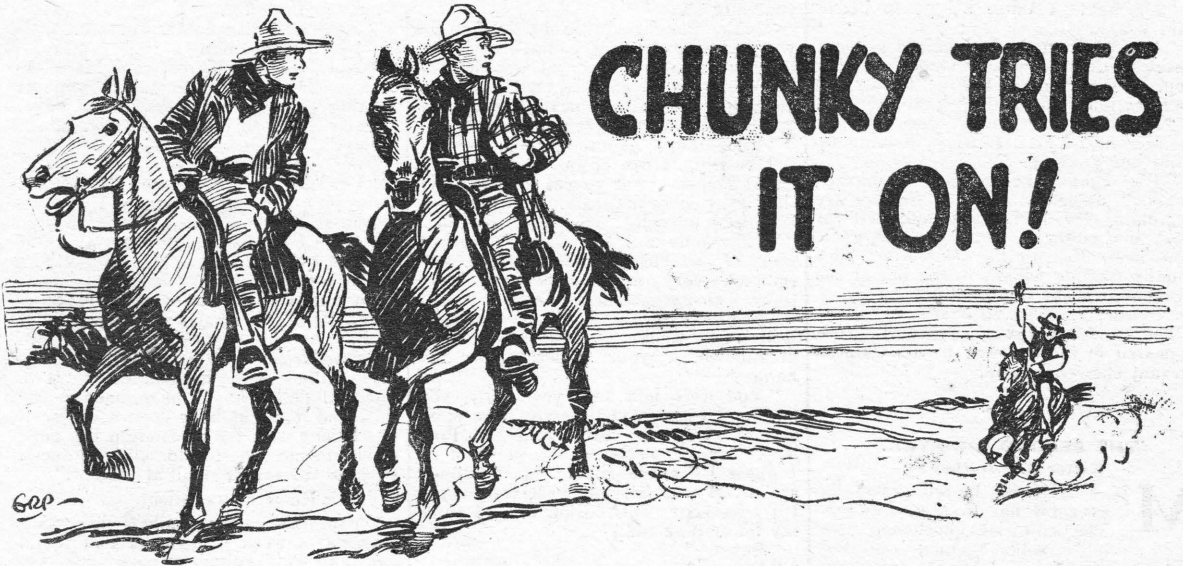


A STORY OF THE LUMBER SCHOOL IN THE BACKWOODS!

Chunky Todgers really meant to do everyone a good turn all round when he started playing "ghost" to Frank Richards. There was no doubt that he meant no harm to the youthful author, but there was a great deal of trouble caused, all the same!



CHUNKY TRIES IT ON!

Another Roaring Long Complete Tale of FRANK RICHARDS & CO.'S adventures at Cedar Creek, the Lumber School of the Canadian Backwoods!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Run to Earth!

"SOMEBODY waiting for you, Franky!"
"Eh? Who?"
"Penrose!" grinned Bob Lawless.

Frank Richards uttered an exasperated exclamation; and Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc chuckled, and Algernon Beauclerc grinned.

The Cedar Creek fellows had just come out of the lumber school after lessons. Frank Richards and his chums were crossing towards the corral for their horses, when Bob's eyes fell upon a figure lounging in the school gateway.

The rubicund cheeks and crimson-tipped nose announced afar that it was Mr. Penrose, of Thompson, the editor, proprietor, and printer of the only newspaper in the Thompson Valley.

Evidently the crimson-nosed gentleman was waiting there for someone, and it was equally evident that the person he was waiting for was Frank Richards, the schoolboy author.

But Frank was not anxious for the meeting.

During the past week he had received three letters from Mr. Penrose; two by post at the ranch, and one by the hand of Injun Dick, delivered at Cedar Creek School.

To none of them had he vouchsafed a reply.

Frank's earliest efforts at authorship had been published in the "Thompson Press," and, very unexpectedly on Frank's part, had proved exceedingly popular in Thompson town. So popular, in fact, that when Frank was laid up with a cold, and could not produce his "copy" on one occasion, the enterprising Mr. Penrose had manufactured a story himself to appear under his name, which had exasperated the schoolboy author to such an extent that his connection with the "Thompson Press" had suddenly ceased.

Mr. Penrose wished to recommence it, hence his insistent communications, to

which the enraged author did not reply. As his letters had produced no effect, here was Mr. Penrose in person, waiting at the school gates for the Cedar Creek author to emerge.

"Bother him!" said Frank, as he followed his chum's glance. "I suppose he is waiting for me."

"Sure!" chuckled Bob. "Won't you see him?"

"No, I won't!" said Frank. "Let's get out the other way. He can wait there as long as he likes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of Cedar Creek led their horses from the corral, but did not head for the gate on the trail as usual. They led the horses away to the side gate that opened towards the creek. Some of the fellows were going out at the big gate, and Mr. Penrose watched them as they went, waiting for Frank Richards to appear.

But Frank did not appear.

The four schoolboys led their horses round by the path near the creek, and did not enter the forest trail till they were well out of sight of Cedar Creek School.

Then they trotted off cheerfully homeward, still leaving Mr. Penrose waiting at the school gate.

Frank Richards' chums were grinning, greatly amused by this pursuit of the schoolboy author, and by Frank's determination to dodge the enterprising editor.

Frank was a little amused himself, but he was more exasperated than amused. He was still feeling very sore over the treatment of his "copy," and he did not want to figure again in the columns of the "Thompson Press."

"Safe now!" said Vere Beauclerc, laughing, as the chums parted at the fork of the trail.

"Safe for to-day!" chuckled Bob Lawless. "But I shouldn't be surprised to find Penrose at the gate to-morrow morning."

"By gad! It's really a compliment to you, Franky," remarked Algernon. "It

shows that your stuff is worth readin', you know—or Penrose thinks it is."

"These great geniuses," said Bob Lawless, in an oracular tone, "are touchy. Franky has got his back up."

"Oh, it isn't such a thumping compliment," said Frank. "There's nothing in the paper to compete with my stuff, excepting whisky advertisements and Penrose's editorials. Everything else that Penrose publishes is bagged from the American papers, and it's all rot. Good-night, kids!"

Beauclerc and his cousin trotted off by the branch trail, and Frank and Bob rode on towards the Lawless Ranch.

Ten minutes later there was a clatter of hoofbeats behind them on the trail.

"Hallo! Here's the Cherub after us again!" Bob Lawless looked back. "Jerusalem! It isn't Beau—it's Penrose!"

"What!"

Frank Richards glanced over his shoulder.

Behind the chums of Cedar Creek, in the dusk of the trail, a horseman was galloping in pursuit, and the rubicund nose of the Thompson editor was recognisable through the dusk.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Frank.

"He's after you!" chortled Bob. "The game's up, Franky—you've got to scribble for him!"

"Bother him! Put it on!" said Frank. "Ha, ha, ha!"

The two chums rode harder, and the pursuing horseman vanished in the dusk behind.

"He'll follow us to the ranch!" grinned Bob. "He's found out that you gave him the slip at the school, and he means business."

"Bless him!" growled Frank.

There was no sign of Mr. Penrose on the plain when the chums arrived at the ranch. The editorial gentleman was not quite so active a rider as the schoolboys.

But soon after the chums had put up their horses and were warming their toes

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at the log-fire indoors, there was a summons at the ranch-house door.

Bob closed one eye at his English cousin.

"Penrose!" he said.

"My hat! I think I'll go to bed!" said Frank.

"You can't go to bed before supper; besides, Penrose would come up after you, I guess!" roared Bob. "Then you'd have to jump out of the window!"

"My dear boys, what does all this mean?" asked Mrs. Lawless, looking up from her knitting.

"It's Franky being such a blessed genius," explained Bob. "Editors are searching for him right and left—at least, one editor is. And you can guess how keen Penrose is after him; he's usually wasting whisky in the bar at the Occidental about this time."

"Shush!" murmured Frank.

The rubicund visage of Mr. Penrose appeared in the doorway as the Chinese servant showed him in.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Editor and Author!

MR. PENROSE bowed gracefully over his hat to Mrs. Lawless. The editorial gentleman was quite sober, which was not customary with him. Mr. Penrose was devoted to the cup that cheers—temporarily. Mr. Penrose was his own compositor and printer, and when the whisky advertisements in the "Thompson Press" were mixed up with the poetry, it was always an indication that Mr. Penrose had been sampling the potent fire-water not wisely but too well. A paper run on such lines was not likely to enjoy a very extensive circulation, and probably the "Press" owed its continued existence chiefly to the fact that there was no competition in the Thompson Valley, there being no other paper published nearer than Kamloops.

"Good-evening, madam!" said Mr. Penrose. "May I beg you to excuse this intrusion—"

"Pray come in, Mr. Penrose!" said Mrs. Lawless. "Bob, hand Mr. Penrose a chair."

Bob politely handed Mr. Penrose a chair with great gravity, and the gentleman from Thompson sat down.

"Ah, I see your nephew is here, madam!" said Mr. Penrose. "I am glad to see you, Richards. I looked in at Cedar Creek for you; but, somehow, I missed you there."

Frank coloured a little as Bob suppressed a chuckle.

"The fact is, Mrs. Lawless, I wanted to see your nephew with regard to the contributions for my paper," said Mr. Penrose.

"Really?" said Mrs. Lawless. "That is very flattering to you, Frank."

"Um!" said Frank.

"Have I your permission to proceed, madam?" asked Mr. Penrose.

"Certainly!" said Mrs. Lawless, with a smile. "If you are going to talk business, you had better step into the office. Mr. Lawless is out."

"Thank you, madam!"

Frank Richards hesitated.

He did not want to talk business with Mr. Penrose; in fact, he had a strong repugnance to doing so. But a certain amount of civility was due to a visitor under the Lawless roof; and so Frank yielded the point, and accompanied Mr. Penrose into the rancher's business-room.

There Mr. Penrose sat down at Mr. Lawless' roll-top desk, turning round on the swivel chair to face Frank.

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"I've written you several letters, and I guess I haven't had any answer, Richards."

"There was nothing to say. I gave you my answer last time I saw you at your office."

"Now, the fact is, Richards, I want you to write for my paper," said Mr. Penrose impressively. "I wouldn't be so candid to everybody, but you're a youngster with a level head, and I guess you're not likely to get puffed up."

"I hope not!" grunted Frank.

"Exactly. I can be quite candid with you. You did some stories for my paper that went down first-rate. I guess I was surprised myself," said Mr. Penrose. "You're only a kid, but you've got a way of scribbling that's rather uncommon—very uncommon, I guess. Now, there was a misunderstanding—"

"Not exactly a misunderstanding," said Frank acidly. "You shoved a lot of rubbish in your paper under my name—"

"You were late with your copy, you know. I guess next time you'll be more careful. But, see here," said Mr. Penrose, "as you make such a point of it, I guess I'll agree not to let it happen again. If you fail me with your copy, I'll miss your contribution out. I can't say fairer than that."

"But—"

"Bless it all, it's a chance for you— you only a pesky schoolboy, too!" said Mr. Penrose warmly. "Don't you like scribbling?"

"Yes, very much," said Frank. "But I—"

"I calculate I'll raise the rates, too," said Mr. Penrose. "What about a dollar a column?"

"I wasn't thinking of that."

"Well, that's business. Look here, Richards, at the risk of giving you a swelled head, I don't mind saying that your stuff is good—remarkably good. It got no end of new readers for the paper. Galoots used to drop into the office and speak to me about it. I've had to depend on bagging copy from the American magazines—poor stuff, and not suitable to this region, either. And it's happened that galoots have seen the magazines at Gunten's circulating library, too, and they don't like it."

It was very probable that Mr. Penrose's method of supplying himself with copy free of charge sometimes led to difficulties.

"Good, original stuff is what I want," said Mr. Penrose. "Of course, authors don't grow much in Thompson Valley. When I landed on you, and found you could write, it was really a bonanza."

Frank smiled. This was really very flattering, and, youthful author as Frank was, he was, naturally, not wholly without a touch of author's vanity.

"How you do it beats me," continued Mr. Penrose. "But I'm a business man. When I find that the public wants a thing, I do my best to supply them with what they want. That's business with a capital B. So long as they want it, let 'em have it, and plenty of it. See?"

Frank admitted that he saw.

"I'll give you a free hand," continued Mr. Penrose generously. "Choose your own subject. Write as you like. Fill as many columns as you please at a dollar a time."

"Oh, bother the dollars!" said Frank. At that early stage of his literary career, Frank Richards had not learned to give much attention to financial considerations. Indeed, he never did learn to give such considerations much attention.

"Business is business," said Mr. Penrose. "Now, what do you say?"

Frank hesitated.

He always found it difficult to say "No" to anyone; but his experience with Mr. Penrose and his paper had been exasperating, and he did not want to accept the offer.

"Yep—eh?" asked Mr. Penrose.

"I—I'd rather not."

"Now, you see here," said Mr. Penrose. "I'm going to tackle you on another ground. I've had some news. There's going to be a rival paper in the valley."

"Oh!" said Frank.

"I've had the news lately," said Mr. Penrose. "A galoot, named Hulkett—Cyrus Hulkett—is coming along to wipe me out—if he can. He runs papers at some of the towns along the railway, and he reckons it would be worth his while to mop up the circulation in the Thompson Valley. He's had the nerve to offer to buy up my paper—offering me two hundred dollars, the galoot!" Mr. Penrose sniffed with indignation. "Two hundred dollars! If he'd made it ten thousand it might have been a trade. I don't deny that the circulation has gone down, owing to—to—circumstances. Perhaps it's rather small at present."

Frank Richards was silent.

"Now, this galoot, Hulkett, is coming along in a week or two, as I've found out, and he's going to wipe out the 'Thompson Press'—if he can," said Penrose. "I've got to pile in. And if you begin your stuff again for my paper, I don't deny that it will give me a leg-up. I put it to your patriotism. You don't want this American galoot to come along and mop up a Canadian paper?"

"But surely my stuff wouldn't make much difference?"

"All the difference in the world," said Mr. Penrose. "I tell you it was popular. Say the word!"

"Well, if you put it like that—" hesitated Frank.

"I do."

"Well, I agree, then. But no more of your blessed split infinitives under my name!"

"Nary a one," said Mr. Penrose. "All O.K. Now, can I depend on you for four columns weekly?"

"Ye-e-es."

"You were at school in England before you came out here?" asked Mr. Penrose suddenly.

Frank Richards nodded, rather surprised by this sudden change of topic.

"I thought so. Now, I guess some stuff on that subject would be interesting to Canadian readers," said Mr. Penrose. "What school were you at?"

"St. Kit's."

"Big show?"

"Fairly big," said Frank, with a smile.

"Something in it you could write about?"

"I—I suppose so."

"That's the stunt, then. A series of stories. Call 'em 'St. Kit's Fellows,' or something like that—see?"

"I'll try," said Frank. "I'll do my best, Mr. Penrose."

Mr. Penrose jumped up and shook the schoolboy author's hand heartily.

"That's the thing!" he said. "I rely on you. Send the stuff along as quick as you can. The more the merrier!"

And Mr. Penrose, in a state of great satisfaction, took his leave.

Frank Richards was left in a doubtful frame of mind. He could not help feeling pleased and flattered; but in Frank's nature there was more modesty than self-esteem, and he was surprised that the editorial gentleman should attach so much importance to his work. However, Mr. Penrose knew his own

business best; and that evening Frank Richards was busily engaged upon his first story of public school life—"St. Kit's Fellows"—and he could not help feeling elated when it appeared prominently in the "Thompson Press" the following week.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Trying It On!

"It beats me!" said Chunky Todgers. Chunky Todgers, of Cedar Creek, was astonished, and he was puzzled.

It was two or three weeks since the interview at the ranch, and during that time Frank Richards' leisure hours had been pretty well filled.

From his earliest days Frank had found pleasure in "scribbling"—indeed, at the early age of eight he had scribbled—early work, in which both the syntax and the orthography had left much to be desired.

Now he found that he quite enjoyed his new work. Indeed, he was in danger of spending too much time indoors with his pen, but his Canadian cousin saw that that did not happen.

When Bob Lawless considered that Frank was "sticking it" too much, he would drag him out, without listening to objections, to ride or skate, which was perhaps all the better for the youthful author.

But, in spite of interruptions, his work progressed, and he delighted Mr. Penrose with a regular four columns weekly; and, taking warning by what had happened on a previous occasion, Frank was always careful to keep well ahead with his "copy," in case of accidents. That was a habit which he never lost in later days.

"St. Kit's Fellows" was a great success.

It was a new kind of stuff for the Thompson Valley, and the readers of the "Thompson Press" found it interesting. More especially, the youthful inhabitants of the valley took a great fancy to it, and Mr. Penrose's circulation extended among the rising generation, much to Mr. Penrose's delight.

All was grist that came to the editorial mill, and a schoolboy's ten cents was as good as anybody else's ten cents, in Mr. Penrose's opinion.

Naturally, every boy and girl at Cedar Creek was a "constant reader," and Frank Richards received compliments enough to turn a head less steady and modest than his own.

But Frank was in no danger of developing conceit. He never ceased to be surprised at his success, and he thought it very "jolly" of fellows to like reading his stuff.

He certainly liked writing it. Mr. Penrose's dollars did not weigh very much with him, though, of course, they came in useful.

There was one fellow at Cedar Creek who simply couldn't understand it. That was Chunky Todgers.

Chunky had literary ambitions himself.

He knew—he did not think—he knew that he could write ever so much better than Frank Richards. Yet Mr. Penrose had only snorted when Chunky offered him literary contributions.

Chunky was driven to the conclusion that Mr. Penrose was a "jay," who did not know his own interests.

It was too bad, as Chunky often remarked, that the only publication in the valley should be run by a "jay," who did not know good literary work when he saw it.

"It beats me!" Chunky remarked,

looking up from Frank Richards' page in the "Thompson Press" one day at Cedar Creek, after dinner, by the school-room fire.

Frank Richards & Co. were round the log-fire, arguing. The next day was Saturday—a free day at Cedar Creek. Bob Lawless was urging an expedition into the foothills for that day, a suggestion that was backed up by Vere Beauclerc and Algernon. But Frank Richards demurred. He had "copy" to produce, Saturday was a good day for hard work at it.

"It beats me!" repeated Chunky

an idea, Richards. I'm going to make you an offer—what I think is a rather generous offer," said Chunky Todgers impressively.

"Go ahead, old scout!"

"Penrose is such a jay that he thinks anything with your name on it is good enough to publish. Well, I'm willing to write under your name—"

"Eh?"

"Bob wants you to ride to-morrow instead of scribbling. Well, you can go riding, and I'll do your copy for you."

"My only hat!"

"Penrose won't know. He may notice



FRANK RICHARDS' "GHOST" IS REVEALED! Mr. Penrose waved the manuscript furiously in the air before the bewildered Frank Richards. "That's your game, is it?" he roared. "Spooing me with a ghost story! Didn't I make you a fair offer? Didn't I give you your own terms? And now you palm this on me!" (See Chapter 4.)

Todgers. "I've just been reading your stuff, Richards. You don't mind my speaking plainly?"

"Not at all," said Frank, laughing.

"It isn't bad—not what you'd call bad—"

"Not what I'd call bad, certainly!" assented Frank.

"But compared with what I can do, you know—"

"Of course, that would rather put it into the shade!" remarked Frank, with great gravity.

"Exactly! I'm glad you can see that, Richards."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Lawless.

"Penrose can't see it," continued Chunky. "He's an awful jay. Of course, if my stuff was once in print, he'd see!"

"How's that?" asked Beauclerc.

"By the circulation jumping 'up," explained Chunky. "Why, the circulation has risen even on Frank Richards' stuff. So it stands to reason that it would fairly jump on mine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not joking, Bob Lawless, and there's nothing to gurgle at. I've got

that it's better than usual, but he will only think you've improved."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As for the writing, that's all right. Now, Penrose has lent you his typewriter. You've got the typer in your room at the ranch, haven't you?"

"Yes," chuckled Frank. "Penrose has lent it to me till I've saved up enough dollars to buy one."

"That makes it all serene, then. I can type," said Todgers.

"And that's all that's necessary!" chuckled Bob.

"That's all," assented Chunky. "Mind, I'm not asking for any of the dollars, Richards. It's simply literary glory I'm after. Penrose won't suspect anything when I hand it in. I've dropped in several times with your bundle of copy, you know, to save you the trouble of going to Thompson. I shall hand it in as usual. He will print it as usual. Afterwards, when he hears from his readers that the last number was surprisingly good—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then you can tell him it was me."

explained Chunky. "Then he'll ask me to be a regular contributor, as well as you. I don't want to bag your job, of course. There's room for us both."

"Oh dear!" said Frank Richards.

"Or, if you like, I'll save you all the trouble by keeping on as your ghost," said Chunky. "You know what I mean—a literary ghost. I've read about that. Authors sometimes have chaps to write for them, and they're called ghosts. See?"

Frank Richards frowned.

"Do you know that would be swindling?" he asked.

"Not in this case, because, you see, you'd be handing in a superior article."

"Oh crumbs!"

"You can go riding to-morrow," said Chunky. "Leave the whole thing to me. Is it a go?"

"Ha, ha! Not quite!"

"Now, have some sense, Richards, old chap!"

"Bow-wow!"

The school-bell rang, and interrupted Chunky's persuasions.

After lessons Chunky Todgers joined the chums of Cedar Creek as they came out into the playground.

"Take this along to Thompson, Chunky, old chap!" said Frank, and he handed a roll of manuscript to the fat schoolboy as he led out his pony.

It was his weekly "copy," which Frank had finished during the dinner interval at the school.

"Sure you won't accept my offer about the ghost, Richards?" asked Chunky persuasively.

"Thanks, no!"

"Are you writing to-morrow?"

Frank shook his head.

"No. Bob's making me go up into the hills with him. Can't be helped."

"I say, then, do you mind if I go to your room at the ranch and use the typer for an hour or so?"

"What on earth for?"

"I want to type out a story."

Frank Richards laughed.

"Oh, all right! I'll speak to my aunt when I get home. Mind you don't damage the typer, though!"

"I can type all right. Thanks!"

Chunky Todgers rode on his homeward way.

There was a deeply thoughtful expression on his fat face.

Frank Richards would have been surprised if he could have guessed what thoughts were working in Chunky's podgy brain.

"No harm in it," Chunky said to himself several times. "No harm at all! It's simply giving me a chance, and it will really be a leg-up for Richards. I guess it's a go!"

Chunky Todgers did not call in at the "Thompson Press" office that evening with Frank Richards' manuscript. That manuscript remained in his pocket, and Mr. Penrose concluded that it was delayed until Monday. He did not guess what manuscript he was to receive on Monday.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Laying the Ghost!

FRANK RICHARDS and Bob Lawless started early from the ranch the following morning.

Bob had had his way, and Frank's literary work was left over. There was, after all, no hurry. His week's work was done, and it was the following week's contribution he had intended to tackle. Vere Beauclerc joined them on the trail, with Algernon, and the four schoolboys rode away cheerily in the frosty air for a day out in the hills.

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A couple of hours later Chunky Todgers rode up to the Lawless Ranch.

Frank had mentioned the matter to Mrs. Lawless, and Chunky was given free admittance to the schoolboy author's room.

Then he planted himself at the borrowed typewriter.

For some hours afterwards Chunky Todgers was stationed at that typewriter, which clicked away incessantly under his fat fingers.

Sheet after sheet rolled from the typer, and the fat author was finished at last.

He collected the typed sheets together, and read them over with delight and satisfaction in his fat face.

Master Todgers had, at least, one fully appreciative reader—himself. And his admiration knew no bounds.

"Good!" he murmured. "Topping! First-rate! After all, Richards can't grumble, and Penrose ought to be pleased when he knows! If this isn't better than Richards' stuff I'll eat my Stetson!"

And Chunky beamed with satisfaction.

His next proceeding was rather curious. He produced from his pocket a sheet of wrapping paper, which was addressed to Mr. Penrose in Frank Richards' handwriting. In that he proceeded to roll his own precious manuscript.

When it was sealed it looked exactly as it had looked when Frank handed his "copy" to Chunky the previous evening.

On Monday morning, on his way to school, Chunky Todgers stopped at the "Thompson Press" office.

Mr. Penrose was not yet up, but he put a rather shaggy head out of the window as Chunky thundered at the door.

"What the dickens—" began Mr. Penrose.

Chunky held up the packet.

"Hand it in!" grunted Mr. Penrose.

Chunky handed the packet in at the window, and rode away, smiling.

He found Frank Richards & Co. in the playground when he arrived at Cedar Creek. Frank called to him.

"You handed in my copy all right on Friday, Chunky?"

Chunky coloured a little.

"You d-d-don't think I've lost it, do you?" he said. "Your copy's safe enough." Chunky did not add that it was safe in his room at the Todgers' homestead.

"All serene!" said Frank. "How did you get on with the typer on Saturday, Chunky?"

"All O.K. I've done some jolly good stuff, you know."

"Glad to hear it," said Frank.

"I dare say you'll see it in print fairly soon!" said Chunky Todgers mysteriously.

"I hope so, old chap!"

"You watch out!" said Chunky.

During morning lessons Chunky was so palpably brimming with satisfaction that the Co. could not help observing it, though they could not account for it.

Morning lessons were interrupted that Monday.

Shortly before the hour of dismissal there was a clatter of hoofbeats without, and the school-room door was flung open.

Miss Meadows looked round in amazement. In the doorway appeared Mr. Penrose, with a crimson face, evidently in a state of great wrath.

"Richards!" he gasped.

"Mr. Penrose, you are interrupting lessons! You cannot speak to Richards now!" said Miss Meadows severely.

"Kindly retire from the school-room at once!"

"I—I—I guess I'll wait!" stammered Mr. Penrose.

And he withdrew.

Until the end of morning lessons the irate editor could be heard moving about in the porch, restlessly and impatiently.

The class was dismissed at last, and Frank Richards & Co. were the first out of the school-room. Mr. Penrose was striding excitedly to and fro outside the porch. As Frank Richards appeared, he came up with a rush.

"You—you—you—" he stammered. "You—you scamp!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"You young rascal!" roared Mr. Penrose.

"What the dickens—" stammered Frank. "Here, hands off, you ass!"

But Mr. Penrose did not "hands off." He put his hands on—hard! But for the fact that Bob and Beauclerc jumped to the rescue, the schoolboy author would certainly have been damaged. But two pairs of hands dragged the wrathful gentleman back, and he sat down on the ground with a bump.

"Ow!" he gasped.

"What on earth's the row?" yelled Bob Lawless. "What have you been up to, Franky?"

"Nothing that I know of!" stammered the bewildered Frank. "I—I suppose he's been drinking—"

Mr. Penrose staggered up.

"That's your game, is it?" he roared.

"Spooing me with a ghost story! Didn't I make you a fair offer? Didn't I give you your own terms? And now you palm off this on me!"

And Mr. Penrose waved a manuscript furiously in the air.

Chunky Todgers changed colour.

Evidently his little scheme, of supplying a superior article under Frank Richards' name, was not working out successfully!

Chunky understood, but Frank Richards did not. The schoolboy author could only stare in bewilderment at the enraged Mr. Penrose.

"What on earth do you mean?" he gasped. "Is that my manuscript?"

"Yep—you young rascal!"

"What's the matter with it?"

"The matter with it!" howled Mr. Penrose. "Utter rot from beginning to end—that's what's the matter—and you never wrote it! Do you think you can rope in my dollars by getting some born idiot to write stuff for you at a cent a yard? Starting an author's ghost, by Jove! You young scamp!"

Frank Richards' face was crimson.

"It's not true!" he exclaimed indignantly. "Not a word of it! Bad or good, it's as I wrote it!"

"As if Franky would play such a trick!" exclaimed Bob Lawless indignantly. "I guess you've been at the firewater, you jay!"

"Look at it!" shouted Mr. Penrose. "Trying to take me in—spooing me with a ghost-story—"

"I haven't—"

"Look at it!"

Mr. Penrose thrust the offending manuscript fairly under Frank Richards' nose. Frank glanced at it, and then he gave a yell. The first line on the precious manuscript was:

"The sun was shining brightly on the anshent roofes of St. Kit's Kolidge."

There was more—much more. But that much was enough for Frank Richards.

"That's not my manuscript!" he howled.

"What? Look at it! There's your name typed on it—"

"My hat!"

"Chunky!" roared Bob Lawless.

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Morny was in his best form. Smiley did not last very long against Jimmy Silver's bowling; but Morny was made of sterner stuff. Bowler after bowler pelted his wicket in vain.

The runs were piling up for Mornington, and the crowd, mindful of the fact that he had very recently been a Rookwooder, cheered him loudly.

"Bravo, Morny! Well hit, Mornington!"
"Go it, Morny!"

Mornington grinned as he heard the shouting. His name was ringing over the field, and he knew that long before the game was over the Head must know of his presence there. And that, in point of fact, was just what Valentine Mornington wanted.

The name that was shouted reached the ears of a Sixth-Former in the quad. Carthew came along to Little Side to investigate, and he stared blankly at the sight of Mornington at the wickets.

"Silver!" he shouted.

"Hallo!" Jimmy Silver looked round from the field.

"Send Mornington away at once!"

"Can't interfere with Coombe's players, Carthew."

"Mornington!" shouted Carthew. "Get off this field instantly!"

Mornington glanced at him.

"Go and eat coke!" he retorted.

Carthew bit his lip, and swung away. He walked directly towards the School House, evidently to inform the Head.

"Now look out for squalls!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell.

The Coombe innings was very near its finish. The last wicket fell to Erroll; Morny "not out" with fifty runs to his credit. And there was only a brief delay before the Rookwood innings began.

Lovell and Kit Erroll were sent in to begin; and Mornington went on to bowl for Coombe. But only a single ball had gone down when there was a buzz in the thronging crowd.

Mornington, ball in hand, glanced round carelessly.

Dr. Chisholm was striding towards the cricket-field, his brows set in a deep, dark frown, his eyes gleaming.

The Head had been scarcely able to credit Carthew's report. But the sight of Mornington banished all doubt.

There was a hush on the crowded ground, and the game stopped of its own accord.

Dr. Chisholm held up his hand.

"Mornington!"

Morny raised his cricket-cap respectfully.

"Yes, Dr. Chisholm?"

"How dare you come here?"

"No choice in the matter, sir," answered Mornington. "I'm a member of the visiting eleven."

"This is a trick!" gasped the Head. "Your object, Mornington, is to defy my authority, as I am very well aware. Leave the precincts of this school at once—immediately, sir!" thundered the Head.

The cricketers looked at one another in silence. The storm had burst at last.

Mornington did not stir from his place. It was plain that he did not intend to obey.

"Do you hear me, Mornington?"

"I hear you, sir."

"Go!"

"Sorry, sir, it can't be done!"

"What—what?"

"I'm here to play cricket," said Mornington coolly. He was quite enjoying the situation. "You can't order me off this ground!"

"Mornington, if you do not depart this instant, I will have you removed by force!" exclaimed the Head.

"Not while I can kick, anyhow!" said Mornington coolly.

"You audacious young rascal—"

Smiley came forward, with a very determined expression on his face.

"Look 'ere, sir—" he began.

"Silence! Who are you?"

"Who am I?" exclaimed Smiley warmly. "I'm the skipper of this 'ere eleven, sir—Coombe Juniors. You can't send one of my men off the field. If you didn't want the match played, you could 'ave stopped it sooner, I s'pose."

"I have no objection to the match," said the Head, rather perplexed—"none whatever. I object to a boy who has been expelled from his school returning hither in defiance of my commands."

"Morny's in my team, sir, and my best man. I'm not going to part with 'im," said Smiley doggedly. "We came 'ere to get fair play. Stoppin' a match when we're winnin' ain't fair play."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

He was nonplussed.

Certainly he did not wish to take the severe step of stopping the match, with no offence given by the visiting team. But to allow Mornington to continue to play—

"Silver, you should not have allowed this!" said the Head.

"I haven't any control over members of a visiting team, sir!" said Jimmy Silver meekly.

"Ahem! Perhaps not! I do not wish to stop the game," said the Head. "Your visitors have a right to play it out. But I object to that boy's presence at Rookwood."

"We can't play without 'im, sir," said Smiley. "He's the best man in the 'ole shoot!"

The Head bit his lip.

He felt that Mornington had defeated him. Without committing an act of high-handed injustice, he could not drive the obnoxious Mornington hence.

There was a pause.

Then the Head turned to Carthew.

"Carthew, will you see that Mornington leaves Rookwood the moment this match is over?" he said. "Silver, understand that it is distinctly forbidden, in future, for you to play a match with any club of which Mornington is a member."

And with that the Head strode away, with a feeling of having been outwitted that was very disagreeable.

"Phew!" murmured Lovell.

"I'm glad that's over! The Head's an old sport, after all!"

"Play!"

The game went on.

Mornington was in great spirits.

He had gained his point, and the Head had been beaten, and that was all the cheery Morny cared about.

His aid did not bring the villagers a victory, as Smiley had hoped, though they came within a measurable distance of it. But when the last ball had been bowled, Rookwood were ten runs ahead, and winners.

"Never mind!" said Smiley. "It was a close thing. We'll beat you next time, Master Silver!"

Carthew came striding up as the cricketers left the field. He dropped his hand on Mornington's shoulder.

"Now, get out!" he snapped. "Oh—ah! Yaroooooh!"

Morny had his bat in his hand. He let the weighty end drop on Carthew's toe with a bump. The bully of the Sixth released him suddenly, and hopped in anguish.

"Oh—ah—ow! Yoop!" howled Carthew.

"I'll—I'll—Ow—ow!"

The enraged prefect made a spring at Mornington. Three or four Coombe bats drove him back, and he was forced to beat a retreat, yelling. Mornington walked cheerfully out in the midst of his new comrades.

"Ta-ta, old tops!" he called out. "I mean, au revoir! I dare say I shall be coming along again soon. The Head is so pleased to see me, you know!"

And Mornington walked off airily with the Coombe cricketers, evidently in great spirits.

"Well," said Jimmy Silver, as he turned back from the gate—"well, Morny does take the biscuit, and no mistake! But—but this sort of thing can't go on, you know. I wonder how it will end?"

Jimmy Silver was not the only one at Rookwood who wondered; the Head was wondering, too. Even the august Head of Rookwood was beginning to feel that Mornington was a little too much for him.

THE END.

(There will be another grand long complete story of Val Mornington's adventures, entitled: "Morny's Latest Stunt!" by Owen Conquest, in next week's special issue.)

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(Continued from page 6.)

"Wha-a-at?"

"Can't you see—that's what he wanted the typer for—"

"Oh!"

Frank Richards understood at last. Chunky Todgers—much dismayed by this unexpected denouement—was retiring stealthily, but hastily, from the scene. A powerful grip on his collar dragged him back.

"You fat villain!" yelled Frank Richards. "You never handed my copy in! You handed this rubbish in instead—"

"Yaroooooh!"

"Own up, you fat rascal!"

"I—I guess I was only doing you both a good turn," gasped Chunky. "Leggo my collar! I—I was going to let Mr. Penrose have some really good stuff for once, and give you a leg-up at the same time, Richards. I—I don't know how he's spotted it and—"

"Where's my copy, you villain?"

"It's all right—safe at home!" spluttered Chunky. "I—I wouldn't throw it away, though, of course, it wasn't any good— Yow-ow-ow! Leave off shaking me, you rotter! Yooooop!"

Mr. Penrose calmed down now, as he comprehended the state of affairs.

"I—I guess I see now," he breathed.

"I beg your pardon, Richards. I guess I couldn't think anything but what I did."

"You might have known—" began Frank warmly.

"Well, I guess I'm sorry. As for that young rascal—" Mr. Penrose grasped Chunky Todgers with one hand, and his riding-whip with the other. And the voice of Master Todgers, for the next five minutes, was like unto the voice of the Bull of Bashan.

It was a very doleful Chunky that delivered up the genuine "copy" at the Thompson Press office that evening. No harm had been done, as it turned out; and, indeed, Chunky had not meant any harm—he had meant to benefit everybody all round. But Chunky's good intentions had been nipped in the bud; and he had found Mr. Penrose's riding-whip so painful, that it was not likely that he would seek again to play the part of Frank Richards' Ghost.

THE END.

(You must not miss reading next Tuesday's extra-fine long complete story of Frank Richards & Co., of Cedar Creek, entitled: "The Big Nose Chief!" It's full of pep!)

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