

THE CEDAR CREEK VENTRILOQUIST!

By Martin Clifford



THE FIRST CHAPTER

TODGERS' LATEST!

"**C**HUNKY'S at it again!"
Frank Richards & Co.
chuckled.

The snow was falling in the playground at Cedar Creek school, in British Columbia, and the three chums had strolled into the school-room, where the logs were crackling cheerily in the stove.

It was not yet time for afternoon lessons, and the big school-room had as yet only one occupant.

That solitary occupant was Chunky Todgers.

Chunky was seated before the stove, with a book on his knees, held in his plump hands. But he was not reading. He was leaning back in his chair, his eyes fixed on the crackling

logs, an expression of deep thought upon his fat face.

Chunky was thinking. He was in a deep reverie.

He did not hear the three school-boys come in. He was too deep in his reverie for that. When the imaginative Chunky plunged into the realms of fancy, he was deaf and blind to his immediate surroundings.

The Co. chuckled softly as they looked at him.

They had seen Chunky Todgers in that dreamy mood before—many a time and oft. Chunky always fancied himself in the character of the hero of the latest volume he had borrowed from Gunten's Circulating Library. The open book on his fat knees indicated the trend of his thoughts.

"I guess that fat jay is about a

As a ventriloquist Chunky Todgers is the laughing-stock of the Cedar Creek school in British Columbia. But Frank Richards & Co. sit up and take notice when Chunky succeeds in throwing his voice—little guessing there is more in it than meets the eye!

million miles away at the present moment!" murmured Bob Lawless. "Shall I wake him up out of dream-land? Quiet a bit, you fellows!"

Bob stepped back to the porch, and gathered up a handful of snow.

Then he re-entered the school-room, and trod softly towards the dreamy Todgers.

Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc stood still, and grinned.

Wherever Chunky Todgers was in his thoughts, he was about to be brought back to reality—suddenly!

He did not turn his head as Bob approached. He was lost to time and space. His round eyes blinked at the fire dreamily.

Bob Lawless arrived just behind him.

He raised his hand, full of snow, and reached over Chunky's head and dabbed the snow on Chunky's little fat nose.

Then Chunky woke up.

"Grooooooooooch!"

The fat youth bounded to his feet, spluttering wildly. "Valentine Vox, the Ventriloquist"—for that ancient book happened to be the one Chunky had been reading—crashed on the floor.

Chunky roared and spluttered.

"Gerrooooooooooch! Grooh! You silly jay, wharrer you at? Oooooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yurrrggggh!"

"Only waking you up, old scout!" said Bob Lawless.

"Yooooooooocchhhh!"

"Where were you, Chunky?" asked Frank Richards, laughing.

"Killing Saracens along with old Cœur-de-Lion?"

"Or tracking the Iroquois along with Chingachgook?" asked Beauclerc.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly jays!" gurgled Chunky.

He dabbed the snow from his fat face and blinked indignantly at the chums of Cedar Crook. Bob Lawless picked up the fallen book, and glanced at it.

"Valentine Vox!" he said, reading out the title. "Is that it? Never heard of it before! What's it about, Chunky?"

"Grooooooh!"

"It's an old novel—I remember beginning it once," said Frank Richards. "A relic of the Victorian era!"

"I—I say, you chaps," said Chunky Todgers, "I've got an idea out of that book——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Frank Richards & Co.

There was really no need for Chunky to tell them that. They were well aware that the imaginative Chunky changed like a chameleon with every book he read.

"You needn't snigger, you jays!" said Todgers. "I've got no end of an idea! There's a galoot in that book who was a ventriloquist——"

"A which?" asked Bob.

"Chap who chucks his voice about, you know," said Todgers. "Makes all sorts of weird noises come from unexpected places, and makes people jump, you know. No end of fun in ventriloquism, I should think!"

"Easier to do in a book than in real life, I guess!"

"Well, it's in the way of a gift," said Chunky. "But practice makes perfect, you know. I've been thinking it over. Just fancy making a bear growl behind Miss Meadows' desk when she's giving us lessons!"

"How on earth could you make a bear growl behind her desk, when there isn't a bear there?" asked Bob.

"With my ventriloquism, I mean,"

explained Chunky. "Then suppose I made a voice come from somewhere, saying 'Hands up!' in the voice of Five-Hundred Dollar Jones, the rustler? Make the folks jump—eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So you're going to be a ventriloquist now!" said Frank Richards, chuckling. "I wonder what would happen if you read the 'Life of Caesar Borgia'? Stick to 'Valentine Vox'!"

"It never occurred to me before," continued Chunky, unheeding. "Fellows have gifts, you know, and never suspect 'em, until—until they suspect 'em you know!"

"Go on!"

"For instance, listen to this!"

Chunky Todgers screwed up his mouth, compressed his fat throat, and, with a look of expiring anguish in his round, bulging eyes, emitted a prolonged and painful squeak.

Frank Richards & Co. stared at him.

Chunky unscrewed his face, and gazed at them, evidently expectant of approval.

"There!" he said.

"Have you got a pain?" asked Bob Lawless, in astonishment.

"Eh? No!"

"Not been eating too much maple-sugar?"

"Nope!" roared Chunky. "I was ventriloquising!"

"Oh! Is that ventriloquising?"

"Throwing my voice, you know."

"Blessed if I noticed it thrown!" said Bob.

Chunky sniffed.

"Don't be an ass, if you can help it, Bob!" he snapped. "Didn't that sound to you like a canary?"

"A—a canary! Nunno!"

"Singing at the window?" said Todgers.

"At the window! Great Scott! No!"

"What did it sound like, then?"

"Like a fat pig squeaking!" said Bob. "That's what it was, wasn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly jay!" howled Chunky. "Where did it seem to you to come from, then?"

"From your silly neck!"

Snort from Chunky.

"Perhaps I'm not quite perfect yet," he said. "I may need some practice, though I'm convinced it's a gift. But it's no good telling me that that didn't sound like a canary at the window, because I know it did! Now I'll make a wolf howl behind the desk."

"Go it!"

Chunky Todgers proceeded to screw up his fat features again, as if he were trying to tie them into a sailor's knot.

A wild howl rang through the school-room.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Co.

"There!" gasped Chunky. "What did that sound like?"

"Like a fat idiot yelling!"

"Look here, Lawless——"

"I guess you want some practice yet," chuckled Bob, "and you'd better be rather careful, Chunky. Suppose your face got fixed like that. Anybody that met you on the trail would shoot you at sight!"

"Oh, rats!" snapped Chunky. "I tell you, I'm quite sure that I'm a born ventriloquist, just like that chap in the book. I'm going to develop my gift. 'Tain't everybody who can make his voice come from all sorts of places. That chap in the book had no end of fun. So I'm going to! I guess I'll jolly well make you fellows jump!"

"Go it! We're ready to jump!" chuckled Frank Richards.

"Richards! How dare you!"

"Eh?"

"D-d-didn't you think that was

Miss Meadows' voice just behind you?" asked Todgers, rather crestfallen.

Frank Richards yelled.

"Ha, ha! No! I thought it was the voice of that duffer just in front of me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess I'll show you some more of—"

But the school bell rang just then, and the Cedar Creek boys and girls came trooping in, and Chunky Todgers' ventriloquism was cut short, which was, perhaps, not a heavy loss. For there was no doubt whatever that the Cedar Creek ventriloquist needed some more practice to make him perfect!

THE SECOND CHAPTER

MISUNDERSTOOD!

"GURRRGG!"

Mr. Slimmey jumped.

Lessons were over for the day at

Cedar Creek, and the backwoods school had emptied.

Mr. Slimmey came back for a book he had forgotten, but when he entered the doorway he stopped and fairly jumped as a weird and mysterious sound suddenly smote on his ears.

"Gurrrig! Goooooooooooo! Gooooo! Gooooo!"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Slimmey.

The school-room was rather dim, and for a moment or two he was puzzled to find from whence the mysterious sounds proceeded.

Then he spotted the fat figure of Chunky Todgers, standing by one of the windows.

A glimmer of the setting sun fell upon Chunky, and showed his podgy face contorted into an extraordinary expression.



Chunky Todgers, far away in his thoughts, was brought back to reality—suddenly! Bob Lawless raised his hand and dabbed snow on his fat little nose. "Grooooooch!" spluttered the fat youth.

His mouth was open, his eyes were bulging, and he seemed on the very verge of a severe attack of apoplexy.

And from his open mouth issued the astonishing sounds that had startled the young master.

"Gurrrrrrrrrg! Goo! Goo! Goo!"

Mr. Slimmey ran into the room in great anxiety. He could only suppose that Joseph Todgers was in the grip of a fit.

"Todgers!" he gasped.

"Gerrroooogh!"

"My poor boy! My dear Todgers!" exclaimed Mr. Slimmey. "What—what is the matter? Try to calm yourself! Do not gasp in that way! Try to breathe regularly——"

He clapped Todgers on the back to help him get his breath.

Chunky Todgers ceased his wild and weird ventriloquism suddenly, and gave a howl.

"Ow! Leave off!"

"Do you feel better, my boy?"

"Groogh! Leggo! I'm all right."

Chunky squirmed away from the anxious master. In the midst of his ventriloquial efforts, the thump on the back had nearly—as he afterwards described it—"spificated" him!

"I—I—I'm all right!" he muttered.

"Leave me alone! Ow!"

"Can you get your breath now?" asked Mr. Slimmey anxiously.

"Eh? Of course I can!"

"If you are quite well, Todgers, you had better go," said Mr. Slimmey. "Why did you remain behind after the others?"

"I—I guess I wanted to practise at——"

"To—to what?"

"Practise," said Todgers.

Mr. Slimmey blinked at him. He failed to understand, which was not surprising, in the circumstances. He did not know that Chunky Todgers

was a wonderful ventriloquist—yet!

"Todgers! Why were you making those ridiculous noises, and assuming such a very alarming expression of countenance?" demanded Mr. Slimmey warmly.

"I—I was practising——"

"Are you out of your senses, Todgers?" exclaimed Mr. Slimmey.

"Nimno! I——"

"Leave the school-room at once!" snapped Mr. Slimmey. He really began to have some doubts as to Joseph Todgers' sanity.

Chunky left the school-room, grumbling to himself. He had just been getting on nicely with his ventriloquial practice when Mr. Slimmey had interrupted him. He rolled out into the porch—and stopped there. Chunky was very keen on his practice—he was always keen on any new stunt that came into his powerful brain.

"The silly jay!" murmured Chunky. "I'd nearly got it when he came moseying in! I guess I'm going to try again."

And Chunky tried again in the porch.

Chunky Todgers was throwing his voice in the manner of the ventriloquist in the novel. But perhaps he was not throwing it according to the rules. The sound that issued from his fat throat was like the last expiring croak from a frog.

"That's better!" murmured Chunky, with satisfaction. "That sounded as if it came from the playground. Now I'll see if I can make a rat squeak behind the wall."

"Squeeeeeeaaak!"

"Upon my word!"

Miss Meadows looked out of the doorway into the porch, with a startled expression on her face.

Chunky Todgers grinned.

He concluded at once that the Canadian schoolmistress had heard the squeak of the rat, and had been scared by it. It was proof positive that the Cedar Creek ventriloquist was getting on!

"Todgers——"

"Were you frightened, ma'am?" asked Chunky, much gratified.

"Frightened!" exclaimed Miss Meadows.

"Yep! Shall I look for the rat, ma'am?"

"The—the rat?"

"Yep! I guess I'll look for him and rout him out, ma'am, if you like," said Chunky, grinning.

He was going to keep it up that it was a real rat. He was not going to let Miss Meadows discover his wonderful ventriloquial powers yet.

But there was a slight misunderstanding.

"Todgers! Are you being impertinent or silly?" exclaimed Miss Meadows, with asperity.

"Eh?" ejaculated Chunky, in surprise.

"What rat are you speaking about?"

"The—the rat that squeaked just now, ma'am!" stammered Todgers. "D-d-d-didn't you hear it?"

"I shall cane you, Todgers, if you talk such nonsense! I looked out to see who was making ridiculous noises in the porch. It was you! Why are you acting in this foolish way?"

"Oh!" gasped Chunky.

"I believe you are the stupidest boy in my class!" said Miss Meadows crossly. "But you are expected to have sufficient common sense, Todgers, not to play foolish tricks like this!"

Miss Meadows turned away frowning, and Chunky's eyes gleamed. He determined to give Miss Meadows a

fright, which he felt she deserved. A mouse squeaking close by her skirt would give her a lesson, Chunky thought.

"Squeeeek!"

Miss Meadows spun round again. For a moment Chunky thought she was frightened by the supposed mouse. The next moment he realised his mistake. Miss Meadows strode towards him, grasped his fat shoulder, and shook him.

"Todgers——"

"Ow!"

"What do you mean, sir, by emitting those ridiculous noises, when I have just reprimanded you on the subject?"

Evidently Miss Meadows had not even suspected that it might possibly be a mouse!

She shook Todgers vigorously.

"Oh dear!" gasped Chunky.

"Now go home, and don't be so silly!" said Miss Meadows severely. And she pushed Chunky out of the porch.

Chunky Todgers trotted away dispiritedly for the corral, to fetch out his fat pony. These repeated disappointments were discouraging, even to a determined youth like Joseph Todgers. He led his pony out at the gates, and found Frank Richards & Co. there, chatting with Molly and Tom Lawrence before starting for home.

Chunky could not resist the temptation to make one more attempt. The sudden growl of a grizzly bear from the dusk would startle that chatting group, and Chunky promised himself a laugh at their expense when he explained that it was only he—the Cedar Creek ventriloquist.

"Gurrrrrrrh!"

That deep and savage growl was supposed—by Chunky—to proceed

from the dusk of the trail; he was throwing his voice again.

But again there was something wrong with the throw.

Instead of shrieking with terror, Molly Lawrence looked round, and gazed at Chunky Todgers in astonishment.

"Todgers! What is the matter?" she exclaimed. And Tom Lawrence stared at him blankly, while Frank Richards & Co. chuckled. They could guess what was the matter.

"Matter?" repeated Chunky.

"Have you a bad cold?" asked Molly.

"A—a-c-cold! Nope."

"Or a cough?"

"Nope!" roared Chunky. "I—I say, didn't you hear the bear growl?"

"What bear?" asked the astonished Molly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Frank Richards.

Chunky Todgers gave a grunt, and climbed on his fat pony and rode away. Tom Lawrence looked at the chums of Cedar Creek in dismayed inquiry.

"Has Chunky gone potty?" he asked.

"Not more than usual, I guess," chuckled Bob Lawless.

"What was he barking like that for, then, like a dog with bronchitis?" asked the puzzled Lawrence.

"Ha, ha! It's only Chunky's latest stunt—he's a ventriloquist now!" shrieked Bob. "He was throwing his voice!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

• That roar of laughter followed Chunky Todgers down the trail, and it made his fat ears burn. And Chunky vowed that, somehow, by hook or by crook, he would develop his wonderful ventriloquial gift, and show these doubting Thomases who was who, and what was what!

THE THIRD CHAPTER

THE DUCK THAT QUACKED!

THE next day Chunky Todgers was met by smiling faces at Cedar Creek.

His latest weird stunt was known to all the backwoods school now, and the Cedar Creek fellows were much entertained by it.

Until the bell rang for lessons, Chunky was besieged by demands to "throw his voice"; and he obliged willingly, until the shouts of laughter apprised him that his fat leg was being pulled.

Chunky went in to lessons in a morose mood.

But Chunky was a stickler! The gift was there—he was quite sure about that. It only remained to develop it. That chap in the book had done it easily enough! And Chunky had more brains than any chap in any book! He was well aware of that.

After morning lessons at Cedar Creek he retired to a secluded corner of the corral and practised till dinner. He succeeded to his own satisfaction, and there was a contented grin on his fat face when he rolled into the dining-room. His powers were developing, and he was ready to put them to the test again.

He dropped into a seat on the pine-wood form beside Yen Chin, the little Chinese, who grinned at him. Chunky regarded that grin as disrespectful, and he determined to give Yen Chin a lesson. He threw his voice behind Yen Chin in an imitation of a dog growling.

Yen Chin stared at him for a moment, and then looked round with a startled expression.

"Bad doggee—go 'way—no bitee poor lil' Chinese!" he exclaimed. Chunky chuckled.

"He, he he! Only my ventriloquism, you young ass!" he said.

"Chunkee velly clevee ventriloquist!" murmured Yen Chin.

Chunky Todgers smirked.

"I guess I can throw my voice where I like," he said. "Nothing to me! It's a gift, you know."

The little heathen's almond eyes glimmered. He jerked his thumb towards a fat duck that Miss Meadows was carving.

little heathen was pulling his leg.

Certainly a ventriloquial quack from a duck that was being carved ought to have a startling effect—and Miss Meadows did not know that Chunky was a ventriloquist, so the "quack" could not be traced to him!

Chunky cleared his throat in readiness. Frank Richards leaned over towards him.

"Don't play the goat here, you ass!" he whispered.



"My dear Todgers!" exclaimed Mr. Slimmey. "What is the matter? Try to calm yourself! Do not gasp in that way!" And he clapped Chunky on the back to help him regain his breath. The fat boy ceased his ventriloquism suddenly. "Ow!" he yelled. "Leave off!"

"S'pose makee duckee talk!" he whispered. "Chunkee so clevee, he makee duckee quack, quack—oh, yes!"

Chunky nodded.

After his many disappointments he would have hesitated to try his wonderful gift at the dinner-table, in the presence of the schoolmistress, had he not just had proof positive of success. It did not dawn just yet on the fatuous Chunky that the wicked

Chunky's lip curled.

"I guess I'm going to make that duck quack!" he whispered back.

"You awful chump, Miss Meadows will—"

"Don't you give me away, Richards."

"Give you away!" gasped Frank. "You thundering ass, do you think Miss Meadows won't know who's quacking?"

"I've just made a dog growl behind Yen Chin, and he thought it was a real dog, anyhow," said Chunky disdainfully.

"Fathead! He was pulling your leg!"

"I'm accustomed to jealousy from you, Richards; but you really might draw it mild, you know," said Chunky, with increased disdain.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Frank.

He gave it up! If the Cedar Creek ventriloquist chose to rush upon destruction, he had to have his own way.

Chunky cleared his throat again, and started. Throwing his voice with all his skill—which was not perhaps so great as he supposed—he emitted a sonorous:

"QUACK!"

There was a start all along the table. Miss Meadows looked up blankly.

If the carved duck had actually quacked, there could hardly have been more astonishment at the Cedar Creek dinner-table.

"Qua-a-a-ack! Kuk - kuk - kuk!" plunged on Chunky recklessly.

"What the thump——"

"Todgers——"

"Is he potty?"

"You silly ass——"

"Silence!" Miss Meadows rose to her feet, a picture of wrath. "Todgers!"

Chunky looked as unconscious as possible.

Doubts crept into his fat mind.

"Todgers!"

"Ye-e-e-es, ma'am?"

"Are you out of your senses?"

"N-n-nunno, ma'am!"

"Then what do you mean by imitating the quack of a duck at the dinner-table?" exclaimed Miss Meadows wrathfully. "Is this a place for foolish pranks?"

"I—I—I—— D'd—did you think

is was me, ma'am?" gasped Todgers.

"Leave the room at once, Todgers! If you cannot behave yourself with propriety, you shall not sit at the table!" snapped Miss Meadows. "You may ask the cook for some bread and cheese for your dinner!"

"Oh!"

"Go at once!"

Miss Meadows' hand pointed to the door.

"Oh dear!" groaned Chunky.

He detached himself from his seat, cast a last, lingering, affectionate look at the duck, and vanished. While the duck was disposed of, Chunky Todgers gnawed bread and cheese in the kitchen, and bemoaned his fate. The life of an amateur ventriloquist at Cedar Creek was a hard one.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

VENTRILOQUISM EXTRAORDINARY!

"YOU fellows——"

"Still throwing your merry voice about, old chap?" asked Frank Richards.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was two or three days later when Chunky came up to the Co. in the playground at Cedar Creek, after morning lessons. Chunky, it was understood, was still cultivating his great gift, though he had not been heard "throwing his voice" so much of late.

"You fellows don't believe that I can ventriloquise!" said Chunky, with a disdainful sniff.

"Ha, ha! Not quite!"

"I guess I'm going to prove it to you!"

"Go ahead!" chuckled Bob Lawless. "Make a horse neigh on the roof!"

"I—I—I guess I haven't practised making a horse neigh yet——"



Miss Meadows hastily unlocked the cupboard and Bunker Honk, dusty, red and breathless, staggered out.
 "Honk—what—what—" gasped the schoolmistress. Chunky Todgers' spoof was all up now!

"Well, make a dog bark under the bench in the porch—"

"I—I'm leaving over dogs just for the present—"

"Well, give us any sample you like," said Vere Beauchere, laughing. "You're best at making ducks quack, I think!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What would you say to making a man call for help from an empty cupboard?" asked Todgers.

"Topping!" said Frank Richards.

"The only drawback is that you can't do it, old chap."

"I guess I'm going to show you!" said Chunky Todgers loftily. "You can jolly well watch me do it!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Bob. "We'll watch you."

"Come on, then!"

Frank Richards & Co. grinned as they followed Chunky Todgers into the school-room.

"Sit down," he said. "I'll stand here by Miss Meadows' desk, and I'll

make a voice come from the cupboard where the easel's kept."

"I don't think!" said Frank.

"You see, I've had a lot of practice now," said Todgers. "I've cultivated my gift, you know. I can hold a conversation with an unseen person, making the answers come from where I like."

"Rats!"

"Well, just listen!"

Chunky started. Half a dozen fellows had strolled into the school-room to see what was on, and they were all grinning. There was a plentiful lack of faith in Chunky's ventriloquial powers.

"Are you there?" called out Chunky.

A faint voice was heard in reply:

"I'm here!"

The Cedar Creek fellows jumped. For—to their ears, at least—it certainly sounded as if the voice proceeded from the locked cupboard.

Chunky gave them a triumphant glance.

"What do you think of that?" he asked.

"Jolly good!" said Bob heartily. "Blessed if I don't begin to believe it isn't all gas, after all! Keep it up!"

Todgers went on cheerily:

"What are you doing there?"

"Sitting down," came the faint voice.

And the schoolboys jumped again. It seemed unmistakable that the voice came from the cupboard.

"What's your name?"

"John Brown."

"How old are you?"

"Forty."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Tom Lawrence, much impressed. "Blessed if I wouldn't swear there was a man in the cupboard answering! I suppose there isn't anyone there?"

Chunky started.

"It's locked!" he said hastily. "Miss Meadows keeps the key in her room. You know that."

"Yes, that's so," agreed Lawrence. "Well, I must say it's jolly clever. Let's hear some more, Chunky."

"Are you still there, John Brown?" called out Chunky.

"I'm here!" came the faint voice.

"Just like real!" said Bob Lawless. "Chunky, old man——"

Bob was interrupted by the entrance of Miss Meadows from the passage. The Canadian schoolmistress was frowning.

"Has anyone here taken a key from my sitting-room?" she asked.

"A—a—a key?" exclaimed Frank Richards.

"Yes; the key of the easel cupboard. It has been taken from the hook."

"Oh!" gasped Bob.

Chunky Todgers' fat face had

become suddenly crimson. Miss Meadows' eyes were fixed accusingly upon him.

"Todgers!"

"Yes, ma'am!" spluttered Chunky.

"Dinah says she saw you leaving my sitting-room. Have you taken the key? If so, return it to me at once."

"Oh dear!"

With a limp hand, Chunky Todgers extracted a key from his pocket, and handed it to the Canadian schoolmistress.

"If you meddle with things that do not concern you again, Todgers, I shall cane you!" said Miss Meadows sternly.

And she quitted the school-room with the key in her hand, leaving Chunky Todgers dumbfounded. There was a howl from Frank Richards & Co. as soon as the schoolmistress was gone.

"You fat fraud!"

"You spoofer!"

"You had the key!" roared Bob Lawless. "You've got a chap locked up in that cupboard to pull our legs!"

"I—I—I——" stuttered the hapless Chunky.

Bang!

It was a loud thump on the inside of the cupboard door.

"Here, lemme out of this!" shouted a voice. Evidently the hidden individual had heard all that had been said in the school-room. "You go and get that key and let me out, Todgers!"

The voice from the cupboard was no longer faint. It was an alarmed yell. And the chums recognised it now. It was the voice of H. B. Honk!

"Honk!" yelled Bob Lawless.

Chunky's fat face was a study.

"I—I—I don't know how he got in the cupboard!" he gasped. "I—I didn't know anyone was there when I started!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Thump!

"Let me out!" yelled Honk. "I guess I shall suffocate if I'm left in hyer! You said it was only to be for ten minutes, you fat jay!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I can't get the key!"

Thump, thump, thump!

Honk was getting desperate.

"Bless my soul! What is this?" Honk's yells and thumps had reached the ears of Miss Meadows, and she came in again hastily. "What—what—"

Thump!

"Lemme out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is—is somebody locked in the cupboard? Todgers, you bad boy——" Miss Meadows hastily unlocked the cupboard, and Bunker Honk, dusty and red and breathless, staggered out. "Honk—Todgers—what—what——"

Frank Richards & Co. beat a retreat from the school-room, leaving the two culprits to explain as best they could. When Honk and Todgers emerged into the playground a few minutes later, they were both rubbing their hands, and looking very excited.

"Yow-ow-ow!" Chunky Todgers was remarking.

"Oh swipes!" groaned Bunker Honk. "You fat jay, catch me helping you in a stunt again! You owe me half-a-dollar, anyhow!"

"You silly ass!" howled Chunky Todgers. "You spoiled the whole thing! Catch me giving you a half-dollar!"

"You pair of pesky spoofers!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "Collar them, you chaps, and roll them in the snow! That's what they want!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I—I—I guess—— Yarooooooop!"

"Leggo! Help! Yoop! I—I say—only a joke on you fellows! I—I— Ow!"

Chunky Todgers and Bunker Honk went rolling together in the thick snow, and they were rolled and rolled till Frank Richards & Co. were tired. By that time Chunky Todgers had probably repented of his fraudulent attempt to convince Cedar Creek of his wonderful ventriloquial powers, and Bunker Honk had probably repented of helping him for the consideration of half-a-dollar—unpaid! And from that unlucky day nothing more was heard from Chunky Todgers on the subject of his new and amazing gift. It was the last performance of the Cedar Creek Ventriloquist.

THE END

FOLLOW YOUR SCHOOLBOY FAVOURITES EVERY WEEK!

Don't say good-bye to all the cheery chums you've met in the "Holiday Annual"—meet 'em all again! In the "Magnet," on sale every Saturday, price 2d., you will find Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars. The chums of St. Jim's are featured in the "Gem," out every Wednesday, price 2d.; while the "Schoolboys' Own Library," price 4d., publishes grand long yarns of the chums of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood Schools.

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Baked Jam Roll.

Baked Jam Roll—crisp,—delicious,—most nourishing, is no more trouble to make than a milk pudding, when you use

Hugon's

'ATORA'

The Good BEEF SUET

RECIPE.

- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Self-raising Flour, or
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Plain Flour and teaspoon Baking Pdr.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of Shredded 'Atora.' Pinch of Salt.

Mix the ingredients with the flour, then rub in the 'Atora.' (In cold weather the Suet should be slightly warmed before using, but not melted). Add enough water to make a stiff paste, roll out thin, and spread over with jam or marmalade. Roll over (sealing up ends by turning them in), damp edges and pinch together. Bake for about $\frac{1}{2}$ hour in a greased tin. Serve hot. Sufficient for 6 persons.

This inexpensive recipe is taken from the 'Atora' Book of 100 useful recipes. Send 6 postcards for a copy, post free from HUGON & CO., Ltd. Manchester.

