

THE CEDAR CREEK DETECTIVE!



An Amusing Story dealing with Frank Richards' Schooldays at the Backwoods School in British Columbia.—By Martin Clifford.

THE FIRST CHAPTER Foxy Ferrett's Rival!

"WELL!" Frank Richards and his chums, Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc, asked that question together.

They were surprised.

The three chums had come upon Chunky Todgers in a corner of the playground at Cedar Creek School, in British Columbia, after morning lessons.

A big cedar-tree grew in that corner, and under the shade of the cedar sat Master Todgers, who was both fat and fatuous, with a book in his hand.

Chunky Todgers had been reading, devouring the volume with glued eyes, which was proof enough that it was one of the most thrilling volumes from Gunten's Circulating Library, in Thompson Town.

But as the Co. came strolling along, Chunky looked up from his book, and fixed his eyes upon them with an intent gaze.

He did not speak. He simply eyed the three chums, staring at them with a watch-

ful intentness that was rather surprising. Frank and Bob and Beauclerc stopped, and returned Chunky's gaze, wondering what was the cause of that fixed and searching stare.

"Well?" they repeated interrogatively.

But Chunky didn't answer. He only gazed.

"What's biting you now, Fatty?" inquired Bob Lawless.

"Eh?"

"Why are you blinking like a blessed gargoye?" asked Frank Richards. "Is anything the matter?"

"Eh? No!"

"Then what—" began Beauclerc.

"I think I can do it all right," said Chunky Todgers, evidently following out a train of thought, though what that train of thought was was hidden in the depths of his powerful brain.

"Can you?" queried Bob Lawless. "And what can you do? Not your lessons. Miss Meadows seemed to think that you couldn't this morning."

Snort from Chunky Todgers.

"Blow lessons!" he answered. "I say, I think I can manage it all right; in fact, Foxy Ferrett is a fool to me."

"Who? Which?"

"Foxy Ferrett, the galoot I've been reading about in this book," said Chunky Todgers, tapping the volume on his knee with a fat finger. "I wonder I never thought of it before. It's really a gift, and there's no doubt I've got the gift."

Frank Richards & Co. grinned. They did not know what Chunky was driving at yet, but evidently a new stunt was developing in his fertile fat brain.

"What's the book?" asked Beauclerc.

"It's one of the latest volumes at Gunten's," explained Chunky Todgers. "Almost new, from Chicago, you know. It's called 'Foxy Ferrett: Detective.' Jolly interesting, I can tell you! The way Foxy Ferrett bowled out Colonel Blood, who murdered the millionaire by putting flypapers into his cigar-case, was wonderful—really wonderful, you know. But I think I could have done it."

"Quite as much as Foxy Ferrett could, I have no doubt," chuckled Frank Richards.

"It's queer," continued Chunky, "that it never occurred to me before, especially as I can see now that I've got the gift!"

"Your stunts never do occur to you till you've read some silly rot in a two-dollar shocker!" remarked Bob Lawless.

"Of course, a galoot don't have much chance here," observed Chunky Todgers, unheeding. "Nobody ever commits a mysterious crime in the Thompson Valley. Even the rowdies at the Red Dog Saloon only kick up a row every now and then, and the sheriff's man runs them into the calaboose. No tracking out required, no sifting of mysterious clues. Still, when a fellow has the gift——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cut the cackle!" said Chunky crossly. "Look here, I guess I'm giving you straight goods. I can work the rifle, just like Foxy Ferrett in the novel, you know. It only needs a cool head, a clear judgment, a calm and penetrating intellect,

an eagle eye that nothing escapes—well, that's me all over!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"If you like, I'll give you a sample," said Chunky carelessly. "That's what I was looking at you for. I was sizing you up."

"Sizing us up!" repeated Frank.

"That's it. Foxy Ferrett used to fix his cool, glittering eye on a galoot and size him up. Then he knew. I guess I could tell you something that would surprise you, Richards."

"Go ahead!"

"F'rinstance," said Chunky, fixing his round eyes on Frank, apparently in imitation of Mr. Ferrett's cool, glittering glance, "I can read clues about you, same as Ferrett in the story. I'll tell you what you've done this morning. You didn't come straight to school from the ranch by the timber trail."

"Didn't I?" ejaculated Frank.

"Surprised you, what?" chuckled Todgers.

"Yes, rather. How can you tell that I didn't come straight to school?" asked Frank, with interest.

Chunky smiled in a very lofty way. It was agreeable to the fat youth to make a surprising impression like this.

"Of course, you wouldn't know how I did it," he said. "You see, it's a gift—the detective instinct. I've got it, and you haven't—that's the difference. But I don't mind explaining. Foxy Ferrett always explains in the last chapter."

"Then suppose we're in his last chapter, and explain," said Bob Lawless, with a chuckle.

"I don't mind. Instead of coming straight to school, Franky, you rode round to the Beauclercs' cabin——"

"Did I?"

"You did, to call for the Cherub. I'll tell you the clues I've worked on," said Todgers. "You've got a daub of mud on your boot!"

Frank glanced down.

"That's right," he assented.

"There's no mud in the playground here,

and none on the timber trail. It's as hard as flint to-day. But Beau's cabin is on the creek, and there's plenty of mud there. So I deduce that you rode round by the Cherub's place to call for him, and dismounted there. See?"

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Frank Richards.

Chunky waved a fat hand.

"Nothing to what I could do," he replied.

"But there's a slight error in your theory, Chunky."

"I'd like to know what it is," said Chunky disdainfully.

"You see, I didn't ride round by Beau's cabin this morning," explained Frank Richards.

"Eh?"

"I came straight to school, and Beau met us on the trail, at the fork, as usual."

"Oh!"

"And this mud on my boot is left from yesterday, because I forgot to brush it off."

"Ah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Lawless. "Try again, Mr. Detective!"

"I—I—" stammered Chunky.

The amateur detective of Cedar Creek looked quite crestfallen. Frank Richards & Co. strolled on, laughing, and Chunky Todgers returned to his book. Evidently he required to study the methods of Mr. Ferrett a little more thoroughly before he started out to emulate that wonderful gentleman.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

The Detective at Work I

"DEAR me!" said Miss Meadows.

The schoolmistress of Cedar Creek was looking over her desk with a frown of annoyance.

Afternoon lessons were going on in the big school-room, with the three classes of Miss Meadows, Mr. Slimmey, and Mr. Shepherd. The lesson for Miss Meadows' class was geography. The recent gold discoveries on

the Yukon River had been heard of in the Thompson Valley, as in every other part of Canada, and Miss Meadows was giving instruction on the Yukon district with the aid of a large wall-map. For once the Cedar Creek fellows were quite interested in their geography lesson. They were quite keen on learning about the frozen Yukon, and the Klondyke River, and Dawson City, and the gold belt that stretched from the extreme north-west of British Columbia



Chunky Todgers came back to Miss Meadows with the missing pointer, a fat smile on his face. "Here it is, ma'am!" (See Chapter 2.)

across the border into the American territory of Alaska.

Instructing by means of a wall-map required a pointer, and the pointer was missing from Miss Meadows' desk.

If Miss Meadows' pointer had been used only to point out places of interest on maps, probably it would never have been missing. But it was sometimes used to rap the

knuckles of inattentive pupils, gently but effectively, especially the fat knuckles of Chunky Todgers, whose wonderful abilities never showed to advantage in his lessons.

For that reason Miss Meadows' pointer was sometimes missing from its place. So it was on the present occasion.

Miss Meadows looked on the desk, and under the desk, and on the pine-plank floor round the desk. But the pointer was conspicuous only by its absence.

"Dear me!" repeated the schoolmistress of Cedar Creek. "My pointer is not here. Has anyone seen my pointer?"

There was no reply from the class, but there were smiles. Miss Meadows did not seem to guess that nefarious hands had been laid on the pointer, but some of her pupils did.

Bob Lawless nudged Chunky.

"Chance for you, old man!" he whispered.

"Eh?"

"This is where you put in your Ferrett stunt. The Mystery of the Missing Pointer, you know."

Frank and Beauclerc chuckled.

"Blow the pointer!" said Chunky Todgers. "I jolly well hope she won't find it. I don't like that pointer."

"Go it, Chunky!" murmured Frank Richards. "Can't you deduce from the shape of the desk, or the colour of the map, who it was that bagged the pointer?"

Chunky grunted.

"I dare say I could——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence in class!" exclaimed Miss Meadows sharply. "If anyone has taken my pointer——"

Chunky Todgers jumped up, with a defiant look at Frank Richards & Co. Chunky had taken the hint, and he was going to display his prowess as a detective.

"Please, Miss Meadows——"

"Do you know where the pointer is, Todgers?"

"I think I could find it, ma'am."

"Kindly do so at once, then."

"Certainly, ma'am."

Chunky Todgers left his place in class,

with the eyes of the fellows upon him.

"The silly ass!" murmured Frank. "How does he think he is going to find it?"

"Watch him!" grinned Bob.

Chunky Todgers was worth watching. He approached the schoolmistress' desk in the manner of Mr. Ferrett approaching the scene of a crime. He blinked over it with what he apparently intended for a searching, penetrating gaze. Then he wrinkled his fat brows in a very thoughtful manner.

Miss Meadows, being quite unconscious of the fact that Master Joseph Todgers was an amateur detective, gazed at him in surprise and annoyance.

"What are you doing, Todgers?" she exclaimed.

"Looking for the pointer, ma'am."

"It is not on the desk."

"I'm finding a clue."

"A what?"

"A clue, ma'am."

"Whatever do you mean, Todgers?"

Chunky was not at all loath to explain.

"You see, ma'am, I've discovered that I've got a lot of ability as a detective——"

"A—a—a detective!" ejaculated Miss Meadows faintly.

"That's it. I'm going to discover where the pointer is and——"

"Don't be ridiculous, Todgers!"

"Eh?"

"You may go back to your place."

"But I can find the pointer, ma'am."

"Find it at once, then, and do not be silly!" said Miss Meadows crossly.

Chunky had failed to impress the headmistress of Cedar Creek, that was clear.

But he was not dismayed. All eyes in the class were upon him, and the boys and girls were smiling.

To the surprise of the class, however, Chunky's words did not prove to be vain. He left the desk, and moved slowly towards the big stove where the logs burned on cold days. The class watched him as he rummaged behind the stove, and there was general astonishment as he rose, with the pointer in his hand.

He came back to Miss Meadows with a fat smirk.

"Here it is, ma'am!"

"Thank you, Todgers!"

Chunky Todgers went back to his place, still smirking. Frank Richards & Co. eyed him as he sat down.

"How did you——" began Frank.

"My ability, you know. I'm a born detective!"

"Rats!"

"Look here, Richards——"

"Silence! Keep your eyes on the map, please. Now, here is the course of the Yukon River——"

And attention had to be given to the Arctic geography of the Klondyke region.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Not Very Surprising!

"I GUESS you fellows were surprised."

Thus spoke Joseph Todgers as the Cedar Creek fellows came out of the lumber school-house after lessons.

Joseph Todgers was looking and feeling well satisfied with himself.

It was only that day that he had made his claim to be a wonderful amateur detective, in the style of Foxy Ferrett, of the two-dollar novel, and chance had already enabled him to surprise the doubting Thomases. Frank Richards & Co. could not help feeling puzzled.

"But how did you find the dashed pointer, Chunky?" Frank Richards demanded.

Chunky smiled.

"You see, I found clues, and deduced the facts from the clues, and found the missing article. Simple as A B C to a fellow like me," he explained.

Some of the Cedar Creek fellows gathered round to hear Chunky explain. Chunky smirked with satisfaction to find that he had an audience.

"And what were the clues?" asked Bob.

Chunky reflected.

"I don't mind explaining," he said loftily. "I'm glad of the chance to convince you fellows of my abilities. The fact is, I'm thinking of setting up in business as a detective."

"Eh?"

"They never commit any crimes in the Thompson Valley, worse luck!" said Chunky. "I shall never have a chance with a mysterious murder. Now, over the border, in the States, it's different. I should have a chance there. Still, a fellow must do what he can. Farmers miss a steer sometimes, and galoots bag the fruit in the orchards in the summer, and there's been pilferings at the places on the creeks. I dare say I shall get a lot of cases—small cases, you know. My idea is to have a standing advertisement in the 'Thompson Press.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Advertisements have to be paid for!" remarked Bob.

"That's all right. Richards can advance the money——"

"Can I?" ejaculated Frank.

"Sure! You've got money in the bank, and it couldn't be used for a more useful purpose. Now I've proved that I'm a really clever detective, I suppose you won't object to financing me?" exclaimed Chunky warmly.

"Financing you! Oh, my hat!"

"But we haven't heard the history of the mystery yet," said Beauclerc. "How did you find a clue to the missing pointer, Chunky?"

"Well, you—you see——"

"We don't see! Explain."

"I—I found a clue, you know." Chunky seemed to hesitate a little. "A—a spot of soot on the desk——"

"What did that imply?"

"My dear chap, that was enough for a detective. Soot came from the stove. Therefore, the chap who had taken the pointer had hidden it near the stove. See?"

"I don't quite see," answered Frank Richards. "If he took the pointer from the desk to the stove, he would be at the desk first, and at the stove second, and so he couldn't leave a spot of soot on the desk."

"Well, he—he did, you know, and that put me on the scent."

"Bow-wow!"

"Well, I found the pointer, didn't I?" demanded Chunky.

"Yes, and I'm blessed if I know how——"

"Me know!" murmured the soft voice of Yen Chin, the Chinese.

"Hallo! What do you know about it, heathen?" asked Bob Lawless.

"Me watchee fat Chunkee hidee pointee!"

"What?" yelled the schoolboys.

Chunky Todgers crimsoned.

"I—I say, the heathen doesn't know anything about it!" he exclaimed hastily.

"You shut up, Yen Chin!"

"Me knowee——"

"Shut up, I tell you, you pesky heathen!"

"Let Yen Chin alone!" exclaimed Bob.

"Now, then, heathen, you tell us. You watched Chunky——"

"Before dinnee," said Yen Chin, grinning. "Me see fat Chunkee sneakee into school-loom, and hidee pointee behind stovee. Chunkee finde because Chunkee hidee!"

"I—I——" stammered Chunky Todgers, quite taken aback.

"You fat fraud!" roared Bob Lawless, in great wrath. "You found the pointer behind the stove because you'd hidden it there yourself."

"I—I——"

Chunky Todgers' crimson face was as good as a confession.

Evidently he had been unaware that any eyes had been upon him when he was hiding the schoolmistress' pointer.

The mystery was quite explained now. It was only an exemplification of the proverb that those who hide can find!

"You blessed fraud!" exclaimed Frank Richards, in great disgust. "And you were making out that you'd found a clue!"

"I—I guess——"

"You've been telling whoppers all——"

"I—I meant if—if there had been a clue, I—I should have found it——"

"Roll him over!"

"Yaroooooh!"

Chunky Todgers went rolling in the playground as a reward for his unvaracity, and Frank Richards & Co. walked away to the corral. They had been surprised by

Chunky's success in finding the missing article; but they were not surprised by the explanation. It was just like Chunky!

But as the chums of Cedar Creek came out at the gates, Chunky Todgers met them again.

"I say, Franky——"

"Shurrup!"

"The advertisement ought to be taken in to-day, if Penrose is going to print it this week——"

"What advertisement, ass?"

"Mine, you know—about my detective work——"

"You silly chump!" exclaimed Frank Richards.

"I hope you're not going to be mean, Richards. You've got money in the bank—you know you have——"

"And I know it's going to stay there," said Frank, laughing.

And he rode out on the trail, leaving Chunky Todgers' further remarks to be addressed to the pine-trees.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

A Very Lucky Detective!

"WHAT's the matter, Molly?" Frank Richards came upon Molly Lawrence in the playground a couple of days later, looking very dismayed and distressed. Her brother Tom was trying to comfort her, in a brotherly way, with the remark:

"Well, it can't be helped, old girl!" A remark from which Molly did not seem to derive much comfort.

"Anything up?" queried Bob Lawless.

"It's my watch!" explained Molly.

"The watch my uncle sent me from Montreal on my birthday. I've lost it!"

"Oh, that's too bad!" exclaimed Beaulclerc.

"Let's all search for it," suggested Frank Richards. "Got any idea where you lost it, Molly?"

Molly shook her head dolefully.

"I wore it on my wrist, you know, and the strap became unfastened. I missed it when I got home yesterday. Nobody has seen it about the school anywhere. I may

have dropped it riding, or along the creek somewhere."

Frank whistled.

"That's rather a big order," he remarked. "Along the creek, most likely, as it's grassy. You might have heard it if it had fallen on the trail."

"We've hunted along the creek," said Tom Lawrence. "I keep on telling Molly that it can't be helped."

"But I want my watch!" said Molly.

Tom made a grimace, as who should say: "Isn't that like a girl?"

"I say, here's a chance for Chunky Todgers, detective!" remarked Eben Hacke, with a grin.

"Chunky hasn't hidden it this time, so he couldn't find it!" said Bob Lawless.

"Hallo! What's that?" Chunky Todgers rolled up to the interested group surrounding Miss Lawrence. "Something lost?"

"My watch," said Molly.

"I'm your man!" announced Todgers.

"Now, then, you give me some details——"

"Don't be an ass, Chunky," advised Bob Lawless.

"You dry up, Bob! This is my business! I want a few details——"

"A few what?" asked Molly, puzzled.



"What time did you miss the watch, Molly?" asked Chunky, taking out a little notebook and pencil. The chums stood by grinning. (See Chapter 4.)

"Foxy Ferrett always asks for the details first, you know. Then he looks for clues," explained Chunky Todgers. "You rely on me to find your watch, Molly! I'm your mutton, with the wool on."

"Stuff!" said Molly.

Chunky Todgers looked reproachful. This was really quite ungrateful on the part of the young lady, when Todgers was prepared to place his vast abilities at her service without demanding fee or reward.

"Oh, give Chunky a chance," said Tom

Lawrence, grinning. "He may as well look for it. The exercise will do him good, at any rate."

"I'll guarantee to find it, if it's still in existence," said Chunky. "With my methods, failure is impossible."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You give me some details, Molly, and leave it to me," said Chunky encouragingly. "When did you miss the watch?"

"Yesterday."

"What time?" asked Chunky, taking out a little notebook, which he had apparently laid in, at a cost of fifty cents, for his detective work. He moistened a stump of pencil with his lips.

"When I got home!"

"Sure you brought it to school with you yesterday?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Then you must have lost it while you were away from home," said Chunky Todgers, in a thoughtful way.

"I knew that already, silly!"

Chunky frowned. Foxy Ferrett's clients did not address him as "silly." But Chunky had his reputation yet to make.

"Did you hear it fall when it dropped off your wrist?" he inquired.

"If I had I should have picked it up."

"Answer the question," said Chunky severely. "No beating about the bush. Did you hear it fall?"

"No."

"Then it must have fallen on something soft."

"Did it fall on your head, by any chance, Chunky?" inquired Bob Lawless.

Chunky did not heed that frivolous question. His fat forehead was wrinkled in a frown of almost terrific thoughtfulness.

"I guess it didn't fall on the trail. You would have heard it drop," he said. "It fell on soft grass, I should say."

"Just what Frank has just said," answered Bob Lawless. "Why, you fat jay, you heard him—"

"Don't interrupt, Bob Lawless! This is a serious matter. You went along the creek yesterday, Molly?"

"Oh, yes!"

"You didn't notice——"

"I didn't notice anything," said Molly crossly. "And I haven't time to keep on talking nonsense! I'm going to look for my watch!"

And she went.

Most of the Cedar Creek fellows went to help, and there was a great going to and fro, and searching and hunting, in the school grounds. But Chunky Todgers caught Frank Richards by the sleeve.

"I say, Franky——"

"Let go! I'm going to help Molly find her——"

"The case is in my hands," said Chunky loftily. "Look here, Richards! I'm going to find that watch. I've got several clues already, and——"

"What are they, fathead?"

"You wouldn't understand. But I say, if I discover the missing watch, will you pay for my advertisement in the 'Thompson Press'?"

Frank Richards laughed.

"Certainly!" he answered.

"That's a cinch?" asked Chunky.

"Yes."

Frank Richards jerked himself away and hurried off to help his chums in searching the school grounds. Chunky Todgers did not join them. He remained for some time in thought, and then strolled out of the gates.

As a matter of absolute fact, Chunky's mind was a beautiful blank on the subject. He had not even the faintest idea of what might possibly have become of the watch. He rolled along the creek, keeping his eyes well about him on the grass and thickets. It was as likely as not that the watch had fallen there, and the fact that Tom Lawrence had searched did not amount to much, for in the grasses and herbage any number of watches might have defied search. Even the ticking was not a guide, for no doubt the watch was run down.

Chunky was thinking it over as he rolled along by the shining creek, but, although he did not confess it to himself, he had no idea of being able to find the watch. He

hugged the delusion that a clue would crop up in his mind and put him on the track.

Suddenly, however, his thoughts were taken from the subject of the missing watch. On the other side of the creek three fellows came in sight—Dickie Bird, Blumpy, and Fisher, of Hillcrest School.

Chunky was glad they were on the other side of the creek. He did not want to be rolled in the grass by the playful Hillcresters.

"Hallo, Fat Jack!" bawled Blumpy, across the stream.

"When are they going to melt you down for tallow?" Dickie Bird wanted to know.

Safe in the knowledge that the stream flowed between, Chunky Todgers snapped his fat fingers scornfully at the Hillcrest fellows.

Whiz!

A soft turf came whizzing across the creek, and it smote Chunky Todgers on his plump chest unexpectedly.

Bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dickie Bird & Co. roared as Chunky Todgers sat down on the bank. He did not remain sitting. The grassy bank sloped into the wood at this point, and Chunky rolled down the slope.

"Oh! Ow! Yow! Ooooooh!" gasped Todgers as he rolled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ooooooop!"

Chunky stopped at last, having rolled into the thicket. He sat up, gasping, and groped round him for some missile to hurl at the yelling Hillcresters on the other side of the creek. His fat hand closed on a hard object in the grass, and he grasped it, for the moment taking it for a stone. He jumped up and raised his hand, but he did not hurl the missile. Stone-throwing was rather too mean in return for a practical joke, and Chunky paused, and shouted "Yah!" instead.

Dickie Bird & Co. walked on their way along the creek, laughing. Chunky Todgers shouted "Yah!" again with lofty defiance, and then—

Then he realised that what he held in

his hand was not a stone. It was much too smooth for a stone.

He opened his fat hand and looked.

"The—the watch!"

Chunky Todgers fairly stuttered.

In his fat palm reposed a pretty little silver watch!

By the sheerest, blindest chance Chunky Todgers had found the missing article!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

Chunky's Triumph!

"THE—the watch!"

Chunky blinked at it.

It was Molly Lawrence's little watch; there was no doubt about that. He knew it well enough by sight.

"By gum!" stuttered Chunky. "I—I—I've found it! If those Hillcrest galoots hadn't pitched that turf at me I'd never have found it."

That was Chunky's first reflection, but it vanished from his fat mind at once.

"I've found it! I told them I would, and I've done it! I wonder what they'll say now!"

That was Chunky's second reflection.

It is said that second thoughts are best, but in this case it was probable that Joseph Todgers' second thoughts would lead him from the straight and narrow path of truthfulness.

There was a grin on his fat face as he turned his steps in the direction of Cedar Creek.

Chunky had started out to find the watch, and he had found it, and he was going to claim the credit thereof. Even Bob Lawless would not be able to deny now that Chunky Todgers shared the marvellous gifts of Foxy Ferrett, the detective!

There was still a search going on in the playground when Chunky Todgers came in at the gates.

"Molly!" called out Todgers.

"Hallo! Had any luck, Chunky?" chuckled Bob Lawless.

"Luck!" repeated Todgers. "Oh, no! Luck isn't what a detective wants. He has to use cool, penetrating brain-power—"

"Fathead!"

"Here's your watch, Molly," said Chunky Todgers coolly.

"Wha-at?"

"You've found it!" yelled Bob.

Chunky Todgers held up the silver watch, which glistened in the sunshine.

Molly Lawrence ran up breathlessly.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "That is it! Where did you find it, Chunky? How did you find it? I'm so glad!"

"Well, Jerusalem crickets!" ejaculated Bob Lawless blankly.

Molly thanked the fat and smiling Chunky warmly as she took the watch and fastened it on her wrist.

"How did you find it, Fatty?" asked Dick Dawson.

"Just happened on it?" inquired Frank Richards.

Chunky sniffed.

"Happened on it!" he repeated scornfully. "I found it because—because I'd taken up the case as a detective, you know, and I was bound to find it with my vast abilities."

"Cheese it!"

"There's the watch!" howled Chunky indignantly.

"I guess it was lying on the grass," said Bob.

"It wasn't, for I've looked all along the creek for it. It was jolly well out of sight somewhere," said Lawrence. "I'm blessed if I know how Todgers found it."

Chunky beamed again.

"Well, how did you spot it, Chunky?" asked Frank.

"I tracked it out."

"How?"

"Following up a clue, you know."

"But what was the clue?"

"You wouldn't understand," said Chunky Todgers loftily. "You see, you haven't the brain for it. Your brains are a bit different from mine, Frank Richards."

"I hope so," said Frank, laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I tracked down the missing watch," said Chunky Todgers, disdainfully. "You fellows all hunted where it wasn't; I just noseyed along to where it was, and

bagged it. Facts speak for themselves, you know. The fact is that I'm a born detective, and Foxy Ferrett was a fool to me." By this time Joseph Todgers almost believed that he had found the watch by some transcendent exercise of his own wonderful abilities. "I'm going to start as a detective——"

"My hat!"

"And take up cases," said Chunky. "What I've done once I can do again. If it's a success, I shall leave school and make a regular business of it. You watch out!"

"Well, you're a very clever boy for finding my watch," said Molly Lawrence, "and I'm ever so much obliged, Chunky."

"Not at all," said Chunky, with a wave of his fat hand. "Any time you lose anything you come to me! I'm your antelope! I only wish somebody would commit a murder somewhere! I'd jolly soon nail the villain, I can tell you! But we never get any murders in the Thompson Valley!" said Chunky sadly. "If a chap was over the border, in the States, he would have a chance. I may set up in Chicago later. I say, Franky, you can ride with me to Thompson after school."

"What for?"

"To put the advertisement in the 'Press.'"

Frank Richards laughed.

"A bargain's a bargain, old chap," he said, "but hadn't you better have some maple sugar instead?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Chunky Todgers did not deign to reply to that question. And after lessons that day Frank Richards called at Mr. Penrose's office with Chunky, and the advertisement was duly inserted. Mr. Penrose received all sorts and conditions of advertisements for his paper, but Chunky's advertisement seemed to give him a surprise. However, the dollar fee was forthcoming, and the advertisement was booked. As the two schoolboys left the office, Mr. Penrose doubled up over his type-case, apparently in a state of great merriment.

Apparently he saw something comic in

Chunky Todgers, detective! Frank Richards was grinning, too. But Master Todgers was quite serious.

"You think it's funny!" he snapped, as they came out.

"Well, a little," admitted Frank.

Chunky sniffed.

"You watch out!" he said.

And with that Chunky trotted off on his fat pony. There was no doubt that Frank Richards & Co. would "watch out." They were keenly interested in the progress of Chunky Todgers' remarkable new stunt!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

Chunky Starts!

"It's out!"

Chunky Todgers met Frank Richards & Co. as they arrived at Cedar Creek School one sunny morning with that announcement. There was a beaming smile on Chunky's fat face, and he held up a paper in his podgy hand—the latest number of the "Thompson Press."

"What's out?" inquired Frank Richards.

"My advertisement!" said Chunky Todgers loftily.

"Oh!" ejaculated the three chums.

Important as that advertisement was to Master Joseph Todgers, it had been quite forgotten by Frank Richards & Co. Now, as Chunky held up the paper for inspection, they chuckled.

The advertisement was really striking. Mr. Penrose had put it quite prominently in the "Thompson Press," perhaps looking upon it as a good joke. It ran, in evident imitation of advertisements Chunky had seen in newspapers from Chicago:

"THE DETECTIVE YOU WANT!

TODGERS!

DO YOU WANT ANYBODY WATCHED?

**LOST YOUR WATCH? LOST YOUR
BONDS? LOST YOUR PET RABBIT?**

CALL ON TODGERS!

TODGERS DELIVERS THE GOODS!

**Any Kind of Detective Business Taken Up
and Put Through.**

Write to Todgers, or Look In.

TODGERS, CEDAR CREEK SCHOOL."



In his fat palm reposed a pretty little silver watch! By the sheerest, blindest chance Chunky Todgers had found the missing article! (See Chapter 4.)

Frank Richards & Co. chuckled loud and long. How Chunky could possibly expect anybody to come to a school for a detective was a mystery to them. Any citizen of the Thompson Valley who happened to want a detective was not likely to look for one in Miss Meadows' class at Cedar Creek. But that obvious fact seemed to be lost on Joseph Todgers.

"What are you cackling at, you silly jays?" Chunky demanded warmly. "Isn't that a jolly good advertisement?"

"Oh, ripping!" said Frank, laughing.

"Doesn't it touch the spot?" demanded Chunky.

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

"Ha, ha, ha! Fancy Chunky watching anybody when he can be seen a mile off! You're rather too fat for a shadower, Chunky. You're more substance than shadow."

"You watch out!" said Chunky disdainfully. "You wait till I get my chance. There may be a robbery at the bank in Thompson, or the Red Dog crowd may go on the rampage and shoot somebody; then you'll see me made in and nail the man. You watch out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess I'm expecting some answers to this advertisement. I'll take up any case to begin. Of course, I can't expect a murder to happen around here just to please me."

"Nunno! That would be expecting a lot," chuckled Frank Richards.

"I—I suppose you fellows haven't missed anything lately?" asked Chunky.

"Missed anything?"

"Yes. I guess I'll undertake to find any lost property for you—at the usual fees."

"The usual fees!" grinned Bob Lawless.

"What are they?"

"Ten dollars and expenses. But I'll do it cheaper for personal friends. If you fellows have missed anything, I'll take on the case, and charge you only half fees. There!"

"You're too generous, Chunky," said Frank Richards, as seriously as he could.

"The fact is, I mean to be generous,"

said Chunky Todgers. "Besides, I want to show what I can do. Now, is there anything doing? Have you fellows missed anything?"

Frank Richards closed one eye at his comrades.

"Well, I missed something yesterday," he said slowly.

Chunky's eyes glistened.

He jerked out a notebook and a stump of pencil, being already provided with those indispensable adjuncts of a detective.

"I'm your man!" he said briskly. "Let's have the details. You missed something yesterday?"

"Yes."

"Where, and when?" asked Chunky, in the brisk, snappy manner that was Foxy Ferrett to the life.

"After I got home yesterday," said Frank.

"What time?"

"About six."

"Where did it happen?"

"About a hundred yards from the ranch-house, on the prairie."

"What did you miss—some property?"

"Yes; not mine. It belongs to Mr. Lawless, my uncle."

"That's all right. I'll find it for him," said Chunky Todgers. "Now, give me an exact description of the article missed."

"It was round," said Frank Richards gravely, while his comrades chuckled. "About eighteen inches in circumference."

"Yes?"

"Marked with painted circles."

"What on earth was it, then?"

"A target."

"A—a what?"

"A target," said Frank Richards cheerfully. "Bob stuck it up, you know, and we were practising with our rifles. I missed it."

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

Chunky Todgers' face was a study for a moment.

"You—you pesky jay!" he exclaimed at last. "Do you mean that you were shooting at a target and missed it?"

"Exactly."

"You silly ass!" roared Chunky. "That wasn't what I meant at all."

"It was what I meant," said Frank, chuckling. "You asked me if I'd missed anything, and I told you. Aren't you going to take up the case?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Chunky Todgers jammed the notebook and pencil back into his pocket, with a withering look.

"You silly chump!"

"Hallo! There's the bell!" said Vere Beauclerc.

And Frank Richards & Co. strolled on to the lumber school-house, smiling, and the amateur detective of Cedar Creek followed, with a snort.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER A Very Injured Youth!

CHUNKY TODGERS' latest stunt caused a good deal of merriment at Cedar Creek, and for some days there was much laughter on the subject, and Chunky received plenty of chipping from his school-fellows. He bore it all with lofty serenity. He was waiting for his chance to come, and when that chance came he was going to show these doubting Thomases what his quality really was.

Unfortunately, the chance seemed a long time coming.

No doubt Chunky's famous advertisement had been read by a good many of the Thompson folk, most of them, probably, taking it for a joke of the editor of the "Thompson Press."

If anyone took it seriously, he did not call on Chunky for his services. Indeed, if any Thompson "galoot" had wanted a detective, it was very improbable that he would have called at Cedar Creek for one.

The week slipped by, and Detective Todgers had not had a "case" placed in his hands.

For some days Chunky lived in hope, but as day followed day without the advertisement bearing fruit, he became rather more serious.

It was true that there were no murders or bank robberies in the Thompson Valley,

nothing that Foxy Ferrett would have cared to handle. But Chunky was prepared to take up the case of a lost dog or a missing shirt. Even such trifling cases did not come his way. It really began to look as if the Cedar Creek detective was born to blush unseen and waste his sweetness on the desert air.

Frank Richards & Co. inquired every now and then how the detective work was getting on, and whether Chunky had put Foxy Ferrett into the deep shade. But Chunky only replied with grunts. He had no news for them.

But on Friday, the last school-day of the week, he tackled Frank Richards & Co. after lessons.

"I haven't had an answer to my advertisement yet, you galoots," he told them in the playground, with a very serious visage.

"Not really?" asked Frank.

"Nope!"

"Did you expect any, you chump?" inquired Bob Lawless.

"The fact is, one advertisement isn't much good," explained Chunky. "You have to keep it up. You've got some money in the bank, Richards. I'm relying on you to see me through."

"Oh, my hat!"

Frank Richards' money in the bank seemed to haunt Chunky Todgers. Somehow Chunky seemed convinced that if a fellow had any money in the bank he, Joseph Todgers, had a good claim to some of it. Chunky was a little bit of a Socialist without knowing it.

"My idea is this," said Chunky. "You come along with me to Penrose's office and fix it up. We'll arrange for a standing advertisement for six months——"

"Will we, by Jove!" ejaculated Frank Richards.

"Yep. That will only cost you about twenty-five dollars."

"It won't!" answered Frank.

"If you're going to be mean——"

"I am, old scout!"

"Of course, if you wanted to do the really proper thing, you'd stand me, say, a thousand dollars," said Chunky. "What I

really want is to take an office in Main Street at Thompson, and——"

"Phew!"

"And furnish it with a roll-top desk, and so on, from Montreal, and engage a clerk——"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"And a typist. Then I could start in proper style."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tain't easy, beginning a serious business while a galoot's still at school, you know," said Chunky.

"Has that just occurred to you?" said Beauclerc, with a laugh.

"And——and I can't begin at home," said Chunky. "I couldn't have my clients calling there——"

"Your what?" yelled Bob Lawless.

"My clients. I couldn't have them calling there. Popper wouldn't understand. He might give me the cowhide——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it looks a bit unbusinesslike to give the school as my address in an advertisement, doesn't it?"

"Ha, ha! Just a bit!"

"So if Frank will do the decent thing and start me in an office in Main Street——"

"Fathead!"

"Do you mean to say you won't, Frank Richards?" demanded Todgers, with deep and sorrowful reproach.

"Yes, rather!"

"You've got money in the bank, and——"

"It's staying there!" answered Frank Richards cheerfully. "Good - night, Chunky!"

"Hold on! I haven't finished yet, you know——"

"We have!" answered Frank.

And the chums of Cedar Creek departed. They did not see Chunky Todgers again till Monday.

On Monday at Cedar Creek the fat youth was looking less cheery than of yore.

He met the Co. with a reproachful look, more of sorrow than of anger. Evidently he looked upon himself as an injured party.

There was no advertisement of Todgers, Detective, in the current number of the

"Thompson Press." And Frank Richards had money in the bank! Those two facts taken together impressed Joseph Todgers with a deep sense of injury.

His wonderful gifts could not find free play and bring him fame and fortune because Frank was keeping his money in the bank, instead of handing it over to Chunky! No wonder Master Todgers looked sorrowful and reproachful.

Naturally, Chunky was not silent about his injuries, especially as he was much given to chinwag.

The following day Frank was surprised when Molly Lawrence asked him:

"What have you been doing to Chunky?"

"Nothing that I'm aware of," answered Frank. "Is anything the matter with Chunky?"

"He says you've treated him badly."

"Does he?" ejaculated Frank.

"He's telling all the school," said Molly.

"I suppose it is only his nonsense!"

Frank stared.

"I'm blessed if I know that I've done anything!" he said. "I'll ask the fat duffer. Thank you for telling me."

And Frank Richards looked for Chunky.

He found him addressing two or three fellows by the porch of the lumber school-house, and as Frank came up, Chunky was saying:

"Mean, I call it! I'd never really have thought it of Frank Richards; but he's treated me very meanly——jolly near dishonestly, in fact——"

"What's that?" roared Frank.

Todgers jumped.

"Oh, I didn't see you, old chap!" he stammered. "I——I was just telling these fellows that——that——"

"That Richards treated you meanly and swindled you!" grinned Eben Hacke.

"Now, what have I done, you fat idiot?" demanded Frank, glaring at Chunky.

Chunky glared back.

"You know what you've done!" he retorted. "Keeping money locked up in the bank when a chap's badly in need of the use of it——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed Shylock, I call you!" said Todgers.

"Why, you — you —" gasped Frank.

"I'm only asking for a thousand dollars —"

"Only!" roared Hacke.

"Only a thousand dollars? Is that all, Chunky?"

"That's all. And, of course, I should pay it back in a few weeks. But Richards is so jolly mean — Yaroooooh!"

Chunky was cut short as the exasperated Frank caught him by the collar.

Rap, rap, rap!

Chunky's bullet head was rapped on the porch three times, and there were three separate and fiendish yells from Joseph Todgers.

Then Frank walked away, with a flushed face.

Chunky rubbed his head.

"O w! W o w! O h, dear!"

And for some time Chunky was too busy rubbing his head to proceed with his recital of the sins of Frank Richards.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

A Client at Last!

"HALLO! What's the row?"

"Anything up, Frank?"

Bob Lawless and Vere Beaulere spoke together as they met Frank in the playground. Frank Richards' face was flushed, and for once he was looking quite angry.

"That idiot Todgers —" growled Frank.

Bob chuckled.

"What's he up to now?"

Frank Richards explained, and, rather to his annoyance, his chums burst into a



"That for me, Injun Dick?" exclaimed Todgers eagerly. The Apache nodded. "Letter for little white chief," he said. "You give Injun half-dollar!" (See Chapter 8.)

roar of laughter at such a huge joke.

"It's not such a joke," he exclaimed. "That silly ass is going round telling everybody that I've treated him meanly, because I don't take my money from the bank and give it to him! Jevver hear of such an ass?"

"Just like Chunky!" chuckled Bob.

"The silly ass!" said Beauclerc. "He can't help being a born idiot! He will get fed-up with this stunt in the long run. He always does."

"I guess I've been thinking about that," said Bob Lawless. "Chunky hasn't had any answers to his advertisement. Nobody has put any cases into his hands. It's rather a shame. I've been thinking that it's about time he had a case."

"Fathead! How could he have a case?"

"We might find him one."

"Ass! Nobody would give a schoolboy a case, would he, even if there was anything doing?"

"Yes, we might. My dear chap, you're dense!" said Bob. "Lend me your ears, as we say in the play. It's some time since the Cedar Creek Thespians did any stunts. We used to be rather strong on theatricals."

"What the dickens——"

"You can make up, old chap. Why not make up as a client for Chunky Todgers, and give him a case?"

Frank started.

"My hat! What a wheeze!"

"If it fed him up with his detective stunt, it would be all to the good. And it would be fun, anyway."

Frank Richards chuckled.

The three chums strolled out to the bank of the creek, there to discuss the scheme, unheard by other ears.

They were smiling when they came in to afternoon lessons.

They smiled still more when they saw Chunky Todgers, unimpressed by his reproachful and scornful looks. Chunky was still labouring under his deep sense of injury.

The next day there was a surprise for Chunky Todgers.

Cedar Creek School had been dismissed from morning lessons, and most of the fellows were in the playground, when a tattered figure stalked in at the gates. It was Injun Dick, an old Apache, who carried half the messages for the citizens of Thompson Town. The old Redskin looked round the crowded playground, and came towards Joseph Todgers.

There was an envelope in his dusky hand. Chunky Todgers started as he saw him, and his face flushed with new-born hope. Was it possible——

"That for me, Injun Dick?" he exclaimed eagerly.

The Apache nodded.

"Letter for little white chief," he said. "You give Injun half-dollar!"

"I—I say, I'll—I'll settle later. Give me the letter!"

Injun Dick drew the letter back from Chunky's eager grasp.

"No pay, no letter," he said tersely.

"Oh, dear! Frank Richards! I say, Franky, old chap, lend me half a dollar!" gasped Chunky. "There's a letter for me. I feel certain it's from a client!"

"Right-ho!" said Frank, with a laugh. "Here you are!"

He tossed a couple of quarters to Chunky, who handed them to the Redskin and took the letter. Injun Dick draped his tattered blanket round him and strode away. Chunky tore open the envelope with eager fingers.

Half a dozen fellows gathered round him as he read the letter.

"Well, what's the news?" asked Bob Lawless. "Is it a client at last?"

Chunky looked up with a serene countenance.

"Yep!" he answered.

"Gammon!" said Eben Hacke incredulously.

"You'll see later!" said Chunky Todgers haughtily. "At present I'm bound to keep this letter a secret. My client insists upon secrecy."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Hacke.

"You can cackle!" snorted Chunky Todgers. "You watch out, that's all."

And Chunky rolled away, to peruse the precious epistle again in privacy.

Frank Richards & Co. looked at one another and grinned. Evidently the bait had taken.

Chunky Todgers withdrew to a secluded quarter of the playground, and read his letter with gloating eyes.

It was a "case" at last.



Two masked men rushed in at the doorway and crashed into him, and Todgers went spinning to the floor. (See Chapter 9.)

There can be no doubt about that, for the letter ran :

"Dear Sir,—Seeing your advertisement in the 'Thompson Press,' I should be very glad if you would grant me an interview on important business. It is a matter of life or death, and the strictest secrecy must be maintained. I dare not come to the school, for reasons which I will explain later. Can you meet me after school, say, at six o'clock in the timber? I will wait for you in the old clearing, near the school. Then you can tell me if you are willing to take up the case.

"Yours truly,
N. O. Boddie."

"Oh, Jerusalem!" murmured Chunky Todgers, almost in ecstasy. "I wonder what Bob Lawless would say if I showed him this? Isn't it ripping? I've a good

mind to show him, too, but Mr. Boddie says it must be strictly secret. I've a good mind, though. But I'll show him later. I—I wonder what fee I shall get?"

When the bell rang for afternoon lessons Chunky Todgers seemed to be walking on air as he entered the lumber school-house.

The Cedar Creek detective was in the seventh heaven of delight.

Not only was there a "case" in his hands at last, but it was a deeply mysterious case, involving the strictest secrecy.

If Chunky had selected a case for himself, according to his taste, he could not have selected a more agreeable one.

Who Mr. Boddie was he had no idea. He pictured some hapless person beset by secret enemies, or involved in the mazes of some fearful mystery, exactly the kind of case that Chunky was keen to handle!

It was not easy to put his mind into

lessons that afternoon. In fact, he could scarcely keep patience with Miss Meadows.

Lessons seemed a shocking waste of time in the mysterious and exciting circumstances.

But school was over at last, and the detective of Cedar Creek was free.

Frank Richards tapped him on the shoulder as he rolled out of the school-house.

"You're looking very chirpy, old fellow," Frank remarked, with a smile.

Chunky Todgers gave him a lofty look.

He was not in need of assistance now to begin his career as a detective. His first case, which was going to be a great success, would start him, and Chunky already saw fame and fortune ahead of him in his mind's eye!

"Don't stop me, Richards," he said. "I'm rather busy!"

"Why, what's on?"

"I've got a client to see," answered Chunky Todgers calmly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"A chap in difficulties, rather mysterious circumstances," said Chunky carelessly. "I may tell you all about it later. At present I'm bound to keep the strictest secrecy."

"Gammon!" murmured Bob Lawless.

Snort from Chunky Todgers.

"You'll see whether it's gammon!" he said. "Later on I may be able to tell you. At present, mum's the word! Go and chop chips!"

And Chunky Todgers rolled away, with his fat little nose very high in the air.

Bob Lawless chuckled.

"May as well get a move on," he remarked. "It will take some time getting ready for dear old Chunky."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank Richards & Co. did not ride home as usual after school. They led their horses out on the trail, and rode about a quarter of a mile, and then turned into the timber.

Meanwhile, Chunky Todgers was hanging about Cedar Creek.

As his mysterious appointment at the old clearing was not till six, he had plenty of time on his hands.

It was not till the last fellow had gone

that Chunky Todgers led his pony out of the gates, and walked through the timber towards the old clearing, at a short distance from the school. He left his pony tied on the trail, and tramped into the clearing on foot. His heart was thumping with excitement as he approached the ruined hut in the clearing. And at the sound of a movement in the hut he jumped.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

A Very Thrilling Case I

"H A!"

It was a sudden exclamation.

In the doorway of the old cabin a figure suddenly appeared, and Chunky Todgers started back a little.

He saw rather a short, stout "galoot," dressed in shabby buckskin, his face almost hidden by a thick red beard, moustache, whiskers, and eyebrows. A ragged Stetson hat was pulled down over the brows.

"Ha! Todgers, the detective!" exclaimed the stranger.

"That's me!" said Chunky.

"Enter!"

The red-bearded pilgrim stepped back from the doorway, and Chunky Todgers went into the cabin.

His heart was still thumping.

As a matter of fact, Chunky was feeling a little nervous. The red-bearded man did not look a very pleasant or peaceable individual, and Chunky noted with some uneasiness that a big Colt revolver was sticking in a leather holster attached to his belt.

But, after all, what was there to be afraid of? This was his client—the mysterious client who was in need of his professional assistance. Surely there was nothing to be afraid of.

"Todgers, the detective," repeated the red-bearded pilgrim, fixing his eyes upon Chunky.

"Sure!" answered Todgers. "I've kept the appointment, you see." Out came the notebook and pencil. "Now, let me have a few details, Mr. Boddie."

He sat down on a log in an easy attitude, and wetted the stump of pencil, ready for business.

"Listen!" said the red-bearded man in a deep voice. "Listen, Todgers! I am in peril! Deadly foes are seeking me!"

"Good!"
"What?"

"I—I mean, I'm just the man you want," said Chunky. "Give me the details of the case. Who are you?"

"I am the rightful heir to a dukedom in the Old Country. My wicked uncle seeks my life!"

Chunky's eyes glistened.

He could not possibly have been offered a case more to his taste. From the novels in Gunten's Circulating Library, he knew all about rightful heirs and wicked uncles.

"Even now," continued the ducal heir—"even at this moment, while we speak, they are seeking me! Did you see any masked men in the wood?"

"Nunno."

"I am assured that they are at hand. At any moment they may find me—and you! Your life will not be worth a moment's purchase!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Chunky.

The Cedar Creek detective cast a rather uneasy glance round him.

A thrilling and mysterious case was very attractive, but it seemed to have its drawbacks, too. Chunky Todgers was prepared to solve any mystery, big or little, but he had no desire whatever to fall in with a gang of blood-thirsty emissaries of a wicked uncle. Chunky placed a very high value upon his skin.

"But you are not afraid?" exclaimed the red-bearded man.

"Nunno! N-n-not at all!"

"Then hear my story."

"G-g-go it!"

The red-bearded man gave a sudden start.

"Ah! They are here! I fly!"

With a bound he was through the window aperture of the ruined cabin and disappearing into the wood.

Chunky Todgers jumped to his feet.

Two masked men rushed in at the doorway and crashed into him, and Todgers went spinning to the floor.

"We have him!"

"Slay him!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Chunky Todgers. "Help!"

He sprawled on his back, with a heavy boot planted on his chest, pinning him there.

His startled eyes blinked up at two masked faces that looked down on him.

Two men in rough homespun, with crêpe masks over their faces, through the eyeholes of which their eyes glittered, were bending over him, and two revolvers glistened over him. Thick black beards showed underneath the crêpe masks.

"Yoop! Keep off! I—I say——"

"'Tis not he!" exclaimed one of the masked men. "'Tis not the heir to the Dukedom of Ditchwater! 'Tis another!"

"Slay him!"

"Yow-ow-ow! D-d-don't do anything of the kind!" howled Chunky Todgers. "I can tell you the sheriff will jolly soon be after you."

"Who are you?"

"I—I—I——"

"'Tis Todgers, the detective!"

"Slay him!"

"I—I—I ain't a detective!" howled Chunky Todgers. "Honest injun, I ain't! I—I—I'm a schoolboy!"

"You lie!" exclaimed one of the masked men fiercely. "You are Todgers, the detective—the rival of Foxy Ferrett! You must die!"

"Slay him!" repeated the other masked man, whose vocabulary seemed to be somewhat limited. "Slay him!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Tell me!" The masked man knelt on Todgers' plump chest. "Tell me, you dog! Whither is he fled—your client? The heir to the Dukedom of Ditchwater must die! Whither is he fled?"

It was certainly Chunky Todgers' duty, as a detective, not to betray his client, but the Cedar Creek detective was too terrified to remember that just then. He pointed to the window.

"He—he's vamoosed that way!" gasped Chunky. "I—I say, you get after him,

and leave me alone! I—I'm giving up the case! I am, really!"

"Slay him!"

"You must die, Todgers!" said the masked man solemnly. "We dare not let you live! With your wonderful abilities, your astounding sagacity, you will soon track us down, and bring us to justice——"

"I—I won't! I swear I won't!" howled Chunky. "I'll let you off! I will, really! Oh, dear!"

"Say your prayers!"

"Yarooooop!"

The masked man rose from Chunky's chest.

"You have one minute to live!" he said.

"Make the most of it!"

"Slay him!"

"Yow-ow-wow!"

The two masked men stepped to the window, apparently forgetful of Chunky Todgers for the moment.

Chunky did not lose the opportunity.

With one bound he was upon his feet; with another he had bundled out of the doorway, and was fleeing for his life.

"Ha! He has escaped——"

"Slay him!"

There was a rush of heavy footsteps in pursuit.

Chunky fled frantically.

Through bush and briar he fled, breathless, panting, towards the trail, his heart thumping. His hat was gone, his hair blew out in the wind. Still behind him sounded those heavy footsteps.

Never had Chunky Todgers put on such a burst of speed before.

He came bouncing out of the timber upon the trail, and staggered and fell from sheer breathlessness. From the trees behind him came a yell:

"Slay him!"

Chunky scrambled up wildly.

His fat pony, tethered on the trail, was browsing a few yards from him. Chunky bounded to the pony, dragged the trail-rope loose, and clambered frantically on the animal's back.

Without even stopping to get into the saddle, he howled to the pony, and started at a gallop up the trail.

Thud, thud, thud!

The frightened pony galloped off at full speed, with Chunky clinging breathlessly to his back. He had covered half a mile before he was able to drag himself into the saddle.

By that time there was no sound of pursuit behind.

The Cedar Creek detective had escaped!

Whether his client also had escaped was a question Chunky Todgers did not even ask himself till he was safe within the fence of the Todgers' homestead.

And while the Cedar Creek detective was fleeing breathlessly for his life, two masked men and a red-bearded pilgrim joined in the shadow of the timber, and roared with laughter.

They laughed so much that their masks and beards came off, and if the Cedar Creek detective had been present then, he would not have needed the penetration of Foxy Ferret to recognise Frank Richards & Co.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Bob Lawless.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank Richards took off his red moustache and eyebrows, and wiped his eyes.

"Oh, dear! Poor old Chunky! I wonder if he will go to the sheriff and tell him there are assassins around in——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Looking for the rightful heir to the Dukedom of Ditchwater——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'd better clear," said Beauclerc, laughing. "Poor old Chunky!"

And, having peeled off their outward garb and become Cedar Creek schoolboys again, Frank Richards & Co. quitted the clearing. They had left their horses near at hand in the wood, and they mounted in a merry mood and rode homeward, feeling pretty certain that they had cured the Cedar Creek detective!

And they were right.

There was no search for the masked rufians. Chunky Todgers told his thrilling tale, but his thrilling tale was not believed. As Chunky persisted that it was true, Mr.

Todgers had recourse to the family cowhide—and then Chunky held his peace.

But the next day, at Cedar Creek, Chunky told the tale again, amid roars of laughter. Of all Cedar Creek, Chunky was the only fellow who believed in the existence of the mysterious masked men and the rightful heir to the Dukedom of Ditchwater.

But he did not follow up the case. He had had quite enough, and he was content to leave the case just where it was, and to let the rightful heir take his chance without professional assistance. And he did not ask Frank Richards again to finance his start as a detective.

But it was a long time before Chunky heard the end of his short career as a detective. The Cedar Creek fellows chipped him unmercifully; even the younger children found amusement in following Chunky to school, and yelling after him:

"Look out, Todgers! They're after you!"

Which was sufficient to cause instant alarm in Chunky's podgy breast. Even when Frank Richards & Co., thinking that the jape had gone far enough, told Todgers of their share in the plot, Chunky would not



The frightened pony galloped off at full speed, with Chunky clinging breathlessly to his back. (See Chapter 9.)

believe them. He was as convinced of the real existence of the rightful heir to the Dukedom of Ditchwater and the mysterious masked men as he was convinced that the sun would rise in the east and sink in the west. But the chipping Chunky received on the subject had one good result—it effectively cured him of his ambition to beat Foxy Ferrett at his own game.

Chunky Todgers was tired of detective work—and Chunky's first case was also his last!

THE END

Incidents in the Life of a "Mountie"!



"FROM INFORMATION RECEIVED."



A PRISONER!



IN ESKIMO DRESS



TRANSPORTING THE MAILS—

—WITH "HUSKY" TEAMS



THE END OF THE CHASE



A POLICE BARRACKS

The Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman always "gets his man," and his life is as dangerous as it is thrilling and romantic.