

GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER!

EVERY
TUESDAY.
Week Ending
Dec. 20th,
1924.
New Series,
No. 309.

The POPULAR

229



THE PHANTOM ABBOT

5 Special Stories and Splendid Hobby Supplement!

TREASURE TROVE IN THE BACKWOODS!

To create a little local interest in his paper, the editor of the "Thompson Press" hides a treasure at Cedar Creek—and the great "hunt" commences with many amusing and lively scenes!



THE CEDAR CREEK TREASURE -HUNT!



Another Stirring Long Complete Story, dealing with the Schooldays, in the Backwoods of Canada, of FRANK RICHARDS, the world-famous author!

THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Startling Invasion!

MISS MEADOWS looked surprised. So did her class. Morning lessons were in full swing at Cedar Creek School, and Miss Meadows' pupils were receiving valuable instruction as to the extent, population, and productions of British Columbia, the Canadian province in which Cedar Creek was situated.

The big door of the school-room opened suddenly.

A pilgrim in a blue shirt, leather crackers, and big boots and Stetson hat looked in.

Some of the schoolboys recognised him as Buster Bill, of the town of Thompson.

What business Buster Bill had in the school-room of Cedar Creek during morning lessons was a mystery to them. It was also a mystery to Miss Ethel Meadows—a mystery which she desired to elucidate on the spot. She fixed a severe glance upon the Buster.

"What is it?" Miss Meadows exclaimed sharply.

Buster Bill touched his hat.

"No offence, marm," he said. "I s'pose I'm the first. I came off from Thompson airy."

"The first?" repeated Miss Meadows, puzzled.

"Sure! You don't mind me a-lookin' round?"

"Looking round?"

"Yep."

"Please leave the school-room at once!" said Miss Meadows, wondering whether the Buster had been sampling the fire-water at the Red Dog thus early in the day.

"Skuse me, marm, I guess I'd like to look round first," said Buster Bill apologetically.

"Nonsense! Please retire at once. No one is allowed here during lessons."

Buster Bill looked disappointed.

"Waal, if you reely object, marm—"

"Certainly I do!"

"Course, I ain't buckin' agin what a lady says," remarked the Buster. "No gentleman would, marm. I'll jest nose out, then, and start somewhere else. Pr'aps it's in the playground, arter all."

And, touching his big Stetson hat again, Buster Bill retired from the school-room and closed the door after him.

He left the school boys and girls staring.

"Upon my word!" murmured Miss Meadows.

The Canadian schoolmistress was as surprised as her pupils. However, the lesson proceeded.

Lessons at Cedar Creek, however, were fated to be interrupted again that eventful morning.

The Cedar Creek fellows were still in the dark as to the whole extent, population, and resources of British Columbia when the door was reopened.

It was not Buster Bill this time. It was Injun Dick, the old Apache loafer of Thompson, in his tattered blanket.

"Well, really!" exclaimed Miss Meadows, in great annoyance. "What do you want?"

The Redskin ducked his head to the schoolmistress.

"Injun come look!" he said. "Missy let Injun look round, you bet."

"Certainly not! Leave this room at once!"

"Go!"

Injun Dick looked rebellious for a moment, but he finally retired, and closed the door after him.

"What on earth is this game, Bob?" whispered Frank Richards to Bob Lawless in wonder.

"Ask me another," said Bob, shaking his head. "Unless they're full up to the chin, I can't guess."

"They didn't look tipsy," remarked Vere Beauclerc. "Something's on, but I'm blessed if I can imagine what it is."

"Silence in the class, please!" snapped Miss Meadows.

The schoolmistress stepped to the window and looked out with a knitted brow. Buster Bill could be seen roaming about the playground, but he was not alone. Three or four more fellows were in the playground, evidently engaged in a search.

What they were searching for was a deep mystery. Glancing in the direction of the gates, Miss Meadows caught sight of two or three more coming in.

"Extraordinary!" she murmured.

She stepped to the door.

Injun Dick was in the passage, scanning it minutely in every corner. From the kitchen came the voice of Black Dinah, the cook, in tones of emphatic expostulation.

"You trabbel off, you white trash. You no come in my kitchen."

"Skuse me, old lady," came a rough voice in reply, "ain't meaning any harm, my black beauty. Jest looking round."

"You trabbel!" screamed Black Dinah.

"I guess— Oh!"

A red-bearded pilgrim came scudding out of the kitchen in a great hurry, followed by Dinah, brandishing a frying-pan.

Miss Meadows gazed in amazement as the red-bearded pilgrim escaped into the playground, and Dinah returned triumphant to her quarters.

"Extraordinary!" repeated Miss Meadows. It really was extraordinary.

Unless a portion of the population of Thompson Town had gone insane that summer's morning, there was no accounting for it. At least a dozen pilgrims had come along to Cedar Creek School, with the apparent desire and intention of "looking round." Buster Bill was the first arrival, but the others had been close behind.

Miss Meadows returned to her class in a state of great amazement.

There was a buzz of wondering talk going on in the class, and it was with difficulty that Miss Meadows brought her pupils back to serious attention to the extent, population, and natural products of British Columbia.

They were more interested in the strange proceeding of Buster Bill & Co.

Miss Meadows spoke to Mr. Slimmey, the second master, and that gentleman left the school-room, evidently to make inquiries among the pilgrims outside as to what they wanted in the school precincts.

The schoolboys waited eagerly for his return.

Mr. Slimmey came back in a few minutes. The schoolboys exerted their sense of hearing to the utmost; they wanted to know what the strange affair meant. But they caught only a few words, such as "Hundred-dollar note," and "Thompson Press," and "Absurd!"

"Ridiculous!" exclaimed Miss Meadows.

"Shall I—ahem!—turn them out, Miss Meadows?" asked Mr. Slimmey.

He did not state how he was going to turn out a dozen or fifteen big-limbed fellows, any one of whom could have made mincemeat of poor Mr. Slimmey.

Miss Meadows shook her head. She was too kind-hearted to set Mr. Slimmey such a task as that.

"So long as they do not enter the school-room, never mind," she said.

Mr. Slimmey returned to his class. Frank Richards & Co. exchanged looks of wonder.

THE POPULAR.—No. 309.

Lessons proceeded; and all through lessons they could hear heavy footsteps and voices in the playground. Buster Bill and his rivals were still busily engaged in their mysterious search. And Frank Richards & Co. were eager for school to be dismissed, so that they could learn what was the meaning of this most mysterious happening.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Mysterious!

"GREAT gophers!" That sudden startled exclamation came from Chunky Todgers.

As Frank Richards & Co. came out of the lumber-school Chunky Todgers had settled down on a bench near the porch.

He took from his pocket a copy of the "Thompson Press," the local paper, of which Mr. Penrose was the editor and proprietor. The "Thompson Press" for that week was published that morning, and Chunky had bought his copy on the way to school on his fat pony. But, arriving only just in time for lessons, Chunky had not had time to look at it till now. Now, apparently, it was something in Mr. Penrose's paper that caused the fat youth to utter that startled ejaculation.

Chunky's round eyes opened wide, and he stared into his paper with the keenest interest. Frank Richards & Co., who had heard him exclaim, looked round at him.

"Hallo, what's the news, Chunky?" asked Bob Lawless.

"News!" repeated Chunky vaguely.

"Anything in the paper?"

"Oh, advertisements, you know," answered Chunky Todgers. And the fat youth closed his paper rather hurriedly, and walked quickly away with it, leaving the chums of Cedar Creek staring.

"What the thump is he keeping dark?" said Frank Richards, in perplexity. "There's something in the paper he doesn't want us to see."

"Oh, bother him!" said Bob. "Where are those pilgrims who came moseying round the school this morning?"

"Gone, I think," said Beauclerc. "Most of them, anyhow; they've gone home to their dinners, I should think."

"We want to know what they wanted," said Bob. "Let's look."

The playground seemed clear of the curious party of searchers now. Doubtless most of them had gone home to Thompson for refreshments, or had wandered farther afield. But the chums, as they crossed the playground, caught sight of one of them—a Chinese laundryman of Thompson, who was raking in the wood-pile. They hurried up to him.

"Hallo, Sing Hi!" exclaimed Bob Lawless, playfully jerking the Celestial by his pigtail.

"What are you looking for?"

The Chinese jumped.

"Ow! You lettee go!" he exclaimed, jerking away his pigtail. "Me lookee for bank-note—oh, yes!"

"You're looking in our wood-pile for a banknote?" exclaimed Frank Richards.

"Alle light! Hundled-dollce notice."

"What on earth makes you think there's a hundred-dollar note there?" howled Bob Lawless. "If there is, by gum, we'll look, too!"

The Chinaman blinked at him.

"No knowee?" he asked.

"Eh? We don't know anything about a hundred-dollar note, sure."

"Then me no teltee," said the Chinaman calmly. "You walkee way, and lettee me lonee!"

"But what are you up to?" exclaimed Beauclerc.

"No savvy."

"What makes you think there's a hundred-dollar note there?" demanded Frank Richards.

"No savvy."

"You benighted heathen—"

"No savvy."

The Chinaman grinned, and evidently did not intend to explain. He went on raking in the wood-pile, the chums watching him in astonishment.

"Hallo! There's Buster Bill again!" exclaimed Frank suddenly.

The Buster had not gone home to dinner. He loomed up into view again, making for the lumber schoolhouse. Leaving the Chinaman raking among the firewood, Frank Richards & Co. hurried towards the Buster.

THE POPULAR.—No. 309.

They were in time to hear him speak to Miss Meadows in the school porch.

"You don't object, marm, if I look round the school-room now that you ain't busy there—eh?"

"It is absurd! But you may look if you like!" said Miss Meadows crossly.

"Thanky, marm!"

Buster Bill marched into the school-room, and Miss Meadows disappeared into her own quarters. The schoolboys followed the Buster in.

Buster Bill stared round at them and pointed a big, knucky forefinger to the door. "You git!" he said tersely. "You ain't wanted around hyer!"

"Bless your cheek!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "I suppose we can come into our own school-room, if we like?"

The Buster shook his head.

"You keep off!" he answered. "I guess I'm looking hyer for that there hundred-dollar note."

"What hundred-dollar note?" shrieked Bob Lawless.

"Hain't you heard?"

"Nope!"

"Then you won't hear from me!" answered Buster Bill. "There's enough galoots on this hyer lay already! You vamoose the ranch!"



"But—"

"Git is the word!" roared Buster Bill, dragging a big Colt revolver from his belt.

"You git—sharp! Absquatulate, afore this hyer shootin'-iron goes off! You hear me yawp?"

The schoolboys backed out into the passage rather quickly. Buster Bill's revolver was looking at them, and if it went off, it was liable to have serious results.

"What the thump does it mean?" said Frank Richards blankly. "Hallo! Injun Dick's still here! Let's ask the Redskin."

Injun Dick had loped into the house, and was looking round him and peering into the kitchen. Frank jerked at his tattered blanket.

"What are you looking for, Injun Dick?" he asked.

The old Apache regarded him gravely.

"Injun look for hundred dollars, you bet,"

he answered. "Injun thirsty."

"But what makes you think there's a hundred dollars here?"

"Little chief no savvy?"

"No."

"Injun no talk. Me want hundred dollars."

Injun bully boy with a glass eye," said the Redskin gravely.

And he jerked himself away from Frank, evidently not intending to let the Cedar Creek fellows into the secret.

Frank Richards & Co. went out into the playground again in great perplexity.

They were further puzzled by the sight of Chunky Todgers, who was dragging loose a pile of logs under the school wall near Mr. Slimmey's cabin, and peering among them with eager eyes. Evidently Chunky had "got on" to the mysterious game, whatever it was, and was joining in the search. The chums watched him for some minutes in silence.

"Chunky knows," said Beauclerc at last. "He'll tell us," said Bob. "If he doesn't, we'll scalp him! Chunky!"

Chunky Todgers looked round in alarm as the three chums ran up. His fat face was flushed and conscious.

"Oh! You—you fellows—" he stammered.

"What are you looking for?"

"N-nothing."

"You're heaving that pile of logs around for nothing?" shouted Bob.

"Ye-e-ep."

"Not looking for a hundred-dollar note?"

asked Frank sarcastically.

Todgers started.

"You—you know, then?" he stammered.

"We know a lot of silly idiots are here looking for a hundred-dollar note!" answered Frank. "Now you're searching, too. Tell us what it is all about."

"Oh, n-nothing, you know!"

"What on earth are you keeping it dark for?"

"I—I tell you it's nothing!" stuttered Chunky. "Here, you fellows, sheer off, and let a chap alone!"

Beauclerc uttered a sudden exclamation.

"The newspaper!"

"What about the newspaper, Cherub?"

"It's something in the newspaper—that's why Chunky wouldn't show it to us," said Beauclerc.

"Why, the fat coyote!" exclaimed Bob wrathfully. "Keeping us out of it, whatever it is! Hand over that paper, Chunky!"

"I—I—I've lost it!" gasped Todgers.

"Why, there it is sticking out of your pocket!"

"I—I mean, gimme my paper!" yelled Chunky Todgers, as Bob jerked it out of his pocket.

"Sit on him!" said Bob.

And Frank and Beauclerc collared the excited Chunky, while Bob Lawless opened the latest number of the "Thompson Press." And then Bob ejaculated, as Chunky had done before.

"Great gophers!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Mr Penrose's New Stunt!

"PENROSE'S latest stunt!" grinned Bob Lawless.

Frank Richards & Co. looked at the well-displayed advertisement on the middle page of the "Thompson Press."

Evidently it was that which had caught Chunky Todgers' eyes when he opened his paper after morning school, and had started him joining in the search with the Thompson pilgrims.

Sooner or later, certainly, Frank Richards & Co. must have seen it, for Frank was a regular subscriber to the "Thompson Press." In that valuable periodical appeared Frank's series of stories, under the title of "St. Kit's Fellows," which Frank's friends declared was the only part of Mr. Penrose's paper that was worth reading. In which, probably, they were not far wrong, the rest of the paper being filled with advertisements, and Mr. Penrose's editorial remarks, and amateur poetry, in the style of "Sunset on the Rockies," or "When I See Thee at Eventide."

Mr. Penrose freely admitted that Frank Richards' contributions helped on his circulation handsomely. There was no doubt that his circulation needed it. But Mr. Penrose was not at a loss for other stunts to induce the citizens of Thompson to shell out five cents at a time for his paper. He had a sale and exchange column, and he had a matrimonial column, and sometimes he had a competition.

When a fresh batch of New York or Chicago papers came up from the railway, Mr. Penrose was accustomed to look over

them for stunts. Any stunt that seemed to him likely to catch on he adopted. He had tried charades, and he had tried missing words. His latest stunt was something more surprising.

"ANYBODY WANT A HUNDRED DOLLARS?"

That was in big type to catch the eye. And it was quite certain that there were plenty of galoots in the Thompson Valley who wanted a hundred dollars.

The notice proceeded:

"THE HIDDEN HUNDRED!"

"Every week, till further notice, the Editor of the 'Thompson Press' will HIDE a 100-DOLLAR BILL in a safe place in the Thompson Valley.

"A CLUE WILL BE GIVEN!"

"The Editor will indicate a spot within a hundred yards of where the Hundred is Hidden.

"THIS WEEK"

"The 100-DOLLAR BILL is hidden within a hundred yards of Cedar Creek School House.

"WATCH OUT!"

"If you want a Hundred Dollars, now's your time! THIS IS A CINCH!"

"So that's it!" said Frank Richards, laughing. "It's that blessed rot that's brought half Thompson mooching round the school this morning!"

"It's a good advertisement, anyway!" said Beaulercr, laughing. "People will hear of the existence of his paper, whether they buy it or not."

"Lots will buy it, of course, to read up the particulars, and to see the result, too!" said Frank. "It's really very bright of Penrose. But it's rather rough on Cedar Creek. We shall have an army here by the afternoon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Look here, you fellows oughtn't to chip in!" said Chunky Todgers warmly. "That's my paper, you know."

"I shall have my copy this afternoon," said Frank. "But I don't think I shall worry about Penrose's hundred-dollar note. Within a hundred yards of Cedar Creek schoolhouse is a big order."

"Well, it's bound to be somewhere!" said Chunky Todgers. "Under something, you know, or stuck in something, or somewhere, you know. I guess I'm going in for it, some."

And Chunky resumed his search, much relieved when the chums walked away and left him the stack of logs all to himself.

In ordinary circumstances nothing would have induced the fat Chunky to shift one of those logs, if he could possibly have helped it. Now he shifted them by the dozen, with the perspiration pouring down his fat face.

Chunky came in to dinner breathing stertorously, and unsuccessful. For once the fat youth was glad when dinner was over. And instead of resting on a bench to digest his dinner in comfort, Master Todgers recommenced at once his search for the hundred-dollar note.

When the bell rang for afternoon classes Todgers came in very reluctantly. The story of the "Thompson Press" competition had spread by that time, and fifty Cedar Creek boys and girls had been joining in the search, at least. But the hidden hundred remained hidden.

The playground was not by any means deserted when the school went in.

The galoots from Thompson, having had their dinner, had returned to the charge with reinforcements.

Miss Meadows made no objection to their searching the precincts of the school for the hundred-dollar note. Objections would not, in fact, have been of much use. Two or three score of rough fellows were not likely to pay much heed to objections.

She insisted only that they should keep out of the house, assuring the eager seekers of easy wealth that Mr. Penrose certainly had not been in the house, and could not have hidden the banknote inside the building.

The schoolmistress privately made up her mind to speak very plainly to Mr. Penrose on the subject. She did not approve of

advertising stunts that brought a crowd of miners, cattlemen, and loafers to Cedar Creek. Neither did she like the excitement that reigned in her class, and militated very considerably against lessons.

Most of the school thought a good deal more of the hundred-dollar note than of lessons; and Chunky Todgers even went to the length of requesting an extra holiday, so as not to be left behind in the search. Chunky rose up in his place rather nervously, but very determinedly, and held up a fat hand to draw Miss Meadows' attention.

Miss Meadows looked at him. "If you please, ma'am," stammered Todgers, "can I—can we—I mean—"

"What?" "C-c-can we have a holiday this afternoon, ma'am?" "Wha-a-at?" "To—to look for the hidden hundred, ma'am!" said Chunky eagerly. "You see, ma'am—"

"Sit down, Todgers!" "Yes; but—but—"

"If you say another word, Todgers, I shall detain you for two hours after lessons!" said Miss Meadows severely.

"Oh!" Chunky Todgers collapsed into his seat. He did not say another word. The bare thought of being detained for two hours, while everybody else was hunting for the hundred-dollar note, made him feel quite faint.

Never had lessons seemed so long to the Cedar Creek fellows as they seemed that afternoon.

It was not a case, by any means, of "linked sweetness long drawn out." The afternoon seemed to drag its slow length along like a wounded snake.

But everything comes to an end at last, and so did that tiresome afternoon. The school was released at last, and all Cedar Creek rushed out with a whoop to participate in the search for the hidden hundred.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Slimmey's Luck!

FRANK RICHARDS & CO. left a crowd still at the school when they led out their horses and rode homeward.

Some of the fellows intended to hang about till dark, when the hunt would have to be given up, though it was likely to cause painful explanations with their fathers when they arrived home late.

When Frank and Bob arrived home, one of the first things they saw was Billy Cook, the foreman of the ranch, with a copy of the "Thompson Press" in his hands, studying the hundred-dollar announcement.

"Hallo! You after the dollars, too, Billy?" asked Bob, laughing.

The ranchman looked up. "I guess this is a cinch!" he said. "Some of the cattlemen have been asking for leave to-day. I reckon they were after this. I calculate I'll hump along to Cedar Creek to-morrow."

"The more the merrier!" said Frank Richards. "There's been an army to-day. I suppose there'll be a host to-morrow."

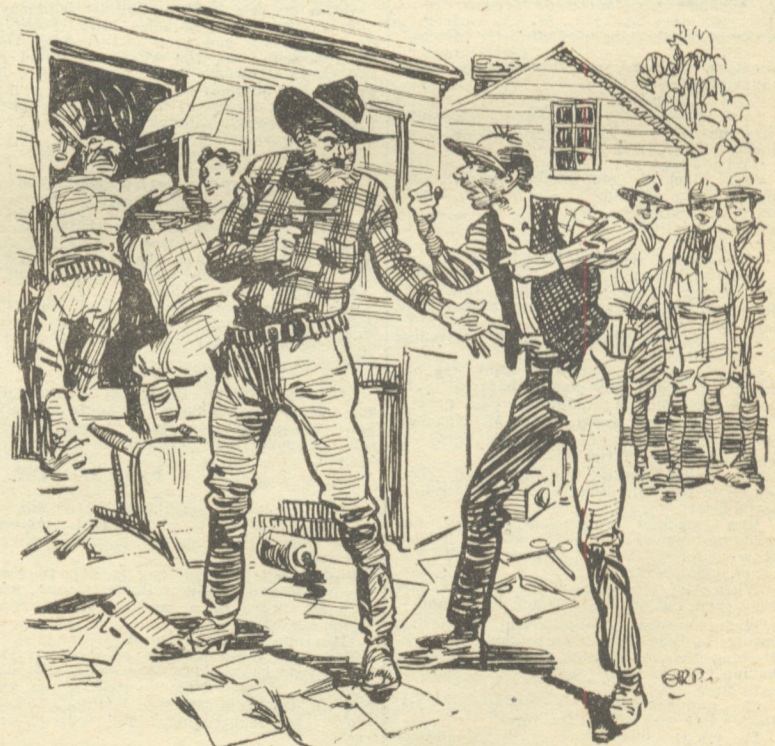
Frank Richards was right on that point. On the morrow morning Billy Cook, having obtained leave from Mr. Lawless, rode up the trail to the school with the chums of Cedar Creek.

The backwoods school was quite populous when they arrived.

Inside and outside the walls were galoots searching for the hidden hundred, Buster Bill and Injun Dick among them. They must have turned out at daylight to get to Cedar Creek School so early.

Morning lessons at the backwoods school were somewhat disturbed by the sounds from outside, especially when there was an occasional scuffle between rival searchers.

Mr. Penrose's stunt was working like a charm, so far as advertisement went; but it did not conduce to the quiet pursuit of knowledge at the backwoods school.



LOOKING FOR THE TREASURE! Outside the offices of the "Thompson Press" there was a large crowd, and inside there evidently was a crowd also. As Frank Richards & Co. dismantled, Mr. Penrose came out of his office, Buster Bill following him with a levelled gun. "I can't have my office turned inside out!" shrieked Penrose. "I guess you can! We're arter that Hundred-Dollar Bill!" said Buster Bill grimly. (See Chapter 5.)

At midday Black Sam brought Miss Meadows' horse round, and the school-mistress rode away to Thompson to interview Mr. Penrose.

She found that gentleman in a happy and expansive mood.

Before Miss Meadows could speak, the editor of the "Thompson Press" informed her that the week's edition of the "Press" was sold out.

"Every copy gone, ma'am," said Mr. Penrose. "They fairly rushed for it. The last copy went an hour ago. I'm getting out an extra edition. This is selling more copies than I sold when I printed the news of the capture of Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones!"

"Will you have the kindness to leave my school out of such affairs on future occasions?" demanded Miss Meadows.

Mr. Penrose smiled.

"My dear ma'am, do you not see the idea? A school is a centre; news spreads from it to all quarters. Every boy and girl will grow excited on the subject, and tell his or her parents. Copies of the 'Press' will be called for from every corner of the valley and—"

"And what of the school work interrupted by this absurdity?" demanded Miss Meadows.

"This what?"

"Absurdity! The school work—the lessons—"

"By gosh!" said Mr. Penrose, "I'm afraid I never thought about that! My mistake! Of course, I quite see your point—quite! Next week I shall certainly choose some other locality. Besides, the stunt would not do in the same locality twice. I'm using your school only once, Miss Meadows. The next hundred-dollar bill shall be hidden at Cedar Camp, and spread the glad news of the 'Thompson Press' in that

NEXT WEEK'S ROLLICKING BACKWOODS STORY

direction. I hope you haven't been given any trouble—"

"But I have."

"I'm sorry! May I make a suggestion? Give your school a holiday until the hundred-dollar bill is found, then—"

"What?"

"Let them all join in the search," said Mr. Penrose generously. "I'm sure they'd enjoy themselves."

"Nonsense!"

"Eh?"

"Nonsense!" repeated Miss Meadows.

And she returned to her horse. Mr. Penrose blinked after her, thinking that Miss Meadows' temper was more tart than he had ever supposed.

That afternoon there was much restiveness at Cedar Creek.

Undoubtedly Mr. Penrose's stunt was not doing the school any good, whatever might be its effect on the circulation of his paper.

That afternoon, among other disturbances, there were sounds of clambering boots on the timber roof of the schoolhouse.

The dollar-hunters had extended their search in that direction, as it had failed on terra firma.

Miss Meadows compressed her lips, but made no remark. It could not be helped. It was useless to think of arguing with the eager dollar-hunters.

When the schoolboys were free at last they came out into a crowded playground.

There were two or three groups of pilgrims eating bully-beef and corn-cakes, and refreshing themselves from flasks and bottles, having brought their provisions with them to save time.

The number was larger than ever, and Buster Bill was still the titan.

The Cedar Creek fellows were not allowed to join in, however, Miss Meadows command-



householder: "I don't admire your music much, but if you don't mind, will you come in and blow your next tune into our grate. We've mislaid the bellows, and can't get the fire to burn!"

ing them to leave for their homes at once, much to their disappointment.

But the other dollar-hunters remained, and the search went on while the sun set towards the far Pacific; and that evening Miss Meadows was more cross than she had ever been before.

She even spoke sharply to Mr. Slimmey, who was deeply sympathetic, and that poor gentleman walked away to his cabin with a heavy heart. Mr. Slimmey, who adored Miss Meadows, was feeling extremely angry with the enterprising editor of Thompson, and was even debating in his mind whether it was his duty—and feasible—to pay a visit to the "Press" office and kick Mr. Penrose.

He was pacing to and fro, thinking thus, in the dusk, when his attention was caught by a fluttering slip of paper almost at his feet.

He stooped and picked it up.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Slimmey. It was the hundred-dollar bill! Possibly its hiding-place had been disturbed by the eager seekers, and the wind had found it and blown it away. At all events, there it was in Mr. Slimmey's hand, and the young master stood staring at it quite a long time, with busy thoughts in his brain.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Turning the Tables!

EARLY the next morning there was a crowd at the gates of Cedar Creek. Buster Bill was the first to arrive, but there were dozens close behind.

A surprise awaited them. The gates were closed, and on the gates was pinned a written notice in large letters—a very surprising notice. It ran:

"THE HIDDEN HUNDRED!"

"The 100-DOLLAR BILL has been found. The finder has hidden it again in Mr. Penrose's premises in Main Street, Thompson. Whoever finds it again is welcome to keep it.

"PAUL SLIMMEY.

"Well, by gosh!" ejaculated Buster Bill. There was a chorus of surprised exclamations from the Thompson pilgrims arrived and arriving.

Buster Bill lingered long enough to read the notice and to digest it, as it were, and then he turned round and started back to Thompson.

After him went the crowd. More and more pilgrims came along the trail, but the returning seekers did not enlighten them. They wanted to be the first in the field at Mr. Penrose's office, where the hundred-dollar bill was hidden anew.

Frank Richards & Co. arrived at school and read the notice with great glee.

"But he hasn't kept it," said Chunky Todgers. "He's an awful jay! He might have given it to me if he didn't want it. What the thump did he want to hide it again for?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Lawless. "It's tit for tat on Penrose. Penrose is going to have a crowd now turning his show inside out."

The chums found Mr. Slimmey with a smiling face when they came into school.

Miss Meadows was smiling, too. Evidently she had learned of the peculiar device by which her faithful adorer was punishing Mr. Penrose for his over-zealous enterprise.

There was no disturbance at Cedar Creek School that morning. As fast as the dollar-hunters arrived they read the notice on the gate and turned back.

The morning passed in blissful quiet. It was probably far otherwise at Mr. Penrose's office in the town.

After morning lessons Frank Richards & Co. saddled their horses and rode away for Thompson.

They were very anxious to learn how the dollar-hunt was getting on.

Main Street, Thompson, was unusually lively.

Outside the office of the "Thompson Press" there was a crowd, and inside there evidently was a crowd also.

Loud voices proceeded from the little building, and several articles of furniture were strewn on the sidewalk.

As the chums of Cedar Creek dismounted, Mr. Penrose, with a crimson and furious face, came out of his office. Buster Bill following him out with a levelled "gun."

"You sheer off!" roared Buster Bill.

"Stopping us! I guess not! No, sree!"

Mr. Penrose waved his hands frantically.

--"The BOOTLEGGERS!"

(Full Particulars on page 16.)

"I can't have my office turned inside out!" he shrieked.

"I guess you can! 'Cause why? We're arter that bill."

"I've got to set up my paper!" raved Mr. Penrose. "You're upsetting my types. You're—"

"You can chew the rag as much as you like, but don't you come in ag'in!" said Buster Bill.

And the Buster went back into the crowded office to resume the dollar-hunt.

"Hallo! You're getting some of your advertising stunt yourself, Mr. Penrose," remarked Bob Lawless. "We've had a lot of this at Cedar Creek."

The hapless editor cast a haggard glance at them.

"They're wrecking the place!" he moaned. "They've taken my handpress to pieces to see if the bill's inside!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Penrose gave it up at last, and walked away dejectedly to the Occidental to comfort himself with the cup that cheers and likewise inebriates. And when Frank Richards & Co. rode away, half an hour later, Buster Bill & Co were still going strong.

Buster Bill was the lucky finder. Unfortunately, he did not find the hundred-dollar bill until Mr. Penrose's office was in a state of disorder and disrepair that was simply shocking to look upon.

Frank Richards & Co. were keen to see the next number of the "Thompson Press." It came out nearly a week late, and when it appeared it contained a brief announcement that the new "stunt" was discontinued. The hundred-dollar bill that had been twice found was the first and last Hidden Hundred.

THE END