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INSIDE 1)

The BOYS' FRIEND

TWELVE PAGES! TWENTY-SIXTH YEAR!

No. 1,024. Vol. XXI. New Series.]

THREE HALFPENCE.

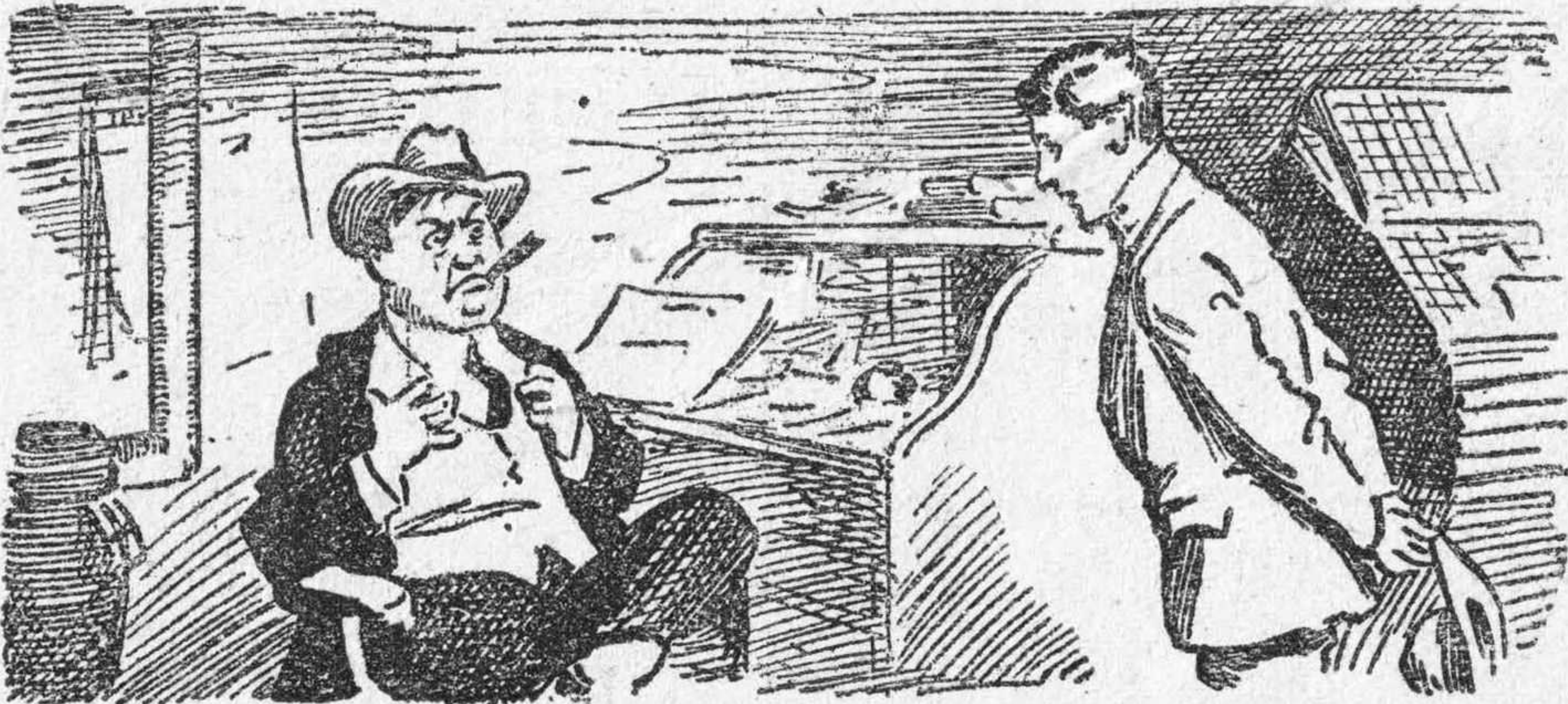
[Week Ending January 22nd, 1921.

The Wrecked Playing Field—Read "THE MINERS' ELEVEN" In This Issue!



BY AN UNKNOWN HAND!

The members of the Miners' Eleven stood aghast. What had once been their playing-field was now more like a section of a battlefield after a bombardment. "Bullford is at the bottom of this!" was the thought that instantly flashed through Jack Vernon's brain. (A thrilling incident in our grand footer yarn which starts on page 26.)



Frank Richards interviews the new proprietor of the "Thompson Press."

"That will do!" he said. "I can't write rot like that!"
 "Rot!" ejaculated Mr. Carter.
 "Yes, silly rot!" said the young author cheerfully. "Besides, it's wrong to write such stuff, decent people don't do such things! If you want sensational and unclean rubbish, you can get some boozey bouncer from the Red Dog saloon to scribble it for you! Good-morning!"
 Frank Richards walked out of the office with that, heedless of further remarks from Mr. Carter.
 Frank mounted his horse, and rode away down Main Street, with a frown on his brow. But as he came out into the trail his brow cleared, and he burst into a laugh.
 Mr. Carter was the first specimen he had met of the modern efficient young man, and he did not think much of him.
 He had very strong doubts whether that bright young man would make a success of reviving the defunct local paper. Mr. Penrose, with all his weaknesses, had given his limited public what they wanted—which is really the beginning, middle, and end of an editor's business.

Mr. Carter evidently intended to give them what he thought they wanted, or what he thought they ought to want—quite a different thing. Guided only by the light of his own genius, it was quite probable that the brisk young man would take the wrong turning.
 The schoolboy author—all school-boy now, and no author—arrived at Cedar Creek as the fellows were coming out of school, and his chums joined him at once, eager to know the result of the interview.
 "It's a wash-out!" explained Frank. "The fellow's a born idiot, and doesn't know it!"
 And he gave a description of the editorial interview.
 "Too bad!" said Bob Lawless. "Then you're not scribbling any more."
 "Not at present," said Frank, with a rather wry smile. "I'm certainly not going to try writing the muck he wants; I should be ashamed to see it in print! I'll give the typer a rest—or, rather, I'll lend it to Chunky. Why shouldn't Chunky have a chance?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I'll try again when A. B. Carter clears out," added Frank. "He won't last long, I think; he's too jolly efficient! When he's gone, perhaps some chap with more sense will come along."

Chunky Todgers came up with a reproachful look as Frank waved his hand to him.
 "Hallo, Chunky!"
 "I've been wanting to see you," said Chunky. "I want your typewriter."
 "Eh?"
 "It's no use to you now," said Chunky Todgers, blinking at him. "Now old Penrose has vamoosed you're left, ain't you? But the typer will come in useful. I want it."
 "My hat!" said Frank.
 "There's a new man in Penrose's office," continued Chunky. "Man named Carter, a fat Johnny, awfully businesslike. I called to see him yesterday, and took him a lot of my manuscripts."
 "Poor chap!" said Bob. "You might have gone a bit easier with a pilgrim and a stranger, Chunky."
 Chunky Todgers sniffed.
 "He looked at my stuff," he went on.
 "Did he have a fit?"
 "No, you ass, he didn't!" howled Chunky. "He said that only typewritten stuff could be considered. Awfully businesslike. That's how they are in the big newspaper offices, you know, East. So I want Frank's typer."
 "But I want it!" said Frank mildly.
 "It's no use to you. Carter won't look at your stuff!" said Chunky confidently. "You see, Penrose was a boozey old galoot, and didn't know how to go in when it rained. He hadn't the sense of a blind burro—that's how he came to take your stuff, you know."

"Oh, was it?" ejaculated Frank. Chunky nodded.
 "Yes, that's it. You see, you can't write. I'm sure you must remember, Richards, that I've told you a lot of times you can't write."
 "I remember," said Frank, laughing.
 "Now I can," resumed Chunky. "I'm not bragging about it, you know. Writing is a gift, and I happen to have the gift. Penrose couldn't see it. He was a real jay, you know! No sense at all. Now he's gone, and there's a new editor, now's my chance. See? I only want a typer to turn out the stuff."
 "No other qualification necessary?" asked Beaulere.
 "I've got all the other qualifications," explained Chunky. "Literary ability, a graphic style, wonderful descriptive powers, and all that. All I want now is Frank's typer. Of course, I'm going to pay for it. How much will you take for it, Frank?"
 "But if you want to buy one you

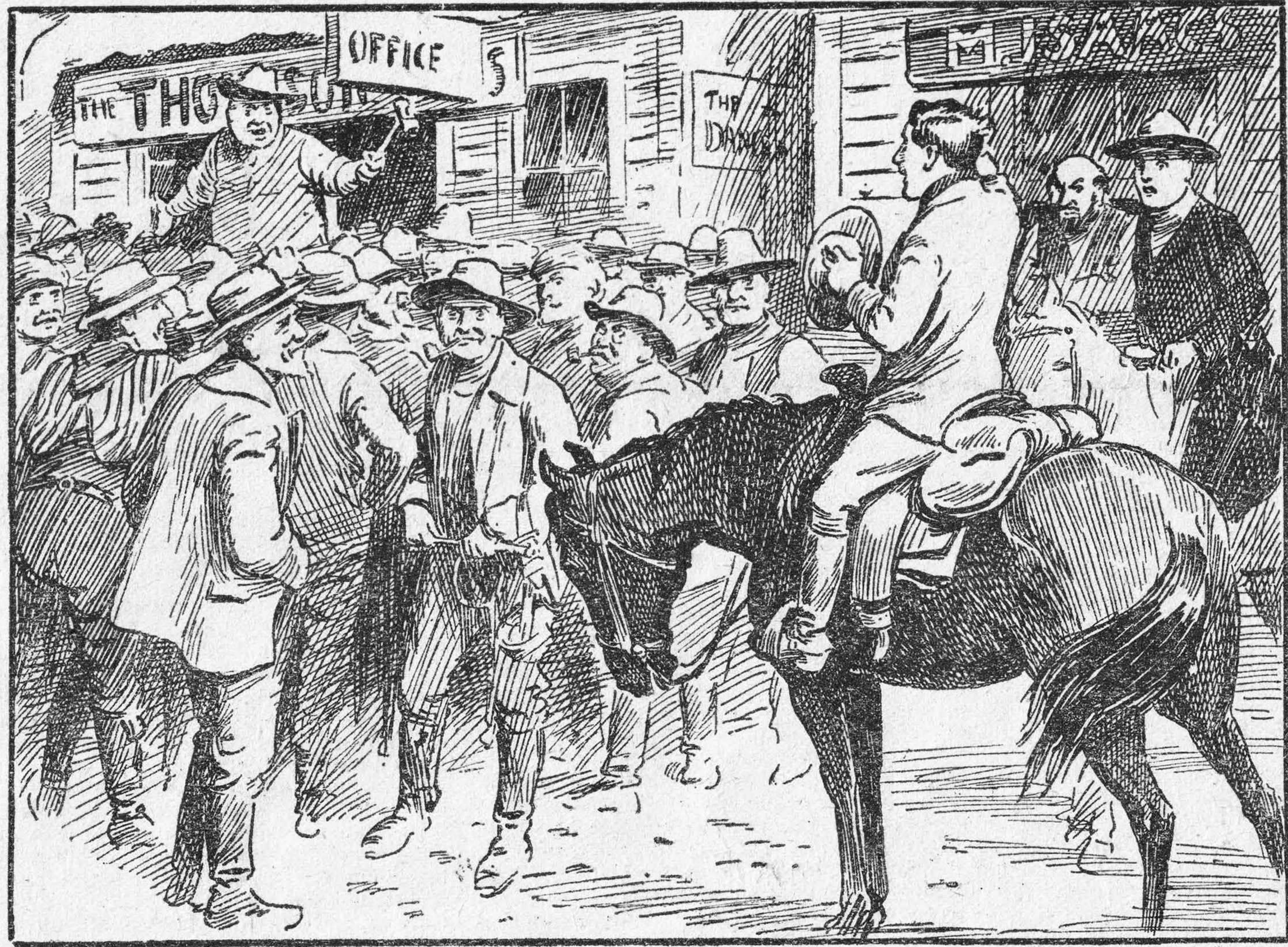
To which Chunky Todgers replied only with a sniff.
 During the next two or three days Chunky Todgers seemed to be walking on air, when Frank Richards & Co. saw him at Cedar Creek.
 Evidently Chunky was in great form and high feather. Asked how his literary work was progressing, he replied that it was top-notch, and fairly rolling off the typer in surprising quantities. On Saturday he was going to dazzle A. B. Carter with it in his office.
 But on Monday, Chunky, like Lucifer, Son of the Morning, had fallen from his high estate. He looked quite gloomy when the chums found him in the playground that day.
 "All O.K.?" asked Bob Lawless. Chunky shook a disconsolate head.
 "That fellow Carter's a fraud!" he said. "He looks business-like enough, but he's as big a jay as Penrose was."
 "How's that?"
 "Say my stuff is no good!" said Chunky warmly.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I've brought your pesky typer here, Richards; you can take it home with you!" said Chunky Todgers dispiritedly. "I'm going to treat that silly galoot Carter with contempt. I shan't take him any more stuff!"
 Whereat Frank Richards smiled, but forebore comment.

The 4th Chapter. A Very Unexpected Bargain!

"Hallo! What's on?"
 It was a Saturday, a few weeks later, and Frank Richards & Co. were riding into Thompson to visit Gunten's Store. On their way they

Carter had bought up the defunct "Press" for a mere song, intending to work it up into a big thing by sheer ability and efficiency. Something seemed to have gone wrong, somehow. Perhaps there had been too much efficiency. At all events, the circulation had gone down instead of up; all the younger generation in the valley lost their interest in the paper when the school story no longer appeared, and an exciting "feuilleton," which dealt thrillingly with murder, forgery, and divorce, had failed to fill the gap. Mr. Penrose had rubbed along somehow on a small circulation, and Mr. Carter found himself rubbing along on a still smaller one. He discovered—rather too late—that there wasn't really room for extensive newspaper expansion in the Thompson Valley. But the brisk young man had been far too efficient to look before he leaped. Hence the sale notice on the office wall, and hence Mr. Gompers Gunten, fat and florid, hammer in hand, addressing the grinning crowd.
 "In one lot, gentlemen," said Mr. Gunten. "Going—going! A very valuable lot; the only local newspaper nearer than Kamloops! First-rate printing press, stock of paper, type-case, new roll-top desk and revolving chair, office standing in its own ground, new shanty—I mean, printing-works! What offers, gentlemen—what offers?"
 "Ten cents!" came from Dry Billy Bowers, and there was a loud chortle after this humorous effort.
 "Gentlemen! Gentlemen! This splendid property—"
 "Two dollars!" called out Buster Bill.

"All serene," he answered. "You know old Isaacs; he will never let himself be beaten. He's grim death on a bargain. It's rather a joke to run him up."
 "And fifty!" called out Mr. Isaacs, with a peculiar glance at Bob Lawless.
 "Hundred and sixty!" hooted Bob.
 "Go it, young Lawless!" roared Buster Bill. "Don't let the sheeny beat you!"
 Mr. Isaacs' black eyes glittered over his prominent nose.
 "Hundred and ninety!" he rapped out.
 "Two hundred!" chuckled Bob.
 "Two hundred dollars I am offered for this handsome property!" said Mr. Gunten cheerily. "Now, gents, don't be backward in coming forward. Two hundred dollars for a property worth—"
 "Two hundred cents!" interjected Dry Billy.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Worth a thousand, if it's worth a Continental red cent!" said Mr. Gunten.
 "Then I guess it isn't worth a cent."
 "Going—going! I am offered two hundred dollars—" Mr. Gunten glanced towards Mr. Isaacs. "Did you say two fifty, Mr. Isaacs?"
 "No, I did not!" answered Mr. Isaacs sourly.
 Bob Lawless was grinning cheerily, but the grin suddenly faded off his sunburnt face.
 Mr. Gunten's eye was on him.
 "Two hundred dollars! Any advance on two hundred dollars? Going—going—gone! Young Lawless, you are the owner of this handsome property at the ridiculous price of two hundred dollars."
 "Great Jerusalem!" gasped Bob Lawless.
 He blinked at Mr. Gunten.
 That gentleman stepped down from the cask, after a rap of his hammer, his business evidently done for the day.
 Bob sat his horse as if frozen to the saddle.
 Not the remotest idea had entered his mind of becoming the purchaser of the "Thompson Press" and its printing outfit; he had been running up the bidding by way of a joke on Mr. Isaacs, who was reputed to be very close with his money. The biter had been bit, with a vengeance.
 The crowd was already dispersing, the auction being over. Mr. Gunten beckoned to the hapless purchaser.
 "Kindly step inside, Bob Lawless, and finish the transaction, will you? Spot cash."
 "But—but I—"
 Bob Lawless had, in the wide world, about thirty dollars to call his own. His face was the picture of dismay.
 Frank pressed his arm.
 "Don't worry, Bob—"
 "But—but I can't! Oh Jerusalem crickets!" gasped Bob.
 "We can stand it between us. I've got some tin in the bank, you know."
 "But—but you can't! You—you shan't—"
 "Can't be helped now," said Frank. "You've bought the dashed thing, you ass! It's got to be paid for. Mr. Gunten, we're going along to the bank. Back in ten minutes."
 "Don't be longer," said Mr. Gunten.
 "But—but, Frank, old chap," gasped Bob, "you can't waste your money—your savings—"
 "I dare say we can sell the blessed thing again for something," said Frank, as cheerfully as he could. "Anyhow, the bargain's made, and it's got to be paid for. Come on!"
 "Oh dear!" groaned Bob. His little joke on Mr. Isaacs had come home to roost in the most unpleasant way.
 But there was no help for it now. Frank Richards drew the required sum from the Thompson Bank, and the chums returned to the "Press" office. There the money was paid over, and the "splendid property" assigned to three partners—Frank Richards, Vere Beaulere, and Bob Lawless. Mr. A. B. Carter gladly pocketed the two hundred dollars, and shook the dust of the Thompson Valley from his feet, doubtless seeking some wider sphere where there would be more room for his genius and efficiency. Mr. Gunten, having pocketed his fee, rolled back to his store quite satisfied.
 And the chums of Cedar Creek—newspaper proprietors now—sat in the deserted office, and stared at one another!



GOING, GOING, GONE! "Here you are, Bob Lawless!" shouted Mr. Gunten. "The 'Thompson Press' is now yours at the small price of two hundred dollars!" "Great Jerusalem!" gasped Bob. His little joke in running Mr. Isaacs up in the bidding had come home to roost!

can order one to be sent from Kamloops," said Frank.
 "Nunno! You see, they wouldn't wait for the money until I'm paid for my literary work."
 "Oh, my only hat! Am I to do that?"
 "Yep! You won't have to wait long. Carter will simply jump at my stuff—"
 "How do you know?"
 "Oh, he's the real goods, you know!"
 "Ha, ha! Well, I'll lend you the typer, Chunky!"
 "Good man!" said Chunky. "I'm sorry for you, Richards—real sorry; but I always told you you couldn't write, didn't I? You couldn't expect anybody but old Penrose to print your stuff! Too weak, you know—too rotten, if you don't mind my being candid!"
 "Not at all," said Frank.
 "Mere trash, then, since you ask my opinion!" said the candid Chunky.
 "Not at all like I should write!"
 "That's true, I hope," said Frank.
 "I'll ride home with you to-night, and carry off the typer," said Chunky. "I'll begin at once; and I've precious little doubt that Carter will jump at my stuff!"
 "I believe he's almost idiot enough for even that!" assented Frank.

had to pass the office of the "Thompson Press," and they drew in their horses as they saw a crowd gathered before the building.
 "Something's on!" remarked Beaulere. "That's Old Man Gunten on the tub."
 "By gum! An auction!" exclaimed Bob.
 The chums of Cedar Creek halted. The fat and oily Mr. Gunten, of Gunten's Store, was mounted on a cask outside the newspaper office, with a hammer in his hand, evidently acting as auctioneer. Most of the Thompson citizens who had gathered round were grinning. On the wall of the office, by the door, was pasted a large notice, announcing that the office, its contents, the paper, and the "goodwill" were for sale that Saturday morning, in one "lot."
 "Carter hasn't had a very long run," said Bob Lawless, laughing. "He hasn't stuck it out so long as Penrose did."
 Evidently, Mr. Carter's career as editor in the Thompson Valley had come to a termination. Mr. A. B. Carter could be seen at the office window, but he did not look so spruce and self-satisfied as on the occasion of Frank's interview with him. This morning his sharp countenance had a gloomy cast. Mr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Three dollars!"
 "And ten cents!"
 "Have your little joke, gentlemen," said Mr. Gunten. "The reserve price, I don't mind telling you, is one hundred dollars. Now, then, what offers?"
 "My hat!" murmured Frank Richards. "If it goes for a hundred dollars, it's cheap enough, you fellows. But I suppose nobody in Thompson wants to try his hand at running a newspaper."
 "Hundred and five!" came from Mr. Isaacs, leaning from his office window a few doors up the street.
 "Hundred and five I am offered!" said Mr. Gunten. "What improvement on a hundred and five dollars, gentlemen, for this splendid property?"
 "Hundred and six!" called out Bob Lawless.
 Mr. Gunten glanced at him and nodded.
 "Hundred and six dollars I am offered—"
 "And ten!" came from Mr. Isaacs.
 "Hundred and twenty!" chirruped Bob.
 "Bob, you ass!" murmured Frank. "You'll get it knocked down to you if you don't look out!"
 Bob Lawless grinned.

THE END.

("The Schoolboy Editor" is a fine, long, complete tale of Frank Richards & Co. You must read it in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND.)