After all, I need the dollars more than you do, Franky," he remarked.

"What dollars?" asked Frank.

"The prize, you know. So it's all right. Still, I'm sorry I'm cutting you out."

"But you haven't cut me out yet, old chap," answered Frank, with a smile.

"I guess the result's pretty sure. I say, what did you call your yarn?"

"Jones' Clearing," answered Frank. Chunky Todgers sniffed.

"Not romantic enough," he said patronisingly. "Mine's called 'The Gallant Sir Cholmondeley.'"

"Oh, my hat! Isn't that rather rich for a backwoods story?"

"Penrose oughtn't to have made it a backwoods story," said Todgers discontentedly. "It doesn't give a chap scope. I'd rather have made Sir Cholmondeley charging the Saracens, you know; much better than mopping up Red Indians. But the condition was that it should be a backwoods story. I say, how many Redskins does your Jones man kill?"

"Ha, ha! None at all."

"Sir Cholmondeley kills about three thousand," said Chunky. "Blood flowed like water, you know."

"Groogh!" said Bob Lawless.

"He's the outcast son of an old family, you know," said Chunky. "His father, the marquis, exiled him because he wouldn't marry the Lady Gloxiana. A few titles give a story tone, I think."

Vere Beauclerc smiled. His cousin, Algernon Beauclerc, looked puzzled.

"You call the chap Sir Cholmondeley?" he asked.

"Yep."

"And he's the son of a marquis?"

"Correct."

"Why wasn't he called Lord Cholmondeley, then?" asked Algernon.

"Eh? Ought he to be?" asked Todgers.

"Well, that's the rule."

"Oh gum!" said Chunky Todgers. "I never thought of that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Still, I dare say Penrose doesn't know," said Chunky, taking comfort. "He can't be well up in titles."

Frank Richards & Co. chuckled.

"After all, that's only a minor point," said Chunky loftily. "The story's a corker—full of romance, you know. The beautiful damsel whom Sir Cholmondeley rescued from the Redskins turned out to be the real Lady Gloxiana, who was changed at birth by a gipsy. There's a really splendid bit describing how Sir Cholmondeley rides up the trail through the timber, when he comes home to De Vere Castle."

"The trail through the timber—at De Vere Castle!" murmured Vere Beauclerc. "Oh, my hat!"

"Isn't that all right?" demanded Chunky.

"Well, in England the road wouldn't be called a trail, and the park, or whatever it was, wouldn't be called the timber," said Beauclerc, laughing.

"Oh!" said Chunky. "Wouldn't it? Still, I dare say Penrose won't know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Lawless. "You're depending on Penrose not knowing a lot of things."

"Then, when the old marquis meets his long-lost son," continued Chunky, "he says to him: 'Cholmondeley, I have missed thee sorely, and, by my halidom, I guess I'm right glad to see thee.' How's that?"

Frank Richards & Co. yelled. The combination of "guessing" with a "halidom" struck them as funny.

"What on earth is a halidom?" asked Algernon.

"Blessed if I know!" said Chunky. "Something that old noblemen swear by, you know. Doesn't your popper swear by his halidom?"

"He doesn't swear at all," grinned the Honourable Algernon, "and I don't believe he's got a halidom."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A bit out of date, I think!" chuckled Frank Richards.

"Is it? Never mind! I don't suppose Penrose will know."

Mr. Penrose was evidently expected not to know quite a large number of things by the hopeful Chunky. And Chunky looked forward with undiminished confidence to the next issue of the "Thompson Press," fully expecting to see "The Gallant Sir Cholmondeley" disporting himself therein.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Prize-winner!

"GREAT gophers!"
Bob Lawless uttered that ejaculation one evening the following week in tones of great astonishment.

The "Thompson Press" was out that day, and on their return from school Bob and Frank had found it at the ranch.

Bob Lawless at once opened it to see the result of the literary competition, hoping to see Frank's name as the winner. Then he howled.

"Well, Bob!" asked Frank Richards. "You're not the winner, Franky."

Frank smiled faintly.

"I hardly expected to be, Bob. It was fun writing the story, and that's good enough. But who's the winner—anybody we know?"

"Chunky Todgers!" roared Bob.

"Wha-a-at!"

"Look here! 'The winner of the 'Thompson Press' Literary Competition is Master Joseph Todgers, of Cedar Creek School, whose successful story will

appear in the "Press" next week. A cheque for ten dollars will be sent to Master Todgers immediately."

"My only hat!" "Penrose must be potty!" exclaimed Bob. "He must have gone once too often to the Red Dog, anyhow, before he looked at the manuscripts. We know that Chunky's stuff was awful rot!"

Frank smiled. He had hardly expected success, so his disappointment was not great; but his surprise was very great indeed at Chunky Todgers' success. Mr. Penrose was known to have a very great devotion to the cup that cheers and also inebriates, and queer misprints had sometimes appeared in the "Press" as a result. But certainly it looked as if the editor-printer-publisher must have paid unusual devotions to the firewater at the Red Dog before selecting Joe Todgers as the winner of the literary competition.

"It's the tanglefoot!" said Bob, with conviction. "Only the tanglefoot could account for it."

"Never mind. We must congratulate Chunky!" said Frank, laughing.

And the next morning, when they arrived at Cedar Creek School, the chums looked for Chunky Todgers to congratulate him.

Chunky evidently knew the glad tidings already. His fat chin was unusually elevated, and he looked as if he were walking on air.

He had received a good many congratulations already, and some friendly advice how to spend the ten dollars, and he smiled in a lofty way as he received congratulations from Frank Richards & Co.

"Thanks, dear boys!" he said. "Of course, I knew it must turn out like that. Nobody else really had a chance. Not many literary geniuses in the Thompson Valley, you know."

"None at all, I reckon!" remarked Tom Lawrence.

The general opinion certainly was that Mr. Penrose must have been to the Red Dog before he looked over the manuscripts. Only Chunky Todgers scouted that suggestion.

After morning lessons Chunky Todgers got out his fat little pony. He was too impatient to wait for the "cheque." He intended to ride over to Thompson and see about that ten dollars.

"Whither bound, Chunky?" called out Bob Lawless.

"Just dropping in at my editor's," replied Chunky carelessly.

"Oh!"

"I dare say I shall have to talk business with him," said Chunky, with quite the air of a sought-after literary man who found fame and fortune rather a bore. "He'll want to bag me for regular contributions, of course. I may do a serial for him. If I consent, I shall insist upon having full scope—no restrictions as to subject and all that. I shall be civil, of course, but firm—quite firm. You fellows like to come?"

"Well, I was thinking of calling in for my manuscript, as it's not a success," said Frank Richards. "May come in useful."

Chunky Todgers smiled. "Not likely to be much use, I guess," he remarked. "Poor old Franky! You can't write, you know! Later on, when I get time, I'll give you some tips about writing—from my experience, you know!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Let's go," said Bob. "Trot out the gees. I want to ask Mr. Penrose how many gallons he shifted before he decided on Chunky for the prize!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Snort from Chunky Todgers. "Come on!" he said. "I'll stand you

some maple-sugar at Gunten's store out of my ten dollars!"

Chunky was evidently keen to have witnesses to his triumph. And there was no doubt that he was going to assume a very lofty manner towards his "editor," and to be very standoffish about future contributions. His fat face was wreathed in smiles as he rode up the Thompson trail with Frank Richards & Co.

The Cedar Creek party arrived at the office of the "Thompson Press." They found it closed and locked up; Mr. Penrose was having his dinner at the Occidental Hotel. But the newspaper man came along presently, and greeted them in his breezy way, and let them into the office.

"Glad to see you, sonnies," said Mr. Penrose, "especially you, young Todgers! I'm going to ask you to do me another story."

Chunky grinned triumphantly at his comrades.

"How you did it," continued Mr. Penrose, "beats me! I guess I never knew you had it in you."

"Oh, I was always a literary chap!" said Chunky modestly. "Sort of gift, you know. It just flowed from my pen."

"Can I have my manuscript, Mr. Penrose?" asked Frank Richards.

"I guess so. You'll find it among that lot," answered Mr. Penrose, with a nod towards the bench, which was littered with manuscripts.

Mr. Penrose's office was not exactly the tidiest building in Thompson—perhaps on account of that gentleman's devotion to the potent tanglefoot.

Frank looked over the crumpled manuscripts. His own story was not there; but, to his surprise, he found a scrawled manuscript, headed "Gallant Sir Cholmondeley."

"Hallo! This is your stuff, Todgers," he said.

"Not in type yet, then?" asked Chunky, as he took the manuscript.

"Eh," said Mr. Penrose—"what's that?"

"My yarn," said Chunky.

"I guess not. The winning story is here. I was going to set it up to-day," said Mr. Penrose. "Write your name on the manuscript next time, Todgers. It's the safest way. Here's the winning story."

"But—but," stammered Chunky. "I—I only sent in one story, and—and this is it—'Gallant Sir Cholmondeley.'" "That rot!" said Mr. Penrose. "I just glanced at that—the silly rot! Is that yours? I guess I can't have made a mistake in the names. The winning story is called 'Jones' Clearing.'"

"What?" yelled Chunky Todgers.

"What?" gasped Frank Richards. And Bob Lawless roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
Not Chunky!

MR. PENROSE stared at the Cedar Creek fellows.

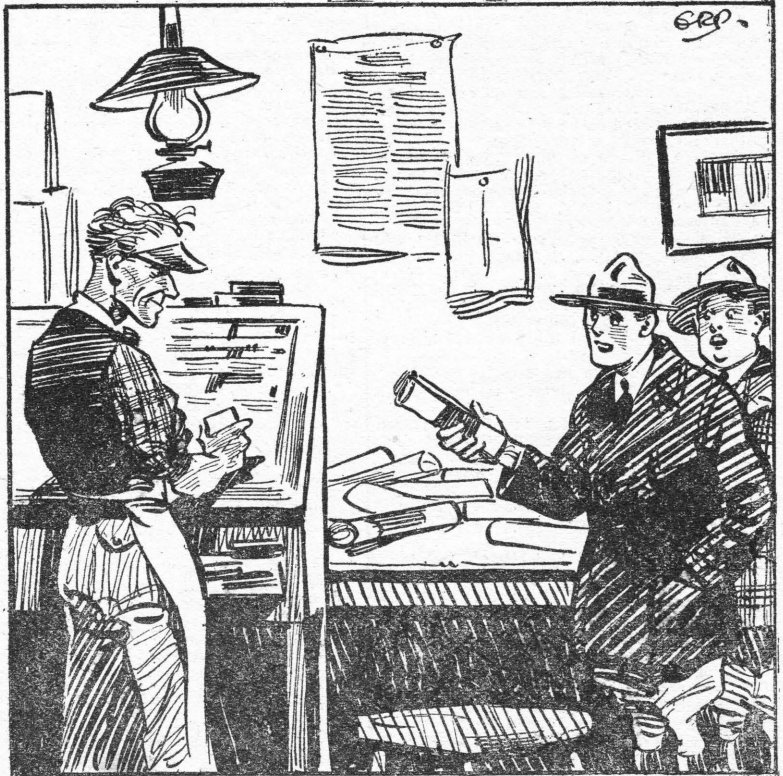
He picked up a manuscript that was lying beside his "case," and Frank Richards recognised his own hand on it.

"Is that the winner?" exclaimed Frank.

"That's it—the only good story among all that lot," said Mr. Penrose.

"What rot!" exclaimed Chunky Todgers, bewildered and wrathful. "Why, you said as plain as possible in the paper to-day that I was the winner."

(Continued on page 16.)



MORE ENTRIES FOR THE COMPETITION!—Mr. Penrose nodded to the two Cedar Creek fellows as they came into his office. "I've brought my story," explained Frank Richards. "Same here," said Chunky Todgers. "Chuck them on the bench along with the others," said the editor, without stopping his work. (See Chapter 3.)

The Housemaster was taken utterly by surprise. He had been in the act of hastening forward to assist in the struggle, and the man crashed into him with tremendous force.

Like a ninopin Mr. Railton was bowled over on to the passage floor. Then, with a low snarl, horribly brutal in its ferocity, the strange man leapt upon the prostrate master.

"Good heavens!" shouted Darrel. "The man must be mad!"

He and the Terrible Three grasped the intruder by his arms, legs, and head. And they did not particularly care how much force they used. Between the four of them they managed to drag him away, and Mr. Railton scrambled to his feet.

"You've not got me—by thunder, you've not got me!" exclaimed the man, in a harsh voice, muffled by the bag which covered his head.

With an almost superhuman effort he wrenched himself away from the grasp of his captors.

Then, with one bound, he was at the nearest window. Without pausing a second he hurled himself forward.

There was a splintering, shivering crash, followed by a dull thud, and a scuffle of feet on the pathway.

Then all was still. The man had thrown himself completely through the window, wrecking framework and glass in the mad action.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Still a Mystery!

"H E'S gone!"
"Great Scott!"
"He's smashed the window to smithereens!"

Mr. Railton stepped briskly to the window and looked out into the night. But all was silent—the man had vanished as though he had been a shadow.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the Housemaster. "This is a most extraordinary affair. The man seemed to be mad! He could scarcely have got through this jagged glass without doing himself frightful injuries!"

Darrel looked at the smashed framework. "I don't know, sir," he said. "The chap threw himself through the glass with such terrific force that there wasn't time for him to be cut. And, besides, his face was protected by that bag."

"Bag?" repeated Mr. Railton.
"Yes, sir. Didn't you see it?"
"No; it was too dark to see anything distinctly."

"Well, the fellow wore a black bag over his head, so that he could not be recognised," said Darrel, rubbing his hands tenderly. "That protected his face from the glass."

"Dear me! It is most extraordinary!" said Mr. Railton. "Who was the man, and what was he doing here?"

"I don't know, sir. I heard an uproar, and came out of my room just in time to be knocked down by the stranger," answered Darrel. "These juniors were chasing him."

Mr. Railton turned to the Terrible Three. "Tell me all you know, boys," he said curiously.

"We don't know much more than you do, sir," said Tom Merry. "I heard somebody pass the Shell dormitory, so I woke Manners and Lowther, and we went out to make investigations. After searching for ten minutes or so, we found that chap with the bag over his head. He was in the entrance-hall, and he dodged into the Common-room."

"And did you attempt to capture him?"

"Rather, sir! But he's got the strength of a giddy lion! He knocked us flying, and darted upstairs. We followed, yelling out, and Darrel came out just as the chap was about to descend the back stairs. We pounced on him in this passage, and you know the rest, sir."

Mr. Railton nodded.
"Yes, yes," he said thoughtfully, staring into the night. "It is utterly useless searching for him, for he must have got clear away by this time. Burglary was his object, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."
"Couldn't be anything else, sir."
Darrel stroked his chin thoughtfully.

"What puzzles me is the way in which the chap flew at you, sir," he said. "The very instant Tom Merry dashed his light upon you, the man tore himself away from us. One might think that he had come to the school especially to harm you."

Mr. Railton laughed grimly.
"Nonsense, Darrel!" he said. "I do not know a soul who owes me a grudge, and certainly not a grudge of this description! Why, the man seemed quite capable of killing me!"

"It's a mystery," said Tom Merry. "Thank goodness we were here to protect you, sir!"

"Yes, it was indeed fortunate, Merry," said Mr. Railton feelingly. "But it was no less fortunate that you chanced to hear him. But for the acuteness of your ears, he might have ransacked the place, and got clear away."

"Well, we only did a little, sir," said Manners. "It's perfectly rotten that the beast escaped! But we weren't prepared for such terrific strength. My hat, he was like ten Sandows rolled into one!"

Mr. Railton patted his watch-pocket—or, rather, the place where his watch was usually kept, for he was attired in his dressing-gown.

"It's very late," he said, "and you boys ought to be in bed. Run up, and get between the sheets without loss of time. You are quite all right, I suppose—no injuries?"

"No, sir."
"Only a bruise or two, sir."
"That's all right, then! Off you go!"
"Good-night, sir!"

The Terrible Three hurried up the stairs to the Shell dormitory, talking excitedly about the night's amazing happening.

They found several juniors awake, roused by the noise of the chase.

But Tom Merry and his chums only gave a very brief account of the affair. Full details would have to wait until the morning.

The mystery was getting deeper and deeper. Where would it all end?

THE END.

(You must not miss next Tuesday's top-hole, long, complete story of St. Jim's, entitled: "In Deadly Peril!")

THE BACKWOOD AUTHORS!

(Continued from page 11.)

"Isn't this yours?"

"That tosh!" exclaimed Chunky Todgers, with deep contempt. "Certainly not! This is my story—'Gallant Sir Cholmondeley!'"

"I guess you can take that away and bury it!" said Mr. Penrose cheerfully. "I suppose the names got mixed somehow. All your own fault, for not writing your name and address on the manuscript."

"I'll remember next time," said Frank Richards, with a smile.

"You see, I had a thumping lot of stuff to go through—more than I ever expected," explained Mr. Penrose. "And I was in rather a hurry. I'd been kept by an—ahem!—important engagement."

"At the Red Dog!" murmured Bob Lawless.

It was pretty clear that the mistake in the names was not wholly due to the fact that the youthful authors had forgotten to write their names on the manuscripts. The fire-water was partly to blame.

Chunky Todgers' face was a study. "Then—then—then I haven't won the prize?" he stuttered.

Mr. Penrose shook his head. "Whoever wrote this story has won the prize," he answered.

"Frank Richards wrote that rubbish!"
"Then Frank Richards is the winner."
THE POPULAR.—No. 277.

"Sorry, Chunky, old man!" said Frank.

"What awful rot!" shouted Chunky Todgers indignantly. "Why, you—you said in the paper—look here, you're not going to get out of it now, Mr. Penrose! I'm going to have that ten dollars! Why, I—I—I—"

Chunky choked with indignation.

"All serene, Chunky! You shall have

**Magnificent 18,000
Words Story**

OF THE

CHUMS OF GREYFRIARS

**"The Barring
of Bunter!"**

IN THIS WEEK'S

MAGNET! DON'T MISS IT!

it!" said Frank Richards soothingly. "You don't mind handing the prize to Todgers, Mr. Penrose? I give up my claim to it!"

"Money down!" said Todgers.

Mr. Penrose laughed, and then Richards, having "put it in writing," the good-natured gentleman handled Chunky Todgers a ten-dollar bill. As a matter of fact, the "cheque" mentioned in the "Thompson Press" was only an editorial flourish, as Mr. Penrose did not possess a bank-account. Chunky was somewhat comforted by the ten-dollar bill, but he was still wounded in his literary susceptibilities.

He marched haughtily out of the office with his precious manuscript.

"Now, I'd like to have a few words with you, Richards," said Mr. Penrose, "as it turns out that you wrote this yarn—really stunning, by the way. I want to see about some further work. Sit down."

Ten minutes later Frank Richards & Co. came out of Mr. Penrose's office in a very satisfied mood. Chunky rejoined them outside.

"Penrose has asked you to write some more stuff, Richards?"

"Yes."

"Then I tell you what. I'll write it for you, as you've treated me so decently about the prize."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Frank Richards & Co. And they rode off to Cedar Creek in a state of great hilarity—leaving Chunky wondering where the joke came in.

THE END.

(Another grand complete story of the chums of the School in the Backwoods next Tuesday.)