

THE THOUSAND DOLLAR COMPETITION! In an endeavour

to raise the circulation of his famous paper, the "Thompson Press," Mr. Penrose, the editor, evolves an editorial stunt, the results of which are amazing and amusing!

An Editorial Stunt!



Another Rollicking, Long, Complete Story dealing with the Adventures of Frank Richards & Co., the Chums of Cedar Creek, the School in the Backwoods!

THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Short Cut to Wealth!

"A THOUSAND dollars!"
"Eh?"
"A thousand dollars!" repeated Chunky Todgers. "And you see, I shall be the chap that ropes it in!"

"You're going to rope in a thousand dollars!" ejaculated Frank Richards.

"Well, of course, it's not absolutely certain!" said Chunky. "Not what you'd call a dead sure cinch. But I think I've got the healthiest chance of any fellow at Cedar Creek, anyhow. You see, it requires brains—"

"Then where do you come in?" asked Bob Lawless.

"If there's a brainier fellow than me at Cedar Creek I'd like to see him, I guess," said Chunky Todgers disdainfully.

"Look at me, then, old chap. No charge."

"But who's handing out a thousand dollars, and what for?" asked Vere Beauclerc. "That's a big sum."

"About two hundred pounds in real money," remarked Frank Richards. "But how—why—when—and where? Expound, Chunky!"

"You haven't seen the 'Thompson Press' this week?" asked Chunky.

"Not yet."

"Well, it's in that prize competition, you know. Mr. Penrose is offering a thousand dollars to the winner."

"What!" yelled Frank Richards & Co. in chorus.

They could not help being astonished.

They knew Mr. Penrose well. Frank Richards knew him rather too well, in fact. For Frank supplied a short story weekly for the Thompson paper, and on several occasions he experienced extreme difficulty in extracting from Mr. Penrose the ten dollars due on that weekly story.

There were several tens in arrears, as a matter of fact, at the present time, and

Mr. Penrose, at the last meeting between author and editor, had put the matter off very airily.

He had had a run of bad luck in the poker-room at the Occidental, to say nothing of a run on the fire-water in the bar-room. When the editorial gentleman had a run of bad luck at poker his staff had a run of bad luck on pay-day.

So it was startling news that the enterprising editor was offering a thousand dollars as a prize.

Frank Richards strongly suspected that the "Thompson Press," and its printing outfit, and its office, with the editor himself thrown in, would not fetch a thousand dollars at market prices. It was, therefore, an interesting question, where that tremendous prize was to come from if it was won.

Chunky Todgers was not thinking of that, however. He was thinking of the wealth he hoped to annex. As the prize competition required brains, Chunky considered that his chance of success was very healthy.

"Penrose—offering a thousand dollar prize!" said Beauclerc. "It must be a spoof!"

"It's in the paper," said Todgers.

"Must be some kind of a catch, I guess," said Bob Lawless. "Penrose couldn't raise it to save his life."

"Well, the circulation may go up, you know," said Chunky. "I suppose it's done for advertisement."

"I guess it won't go up to that extent."

"Well, that's what he's offering," said Chunky Todgers. "I guess it's all square. I should be sorry for Penrose if somebody won the prize and he couldn't pop up. They may do those things in the East, but it wouldn't be safe in Thompson. He would get lynched!"

"Jolly risky, anyway," said Frank. "I'm afraid Penrose must have been going it at the Red Dog when he thought of this stunt. Let's see the paper."

Chunky Todgers extracted a folded

and crumpled copy of the "Thompson Press" from under his jacket.

It was not an imposing journal to look at.

Mr. Penrose had no rivals in his business in the Thompson Valley; there was not room for two local papers in the section. Indeed, the circulation of the "Press" sometimes dipped to a figure that made Mr. Penrose frown very thoughtfully, and forced him to comfort himself with an extra "nip" at the Red Dog.

But for Frank Richards' contributions, in fact, the paper would probably have gone "under" altogether. But Frank's story rallied the rising generation round it; every youth in the valley read the paper. Even at that early age, Frank experienced a foretaste of the popularity his work achieved later in a wider sphere.

Often and often, Mr. Penrose congratulated himself upon having secured the schoolboy author for his paper; and he made no secret of the popularity of Frank's contributions. He was, in fact, a great deal more generous with commendation than with cash.

The paper was not large, and the printing left something to be desired. Mr. Penrose was his own printer, as well as editor and contributor; and he some times set up his paper after an evening at the Occidental, so that little errors would creep in. And he seldom drew proofs; he was gifted by Nature with a powerful repugnance to anything in the shape of work.

What he handed out to the public was good enough for five cents, in Mr. Penrose's opinion; in fact, too good. He did not always hand it out to time. Sometimes there were difficulties about the paper supply, owing to Mr. Penrose neglecting to settle an account, and sometimes after a prolonged "bender," Mr. Penrose was not in condition to get his paper out. However, it generally turned up sooner or later.

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Every now and then Mr. Penrose developed some advertising "stunt" to buck up his circulation, borrowing any wheeze that struck his fancy from the New York and Chicago papers, which arrived in the Thompson Valley a week old.

Apparently, Mr. Penrose was now engaged upon a new advertising stunt of unusual magnitude.

Frank Richards & Co. looked at the paper with great interest. Of the twelve pages, six were filled with local advertisements, two with Frank Richards' story, and the rest with Mr. Penrose's editorial lucubrations, or copy borrowed recklessly from the American papers. But in this special number nearly a page was devoted to a startling announcement:

!!!!!!

**"SIT UP AND TAKE NOTICE!
THIS MEANS YOU!!!**

ASTOUNDING PRIZE COMPETITION!!!

PRIZE OF ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS!

**SPOT CASH! SPOT CASH!!
SPOT CASH!!!**

The Prize of One Thousand Dollars will be awarded to the Reader who correctly supplies the answer to the following Conundrum:

WHEN DOES A HORSE BECOME A BUILDING???

In case of more than one correct answer being received the Prize of One Thousand Dollars will be awarded to the first-opened correct solution.

The Correct answer is deposited in a sealed envelope in the Thompson Bank. It will be opened in the presence of the prize-winner and any Citizen who cares to be present. No deception, Gentlemen! Straight as a Die! All answers must be received at the Office by Next Saturday, accompanied by Three Coupons cut from this Number!

**SIT UP AND TAKE NOTICE!
NOW'S YOUR TIME!"**

"My only hat!" said Frank Richards. And he whistled. That imposing announcement impressed him.

"Looks square, doesn't it?" said Chunky Todgers eagerly. "If the answer's sealed up at the bank, and anybody can see it opened, that's fair and square. No catch in that. No altering the thing at the last minute to spoof the prize-winners, you know."

"Looks square!" said Bob. "Oh, it's square enough!" said Todgers. "It simply needs brains to find the correct answer. I guess I can do that."

"I shouldn't wonder if a hundred galoots get the right answer," said Bob. "In that case it goes to the first opened!"

"Well, that's a matter of luck, of course; but it's worth three coupons at five cents each. Besides, it's a rather hefty puzzle. I guess a lot of galoots wouldn't puzzle it out!" said Todgers. "F'rinstance, what do you chaps think is the answer?"

Bob yawned.

"Blest if I know! When does a horse become a building? He never does that I know of!"

"That's where the difficulty comes in!" said Chunky triumphantly. "It needs brains, you know. That's where I get a chance!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Well, what's your answer?" asked Frank.
Chunky closed one eye knowingly. "That's telling, I guess!" he answered.

"Why, you fat boulder, you just asked us what we thought the answer was."

Todgers chuckled.

"No harm in getting your opinion," he said. "I'm keeping my answer dark. I'm wise, you know!"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Frank. "Hallo, there's the bell! Come along!"

"I've got an idea, though—" said Chunky.

"Keep it till after lessons."

"But I guess—"

Frank Richards & Co. walked off to the schoolhouse, and left Chunky to guess. Lessons had to be considered, even before Mr. Penrose's new and astounding prize competition.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Frank Richards is Wanted!

MISS MEADOWS found an unusual amount of whispering going on in her class that morning at Cedar Creek.

Chunky Todgers was not the only fellow who had seen the startling announcement in the Thompson paper.

The thought of bagging such a sum as a thousand dollars was dazzling, and at Cedar Creek, at least, Mr. Penrose's new stunt had made a sensation.

Fellows whispered to one another in class, asking one another's opinion as to when and how a horse could become a building?

The puzzle was really puzzling, for, as far as any Cedar Creek fellow could see, it was quite impossible for a horse to become a building. Yet there was an answer, sealed up in the Thompson Bank, ready to be opened and revealed in the presence of the lucky winner.

Frank Richards wondered whether the thousand dollars was in the bank also. On that point he had very strong doubts.

When morning lessons were over, Chunky Todgers joined the Co. at once as they came out into the playground. Frank Richards & Co. had taken out their skates to go on the creek, which was frozen hard. But Chunky insisted upon being heard.

"Never mind skating now," he said. "You can skate any time this winter. About that thousand dollars, you know that—"

"No need for us to worry about that," said Frank, laughing. "That's a cert for you, isn't it?"

"Well, I really guess it's a cinch," said Chunky. "But I want to make it a sure thing. My idea is to send in a dozen answers—see?"

"Well, go ahead and do it, while we skate!"

"But every answer has to have three coupons, and they cost five cents each," said Chunky. "I shall want about ten dollars!"

"Oh!"

"My idea is to form a sort of syndicate," said Chunky.

"A—a—a syndicate!"

"That's it! We crowd in all the answers we can think of, and make sure of roping in the prize. You fellows supply the money, and I supply the brains. Savvy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not joking—"

"You are, old scout!" said Bob Lawless, with a chuckle. "You see, you

couldn't keep your part of the bargain and—"

"Owing to a total absence of assets," grinned Frank.

"Oh, don't be funny!" urged Todgers.

"It's worth putting up twenty dollars or so, to rope in a thousand. You've got some money in the bank, Richards—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, you fellows will have a whack in the prize—"

"If any!"

"We're practically certain to bag it, if we shove in about a hundred answers," urged Chunky. "I shall set my brains to work, you know—all you fellows have got to do is to supply the cash. And—and I'll stand you fifty dollars each out of the prize."

"You're too generous, old chap!" said Beauclerc.

"Well, I mean to be generous! Is it a go?"

"Not quite!" said Frank. "Come on, you fellows; we sha'n't get any skating before dinner if we wait for Chunky to wind up."

"Make it ten dollars, then!" exclaimed Chunky. "I guess I could make pretty certain of it with that."

"Ass!" said Frank. "If we're going to spend ten dollars on the silly thing, why shouldn't we send in answers ourselves, and bag the prize?"

"Oh, you couldn't! You see, you haven't the brains!" explained Chunky.

"Without my assistance, you wouldn't have a look-in. No good blinking facts, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank Richards & Co. beat a retreat, leaving Chunky Todgers to waste his sweetness on the desert air. They weren't in the least inclined to finance Chunky's intellectual powers.

"It's all rot!" said Bob Lawless as he sat on the bank to put his skates on by the frozen creek. "There's some catch in it. Penrose couldn't raise such a sum if it was won!"

Frank Richards nodded.

"That's how it seems to me," he said. "But I don't quite catch on, all the same. It's risky to play a trick like that in the Thompson Valley. Suppose some fellow like Buster Bill won the prize and didn't get it? He would go round asking for it with a revolver!"

"Penrose must have been imbibing at the Red Dog when he thought of this stunt," answered Bob. "Anyhow, I don't believe he's got a thousand dollars. If he has, why don't he square you the thirty he owes you?"

"I think I'll ask him when I see him again," said Frank, laughing.

When the chums of Cedar Creek came in to dinner, Yen Chin, the Chinese, called to Frank Richards.

"Mr. Penrose give me message fol you, Richards!"

"Oh! What's the message?" asked Frank.

"You call at office artee school to-day. Mr. Penrose say hum vellee important."

"Right-ho, kid!"

"That looks like squaring," said Bob. "Perhaps Penrose has come into a fortune!"

"We'll see this evening," said Frank.

"We'll ride over to Thompson after lessons. It's about time the editor squared his staff!"

The chums of Cedar Creek chuckled. Frank Richards was all the "staff" Mr. Penrose possessed; everything else on the paper was done by Mr. Penrose himself, from scribbling out the editorial column, and scissoring columns from other papers, to setting up the type and printing the paper on the hand-press in his office.

There was natural history in class that afternoon; and Miss Meadows had selected as her subject that noble and intelligent animal—the horse! She found her pupils very interested and attentive so long as that lesson lasted. Perhaps they hoped to pick up some enlightenment on the subject of the puzzle competition. But though Miss Meadows went quite exhaustively into the subject of equine quadrupeds, she shed no light on the perplexing problem of when and how a horse became a building. On that point there was no assistance to be found in all the range of known natural history.

After school, many of the Cedar Creek fellows did not seem in a hurry to depart. Many of them hung about the playground, with copies of the "Thompson Press" in their hands, and deep, thoughtful wrinkles in their brows. They consulted with one another very seriously. Frank Richards had never seen so many copies of the "Press" at once at the school; evidently the sale was going up on the strength of the thousand-dollar competition. That part of Mr. Penrose's object was being achieved at least.

The chums of Cedar Creek dodged Chunky Todgers, and led out their horses from the corral. Chunky howled after them as they rode away, and they caught the word "syndicate," and chuckled.

As they rode on to Thompson, there was a patter of hoofs behind, and they looked back to behold Chunky Todgers in hot pursuit, on his fat little pony. He waved to them to stop.

"Put it on!" said Frank.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop, you beasts!" howled Chunky, from the distance.

Frank Richards & Co. rode on at a good speed, and Chunky tailed off on his fat pony. He was very anxious for another interview; but the anxiety was all on Chunky's side. His great scheme of a syndicate, in which he was to supply the brains, while Frank Richards & Co. supplied the dollars, did not recommend itself to them.

When the Co. turned into Main Street, at Thompson, the hapless Chunky was out of sight. They rode on to Mr. Penrose's office, and dismounted at the door.

As they passed Gunten's Store, they saw a group of cattlemen conning over several numbers of the "Thompson Press," and they caught the words "a thousand dollars!" They passed a dozen or more people in Main Street with copies of the paper in their hands. Outside Mr. Penrose's office nine or ten citizens were lounging, smoking and discussing the thousand-dollar competition. Among them was Billy Cook, the foreman of the Lawless Ranch. Billy Cook nodded and grinned to the schoolboys as they dismounted.

"You in it, too?" he asked. "There ain't any papers available yet. I'm waitin' for some, I guess."

"Sold out?" asked Frank.

"Correct! Every paper's sold off, and now there's a new lot coming on," said the ranchman. "I guess Mr. Penrose will be doing a lively trade."

"He will need to, if he's going to raise a thousand dollars to hand out to the prize-winner," said Beauclerc.

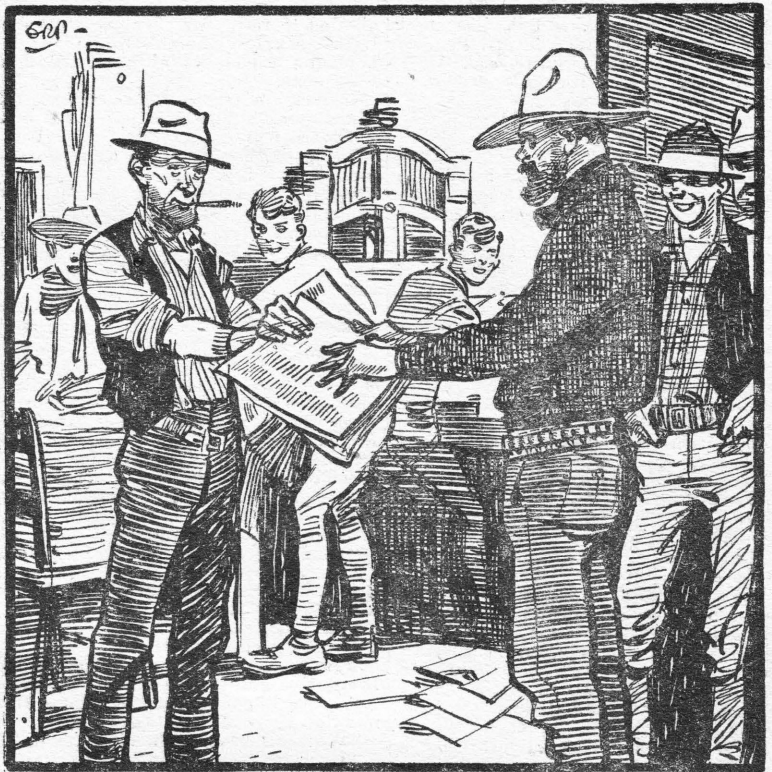
"Yep! I guess I'm going to have half a dozen tries," said Billy Cook. "If I get that thousand, I reckon it will see me through a bender down at Kamloops."

"If!" murmured Frank.

"Well, every galoot has a chance, and the more you put in the more your chances," argued the ranchman.

"You feel sure Penrose has the cash?" asked Bob.

Billy Cook started. That appeared



THE "THOMPSON PRESS" IN DEMAND! When Euster Bill came in there was a copy of the paper ready for him. "I guess I'll take a dozen," he said. "I'm going in strong for this hyer prize." Mr. Penrose handed them out smiling. Billy Cook was next, and he took six. After that there was a steady stream of purchasers who took off the copies as fast as Frank Richards & Co., turned them out. (See Chapter 3.)

to be a new thought to the ranchman's simple mind.

"He couldn't offer it as a prize if he hadn't, could he?" he asked, with a stare.

"Well, he oughtn't to," said Bob, with a grin. "But he might, you know."

Billy Cook wrinkled his brow thoughtfully.

"If it's a catch, I'm sorry for him," he said. "I guess he'll be rooted out of his office and lynched, if he don't pay up. I guess all the valley will want to know the name and address of that prize-winner, and nose along to see him about it, too. Some! If there ain't a galoot with a thousand-dollar bill to show after this is over, I guess Mr. Penrose will wish he had a cast-iron neck!"

Frank entered the little lumber office, followed by his chums, and Mr. Penrose dawned upon him in all his glory.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Mr. Penrose's Busy Day!

THE new and wonderful competition, with its thousand-dollar prize, had taken the town of Thompson by storm, as it were.

The stack of "Presses" at Gunten's Store had sold off like hot cakes before noon, and a second stack had sold off in the afternoon.

Since then, Mr. Penrose's office had been besieged for copies—for the editor did a retail as well as a wholesale business.

During office hours any galoot could drop in at the office for a single copy of the Thompson Valley paper. But to all requests, for the present, Mr. Penrose

had to reply in the negative. He was sold out.

Two editions sold out in a single day, and the cry was still for more! Instead of one edition dragging its weary length over a whole week, and a good proportion of it remaining on the premises unsold!

It was a change, there was no mistake about that. Mr. Penrose's latest advertising stunt was a howling success, so far.

The news of the thousand-dollar prize had already been talked of up and down the valley, from Lone Pine to Silver Creek, and the post-waggon had come in with orders for the "Thompson Press" from the camps down the river.

It was quite a circulation "boom." Such "stunts," though common enough in the more thickly settled and populated sections, were new and rare in the Thompson Valley, and so "caught on" more completely. It was probable that every inhabitant of the valley would see the paper that week, though whether Mr. Penrose's weird publishing methods would enable him to retain the new readers permanently was another question. In the make-up of the paper there were, as a rule, too many traces of the influence of Mr. Penrose's favourite beverage.

But the enterprising gentleman was extremely busy now. Mr. Penrose hailed originally from New York, which he called "Noo Yark." In "Noo Yark" he had learned to hustle, and he was hustling now.

In his shirt-sleeves, with a pipe sticking out of the corner of his mouth above an unshaven chin, Mr. Penrose laboured with his hand-press, which would have worked more easily if it had been in a

state of better repair. But, like most things in the office, and in Mr. Penrose himself, it had rather run to seed.

He gave Frank Richards & Co. a glance and a short nod.

"Sit it out, bub," he said.

"You wanted to see me?"

"Yep; sit it out."

This apparently meant that Frank was to wait. The chums of Cedar Creek sat on a bench and watched the busy gentleman.

He was turning off copies at a great rate, though not perhaps in perfect condition. With a keen eye to business, Mr. Penrose reduced the size of the new editions of his paper. As he reasoned to himself, the galoots were buying the paper for the "competish," not for the advertisements, or even for Frank Richards' story. So he reduced the size by two-thirds, giving the readers the competition page with its coupon, and little besides.

This was a great saving in paper and labour. But even so, Mr. Penrose had plenty to do. He was not an industrious gentleman, as a rule; but he seemed all industry now in his attempt to meet the huge demand for his publication.

As a matter of fact, that demand had to be met. Buster Bill had looked into the office several times for his copy, and had remarked at length, that if it wasn't ready that evening he was going to "pull his gun." Mr. Penrose had a strong objection to his office window being turned into a target for sharpshooting. So he laboured away like a new Hercules, on a new and bigger job. "Say, bub," he said presently, "I guess I got to talk to you, some, but I'm busy now. Suppose you wedge in and help."

"I don't mind," said Frank.

"Count us in," said Bob Lawless cheerily. "What can we do for you, Mr. Penrose? Like me to write a poem for you?"

Mr. Penrose grunted.

"I guess I've got all the stuff set up long ago, you young jay. You fold the copies on that bench yonder."

"Right-ho!"

"Richards, you know how to handle this press. You stand here and pull the sheets."

"All serene," said Frank.

"You take them from the printer, Beauclerc, and hand them across to the folding-bench."

"Certainly!" said Beauclerc.

Having set the chums of Cedar Creek to work, Mr. Penrose was able to relax his own efforts. In fact, there was nothing for him to do now, save to look on and smoke, and occasionally rap out a direction.

The arrival of the three chums had been, in fact, a windfall to the hard-worked editor, printer, and publisher.

Frank Richards & Co. piled in cheerily, quite willing to put in an hour or two helping the driven editorial gentleman. "Thompson Presses" multiplied under their busy hands.

When Buster Bill came in again there was a copy ready for him, and he was not under the painful necessity of "pulling his gun."

"I guess I'll take a dozen," said Buster Bill. "I'm going in strong for this hyer prize."

Mr. Penrose handed them out, smiling. Billy Cook was the next man in, and he took six. After that there was a steady stream of purchasers, who took off the copies almost as fast as Frank Richards & Co. turned them out.

When the purchasers were satisfied, however, and the newcomers ceased to trouble, the amateur printers were not

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allowed to rest. Mr. Penrose wanted a fresh stack for Gunten's Store, and he kept the schoolboys at work till they were done.

In fact, the printing did not cease till Mr. Penrose's supply of paper ran out. Then it had to stop.

"I guess I'll ride over to Kamloops to-morrow and borrow some paper there," said Mr. Penrose. "There'll be a noo demand to-morrow—sure. Say, isn't this some stunt, what?"

"Looks like it," said Frank, with a smile. "Must be no end of a circulation this week, at any rate."

"After this, by gum, I'll give 'em just a single sheet—competition page and coupon," said Mr. Penrose. "That will see em through for the competish—and save trouble, I reckon. I guess this office lays over any other in the North-West when it comes to hustle. That the last of the paper? Well, you can ease off now. I reckon it will do for to-day. Much obliged. Before you vamoose, you kids can carry this bundle along to Gunten's Store, if you like. I've got to drop in at the Occidental—"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Frank. "You sent me a message to Cedar Creek that you wanted to see me; that's why we came over."

"So I do," said Mr. Penrose. "But I'm thirsty—I mean tired. Tote that bundle along to the store, and come back hyer. I've got to see a man at the Occidental on important business for a few minutes."

"We shall be home a bit late—"

"Important business—can't wait!" said Mr. Penrose, and he disappeared without further words; making a beeline for the Occidental Hotel. His "important business" was with the bar-keeper there.

"We seem to have been let in for jolly nearly making a night of it," said Bob Lawless, laughing. "Anyhow, you'll get your thirty dollars, Franky. Penrose has taken three times that much while we've been here. I guess we'd better tote his bundle along to the store."

The big bundle of "Thompson Presses" was taken along to the store, and duly delivered to Mr. Gunten there. Then the chums of Cedar Creek returned to the newspaper office.

Mr. Penrose had not yet returned.

His important business was still keeping him at the Occidental.

"Dash it all, we can't wait much longer," said Frank. "The people at home will be getting alarmed about us."

"Here he comes!"

An unsteady step was heard without. Mr. Penrose, with a rich complexion, came into the office, and smiled affably at the three chums. He was not intoxicated; but it was clear that he had expended a considerable portion of his late takings on the fiery fluids sold at the Occidental.

"Been to the store?" he asked.

"Yep," answered Bob.

"You made old Gunten sign the note for them—he's sharp, is Gunten."

"Here you are."

"Good! Now I guess I've a few words to say to you, young Richards."

"I've a few to say to you," agreed Frank. "Which is going to begin?"

"Eh? What have you got to say, bub?"

"You owe me thirty dollars," explained Frank. "You asked me to mention it next time I saw you."

"Mention it next time," said Mr. Penrose. "It will be all right. Matter of fact, I've just met Kentuck, the poker man, at the Occidental, and he made me square for last night. I had only just enough to settle with the bar-keeper.

But your dollars are all right, bub; you can see for yourself how the circulation is going up—leaps and bounds, by hokey."

"Oh, all right," said Frank. "And now, what did you have to say to me, Mr. Penrose? We've got to get home, you know."

"Sure! It's private," said the editorial gentleman, with a glance at Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc.

"You can tell me before my friends, I suppose," said Frank, in surprise.

Mr. Penrose shook his head.

"Business is business," he answered. "I guess I want to whisper in your ear all on its lonesome."

"We'll wait outside, Frank," said Beauclerc, crossing to the door at once.

"Don't be all night, Franky," said Bob Lawless, as he followed Beauclerc out.

Mr. Penrose closed the door after the two schoolboys, and then, to Frank's astonishment, winked at him.

"Can't be too careful!" he remarked.

Frank looked a little impatient. He was inclined to attribute Mr. Penrose's air of mysterious secrecy to his libations at the Occidental.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

Mr. Penrose closed the little window. Then he proceeded to expound, and Frank Richards listened in astonishment.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Business Proposition!

"YOU catch on to the stunt?" was Mr. Penrose's first remark.

"What?"

"Thousand dollars prize—sending up the circ. in jumps—you see that? Only one weakness in the scheme, and—"

"And what's that?"

"There isn't any thousand dollars!" explained Mr. Penrose.

Frank Richards jumped.

His uneasy suspicions had been almost laid to rest. This cool confession by the enterprising gentleman from "Noo Yark" took him quite by surprise.

"There—there isn't—" he stammered.

"Shush! Don't shout."

"But—" gasped Frank.

"I guess I was raised in Noo Yark, where we learn business as soon as we breathe," said Mr. Penrose. "Surprises, you—what? Chew it over! Simple as A B C. I learned the newspaper business in Noo Yark and Chicago, and I'm putting you up to some valuable wrinkles, Richards. You'll find 'em useful if you're ever in the business for yourself. Fool the public—that's the motto. It's a cinch all the time. The public like being fooled. They cry out to be fooled. They won't be happy unless they're fooled. Well, fool 'em! Catch on?"

And Mr. Penrose smiled a smile of great good humour and cunning mingled, with also a mingling of semi-intoxication.

Frank Richards simply stared at him. Mr. Penrose seemed to be quite unaware that he was confessing to a piece of unscrupulous roguery. Such matters had apparently not entered into his considerations. Doubtless, commercial morality was not in the curriculum when he was learning his business in "Noo Yark."

"What—what—" stuttered Frank at last. "Are you potty, Mr. Penrose?"

"Hay?"

"I don't know what that may be possible in a big city," said Frank, "but it's not possible to play such tricks here, to say

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"Br-r-r!" grunted Jimmy Silver. "What the thump have we been wasting our time on the fellow at all for? Let's get back to the cricket, for goodness' sake, and get the taste out of our mouths!"

And the Co. grinned, and walked back with their great leader to the cricket. The Rookwooders took their homeward way, most of them feeling rather disappointed. The interview with Mr. Lurchey had been tame—very tame—as Putty Grace remarked. The fellow hadn't been cheeky, and Bulkeley hadn't laid into him with the stick. The juniors had really had their walk for nothing. No startling details of the career of George Huggins—Gentleman George—had come to light. Instead of that, the Huggins' story was disposed of for good and all, and Montmorency stood cleared in the eyes of the Fourth of all imputations of humble origin, whatever Morny chose to think. Montmorency's little ways had not made him beloved, and there were few who rejoiced to see him "set right" with his Form.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
All Serene!

GET out!" Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency uttered those words quietly, but threateningly, as Lattrey looked into Study No. 5 an hour or two later.

Instead of getting out, however, Lattrey got in, and closed the door after him.

"You prefer to leave this study on your neck?" asked Montmorency, pushing back his spotless cuffs a little.

"Hold on a minute!" said Lattrey, with a bitter grin. "I've just a few words to say. I know your game. Do you think I'm blind, even if all the other fellows are? You've squared that rotter at the Bird-in-Hand, or your precious uncle's squared him. He's been paid to hold his tongue, and I fancy he's being paid regularly, or he would soon open his mouth again. It was fixed up before you asked Bulkeley to chip in, you knowing jolly well that the rogue was going to take back what he'd said, and he's being paid to go away from Coombe or—"

Lattrey watched Montmorency's face intently as he spoke, fully expecting to read there some confirmation of his surmise.

If Montmorency's heart sank at finding himself read so easily and so keenly, he gave no sign of it.

Only a smile of contemptuous amusement appeared on his face.

"I'm not finished yet," said Lattrey, with an evil look in his eyes. "You may or may not happen to know that my father is a private inquiry agent—"

"I'm sure I don't care a rap!"

"I'm going to write to him," continued Lattrey. "I'm going to ask him to let me know what he can about Goby Hall, and a servant that used to be kept there, named Huggins, and whether he changed his name to Montmorency when he came into money."

Montmorency gave a slight start.

"Ah, that touches you, does it?" sneered Lattrey.

"Not at all," drawled Cecil Cuthbert. "You're quite amusing, old bean. But I'm tired of your peculiar brand of conversation. Will you get out?"

"Not yet. I—"

"You will!"

Montmorency threw the study door open, and strode towards Lattrey. A moment more, and the cad of the Fourth was grasped in a pair of hands that,

though white and exceedingly well-kept, were very powerful. There was a yell from Lattrey as he went spinning through the doorway.

Crash!

"By gad!"

Townsend and Topham were coming to the study, and they jumped back as Lattrey crashed at their feet.

Lattrey picked himself up, his eyes gleaming. For a moment he seemed about to rush furiously at the handsome, disdainful junior standing in the study doorway. But he changed his mind, and with a black brow strode away down the passage.

Towny and Topsy came into the room, and Towny coughed. Montmorency took no heed of the two nuts.

"Monty, old man—" murmured Townsend.

"Monty, old top—" breathed Topham.

"Comin' out for a stroll before tea, old fellow!"

"Do, Monty!"

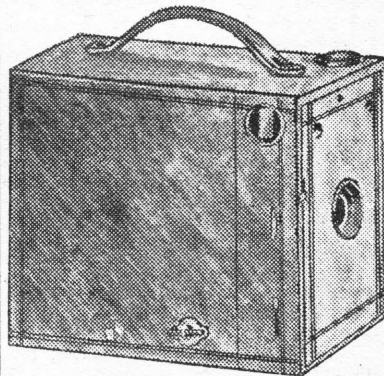
And Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency relented, and deigned to receive his nutty pals into favour again. And once more Rookwood School was treated to the gratifying sight of three elegant and lofty youths strolling arm-in-arm in the quadrangle.

But the outward serenity of Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency, the aristocratic calm which he carefully maintained in public, went no deeper than his skin. The threat of Mark Lattrey still rang in his ears, and within the skin of Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency George Huggins quaked. For one danger had only been averted to give place to another, and his footsteps were still upon slippery paths. Outwardly all was serene, but inwardly there was doubt and dark foreboding for the upstart who was living a lie.

(What is the mystery of Montmorency? You will learn this secret in next week's grand, long, complete tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood, entitled: "The Impostor's Secret!")

LOOK!

THIS TOPPING CAMERA IS ONE OF THE MANY



PRIZES OFFERED IN A SIMPLE COMPETITION IN THIS WEEK'S

MAGNET LIBRARY.

"AN EDITORIAL STUNT!"

(Continued from page 6.)

nothing of such a thing being a rotten swindle!"

"Cut it out!" "Anyhow, it's not possible!" exclaimed Frank. "Why, if the prize isn't given, you'll have your office pulled down about your ears!"

Mr. Penrose winked. "Tread soft!" he answered. "You don't tumble. There's going to be a prize-winner all O.K. Name and address in the paper next week. Letter of thanks for the thousand-dollar bill. Fixed up, you know."

"But—" stuttered Frank. "And you're the antelope."

"I!" yelled Frank Richards.

"Come off! This is business—cold business from the word go. You're my staff, ain't you? I couldn't trust any galoot outside my staff. Your name goes in as prize-winner. First opened—see? Easy as rolling off a log. After, you'll be interviewed by a crowd of galoots. You tell 'em all about the way you worked out the puzzle with a wet towel round your head, what you're going to do with the thousand-dollar bill, and so on. Catch on? Of course, there won't be any thousand-dollar bill. I guess there probably isn't one in the Thompson Valley at all. I know I've not got one, anyway. Have you?"

"Eh? Of course not."

"Well, then, don't argue. I thought I'd just mention it to you that you're going to be the prize-winner, so that you'd be up to snuff—see? That's all. Good-night!"

"But—" howled Frank Richards.

"Good-night! I've got to see a man at the Red Dog about some business. Can't wait!"

"I'm afraid the man at the Red Dog will have to wait a few minutes," said Frank Richards grimly. "I've got a few words to say. You're a swindler, Mr. Penrose!"

"Is that all?"

"You're not going to make me a party to a swindle."

"Why, I relied on you. I took it for granted!" exclaimed Mr. Penrose indignantly. "Don't you understand what business is?"

"Better than you do, I think," said Frank. "Swindling isn't business, and it does no good. But if it did I wouldn't have a hand in it. I'm going to keep an eye on this precious competition of yours, and if you try to spoof the folk, I shall show you up. Keep that in mind."

"Why, I—I—I—I!" gassed the unhappy stunt merchant. "I shall be ruined. Look here, young Richards—" "Go and eat coke!"

Frank strode out of the office and mounted his horse, which Bob was holding in readiness for him.

"Been having a row with Penrose?"

asked Bob curiously.

"Yes. Let's get off."

The three chums rode away in the darkness.

In his office Mr. Penrose sat, and gaped for breath, the most completely dismayed gentleman that could have been found just then in the whole length of the Thompson Valley.

(Another rollicking, long, complete story of Frank Richards & Co. of Cedar Creek, entitled: "A Trickster Tricked!" in next week's issue. Do not miss it!)