GRUNDY'S LUCK!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

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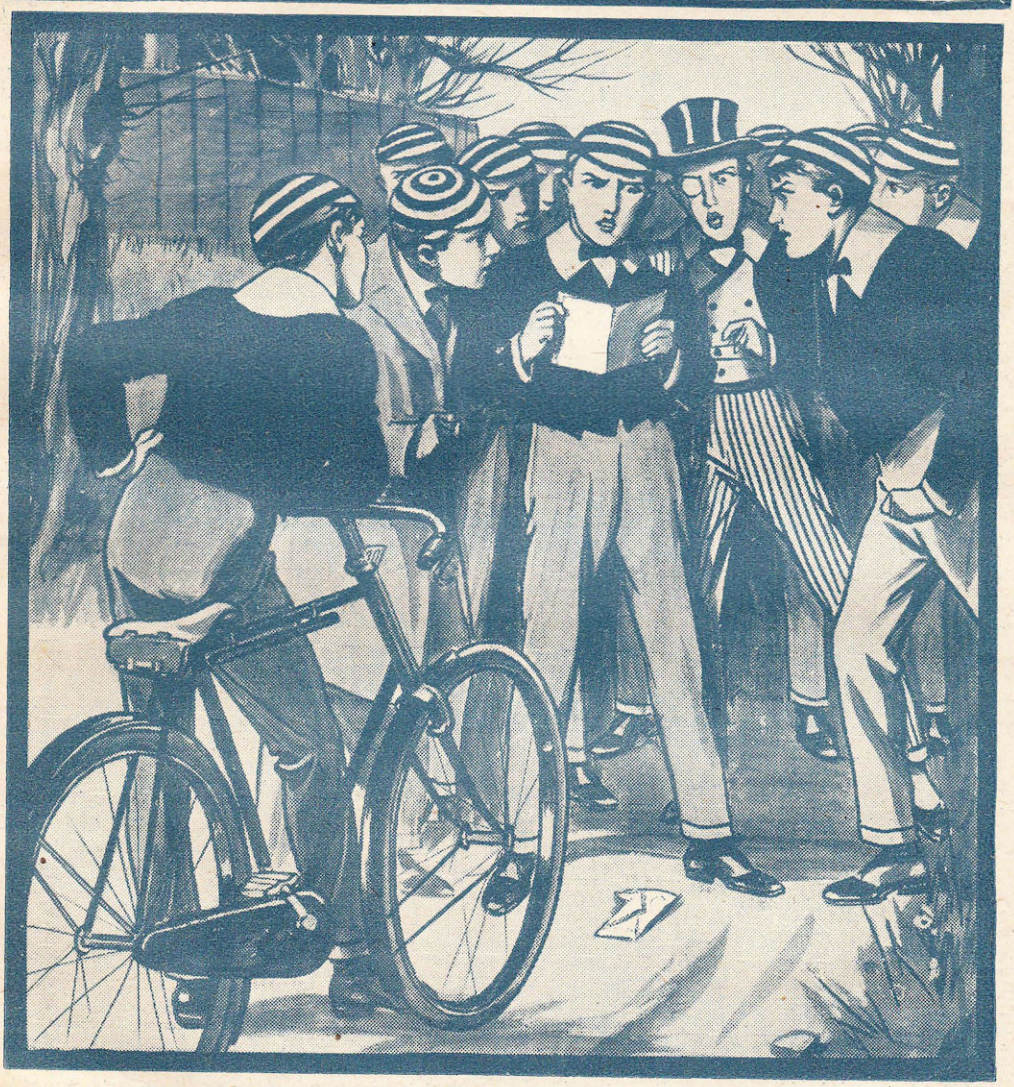


FAIRLY DONE BROWN!

2-3-18

A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry and Co. at St. Jim's.

GRUNDY'S LUCK!

By Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.
Waiting for Grundy.

"SEEN that idiot Grundy?"

"Seen that frabjous chump Grundy?"

Wilkins and Gunn asked those questions simultaneously.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were chatting in the gateway when Grundy's chums arrived, and inquired after Grundy in that affectionate manner.

The Terrible Three were waiting for the postman, who was late. Some remittances they had been expecting were also late. They nourished a hope that the postman and the remittances would arrive together.

"Grundy?" repeated Tom Merry. "No."

"Lost him?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Lost, stolen, or strayed?" grinned Manners. "I wouldn't inquire after him if I were you. He's much better lost."

But Wilkins and Gunn did not smile. They were not feeling humorous.

"The crass ass went over to Abbotsford on his bike," explained Wilkins. "He went to see a cousin or something he's got there, a lieutenant or something, at the camp. He ought to be back before now."

"We're waiting tea for him!" growled Gunn.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, don't wait any longer," he suggested. "That will solve the difficulty, won't it?"

"Not quite!" grunted Wilkins. "Grundy's got all the tin!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The howling chump!" said Wilkins wrathfully. "It was understood that he was going to stand the tea. Now he keeps out like this, the fathead! I suppose he's teaching them manœuvres at the camp, or giving the C.O. instructions how to handle men. He would!"

"I hope he hasn't had an accident!" grunted Gunn. "It would be pretty serious if the chump's run into a motor-car or something."

"Serious enough for Grundy!" said Tom.

Gunn sniffed.

"I wasn't thinking of Grundy. I mean we've missed tea in Hall. If that ass don't come in, what are we going to do?"

The Terrible Three chuckled.

"You'd better come and have tea with us," suggested Monty Lowther generously.

Wilkins and Gunn brightened.

"Oh, thanks!" said Wilkins. "Something good going in your study, Lowther?"

"Not exactly going," replied Lowther. "Gone is nearer the mark. We've got a whole sardine, though."

"A—a what?"

"Sardine."

"Anything else?"

"Sorry, no."

"You frabjous ass!" howled Wilkins. "Are you asking us to come to tea on one sardine?"

"Certainly. Better one sardine and us therewith than a stalled ox in Grundy's study."

"Oh, don't be a funny ass!" growled Gunn, staring out into the dusky road. "If that silly ass don't come, I'll punch his nose when he does come."

"Hallo, here he is!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Who—Grundy?"

"No; the postman."

"Blow the postman!"

The Terrible Three grinned and surrounded Mr. Blagg, but Mr. Blagg shook his head.

"Registered letter for me, Blaggy?" said Lowther pleadingly.

"No, Master Lowther."

"What's for me, Blaggy?"

"Nothin', Master Manners."

"And me, Blaggy?"

"Same as for Master Manners, sir!" grinned Mr. Blagg. And he trotted on.

"Thus do the hopes we had in him touch ground and dash themselves to pieces—Shakespeare!" groaned Monty Lowther.

"You'd better wait for Grundy, too!" chuckled Wilkins. "Grundy's rolling in oof. His Uncle Grundy sent him a big tip this morning."

"I wonder whether Grundy would swop his uncle for mine?" sighed Monty Lowther. "I'd give mine away, with a pound of tea."

"Hallo, deah boys! I've been lookin' for you!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth loomed up in the dusk. Monty Lowther threw his arms round D'Arcy's neck and embraced him affectionately.

"Just in time, Gussy——"

"Yawoooh!"

"Dear youth——"

"You uttah ass, you are wumplin' my tie!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

"What do ties matter at a time like this?" exclaimed Lowther. "Friend of my childhood, canst thou lend me two bob?"

"Gwooogh!"

Arthur Augustus jerked himself away, with his tie flying loose and his collar sadly rumpled. He groped for his eyeglass, jammed it into his eye, and bestowed a withering glare upon the humorist of the Shell.

"Lowthah, you uttah ass, I wegard you as a fwabjous fathead!"

"Dear pal, you can regard me in any character you choose to assume for the purpose if you will lend me two bob."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah, you duffah, I mean you are a fwabjous ass, not that I am a fwabjous ass! I mean——"

"Never mind what you mean, if you have two bob about you," interrupted Lowther. "Remember, in war-time it is up to the idle rich to share with the deserving poor. So hand out your shekels."

"Wats! As a mattah of fact, I was lookin' for you chaps to bowwow a pound or so," said Arthur Augustus. "We are stonay bwoke in our studay."

"Avaunt!" groaned Lowther. "Is everybody stony broke? Is there no longer balm in Gilead? If this goes on, I shall join the Pacifists. That will save the expense of getting my hair cut, anyway."

"Bai Jove! If you fellows are stonay——"

"Never mind. Rally round and help us wait for Grundy!" said Monty Lowther. "Uncle Grundy has been shelling out it seems, so Nephew Grundy can follow his example. We'll all collar Grundy as he comes in, if the villain comes in before the tuckshop closes——"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Wilkins, as the whir of a bicycle sounded on the road. "Here comes the frabjous chump!"

"Here comes the silly josser!" snorted Gunn.

A lamp winked outside in the gloom, and turned in at the gate. George Alfred Grundy of the Shell jumped down just as Taggles came out of his lodge with his bunch of keys.

"Just in time, old chap!" said Wilkins.

"Waiting for you, dear boy!" murmured Gunn.

All was forgiven Grundy now that he had arrived, and he had become a dear boy instead of a frabjous chump, possibly owing to the munificent tip from Uncle Grundy that jingled in his pockets.

Gunn took the bike. Grundy strode in. Even in the gloom it could be seen that George Alfred Grundy was looking unusually chippy. Grundy was always a rather lofty fellow. Now he looked loftier than ever.

"Had tea?" he asked.

"Ahem! No. We thought we'd wait for you, old scout!" murmured Wilkins.

"Right! I'm a bit late."

"H'm—a trifle!"

"I had a lot to talk about with my cousin, Captain Grundy. Hallo! That you there, Tom Merry? Had your tea?"

"Not yet," said Tom, with a smile.

"Come and have tea in my study," said Grundy. "Your friends, too, and you, D'Arcy. I want to talk to you fellows. Do come!"

"Bai Jove, you are vewy hospitable, Gwunday!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "I will come with pleasuah, deah boy!"

"Same here," said Tom Merry.

"Any port in a storm," murmured Lowther.

"Eh? What did you say, Lowther?"

"You're awfully kind, old chap."

"Oh, that's all right. You see, I want to talk business with you fellows."

"Business!" repeated Tom Merry.

"Yes, important business," said Grundy impressively.

"Oh!"

"You might put the bike up for me, Gunn. Wilkins, old man, cut off and ask Dame Taggles to change this fiver, will you. Bring in something for tea—anything that's going—within the rules, of course."

Wilkins and Gunn hastened to obey the great man's behests. Grundy himself marched off to the School House with his guests. The great Grundy was evidently in high feather, and though the Terrible Three wondered what "business" he could have to discuss with them, they were quite pleased to share the hospitality of his study. Tom Merry hoped that

the business was not in connection with Grundy's never-satisfied claim to play in the junior football eleven. For in that case the business was sure not to be settled amicably, which would be awkward. But—owing to the state of the larder in No. 10—he resolved to risk it.

CHAPTER 2.
Great News.

TOM MERRY & CO. marched into the School House with Grundy, in a more cheerful mood. Inside they met Blake and Herries and Digby of Study No. 6, who were looking for their noble study-mate.

"Oh, here you are, Gussy, you ass!" grunted Blake.

"Weally, Blake——" began Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Have you raised the wind?"

"I am sorry that the weply is in the negative, deah boy."

"Oh, my hat! I've tried Roylance, and he's as stony as the Sahara!" groaned Blake. "Contarini has spent his last bob on macaroni, of course. Talbot's out. Just our luck. Anybody seen Talbot?"

"Come to tea with me, you chaps," said Grundy.

Blake looked at him.

"Pway accept Gwunday's kind invitation, Blake. I am goin'," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Right-oh—and thanks!" said Blake. And Herries and Dig signified their assent.

It was quite a large party that followed George Alfred Grundy into Study No. 3 in the Shell.

With the Terrible Three and the four chums of Study No. 6 to provide for, as well as his own study-mates, Grundy had a food problem to solve that might have puzzled the Food Controller himself.

Grundy lighted the gas and stirred the fire in the study. Then he turned to his guests, standing before the fire in a commanding attitude with his hands in his pockets.

"Now, you fellows——" he began impressively.

It was only too evident that something had happened to buck Grundy. He was a greater man now in his own eyes than he had been before, which is saying a very great deal. Tom Merry feared that football was coming, and his heart sank. He would have preferred to postpone a football discussion till after tea.

"I've had a jaw with my cousin at Abbotsford Camp, Captain Grundy," continued George Alfred.

"I hope he enjoyed it," remarked Blake politely.

Grundy did not heed that observation.

"About football!" he said.

"You told your cousin all about the game?" inquired Monty Lowther innocently. There was a general suppression of smiles. What Grundy thought he knew about football was unlimited; but what he actually did not know about the game would have filled a library.

"Captain Grundy's skipper of a khaki footer eleven at Abbotsford," said Grundy, still unheeding. In conversation, George Alfred was often prone to listen to no voice but his own.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

Tom was naturally surprised to hear that a member of the Grundy family could play footer.

"I've been kept out of the footer here a good deal," resumed Grundy. "I won't say it was jealousy of my form."

"No, don't!" murmured Manners.

"I prefer to attribute it to crass ignorance," said Grundy. "You don't mind my speaking plainly, Merry?"

"Not at all," said Tom. "I'm only surprised to hear you admit your crass ignorance of the game, Grundy."

Grundy stared.

"I was referring to your crass ignorance, Merry, as a footer captain!" he explained.

"Oh, I see," assented Tom blandy. "My mistake!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Some footer captains know a player's form at a glance; some won't learn to distinguish a really good man in donkey's years," said Grundy. "You're one of the latter kind, Merry, if you don't mind my saying so."

"Not at all."

"I'm not going to argue with you on the subject, Merry——"

"Thank goodness!"

"I've argued till I'm tired——"

"Me, too!" murmured the captain of the Shell.

"And you never could see that you were in the wrong."

"My crass ignorance, old chap," said Tom politely.

"Exactly!" assented Grundy. "But under the present circumstances, Tom Merry, I expect you to see sense for once. On the present occasion, it is absolutely necessary for me to play in the St. Jim's junior eleven——"

"Oh!"

"I want you to hand over the captaincy to me——"

"Great pip!"

"For the one occasion only," explained Grundy. "I've arranged a fixture, and I prefer to captain the team for the occasion."

The juniors looked at Grundy.

Grundy's "cheek" was always colossal, but it was amazing even for Grundy to carry cheek to this length. In spite of Grundy's great opinion of his own powers, he was a most insignificant member of the junior football club. Arranging fixtures for the team on his own, without consulting either captain or secretary, was rather rich.

Evidently this was the business that Grundy had to discuss with Tom Merry & Co.

Fortunately, Gunn and Wilkins came into the study at that moment. Gunn was helping Wilkins carry in the parcels.

"You might have got the table set," remarked Wilkins.

"Too busy," answered Grundy. "Talking business. Now, Tom Merry——"

"Let's talk business after tea," suggested Lowther.

"Oh, never mind tea! This is rather important——"

"So is tea. Put it to the vote," said Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah! Tea befoah business," said Arthur Augustus.

"Hear, hear!"

The guests were unanimous. They had a good reason. Grundy's business was likely to lead to strained relations. It was better, in every way, to have tea first.

"Oh, I don't mind," said Grundy, rather reluctantly. "What have you got, Wilkins? Anything fit to eat?"

"Well, there isn't any butter——"

"Who cares? They don't get much butter in the trenches, I'll be bound," said Grundy. "If the Tommies can go without, what the dickens does it matter about civilians?"

"Bai Jove! I quite appwove of that mannah of wegardin' the buttah shortage, Gwunday," said Arthur Augustus.

"No sugar or tea," said Wilkins.

"Bother sugar and tea!" said Grundy. "We're not babies or old ladies."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hot water is a healthier drink than tea," remarked Blake.

"Quite wight, deah boy!"

Wilkins' purchases were, in fact, a bit limited. They represented chiefly the things that had not fallen under the eagle eye of the Food Controller. But, after all, preserved fruits were as good as jam, and oat cakes even better than bread. True, the expense was great, but that did not matter to the recipient of Uncle Grundy's munificent tips.

It was quite an agreeable tea that the numerous party sat down to—though tea was conspicuous by its absence.

Grundy did the honours quite gracefully.

For once the lofty George Alfred was desirous of making himself agreeable—evidently with a view to borrowing the football captaincy from Tom Merry, for "one occasion only."

He was as likely to be able to borrow Tom Merry's head as the captaincy, but he was not yet aware of that fact.

The feast was over at last, washed down with warm water; but although the latter might be a healthier drink than tea, nobody seemed to want a second cup.

After tea Blake was the first to rise, remembering an engagement in the Common-room.

"Hold on, Blake!" said Grundy at once.

"Excuse me, I've got to speak to Skimpole——"

"I want to talk business."

"Oh, dear!" murmured Blake.

Blake sat down again. He felt that he was bound to give Grundy his head to a certain extent, after the handsome spread.

Grundy rose, and assumed his favourite attitude before the fire. From that coign of vantage he addressed the tea-party.

"Now, about this match."

Tom Merry suppressed a groan.

"I've fixed it up," continued Grundy. "It's a high honour for a school junior team to get a match with a khaki eleven."

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom. "Is that it?"

"That's it. Captain Grundy has consented to play a football-match with St. Jim's juniors," said Grundy loftily.

"My hat!"

"Under the circs, I thought I'd better take it on myself to arrange the fixture," said Grundy. "I was sure all the fellows would be glad to bag a match like that."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, that's so," agreed Tom Merry. "We'll be glad to play them them, of course, though it's a bit of a problem, a junior eleven against an Army team."

"Of course, they're older," said Grundy. "But it's a bit of a scratch team, got up among the young recruits, not a corking Army team, of course. Average age about eighteen. We can play them."

"We'll try, anyway," said Tom.

"I've fixed it for Wednesday next week."

"Oh, all right!"

"Now, as I've arranged the match, it's only fair that I should captain the team. I put it to you, Tom Merry."

"Sorry! Can't be done."

"Now, don't be an ass! Do you think you can leave me out of a match that I've bagged all on my own?" demanded Grundy warmly.

Tom Merry looked rather worried. He began to wish that he hadn't had tea in Grundy's study, after all.

"I'm sorry!" he repeated. "But the match will be a bit tough for us, anyway, Grundy, and we shall have to put our very best men in the field. I couldn't possibly play you."

"Well, my hat!" said Grundy. "Not play me at all?"

"Sorry, no."

"There are some other members of the committee present," said Grundy. "Do they say the same?"

"Yes, rather!" said Jack Blake, with emphasis.

"Weally, Gwunday——"

"My dear man!" murmured Wilkins.

"Well," said Grundy firmly, "I'm not only going to play in the match, but I'm going to captain the eleven! That's settled!"

"Time we were getting along," remarked Tom Merry, rising.

"Wait a minute, Merry. If you refuse to join in, I shall simply play the match, and leave you out!"

"Eh?"

"I shall ask the eleven to play under me. If they refuse, I shall raise a team myself, diregarding your team, and play the match."

Tom Merry smiled.

"No objection to that, Grundy. Any fellow who likes is at liberty to raise a team, if he can, and play anybody he chooses. It won't be the St. Jim's junior eleven, that's all."

"It will be," answered Grundy calmly. "The match will be announced as being played by the St. Jim's junior eleven. Notices will be put in the local papers to that effect."

Tom Merry flushed.

"Look here, Grundy, don't be a silly ass!" he said sharply. "You can play a scratch team wherever you like, and get as big a licking as the other side likes to give you, but you can't call your collections of freaks the St. Jim's junior eleven."

"Bai Jove, wathah not!"

"That's decided," answered Grundy, unmoved. "It will be the school junior eleven, and I shall be captain. Any of your members are welcome to play in it, if they come up to my standard."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You silly ass!" roared Blake, forgetting for a momnt that he was Grundy's guest.

"Look here, Grundy," said Tom Merry, "if you stick to that, you'll turn the whole thing into ridicule by your silly, fat-headed play. You can't make the whole neighbourhood cackle at our junior eleven by using our name. Call your blessed eleven anything you like—the Grundy Ramblers, if you choose, or the Colney Hatch United, any old thing—but you can't use the name of the school junior eleven for a freak team!"

"I'm sorry to see this paltry jealousy, Merry!"

"You silly ass!" roared Tom, exasperated.

"It makes no difference to me. I'm going to play the match, captaining the St. Jim's junior eleven. If you choose to play, you can have a place; otherwise, you stand out. Take your choice!"

Tom Merry glared at the ineffable George Alfred. How any fellow could have such a colossal cheek was a mystery to Tom. Even if Grundy did not know that he was no footballer, he ought to have known that he couldn't act in this manner. But Grundy evidently didn't know. He was quite satisfied with himself.

"Bump him!" suggested Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs, we are Gwunday's guests!"

"Ahem! I forgot that. Let's clear," remarked Manners.

"Well, what's your answer, all of you?" demanded Grundy.

Tom Merry contrived to smile.

"Thank you very much for your kind entertainment, Grundy," he answered. "Your tea-parties are so delightful! Good-bye!"

And the guests marched out of the study.

Grundy snorted.

"That means that there's going to be trouble," he remarked to Wilkins and Gunn. "Of course, it won't make any difference to me. I never stand any rot!"

"You—you can't do it, Grundy," murmured Wilkins. "You can't make out that your scratch eleven is St. Jim's second team."

"It will be St. Jim's second team," replied Grundy calmly. "Haven't I offered the second eleven members places in it? It's their own look-out if they refuse my offer—a generous offer, I call it."

"Oh, crumbs! But—but you can't ——"

"I can, and I'm going to!"

Grundy's tone was final, and his study-mates did not argue the point. They only wondered what would come of Grundy's cheerful assumption of the post of junior footer captain of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 3.

A Chance for Grundy.

TOM MERRY wore a thoughtful expression that evening.

He was thinking a good deal about the fixture with the recruit team at Abbotsford.

Certainly, it was like Grundy's cheek to fix up a match for St. Jim's juniors on his own responsibility. All the same, Tom was not insensible to the honour of playing a khaki team, an opportunity that was not likely to come often in the way of a junior school eleven.

Tom Merry, in fact, would have been very pleased to book that match, especially as Grundy had arranged it for a vacant date. Indeed, Tom would have cancelled some matches for the sake of playing a khaki team. If only Grundy would see reason!

Tom talked it over in the study with Manners and Lowther.

"You see, Grundy's booked the match in the name of the junior eleven, so it is our match," he remarked. "There's only one junior eleven, and Grundy's not in it. I—I wonder whether we could stretch a point for once, and let Grundy play in the team? To a certain extent, he's entitled to a show, under the circs."

"It means playing a man short," said Manners.

"Worse than that," said Monty Lowther. "It means playing an extra man for the opposite side."

Tom laughed.

"I suppose it does," he admitted. "But if Grundy would agree to some hard practice, with some coaching, it might be done. As for letting him captain the side, only a silly idiot like Grundy would think of such a thing! I'll speak to him about it, I think."

And when the chums went down to the Common-room, Tom Merry looked for Grundy. He found the great George Alfred there, looking very important.

Grundy had offered Kangaroo of the Shell a place in his team, and the Cornstalk was politely assuring him that he wouldn't be found dead in it, when the Terrible Three came along.

"I'll play for you, Grundy, if you like," interjected Baggy Trimble.

"Oh, don't you be an ass!" was Grundy's reply.

He looked inquiringly at Tom Merry.

"Made up your mind?" he asked.

"Oh, yes!" said Tom. "I suppose Captain Grundy will want our sec. to write confirming the match, won't he?"

"Not at all. I've fixed it up," answered Grundy calmly. It's all settled. We go to Abbotsford on Wednesday next week."

"Of all the cheek!" exclaimed Lowther.

"Oh, cut it out!" said Grundy disdainfully. "You don't know anything about football, Lowther!"

"And what do you know about it?" Lowther inquired sarcastically.

"About everything that is to be known. Football at this school is hardly up to the mark of a fellow like me. When I was at Redclyffe——"

"Oh, don't spring Redclyffe on us again! I wonder you weren't lynched when you were at Redclyffe. Why on earth didn't you stay there?"

"Redclyffe's gain was our loss." sighed Manners.

Grundy snorted.

"Well, I've been thinking, Grundy!" said Tom Merry. "Leave the match to the junior eleven, as you've booked it in their name, and I'll see whether I can play you in the team."

"As skipper?"

"No, you fathead!"

"Play Gwunday!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Weally, Tom Mewwy, I suppose you are not thinkin' of covahin' the juniah eleven with widicule?"

"It will amuse the Tommies, at any rate," remarked Blake.

"As good as a cinema, I should say!" agreed Levison of the Fourth.

Grundy was reflecting, unheeding the personal remarks of the other fellows. Wilkins and Gunn were urging him to accept the skipper's offer. It was an offer far above his deserts.

"Well?" said Tom at last.

"Well," said Grundy thoughtfully, "I want to make a win of it if possible, and for that reason I think I ought to be skipper."

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

"Oh, don't cackle! But, for the sake of peace, I don't mind yielding the point," he added magnanimously. "I'll let you skipper the team, Tom Merry, on the understood condition that I play."

"Not quite that," said Tom at once. "I can only promise to do my best for you, if you stick to practice, and take some coaching—you need it badly enough."

"Oh, don't be funny!" snorted Grundy. "I've already offered my services to the junior club as general coach. I've been refused. To talk about coaching me is to talk rot. Still, I'm an accommodating chap. I'll give you a chance to see that I'm a first-rate player. And if you put me in the team it's all right."

"And if I don't?"

"Then I'll raise an eleven myself and take it over to Abbotsford next Wednesday," said Grundy firmly. "Make up your mind by Saturday!"

"You uttah ass, Gwunday——"

"Let it go at that," said Tom. "I'll expect you on Little Side to-morrow, Grundy, and we'll see what can be done."

"Right you are!"

Grundy had the air of a fellow who had made a great concession. As for the comments of the other fellows, he did not heed them.

There were some fellows, too, who backed up Grundy in his unreasonable attitude. Racke & Co., the black sheep of the School House, gave him their hearty support, in the charitable hope of making trouble for the captain of the Shell. More than once Grundy had taken it upon himself to punch Racke and Crooke and Scrope for being what he called "smoky rotters." They did not love the high-handed George Alfred. But any stick was good enough to beat an adversary with, and they wasted quite a lot of time in buttering Grundy that evening, and advising him to stick to his guns.

Not that Grundy needed urging. He was the fellow to stick to his guns in

all circumstances. As he often explained, he never stood any rot.

The next day the weather was fine, and there was a good crowd of juniors on Little Side after morning lessons. Many of them had gathered to see Grundy at practice. The news of the khaki fixture had spread, and all the junior footballers at St. Jim's were keen about it, and all of them agreed that Grundy's claim to play was preposterous.

Figgins & Co. came down specially from the New House to see what kind of a show Grundy would put up. Even a crowd of Third-Form fags came along; and Levison minor and Reggie Manners and Wally were heard urging Grundy to "go it!" To Grundy's surprise, there was a certain amount of merriment in the crowd. Grundy did not see any room for merriment.

Tom Merry arranged with Figgins for half-an-hour's play with full teams of School House and New House fellows. Grundy was in Tom's eleven. Tom spoke to him very seriously before the practice began.

"Now, look here, Grundy, just a word——"

"I've got a word to say to you," said Grundy. "But go ahead. I'm listening."

"I'm putting you in as right back——"

"Better make me centre-forward," said Grundy at once. "I shall be able to give the team a better lead in that position."

"You're not wanted to give the team a lead, Grundy," said Tom, as patiently as he could. "You can leave that to me!"

"Oh, that's piffle, you know!"

"Your business is to play back—back up the halves and clear the ball, and so on."

"Not to score?" inquired Grundy sarcastically.

"No. We're not looking for goals from a full-back."

"I expect you'll get 'em, all the same. I've got my shooting-boots on to-day."

Tom did not heed that remark.

"Above all, you're not to keep the ball," he said. "When you get the leather send it to the proper place. None of your rushes up the field."

"My rushes up the field are my strong point," said Grundy calmly.

Tom Merry breathed hard.

"Now, look here, Grundy, I'm trying to do my best for you!" he said. "Play the game, and have some sense, and if I possibly can I'll put you in the junior team for the khaki match. Mind you don't charge us from behind, and try to push us off the ball!"

"If I see a fellow fumbling with the ball, Merry, and I feel I could do better, I haven't any choice."

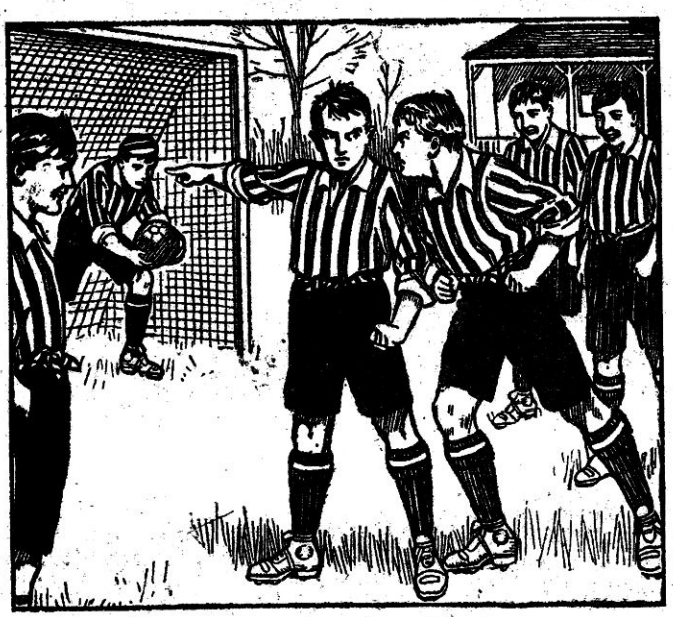
"Well, that's all I've got to say," said Tom.

"Now I'll say something," said Grundy cheerfully. "I can't have my game ruined by considerations for anybody's swelled head. My suggestion is this. Put me in as centre-forward, and tell the team to back up my play. Tell 'em to keep their eye on me, and follow my game. And I wish you wouldn't stalk off while I'm speaking to you!" roared Grundy.

But the junior captain did stalk off, and Grundy rather sulkily lined up as right-back. And when the play began there was a chuckle round the field and a yell:

"Go it, Grundy!"

Grundy went it!



Tom Merry Is Not Pleased!
(See Chapter 4.)

CHAPTER 4.
Grundy Shows What He Can Do.

FIGGINS & CO. were smiling when they started. They fully expected to walk over the School House fellows, aided, as the latter were, by Grundy. Grundy meant to walk all over them, aided or not by his fellow-players. Grundy's idea of footer seemed to be that it was a one-man game, and that he was the one man. Tom Merry was sincerely desirous of giving Grundy a chance of showing what he could do, though he was conscious that Grundy's swelled head made the thing a foredoomed failure. Grundy had shown too often what his game was like for the captain of the Shell to have any great hopes. A big, powerful fellow like Grundy might have been very useful at back, if only he would have understood that he was not the only pebble on the beach. But he wouldn't.

Figgins & Co. came on, but the School House got the ball and drove through them. The forwards were busy in the New House half, and Grundy, much to his disgust, was left with nothing to do. Grundy was not the fellow to do nothing for long. He followed up the attack with a rush which carried him ahead of the halves and among the forwards. And, feeling that he could do better with the ball than Tom Merry could, he cheerfully shouldered his skipper from behind and sent Tom sprawling.

The captain of the Shell rolled on the ground, amid yells of laughter and cheers from the spectators. Grundy was not disappointing them.

Unheeding Tom's roar of wrath and the laughter of the field, Grundy rushed the ball on. His idea was that he could go through the New House like a knife through cheese and slam the ball in, despite Fatty Wynn grinning in goal. He was greatly surprised when the ball disappeared from his foot, not even seeing how Figgins hooked it away.

Figgins ran on with it, laughing, and Grundy spun round and rushed back, colliding with Talbot and sending him spinning. Levison just dodged him, or he would have gone spinning, too. Then Grundy stumbled over Tom Merry, who was getting up. Tom went down again, and Grundy sprawled across him.

"Draggimoff!" shrieked the captain of the Shell. "Collar him! Spiflicate him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! The uttah ass!"

"You clumsy ass!" roared Grundy wrathfully. "What do you mean by getting in the way? Do you call this football?"

He jumped up and rushed after Figgins.

It was lucky for him, for if he had remained within reach of his skipper there would certainly have been assault and battery on the footer ground.

Figgins was slamming in the ball by that time, but Herries in goal drove it out. There was only one back on the scene, and the New House forwards dealt with him, and the leather went in again from Kerr, who scored. Just after the ball whizzed past Herries and landed in the net, Grundy came racing up, charged Kerr from behind, and sent him spinning into the goal fairly on top of the astounded Herries.

"Yaroooh!" roared Kerr.

"Yooooop!" spluttered Herries, as he collapsed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grundy, you silly villain!" yelled Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy stood panting.

Whether he thought he had been playing football it is impossible to say; but certainly he was annoyed and wrathful. Tom Merry came striding up with a grim brow, and Grundy faced him with a brow that was still more grim.

"You silly chump!" he roared.

"What?"

"Look at that!" Grundy pointed dramatically to the goal. "There's one up for the New House."

"You gave them that goal!" shrieked Tom.

"You did, you mean!"

"You fathead! You Hun! You—you——"

Words failed Tom Merry.

"I appeal to the whole team!" exclaimed Grundy, looking round. "Is that chap fit to skipper any team outside an infants' school? Did you ever see such a clumsy ass? Instead of backing me up, he gets in the way——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is it centre-forward's bizney to back up a full-back?" demanded Blake.

"Yes, when I'm full-back."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You shwiekin' ass, Gwunday——"

"Look at it!" exclaimed Grundy. "I had the game fairly in my hands. I should certainly have got the ball and scored if Tom Merry hadn't blundered into my way like a potty Hun——"

"You charged me like a mad bull!" howled Tom.

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"What were you doing there, anyway, you chump? Didn't I tell you to keep your place?"

"Didn't I tell you that rushes up the field were my great point?" demanded Grundy, in his turn. "Do you think I'm going to chuck a game away simply because you haven't sense enough to put me in the right place?"

"Oh, kill him, somebody!" gasped Tom Merry.

"If the fellows haven't sense enough to sack you now, Tom Merry, they're past praying for!" snorted Grundy. "What beats me is that you can't see that you're no good as skipper."

"Bai Jove!"

"Are we going on?" inquired Figgins politely.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No," he answered. "There's nothing to go on for. This was a trial to see what Grundy could do. We've seen!"

"We have—we has!" grinned Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, if you're fed up, you get off, Merry. I'll captain the team and finish," said Grundy. "Line up, you fellows, and look on me as your skipper. Where are you going to?"

The footballers did not answer. They went.

"Come back, you silly asses!" shouted Grundy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Figgins——"

"Oh, don't!" said Figgins. "You're too funny to live, Grundy! Did you get a coach from Colney Hatch to teach you footer?"

Grundy strode after Tom Merry, who had gone off the field. He clapped his hand on the shoulder of the captain of the Shell.

"Look here, you blithering ass——" he began.

Tom shook his hand off angrily.

"Shut up!" he answered.

Tom's politeness had been put to too great a strain, and it had failed.

"What about the practice?"

"That's done."

"Do you mean to say you've seen enough to judge of my form?" exclaimed Grundy.

"More than enough!" snapped Tom, while the other fellows chortled.

"And what's your decision about my playing in the team?"

Tom stared at him.

"I should think you could guess that," he answered. "I wouldn't play you if we were meeting a girls' school!"

"You mean I'm to be left out?"

"You bet!" said Tom emphatically.

Grundy sniffed.

"Well, I expected it," he answered. "Jealousy and envy always go with bad play, and I quite expected this of you."

"Well, now you've got what you expected," said Tom gruffly.

"All serene! I shall make up a team to play Captain Grundy's lot at Abbotsford. I sha'n't play you, Tom Merry. I'm sorry, but after your exhibition today, you really can't expect me to."

"Fathead!"

"The same applies to you, Talbot. After the crass way you shoved yourself in my way, I can't give you a place."

Talbot laughed.

"I might make an exception in your favour, Levison, though I'm not wholly satisfied with you——"

"Please don't!" grinned Levison.

"Look here, Grundy!" said Tom quietly. "You can play any fool game you like, as you're your own master till your relations shove you into a lunatic asylum. But if you take a gang of duds over to Abbotsford, you're not to call them the St. Jim's Junior Eleven, and you're not to put any notice in the local papers calling them that. Do you see?"

"I see. I shall do it, all the same."

"You won't be allowed to, then."

"Who'll stop me?" demanded Grundy, in a very warlike way.

"We'll stop you fast enough!" exclaimed Tom, in great exasperation. "And for a beginning we'll give you the frog's-march now as a warning!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You—— Here, hands off! Oh, my hat!"

Grundy roared and struggled, but the juniors did not heed.

They seized the great Grundy, and whirled him into the air, and frog's-marched him all round the footer-ground amid laughter and cheers.

By the time they landed Grundy on his back the Shell fellow had no breath left to roar with, and he lay and spluttered for a long time, till Wilkins and Gunn came and picked him up. Grundy crawled away in a state of breathless indignation. But his resolution was not changed—not a whit. Grundy was a sticker.

CHAPTER 5.
Declined With Thanks.

THE next day Grundy of the Shell was busy.

Having decided to form a junior eleven—to play under the title of St. Jim's Juniors in the school colours—he set to work without delay. As he explained to Wilkins and Gunn, there wasn't much time to be lost. He had to lick his team into shape before Wednesday. Wilkins and Gunn could only gasp at the bare idea of Grundy licking any team into shape. They wondered what shape it would be licked into by Grundy.

Grundy's two chums were set down at once as recruits. Wilkins was a good footballer, though Grundy often told him how he could improve his play, and said he was an ass for not taking expert advice.

Gunn, who was rather a studious fellow, was not great at games, though he could play in a good average style. Grundy admitted that in Gunn's case a lot of coaching would be needed, but he was ready to give it.

Unfortunately, it turned out that Wilkins had damaged his ankle, and was not likely to be able to play for a week or so. Strange to relate, Wilkins' ankle showed no outward sign of damage. The damage, whatever it was, must have been entirely internal. But Wilkins limped about the study a good deal, and Grundy regretfully crossed his name off the list.

It was equally unfortunate that Gunn received a letter from home asking him to go there on Wednesday afternoon. A family command of that kind could not be neglected. Gunn sorrowfully told Grundy that he wouldn't be able to play for him, after all. He did not add that he had written home and asked his brother to write that letter.

The two Shell fellows did not want to quarrel with Grundy, who was a terrific fighting-man. Moreover, they liked old Grundy, and did not want to hurt his feelings. But they were determined, with the most deadly determination, that they would not figure in Grundy's freak eleven.

Thus deserted by his pals, George Alfred had to begin his footer list again from the beginning.

He announced his willingness to play members of Tom Merry's team, but the willingness was all on his side. He did not condescend to ask the Terrible Three, not being satisfied with their style of play, especially Tom Merry's. But he offered four places to Study No. 6.

The reply of Study No. 6 was short, if not sweet. It consisted of the ancient and classic monosyllable, "Rats!"

And Arthur Augustus added, with emphasis:

"Yaas, wathah! Wats, and many of them, Gwunday!"

Baffled there, Grundy offered places to Kargaroo of the Shell, Clifton Dane, and Bernard Glyn. The three Shell fellows roared.

"I'm not joking!" exclaimed Grundy. "I mean it!"

"You must be!" said Kangaroo, with a shake of the head.

"Not at all; I mean it!" persisted Grundy. "Of course, your footer doesn't come up to my standard—especially yours, Noble. But I shall be keeping an eye on you, and I shall give you some tips in our practice on Saturday. What do you say?"

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

"What are you cackling at?" roared Grundy.

Kangaroo wiped his eyes, and waved Grundy away.

"Don't!" he said.

"Eh? Don't what?"

"Don't be so funny! You're giving me a pain in the ribs!"

"Look here, do you silly chumps accept my offer or not?" bellowed Grundy.

"Not!"

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

And George Alfred departed in search of fresh fields and pastures new, leaving the Cornstalk Co. chortling.

Study No. 9 had the honour of the next visit from Grundy. Levison and Clive and Cardew were at prep when the great man happened in.

"I've put your name down, Levison," was Grundy's announcement.

"Down where?"

"In my footer list."

"Take it up again, then."

"Does that mean that you decline?"

"Exactly," assented Levison.

"You're not much good, anyway," remarked Grundy. "Now, about you, Clive——"

"What about me?" grinned the South African.

"I've noticed your play at centre-half, and you're not bad. I should have to set you right on one or two points, but I've no doubt that will be all right. Shall I put you on my list?"

"Thanks, no."

"You don't get a chance of playing a khaki team every day."

"My dear man, I'd do anything to amuse the Tommies, except playing the giddy ox in a team of giddy oxen. Besides, you'll be funny enough to set all Abbotsford in a roar."

"Oh, dry up! I don't know about you, Cardew," said Grundy, with a rather doubtful look at the dandy of the Fourth. "You're a bit too lackadaisical for a footballer. Still, I'll give you a chance."

"Thanks, awfully!" said Cardew. "You're really too good, Grundy!"

"Not at all. With a bit of coaching from me, I've no doubt you'll make a fair show. I'll put your name down, then."

"Just as you like."

"You ass, Cardew!" exclaimed Clive. "You're not going to play?"

"Not at all!"

"Eh?" exclaimed Grundy, stopping his pencil half way. "What's the good of putting your name down, Cardew, if you're not going to play?"

"None that I can see," answered Cardew cheerfully. "But you can put it down if you like. I've no objection."

Grundy gave the three grinning juniors an exasperated look. Continuous refusals of the high honour of playing in his team were beginning to annoy him.

"I didn't come here for any confounded cheek!" he exclaimed.

"Go hon!"

"And for two pins I'd mop up the whole study!" roared Grundy.

Cardew opened the table-drawer, fumbled in it, and laid two pins on the table. Grundy stared at them.

"There you are!" said Cardew meekly.

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"There are the two pins. Now mop up the study!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

George Alfred Grundy never needed asking twice in a matter of that kind. He made a rush at the three.

The three rose to the occasion. Before he knew what was happening, the Shell fellow was swept off the floor, and the next thing he knew was that he was on his back in the passage, in a very breathless state. The door of No. 9 closed on him, and there were three merry chortles within.

Grundy staggered up.

He was greaty inclined to renew the combat, in spite of the odds, but business came first, and he postponed vengeance. He strode along wrathfully to No. 7 in the Fourth, where he found Contarini and Smith minor, and the new junior from New Zealand, Dick Roylance.

Apparently Study No. 7 had received news of Grundy's quest, for they grinned as George Alfred looked in. Grundy frowned.

"I'm making up a list for my match at Abbotsford," he said. "I can play one of you fellows."

"Grazie tanto!" murmured Contarini. "Troppo gentile."

"Eh? I don't understand ice-cream language!" grunted Grundy. "I don't want you—you can't play footer. Nor you, either, Smith; you're no good. You don't mind my saying so?"

"Not a bit!" chuckled Smith minor. "If you thought I could play footer, Grundy, I should ask the fellows what was wrong with my play."

"Oh, don't be an ass! It's you I want, Roylance. I fancy I could make a footballer of you."

Dick Roylance laughed.

"I'm sorry I can't give you a chance," he answered. "Declined with thanks, old man."

"You cheeky Fourth-Form chump——"

"You silly Shell fathead!"

Grundy very nearly started in to mop up No. 7, but perhaps he was restrained by the unfortunate result of the attempted mopping up of No. 9. He snorted instead, and tramped out, and slammed the door.

Fellows in the passage grinned at the sight of George Alfred, with his pencil and footer list—blank, so far.

Ill-luck dogged the steps of Grundy. He tackled Julian and Kerruish, Hammond and Reilly, and their refusals were firm—more firm than polite. He asked George Gore, and Gore told him to go and eat coke. In spite of a previous decision, he asked Talbot of the Shell, but Talbot politely declined. He even asked Buck Finn, who knew as much about footer as he knew about flying, but Finn turned him down.

In a decided ill-humour, Grundy marched across to the New House, determined to make up a team from that quarter, since his own House had left him in the lurch.

To his exasperation, Figgins & Co. persisted in treating his suggestion as a joke, and roared over it. It was in vain that Grundy asserted that he was not joking. Figgins & Co. persisted that he must be, and continued to roar.

Grundy left them, snorting, and tried Redfern and Owen and Lawrence. From the fact that Grundy quitted Redfern's study with three pairs of boots lashing out behind him, it appeared that he had not prospered there. With a dark and frowning brow, Grundy tramped back to the School House.

Wilkins and Gunn had nearly finished their prep by the time he came back to the study.

"Made up your list, old chap?" asked Gunn blandly, while Wilkins winked at the ceiling.

"No!" snapped Grundy. "I say, how's your ankle, Wilkins?"

"Awful!" said Wilkins pathetically.

"Look here, Gunn, are you bound to go home next Wednesday?"

"Simply impossible to get out of it, old scout."

Grundy snorted.

"Hadn't you better do some work, old chap?" murmured Wilkins.

"Bother the work!"

"You can't bother Linton in the morning."

"Blow Linton!"

However, Grundy sat down to work, and left the footer list—still blank—over till the morrow. So far, Grundy's eleven consisted of one person—George Alfred himself. And terrific footballer as Grundy believed himself to be, even Grundy could not think of playing the khaki match entirely on his own.

It was a knotty problem, and Grundy gave it more thought than he gave his prep, with the result that he was in hot water with the master of the Shell the next morning.

But that was only a trifle. Grundy had no time to waste on Form work or Form masters. He thought out the knotty problems in class, and to judge by the satisfied expression on his face when Mr. Linton dismissed the Shell, he found a solution. But whether that solution was as satisfactory as Grundy supposed was another matter.

CHAPTER 6.
The Only Way.

TOM MERRY noticed that Grundy wheeled out his bicycle after dinner that day. He was not aware that Grundy's destination was the office of the "Rylcombe Gazette," where a notice was to be inserted concerning the match at Abbotsford between the khaki team and St. Jim's second eleven. Had Tom been aware of that, it is probable that Grundy's ride would not have been uninterrupted.

As it was, Grundy rode off cheerfully, and returned in good time for dinner. Wilkins and Gunn met him as he came in, in an inquiring mood.

"I've done it!" Grundy remarked.

"You generally have!" observed Wilkins thoughtlessly.

"Eh?"

"I—I mean what have you done this time?" asked Wilkins hastily.

"I've seen Tiper."

"Anything special about Tiper?" inquired Gunn.

"I mean I've seen about putting the notice in the local paper," explained Grundy. "I've just caught it in time for this week. I ought to have seen about it before really; but it's all right. The notice comes out in the 'Gazette' to-morrow."

Wilkins and Gunn exchanged glances.

"About the match at Abbotsford?" Gunn asked.

"Yes, of course!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I've arranged for a regular notice, and also a chatty paragraph about the interesting nature of the match," remarked Grundy. "Khaki eleven and St. Jim's second team, you know. Very interesting match, I think, and there's no reason why the paper shouldn't say so."

"Oh!" murmured Wilkins.

"I sent off the notices yesterday to the Abbotsford and Wayland papers——"

"You did?" gasped Gunn.

"Certainly. It's mentioned that I captain St. Jim's. Other names of players could not be given, as the eleven isn't made up yet."

"You've referred to yourself as skipper of St. Jim's second eleven?" asked Wilkins. Well as he knew Grundy, he could hardly believe in such colossal nerve.

"Naturally," answered George Alfred calmly. "I'm captain in the match. I was willing to leave it to Tom Merry, as a concession, if he'd agreed to play me. He wouldn't! You know that."

"Yes, I—I know that!"

"Well, then, there was nothing else to be done. Now the bizney is to raise my eleven, and I've thought that out."

"Oh, you've thought that out, have you? I thought you tried it yesterday and found it a frost."

"That's because there's a conspiracy against me."

"A—a—a conspiracy?"

Grundy nodded.

"Yes. I don't like to say it, Wilkins, because I rather like Tom Merry in a way—he's not a bad chap, take him all in all. But jealousy will make even a decent chap go to shocking lengths. Rather than allow me to play a great game for St. Jim's, he's persuaded all the footballing fellows to refuse to play for me. That's the only way of accounting for it. It's a conspiracy."

"There's the dinner bell," said Gunn feebly.

Grundy's chums felt that the great George Alfred was almost too much for them. Apparently he did not realise how colossally cheeky it was to announce a match by St. Jim's juniors, with himself as skipper, unauthorised by the club, and when he was not even a member of the team. But Wilkins and Gunn found comfort in the reflection that the match would not come off, as Grundy could not raise a team of players.

But even yet they did not quite know Grundy. They went in to dinner, Grundy in an evidently cheerful mood. After dinner George Alfred expounded the plan that had been formed in his mighty brain.

"Tom Merry calls himself a football skipper," he remarked to his chums. "Anybody could lead a team made up of chaps who could play. The real test of

ability is to make up a team of scratch players, lick them into shape, and turn them into a winning side."

"You could do that, I suppose?" murmured Wilkins, with one eye closed at Gunn.

"I could! And I'm going to!"

"Eh?"

"That's the idea. I'm going to recruit any fellow who's willing to play, give him first-class coaching, and make up an eleven. It's the only way, you know, as the chap says in the play. What do you think of the idea?"

Wilkins and Gunn did not state what they thought of the idea. They only blinked at Grundy.

Grundy walked away, and left them blinking. He ran down Racke and Crooke and Scrope in the quad. The three black sheep were talking geegees—a subject they dropped at once as Grundy came up. Once upon a time Grundy had knocked Racke's and Scrope's heads together for discussing racing matters in his hearing. Grundy was down on merry blades, and he had high-handed methods which did not make him beloved.

But the three were quite civil. Grundy was up against Tom Merry just now, which was quite enough to assure him the hearty support of Racke & Co.

Out came Grundy's pocket-book and pencil.

"I'm going to put you fellows' names down!" he announced.

"Hallo! What is it?" asked Crooke. "A sweep?"

Grundy glared.

"You miserable ass! Do you think I go in for gambling?" he demanded.

"Well, what is it, then?" said Crooke sulkily. "What do you want our names for?"

"My eleven."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I'm going to play you on Wednesday."

Grundy did not ask them if they would play. He stated that he was going to play them. That was Grundy's genial way.

Racke & Co. burst into a roar. They had heard all about Grundy's efforts to raise an eleven, over which all the Lower School had chuckled merrily.

"I don't care for footer," smiled Racke. "I'm afraid I shall have to ask you to leave me out, Grundy."

"Too much fag for me!" grinned Scrope.

"The compulsory practice is bad enough," said Crooke. "Catch me playing!"

Grundy hardly heard those remarks. He was writing down the three names in his list, which was started at last.

"I'm making up an entirely new eleven," he said, when he had written the names. "I shall expect you to put in every minute at practice, and I hope to make you into passable players by Wednesday. Good coaching works miracles. You ought to be glad of the chance! You don't play for the School every day—and against a khaki team, too. Don't mind what Tom Merry says. He's bound to object, but don't take any notice of him. I'm running this show!"

Racke & Co. exchanged glances.

"By gad!" murmured Racke. "Merry would be as mad as a hatter if——"

"By gad, he would!" chuckled Crooke.

"After all, it's rather a distinction to play a khaki team. I'm your man, Grundy," said Racke, with great heartiness. "I say, if you want any more recruits, I'll speak to Clampe and Mellish."

"Do!" said Grundy. "Send them to my study."

"Right you are!"

Before afternoon lessons, Grundy's team was well on the way to completion.

The black sheep of St. Jim's entered into the scheme with great cordiality.

A fellow like Racke had no chance of playing in a real match unless he changed his manners and customs very considerably. To play in the name of the School, against the will and order of Tom Merry, seemed to Racke a first-class move against the junior captain.

Certainly such a team as Grundy was raising would be booked for a hopeless licking—the khaki goals would probably amount to about twenty to nil. But that did not matter in the least to Racke & Co.—it rather attracted them. They did not care twopence for football, or for the School's name in sports. The more ridiculous the defeat the more it would make Tom Merry "squirm."

To those cheery youths the match was simply a joke, a huge joke, and they did not intend to exert themselves in the least.

Mellish and Clampe and Chowle joined up at once, when Racke told them the joke, and Piggott of the Third offered his services. Grundy accepted him provisionally, to be dropped if an older player turned up. Grundy wanted only three or four more men—and he soon found them. Skimpole, the genius of the Shell, who knew as much about footer as a Prussian knows about truth, joined up from sheer good-nature, when he was asked. Clarence York Tompkins of the Fourth gave in his adhesion, because he was a duffer, and Baggy Trimble jumped at the chance in the hope of raising a small loan from Grundy.

Just before lessons, Grundy pinned a paper on the notice-board. After lessons it caught the eyes of several fellows, and there was soon a crowd round the board, staring at it.

CHAPTER 7.
Grundy's Eleven.

"BAI Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The silly ass!"

"Seen this, Tommy?" shouted Jack Blake, as the captain of the Shell came down the staircase with a footer under his arm.

"Hallo! What's on?" asked Tom.

"Look at this."

The Terrible Three joined the grinning crowd, and stared at the notice on the board, indited in Grundy's sprawling hand.

They simply blinked as they read it.

Grundy's sprawling script informed St. Jim's and the world generally that the Abbotsford match would be played on Wednesday, on the Abbotsford Athletic Ground, kick-off at three o'clock. The list of players was appended as follows:

"G. A. GRUNDY.
A. RACKE.
G. G. CROOKE.
C. CHOWLE.
L. CLAMPE.
B. TRIMBLE.
C. Y. TOMPKINS.
H. SKIMPOLE.
P. MELLISH.
L. SCROPE.
R. PIGGOTT."

The list was, as Blake remarked, a corker. There was not a fellow mentioned in it who could play footer. About the best in the bunch was Tompkins, who played like an owl, according to Blake. Still, he played. The others never played when they could help it—excepting of course, the great Grundy.

"What on earth is that?" exclaimed Tom Merry at last. "Is it a joke?"

"Not at all; quite sewious, deah boy," smiled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "That is appawently the team Gwunday is goin' to play in the khaki match."

"The howling ass!" exclaimed Tom wrathfully.

"Under the name of St. Jim's juniors, too!" said Talbot of the Shell, laughing. "I really think we shall have to speak to Grundy."

"It won't come off," said Tom. "Those duffers are too slack to play. They are only pulling Grundy's leg, I expect."

"Yaas, wathah! That is vewy pwob."

And Tom Merry went down to footer, dismissing Grundy and his works from his mind.

There was laughter, loud and long, over Grundy's list, however. Everybody came to have a look at it. Even seniors strolled along to look and laugh. Even Kildare of the Sixth, and Darrel and Langton, were seen to read that list, and burst into a roar.

Grundy was the only fellow at St. Jim's, who could see nothing comic in it.

If Grundy had gone round deliberately searching for fellows who could not play footer he could not have succeeded better. Grundy was aware that his team was composed of duds. What he chiefly depended upon was the result of first-class coaching from a first-class player—himself. He explained that to Wilkins and Gunn, who seemed to be suffering from internal pains while they listened to the explanation.

"Besides, a really good skipper means everything to a team," said Grundy confidently. "Better a bad team with a good skipper, than a good team with a bad skipper. I don't say that Tom Merry could make that team win. But leave it to me, and you'll see what you will see."

And on that point at least there was no doubt.

There were difficulties, however.

Racke & Co. were prepared to play at Abbotsford, or anywhere else, for the sake of worrying Tom Merry; but they were not prepared to exert themselves at footer practice. Anything like work was quite outside the scope of their plans.

When Grundy called his men to practice, he found that Racke & Co. had gone out, and the only fellows he could find were Tompkins, Skimpole, and his noble self. Grundy growled wrathfully, but it could not be helped, and he marched Tompkins and Skimmy down to Little Side to give them some coaching.

Unfortunately, the learned Skimpole was pumped after about three minutes. Skimmy could talk without limit, and he knew all about Socialism and Determinism and evolution, and stuff of that kind, but physical exertion was not in his line. He crawled off Little Side feeling dazed and dreary, and limped back to the House with great doubts as to whether he had better play in the great match, after all.

Clarence York Tompkins was a little better; but, on the other hand, he did not seem to feel any need of coaching—from Grundy, at all events. He replied to Grundy's instructions by such disrespectful ejaculations as "Rats!" "Rot!" and "Go and boil your head!" And there was much merriment when Grundy and his recruit were seen at fisticuffs; and practice ended with the unhappy Tompkins fleeing wildly from the football-ground, with his skipper raging in pursuit.

And that evening one name was crossed out from Grundy's list with a heavy hand—the name of C. Y. Tompkins. Tompkins himself had crossed it out. He had had enough of Grundy.

"After all, the fellow's no good," Grundy told Wilkins and Gunn.

Perhaps your ankle will be well enough by Wednesday, Wilkins."

"I'm afraid it's getting worse," said Wilkins hastily.

"I shall have to find another man, then."

Finding another man was not easy, however. Grundy sought up and down St. Jim's, but there was not another man to be had. It was exasperating, but there it was. And later in the evening Grundy looked in on Tompkins.

"You'll have to play, Tompkins," he said. "I can't replace you at short notice."

"I wouldn't be found dead in your silly team!" was the reply of Clarence York. "Go and eat coke!"

Grundy pushed back his cuffs.

"I never stand any rot, Tompkins. Where will you have it?"

"Do you think you're going to bully me into playing in your potty team?" shouted Tompkins, in great indignation.

"You're going to play!"

"I'm not!"

"You are! You'll think better of it when I've given you a licking."

Grundy felt that he was justified in taking a strong line. Grundy never did anything that he did not feel was justified. He was a conscientious fellow. He started towards Tompkins.

But Tompkins and his study-mate, Mulvaney minor, lined up together to handle the big Shell fellow, and a poker and an inkpot were introduced into the argument. There was excitement in the study for some time, but Grundy found that the poker and the inkpot were unanswerable arguments, and he left rather hurriedly, in a shocking state, and the name of C. Y. Tompkins remained crossed off. Grundy had to decide to play the great match a man short; but he felt that, with himself in the lead, the odds against him would not really count very much.

CHAPTER 8.
The Limit.

THE next day there was wrath in the School House at St. Jim's. Grundy was wrathful because his recruits had all gone out for the afternoon, and the coaching—so very necessary for such champions—was unavoidably postponed once more.

Tom Merry & Co. were wrathful because somebody had brought home a copy of the local paper from Rylcombe, and Grundy's announcement was seen there.

It was at tea-time that Tom Merry found that precious notice in the paper, and he left his tea unfinished to call upon Grundy.

The captain of the Shell burst into Grundy's study with the paper in his hand, and brandished it before Grundy's startled face.

"What does this mean?" roared Tom.

"What are you driving at?"

"This foolery in the paper!" shouted the captain of the Shell. "This silly rot you've put in!"

"Oh, my notice!" said Grundy. "What about it It's the same that I've had put in the 'Wayland Times' and the 'Abbotsford Sentinel.'"

"You've splashed this silly rot over all the local papers?" howled Tom Merry.

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Grundy tartly. "Naturally, I've announced the match. Lots of people will be glad to come and see it—a match between a public school eleven and a khaki team."

"You've called your set of freaks the St. Jim's second eleven!" shrieked Tom.

"I've called my team the St. Jim's second eleven, certainly."

"You—you—you frabjous dummy!"

"Oh, dry up!"

Grundy's Methods of Discipline.
(See Chapter 7.)

"Do you think we're going to allow you to make our eleven look idiotic before half the county?" demanded Tom. "People who see you will think you are really St. Jim's second team, after this."

"Naturally."

"Do you think you'll be allowed to show up St. Jim's as a lunatic asylum, you howling idiot?"

Grundy pointed to the door.

"That's enough. Get out!"

"What!"

"Get out! I can feel a certain amount of sympathy for you, Merry, at being put in the shade, after the way you've swanked about. I understand perfectly. But I must point out that you owe it to your crass stupidity. If you'd agreed to play me, I'd have let you have the match."

Tom crushed the paper in his hand.

"This is going to be stopped," he said.

Grundy laughed scornfully.

"I'd like to know how you're going to stop it," he answered.

"I shall write to Captain Grundy at the camp, and explain the whole matter to him," said Tom. "That's the only way."

Grundy smiled.

"N.G.," he answered. "I've thought of that, and nipped it in the bud in advance. I've explained to my cousin that there are some fellows here who are jealous of me, and set up to be top-dogs in school footer, and warned him not to take any notice if he hears from them. I mentioned your name specially."

Tom Merry gasped.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Wilkins.

The captain of the Shell calmed himself. It was not much use losing his temper.

"I suppose you're a born fool, Grundy, and you can't help it," he said.

"There's the door!" replied Grundy.

"But surely you must see that this can't be done?" said Tom, as patiently as he could. "Look at it! Your team isn't St. Jim's Second Eleven, and you're not junior captain."

"For this occasion I am."

"By what right?" asked Tom, still patient.

"For the sake of the school," answered Grundy, "it's time for me to take a hand in the matter of school games. The thing's been long enough in the hands of incompetent fumblers. I'm a patriotic chap. I think of the reputation of St. Jim's as a sporting school.

"Oh, dear!" murmured Gunn.

"I feel quite justified in taking this step," resumed Grundy. "Opposition I regard with contempt."

Tom Merry breathed hard through his nose.

"This announcement," he said, tapping the paper, "is enough to bring a big crowd to the Abbotsford Athletic Ground on Wednesday."

"I expect it to," assented Grundy.

"There may be five hundred or a thousand people there, and they'll see a set of silly idiots playing the fool, and think that represents St. Jim's. Do you think we can allow that to happen?"

"I'm afraid I can't take any notice of remarks dictated by a paltry jealousy, Merry."

"You mean you're going on?"

"You bet!"

"You'll be stopped!" said Tom, and with that he left the study.

Grundy went calmly on with his tea. Wilkins and Gunn were looking at him very curiously, but he did not observe it.

"I fancy I told him off pretty well," he remarked complacently. "Of course, I expected opposition."

"D-d-d-did you?" stammered Wilkins.

"Certainly! There's nothing annoys fumblers so much as seeing a really efficient chap getting to work. Still, they'll come round."

"Oh, you think they'll come round?"

Grundy nodded.

"Quite sure of it. You see, even Merry, duffer as he is at footer, has his good points. He really thinks a lot about the school's reputation at games, only he

doesn't know the way to set to work. Well, a victory over a khaki team will be a big leg-up for us, won't it? After I've beaten the Tommies' team at Abbotsford all the fellows will come round. They'll admit that I was in the right, you see."

"You—you think you'll win on Wednesday?"

"I expect to. But a defeat doesn't matter much, so long as there's a good game. It will be a creditable match, and that's the thing."

"But—but your eleven——"

"A good skipper to pull a team together works wonders. Besides, I intend to put my very best into the game. Tom Merry has queer ideas about a chap keeping his place in the field, and all that. I've never thought much of such ideas. A good player's place is where he is wanted."

"Well, yes—within limits."

"Quite so, in ordinary cases," assented Grundy. "But ordinary rules do not apply to a very exceptional player. I shall play centre-forward, but I shall be found pretty often helping the backs, and bucking up the halves—even dropping into goal in case of need. Then, in case of dispute, I shall be able to set the referee right, with my knowledge of the game."

"Oh, crikey!"

"You see, an exceptional captain means everything in a match. That's my view. Some fellows are born footballers," explained Grundy. "I don't brag of my footer. It's not a thing to brag of, really, being a gift. But there's no silly false modesty about me. I never underrate myself."

"You don't!" agreed Wilkins and Gunn very heartily.

Grundy strolled out of the study after tea, looking and feeling very well satisfied with himself and things generally. Fellows glanced at him curiously, but he did not mind, even if he noticed it. Some of the fellows really wondered whether Grundy was quite right in his head.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came up to him in the passage, his eye gleaming sternly behind his eyeglass.

"Gwunday, you will not be allowed to play the howlin' ass in the name of St. Jim's!" he said.

Grundy only smiled.

"What do you know about footah?" demanded Arthur Augustus.

"My dear chap, go and see your tailor about a new waistcoat," said Grundy. "Leaves games to those who understand them!"

"He walked on, leaving Arthur Augustus breathless with indignation.

Other fellows spoke to Grundy, pointing out that he couldn't do it, and that he would be stopped, and that he was a silly ass, and a cheeky chump, and a burbling jabberwock, and so on. Their remarks glided off Grundy like rain from glass. He was impervious to criticism.

Indeed, the general attention he received seemed to be taken by Grundy as a tribute to his greatness. His proper place was in the limelight—he felt convinced of that. And certainly for that afternoon at least, Grundy was the cynosure of all eyes.

CHAPTER 9.
Drastic Measures.

TOM MERRY thought hard about the matter during the next day or two.

Exactly what measures to take he did not know yet; but he was quite positive on one point—that Grundy had to be stopped!

For that freak team to play the fool, as he expressed it, in the name of St. Jim's before a big crowd was impossible. What would people think of a school that turned out such footballers?

Grundy had a right to raise any team he liked, and play anybody who was ass enough to play him, certainly—if he did it in his own name. But to take upon himself the style and title of junior captain of St. Jim's, and to represent his weird collection of duffers as the school Second Eleven, was a long way past the limit. How any fellow could possess such colossal nerve was a mystery. And Grundy somehow did not seem to realise that there was any nerve in it at all.

Tom was not in a hurry to act, for it was possible that Grundy's amazing team would break up of its own accord. Already the eleven was reduced to ten. And on Monday there was a fresh defection. When Grundy called on Skimpole for practice, the genius of the Shell blinked at him through his big glasses, and shook his head.

"I fear, my dear Grundy, that I shall have to resign," he said. "I find that the physical exertion involved in that somewhat childish amusement seriously interferes with the repose of mind requisite for the study of more important matters, such as entomology——"

"Look here——"

"And Determinism——"

"You silly chump——"

"And Socialism——"

"I'm waiting for you!" roared Grundy.

"And evolution——"

Grundy gripped Skimpole by one ear, and the learned Skimmy gave a howl.

"Yaroooh! Pray release my ear, Grundy. It causes me considerable discomfort to have my auricular appendage compressed with such extreme violence. Yaroooh!"

Talbot got up, and took hold of Grundy.

"Outside!" he said briefly.

"I don't want to lick you, Talbot——"

"Cut off!"

"Well, if you will have it!" said Grundy angrily.

Somehow it was not Talbot who was licked. Grundy found himself in the passage five minutes later, not feeling quite up to footer practice or anything else. The new eleven did not get any coaching that day.

The next day Grundy's eleven numbered nine.

Some football skippers would have been rather dismayed at the prospect of meeting an older team two men short. Not so Grundy. Better a team of nine captained by George Alfred Grundy than an eleven with a duffer like Tom Merry at the head of it. That was how Grundy regarded it.

There was considerable speculation as to whether the rest of Grundy's team would melt away before Wednesday. Tom Merry hoped that it would, and thus settle the matter without further bother.

But it didn't. Racke & Co. were too delighted at the worry they were causing to think of deserting Grundy. The black sheep of St. Jim's stuck to their colours, and some of them even did some practice on Tuesday—those who could not escape Grundy's eagle eye.

On Tuesday evening the team still numbered nine, and Grundy's determination to play the match was unshaken.

And that evening Tom Merry called a meeting in his study to discuss the situation. It was clear that something had to be done, and it had to be decided what.

Study No. 6 came along, and Figgins & Co. from the New House. It was a matter that concerned them all.

"Suppose we collah Gwunday tomowwow aftahnoon, and wope him up in the wood-shed," suggested Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"We can't rope up nine fellows," said Tom.

"Thrash them all round!" was Herries' suggestion. "Let's take one each, and give them such a hiding tomorrow, that they won't be able to crawl."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They've got to be stopped, anyway," said Figgins. "We can't have the school held up to ridicule. Besides, there's the Tommy chaps to think of. What will they say when they find themselves playing a set of idiots?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I've got another idea," said Herries.

"Two in one day!" ejaculated Monty Lowther, in astonishment.

Herries gave the humorist of the Shell a glare.

"If Lowther's going to be funny——" he began wrathfully.

"Dry up, Monty!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Well, what's the idea, Herries?" inquired Tom Merry pacifically.

"Towser——"

"Eh?"

"My bulldog, Towser," said Herries confidently.

The juniors looked at Herries. That burly youth had tremendous faith in his celebrated bulldog Towser. But how on earth Towser was to help him in the present emergency was a puzzle. However, Herries went on to explain.

"Shove the silly fools somewhere—say, the wood-shed, and leave Towser on guard," he said. "If they try to get out, Towser will fairly rip them into ribbons, if I set him on the watch."

"You silly ass!" roared Figgins. "What would the Head say if Grundy was ripped into ribbons by your blessed bulldog?"

"It would serve him right!"

"I don't think the Head would say so," grinned Tom Merry. "Moreover, I don't think we want Grundy to be torn to pieces by that wild beast of yours. Any more ideas, anybody?"

"How are they going?" asked Kerr. "Train or road?"

"Train, I hear," said Tom. "There's a train from Rylcombe to Abbotsford soon after dinner, and they're taking it. Those lazy slackers don't feel inclined to ride it, I suppose."

"Sure?" asked Kerr.

"Yes, I'm sure. I've seen Grundy looking out the train in the time-table—he borrowed Talbot's time-table to look."

"Then they'll walk down to the station after dinner."

"Yes."

"Easy enough, then," said the New House junior. "A score or so of us ahead of them on the road—that's simple. We'll lie in ambush for the silly asses, and collar them as they come by. There isn't much fight in that crowd, excepting Grundy himself. A fight wouldn't hurt us, anyway. We'll collar the whole gang, and keep them back till it's too late to go to Abbotsford."

"Hear, hear!" said Fatty Wynn.

Figgins nodded approval. He always backed up the suggestions of his Scottish chum, in whom he had unlimited faith.

"Well, that would settle the matter," said Tom thoughtfully. "It's rather rotten on the khaki team, though, to be left in the air."

"They wouldn't care for the match if they knew what it was going to be like."

"Well, that's so."

"Besides, no need to leave them in the air," said Kerr. "One of us can telephone from Rylcombe post-office, and let Captain Grundy know that the team can't come over, owing to unavoidable circumstances. We shall be the circumstances, but we needn't mention that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Done!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! I quite appwove."

"Hear, hear!"

"It's settled, then," said Tom Merry. 'Let's see, there's ten of us here, and we'll take Kangaroo and Talbot and Julian, and Kerruish and Roylance and Reilly, and a few more. We've got to take care that none of them gets away. And not a word for those chumps to hear, or they'll play us some trick, and dodge us!"

That ended the discussion; and the talk ran next on footer—really a much more important matter. But the council of war did not guess that a fat figure stole softly away outside the study door, when the subject was changed. They would not have felt so satisfied in their minds if they had known that Baggy Trimble was heading for Grundy's study—with surprising news for Grundy!

CHAPTER 10.

George Alfred Comes Out Strong.

"GRUNDY, old fellow——"

Grundy gave Trimble a frozen glare. He did not like being called "old fellow" by the fat and fatuous Baggy.

"None of your cheek!" he said sharply. Grundy was not one of those footer skippers who consider it necessary to waste politeness on their players.

"Oh, all right!" said Baggy tartly. "I won't tell you, then."

"I don't want to hear any of your yarns!" said Grundy disdainfully.

"You'd jolly well like to hear this one, I reckon!" chuckled Trimble. "There's a plot against you."

"I know that—a plot to keep me out of the school footer. I know it, and I'm dealing with it."

"Can you lend me ten bob, Grundy?"

"No! There's the door!"

Trimble did not take that plain hint.

"Suppose they're plotting to keep you from getting to Abbotsford to-morrow, Grundy?" he said.

The Shell fellow started.

"What do you mean?"

"Can you lend me——"

"I'll lend you a thick ear, if you don't explain!" said Grundy angrily. "Now then, get it out!"

He closed the study door and glared at Trimble. The fat junior eyed him doubtfully. He meant to have something for his trouble. Baggy felt that that was only fair. Why should he play the eavesdropper for nothing? It did not seem to occur to him not to play the eavesdropper at all.

"Go ahead!" commanded Grundy.

"I happened to hear them talking in Tom Merry's study," said Trimble cautiously. "I was—was passing——"

Grundy snorted.

"I know your sneaking ways!" he snapped. "You listened, and you dare to come here and repeat to me what you heard, you fat sneak!"

"Well, I won't repeat it, then."

"Yes, you will!" said Grundy, rather unreasonably. "Get it out, quick! If there's any plotting going on, I'm bound to take my measures."

Trimble—feeling that a loan would be pretty safe after he had rendered Grundy such a service—told his story.

The Shell fellow's brows grew blacker and blacker as he listened.

"Rotten, ain't it?" wound up Trimble.

"Too rotten for words!" exclaimed Grundy. "Not that I quite believe you. A fellow who would listen at a keyhole would tell lies!"

"Look here, you know——" began Trimble warmly.

"Still, I'm glad you've put me on my guard. Keep this dark!" said Grundy. "You can get out!"

"What about the ten bob?"

"You're a mean little beast, Trimble! I daresay you've made up this yarn to screw a loan out of me. But if it turns out to be true, I'll stand you half-a-crown——"

"Shell out!" said Trimble eagerly.

"To-morrow, I mean—after it's proved."

"Oh, I say, Grundy——"

"Oh, get out!"

Grundy opened the door, pushed Trimble into the passage, and shut the door after him. Baggy rolled away very discontentedly. He felt that he had not been treated with proper respect. But Grundy did not waste any thought upon Baggy Trimble.

He paced the study with knitted brows.

Trimble was very unreliable; but Grundy had little doubt that his information was correct. It had been said openly that he would be stopped; and he had quite expected some measures to be taken. He had not expected such drastic measures, that was all.

"The cheek!" said Grundy, with deep indignation. "The awful cheek! Interfering with me—Me! Of all the nerve——"

Grundy was greatly inclined to rush into Tom Merry's study, announce to the juniors there that the scheme was discovered, and tell them what he thought of them—at great length and with due emphasis.

But he did not.

Grundy was not a very bright youth. But even Grundy could see things when they were very plain. It was clear that Tom Merry & Co. were determined to prevent the freak team from going over to Abbotsford on the morrow. If he revealed that he knew the present plan, they would make another—which he would not know, and could not guard against. That was clear—even to Grundy.

Now he knew the scheme, and could lay his plans accordingly. He intended to say nothing about the matter—and he even grinned as he thought of the numerous party lying in ambush on the Rylcombe road on the morrow, and the disappointment he had in store for them.

That reflection made Grundy quite cheerful, and he was smiling when Wilkins and Gunn came up to the study.

He did not explain the matter to them. He could trust their loyalty, but he was not so sure of their discretion. He said no word.

The next day he observed Tom Merry & Co., and noticed that they smiled a good deal when they spoke to one another—and that if he came along they ceased to speak. Now that his eyes were opened, he understood what that meant.

And Grundy smiled, as well as Tom Merry & Co.

He was quite content to let the chums go ahead with their plans—while he went ahead with his.

Grundy strolled in the quadrangle till dinner-time, but when the other fellows went in to dinner Grundy did not follow them. Dinner was nearly over when George Alfred turned up in the dining-room, and he looked rather muddy. Mr. Linton gave him a severe look.

"You are late, Grundy!" he snapped.

"Awfully sorry, sir," said Grundy, with unaccustomed meekness. "I've been out of gates."

"Take fifty lines."

"Yes, sir."

Grundy bolted his dinner in what time was left. He was out of the dining-room as soon as the rest, and he grinned as he noticed quite an army of fellows sauntering away to the gates.

The Terrible Three went first, and Study No. 6 followed. Figgins & Co., and Redfern and Owen and Lawrence, went out in a body. Julian and Kerruish, Reilly and Hammond and Talbot and Kangaroo went out singly. But Grundy was well aware that they joined up after they were out of gates. Baggy Trimble nudged his elbow as he stood looking from the door of the School House.

"You've seen them?" grinned Baggy. "They've gone to wait for you on the road, Grundy."

"I know that, fatty!"

"Well, what about that loan?"

"There's your half-crown, you fat bounder! Go and get your things ready for Abbotsford."

"You'll have to take the ticket, old chap."

"You won't want a ticket," said Grundy grimly. "We're not going by train. Put your things in a bundle to tie on the handle-bars."

"Handle-bars!" ejaculated Trimble.

"Yes; we're biking it."

"Oh, my hat! I—I haven't a bike."

"I've borrowed Blake's bike for you."

"I—I can't ride so far."

"I'll see that you do. Where are you going?"

"I—I'm going to speak to Roylance!"

"Roylance has just gone out after those rotters."

"I—I mean Racke!"

"Come with me, you fat slacker!"

Baggy Trimble groaned, and resigned himself to his fate. Grundy called his team together. Racke & Co. were in great spirits. Exertion at footer was not in their line, certainly; but then they did not mean to exert themselves. The match would be a farce, and they intended it to be one.

"We're ready," said Grundy, having shepherded his men—somewhat to their surprise—into his study. "But we're going to bike it, after all. A score of fellows are waiting for us in Rylcombe Lane, to nail us as we go to the station. We're going to let 'em wait, while we bike it another way."

"Oh, gad!" ejaculated Racke.

"Dane is hanging about the gate with his bike," continued Grundy. "You can guess what that's for. He's going to warn them that we've started—when we do. Well, let him!"

"But he'll see us wheel out the bikes, and know we're not going by train!" exclaimed Crooke.

Grundy smiled the smile of superior wisdom.

"No, he won't! We're going on foot, as if we're walking to the station. He will pass us on the road. I expected it. The bikes are out already—I took them, two at a time, while the fellows were at dinner."

"Great pip! That's where you were, then?"

"Exactly."

Racke & Co. looked at Grundy rather admiringly. This certainly was very deep of the great George Alfred.

The idea of Tom Merry & Co. waiting and watching in the lane for the party that would never come tickled the juniors, and they roared. That was all that was wanted to give their joke on Tom Merry a finishing touch.

"It's rather a long ride to Abbotsford, though," said Chowle doubtfully.

"Oh, don't be a slacker!"

"No need to ride there," said Racke at once. Racke was rather brighter than Grundy. "We can bike it to Wayland, and catch the train from there—same train. We can easily beat the local on the jiggers."

"Well, yes, that's all right," admitted Grundy. "I—I was going to suggest that, only—only——"

"Only you hadn't thought of it," remarked Racke.

"Don't be cheeky, Racke!"

"Let's get off!" said Crooke hastily.

And they got off.

Nine fellows walked out of the school gates, and Clifton Dane, apparently busy with adjusting his saddle in the road, smiled as they went. Grundy & Co. smiled, too, as they walked down the lane towards Rylcombe.

They were not surprised when, a few minutes later, Clifton Dane came whizzing past them on his bike, the saddle apparently being satisfactorily adjusted now.

"Hallo, going for a spin, Dane?" called out Grundy genially.

"Not very far," answered Dane, as he whizzed by; and he disappeared round the bend in the road ahead.

Grundy & Co. halted, grinning.

"This way!" said Grundy.

He led the way across the fields to a barn, in which nine bicycles were stacked. The team grinned as they wheeled them out. The machines were wheeled into a side lane, where the party mounted, and started at a good pace for Wayland, in great spirits. They chuckled as they rode at the thought of the ambush in Rylcombe Lane.

Grundy & Co. duly arrived at Wayland, and put up the bikes at the station. The local train from Rylcombe was not yet in, and they had ten minutes to wait for the train for Abbotsford. And when the train came in, they crowded into it, and rattled away in great spirits. Whatever happened at the khaki match, Grundy was booked to arrive safely at Abbotsford Athletic Ground—on that point there was no doubt whatever.

CHAPTER 11.
Grundy's Luck.

"BAI JOVE! Heah's Dane!"

Tom Merry & Co. were in ambush, watching the lane from the bushes off the road. There was the whir of a bicycle, and Clifton Dane came up, and jumped off his machine. He wheeled the bicycle under the trees.

"Well?" asked Tom Merry, with a smile.

"Grundy's off," said the Canadian junior, laughing. "I passed them on the road. They'll be along here in about ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, from the rate they were walking."

"Good!"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Poor old Grundy!" said Dick Roylance, with a laugh. "It's the only way to deal with him."

"But the khaki chaps ought to be told," said Manners. "One of us must get along to Rylcombe and telephone. I'll go, if you like."

"Do, old scout," said Tom Merry.

And Manners walked up the lane towards the village, leaving the rest of the party in ambush.

Tom Merry & Co. waited.

There were sixteen fellows in the party. Half the number would have been enough to deal with Grundy's followers; but Tom, like a good general, left nothing to chance. Grundy & Co. had to be looked after when they were caught, and kept in durance vile till dusk.

A quarter of an hour passed, but although many pedestrians passed along the lane, Grundy was not among them. Tom Merry had posted his ambush at a spot where the short cut through the wood could be watched also. But neither by the road nor the short cut did Grundy appear. The minutes ticked by, and when they had waited half an hour the juniors were restive.

"They ought to be here by this if they crawled on all-fours," said Monty Lowther. "What on earth's keeping them?"

"Sure they started, Dane?"

"Of course I'm sure! I passed them on my bike."

"It's jolly queer."

"Hallo, here's somebody!" said Blake, when another quarter of an hour had passed.

It was Wilkins of the Shell on a bike. The juniors came out into the road to meet Wilkins. He stared at them.

"Oh, you're here, Tom Merry!" he exclaimed. "Blessed if I knew where to look for you."

"Were you looking for me?"

"Yes. You see——"

"Have you seen Grundy?" broke in Blake. "Where is the silly ass?"

"Eh? They started nearly an hour ago," said Wilkins, with a stare. "They've passed you if you've been here."

"Bai Jove! We've been waitin' all the time, and they haven't passed, deah boy."

"Waiting for Grundy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh!" said Wilkins, with a grin. "I savvy. Perhaps Grundy smelt a rat, and went another way."

"Catch that silly ass smelling a rat!" sniffed Figgins.

"Well, I know they started," said Wilkins. "I saw them. Perhaps this note's got something to do with it. Grundy asked me to give it to you after waiting half an hour. He said I should find you along this lane somewhere. I'm blessed if I could guess what he was getting at."

Wilkins tossed an envelope to Tom Merry.

The captain of the Shell, with an inward misgiving, opened the note. The juniors crowded round to read it, and there was a howl of wrath and consternation as they read:

"Dear Duffers,—No dowbt this will sirprise you. You will have to get up verry erly in the moarning to catch me aslepe. It may interrest you to heer that we have gone by bike to Wayland, to take the trane there, and we shall be at Abbotsford by the time you get this noat.

"Sold agane!

"Yours, with skorn,

"G. A. GRUNDY.

"P.S.—Go and eat coak!"

"Gweat Chwistophah Columbus!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"They—they've gone!" stuttered Tom Merry.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wilkins. "Grundy spotted your game, after all. Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatevah to cackle at, Wilkins——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry looked desperately at his watch.

"Too late!" grunted Blake. "They're nearly at Abbotsford by this time, or quite. They can't be stopped now. How the dickens did they get the bikes out without Dane seeing them? You must be an ass, Dane!"

"They hadn't any bikes when I passed them," said Dane. "They must have gone back for them——"

"They didn't!" said Wilkins.

"That's why Grundy was late for dinner, of course," groaned Tom Merry. "He was taking the jiggers out then."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wilkins, evidently regarding the matter in a humorous light. "Good old Grundy! Who'd have thought it of him?"

The juniors bumped Wilkins in the road as a hint that ill-timed merriment was out of place. Then they held a hasty council, but there was nothing to be done. The match would be over before they could reach Abbotsford if they went there.

That egregious match, covering St. Jim's with ridicule, was to be played, and they simply raged at the thought. It was not much comfort to resolve upon giving Grundy the ragging of his life when he came home. That would not undo the harm.

"Bai Jove, we're faihly sold!" said Arthur Augustus dismally. "Fancy an uttah ass like Gwunday havin' the bwains to dish us like this! Hallo, here's Mannahs!"

Manners came up from the direction of the village, smiling.

"Caught Grundy?" he asked.

"He's dodged us!" groaned Tom.

"And gone to Abbotsford!" yelled Manners.

"Yes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you yelling at?" shouted Blake. "What's the matter with you, you dummy?"

Manners roared.

A lad in uniform came along the road from Rylcombe. He had a buff envelope in his hand. He stopped as he saw the crowd of schoolboys.

"One of you gents Master Grundy?" he asked.

"No!" grunted Tom.

"Is that a wire for Grundy?" asked Manners, grinning.

"Yessir."

"Better take it on to the school, then."

The telegraph-lad went on his way whistling. Manners chortled spasmodically.

"Poor old Grundy!" he said. "It's just his luck!"

"Just his luck!" snorted Lowther. "Grundy's had all the luck. Fancy that silly idiot fooling us!"

"Yaas, wathah. It's simply wotten!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Manners, you ass——"

Manners wiped his eyes.

"It's too funny!" he gasped. "You see——"

"Oh, bump him!" exclaimed Figgins.

"Hold on! I haven't told you yet!" gasped Manners. "I've telephoned to Captain Grundy at the camp——"

"Bless Captain Grundy——"

"And he's not there——"

"What?"

"They got orders to change camp this morning suddenly," explained Manners. "So a johnny told me over the wires. Captain Grundy's gone with his company, and he sent a wire to Grundy to tell him not to come."

"What?" yelled Tom Merry.

"There won't be any match!" trilled Manners. "The whole blessed footer eleven is fifty miles away by this time, and the wire's been delayed, of course. Telegrams always are delayed in these times. I suppose the captain johnny sent it off as soon as he had his orders—he couldn't send it earlier—and hoped Grundy would get it. That must be the telegram that the kid's taking up to St. Jim's now."

Tom Merry gasped.

"Then—then there isn't any footer team at the camp?"

"Ha, ha! No——"

"And—and Grundy——"

"Grundy will find that out when he gets there."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a yell of laughter. The juniors simply howled. Grundy, with great and unexpected astuteness, had

dodged the ambush, and got safely off to Abbotsford, and his reward was to be the discovery that Captain Grundy and his football team were gone, and that there was no match to be played.

The juniors shrieked.

"Bai Jove!" stuttered Arthur Augustus, wiping his eyes. "Poor old Gwunday! He has all the luck. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

* * * * * * *

There was quite an army of fellows lounging round the doorway of the School House later that afternoon when Grundy came home.

Grundy & Co. wheeled in their machines in a tired way, looking the reverse of cheerful.

"Had a good match, Grundy?"

"And a nice journey?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pleasant outing—what!"

"Poor old Gwunday!"

"There's a telegram waiting for you indoors, Grundy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy snorted.

"The match hasn't been played, after all!" he growled. "The team had gone——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!"

Grundy tramped wrathfully into the School House, his team slinking in after him. They left Tom Merry & Co. yelling.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"THE ST. JIM'S RUINS!" by Martin Clifford.)

Cadet Notes.

RECENTLY an interesting and pleasant gathering of the "F" Newhaven Company of the 1st Cadet Battalion Sussex Yeomanry was held at the Drill Hall. Various competitions and games were enjoyed, and refreshments were provided. During the evening a presentation of a leather wallet was made to Sec.-Lieutenant Eastick, who is leaving the corps to join H.M. Forces. He carries with him the good wishes of all the members of his company for his prosperity and success.

* * * * * * *

On Saturday, January 12th, the 7th Cadet Battalion of the London Regiment held a route march, leaving Finsbury Square at three in the afternoon, and later, when passing the Mansion House, the Lord Mayor took the salute from the lads. Tea was provided for them at Staples Hall, and it was followed by a concert. The corps is going very strong, and members thoroughly enjoy the good time they have in its ranks.

* * * * * * *

A R.E. Corps is being raised, with headquarters in Bromley, for lads residing in the neighbourhood. The regulation Service uniform is to be provided, and members are enrolled, with a small entrance fee and a monthly subscription. A branch of the corps has already been opened at the Khaki Club, Pond Road, Blackheath. Readers of the "Gem" residing in this district should get into communication with the headquarters of this corps if they are not already in some other Cadet battalion.

* * * * * * *

The Royal Arsenal has an excellent Cadet Corps in its neighbourhood in the 1st Woolwich Cadets, with headquarters at Sutcliffe Road, Plumstead Common. The lads are busy stamp-collecting, and this scheme of the Central Association has given a great stimulus to drill attendance.

* * * * * * *

Active efforts are being made to increase the numbers and strength of the existing Cadet Corps in Cardiff, and a meeting was held on Saturday, January 26th, for the purpose of promoting the movement. Throughout the whole of South Wales considerable activity is going on in this direction, and it is hoped that the result will be a very large addition to the strength of the Cadet Corps in that area.

* * * * * * *

In connection with the movement referred to in the previous paragraph, a meeting of the Monmouthshire Territorial Force Association was held at Newport recently, Lord Treowen presiding. A report on the progress of the Cadet movement in the county was presented by Major Acheson Moore, who stated that the Cadet movement in the County was making good progress. A new company had been formed at Ebbw Vale, and a letter was read from the War Office recognising the Cwm and Little Mill Companies of the 3rd Cadet Battalion of the Monmouthshire Regiment. This is excellent news, and readers of these notes residing in these places ought to get into communication with the newly-formed Cadet Companies at once.

* * * * * * *

From a recent report of the Civil Service Cadet Battalion we learn that some two thousand Cadets have passed through the ranks of the battalion since its formation, and have been trained to fit them for service as efficient members of the Territorial Force. The strength of the battalion has been well maintained, and it continues to carry on a very large number of trainings, camps, musketry competitions, and other useful and interesting events. Membership of this battalion is restricted to boy clerks of the Civil Service, of whom a considerable number are already members, and with the great expansion that has taken place in the Civil Service in recent years there should be a corresponding increase in the strength of the battalion, and it is hoped that every boy clerk in the Service will join the corps and take part in its work.

* * * * * * *

A recent circular issued by the Church Lads' Brigade records the fact that two former members of the brigade have, by their gallant conduct in the war, received the much-coveted Victoria Cross. The following particulars of these two men are given, with the circumstances under which they were awarded this distinction, and we cannot do better than reprint them for our readers here. Such examples ought to do much to encourage boys to join the Cadet movement, and make themselves efficient and ready for the time when they also may have to join the Regular Forces:

LANCE-CORPORAL F. G. ROOM, V.C., Royal Irish Regiment (late St. Ambrose Company, Church Lads' Brigade, Bristol)

"For most conspicuous bravery when in charge of his company stretcher-bearers. During the day the company had many casualties, principally from enemy machine-guns and snipers. The company was holding a line of shell-holes and short trenches. Lance-Corporal Room worked continuously under intense fire, dressing the wounded and helping to evacuate them. Throughout this period, with complete disregard for his own life, he showed unremitting devotion to his duties. By his courage and fearlessness he was the means of saving many of his comrades' lives."

CORPORAL SYDNEY JAMES DAY, V.C., Suffolk Regiment (late St. John de Sepulchre Company, Church Lads' Brigade, Norwich).

"For most conspicuous bravery. Corporal Day was in command of a bombing section detailed to clear a maze of trenches still held by the enemy. This he did, killing two machine-gunners and taking four prisoners. On reaching a point where the trench had been levelled, he went alone and bombed his way through to the left in order to gain touch with the neighbouring troops. Immediately on his return to his section a stick-bomb fell into a trench occupied by two officers (one badly wounded) and three other ranks. Corporal Day seized the bomb and threw it over the trench, where it immediately exploded. This prompt action undoubtedly saved the lives of those in the trench. He afterwards completed the clearing of the trench, and, establishing himself in an advanced position, remained for 66 hours at his post, which came under intense hostile shell and rifle-grenade fire. Throughout the whole operations his conduct was an inspiration to all."

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The stream of inquirers for addresses of local Cadet Corps is still flowing strongly, and some hundreds have already been dealt with. But many more are wanted, so "let 'em all come." Remember the address for inquiries is the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments, Judges' Quadrangle, Royal Courts of Justice Strand, W.C. 2.

Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"THE ST. JIM'S RUINS!"

By Martin Clifford.

Next week's story is one of the humorous type, though it is not at all like the very funny yarn which you are getting this week. That turns upon George Alfred Grundy and his greatness. "The St. Jim's Ruins" brings Mr. Ratcliff and Mr. Selby prominently into the limelight, though they are not the "ruins" referred to, as I was inclined to think they might be when I saw the title of the story, and then, turning over the pages, noticed how often their names figured. What the ruins were, and what happened when they were found I shall leave it to the story to tell you. But I must mention Baggy Trimble's great find—the boot of Julius Cæsar—with his own name—the name of Cæsar, not Baggy's cognomen—upon it!

IMPERTINENT LETTERS.

Will the few misguided readers who have recently written me impertinent and abusive letters please note that they have no chance of getting the notoriety of which they are in search? I have no intention of printing any more letters of this kind. I shall not even refer to them except in such general terms as I am using here. They annoy our many thousands of loyal and satisfied readers when they appear in print; and they serve no useful purpose. I can—and I do—give my readers good reading matter every week; I cannot provide them with brains to understand it. One of my correspondents abused in bitter terms a story which has proved as popular as anything I have ever published because he could not understand it! That was not the fault of the writer or of the Editor. Intelligent youngsters of eight or nine can make out the meaning of the stories fairly well, though we do not pretend to cater for such youngsters. The boy of fourteen or more who cannot had better try another paper, not write abusive letters to me. And as for the sweet youth who says I am "a fool, a cad, and a liar" because I said that Tom Merry was more generally popular than Harry Wharton—well, what can you reply to such unabashed ignorance and impudence? I never learned to talk the language he is talking!

CORRESPONDENCE WANTED.

With boy readers in any part of the Empire.—L. Chandler, 385, Bell Street, Ottawa, Canada.

With boy reader in Australia—about 14.—John Shepherd, 47, Gideon Street, Bathgate, Linlithgowshire.

With boy readers anywhere.—H. T. Cooke, 166, Commercial Road, Swindon.

With girl reader in India.—Miss Rita Lee, 17, Lewisham High Road, New Cross, S.E. 14.

With readers who collect cigarette cards.—D. Whaley, 61, Myddleton Road, Bowes Park, N. 22.

Your Editor

THE ST. JIM'S GALLERY.

No. 6.—Aubrey Racke.

THERE is more than one kind of snobbery. In fact, there are many kinds.

There is that which comes from vanity as to the possession of a long line of ancestors—I say vanity, because a proper pride in ancestors who have lived decent lives and played the man's part is not snobbery at all. But it is gross snobbery to be vain of the fact that those in the family line before you have never had to work.

There is the snobbery of intellect. It is all very well for a fellow to pride himself on the possession of a superior brain; but too many of those who have this pride are apt to think of the foolish and the dull and the ignorant as something less than human beings.

There has sprung up of late a new snobbery—that of the so-called "working man." I am quite prepared to admit that the working man is my equal in the sense that he has all the rights I have. I do not admit that he is my superior simply because he works with his hands while I work with my head. It is a claim that I find many "working men" making nowadays. But there is excuse for it. The "working men" have had a hard struggle for elementary rights, and they are not to blame if that struggle has given them perverted ideas.

And there is the snobbery of money, which is the worst of all.

Aubrey Racke is a money snob. His father is a war profiteer of the grossest type. The war profiteer, however, can only be considered worse than any other maker of unfair profits inasmuch as he is unpatriotic. It is a fair question whether robbing the nation is really worse than any other forms of robbery, for the individual—and the nation is made up of individuals—certainly does not feel it more. Nevertheless, I think it is a sound and healthy instinct which makes most of us regard with loathing the man who would take advantage of his country's needs to pile up wealth for himself.

And to be vain of the dirty money thus acquired is the very limit in snobbery. Racke is vain of it. When he came to St. Jim's he had not the least doubt of an open-armed welcome. The fellows were sure to bow down and worship the golden calf, he thought.

There are snobbish schools. No doubt there is some snobbery at all schools, for the fault is in human nature. But St. Jim's has certainly not more than its share of it; and the Shell and Fourth were not found bowing down to the golden calf!

Who Racke's father was before he made his money no one at the school knows. Trimble says that his pater knew Racke's pater before the war as a poor man. There is no disgrace in being poor; but one cannot help thinking that Racke senior was not of the "poor but honest" class that the writers of fifty years or so ago were fond of enthusing about. "Poor but dishonest" was probably nearer the correct label for Racke's father!

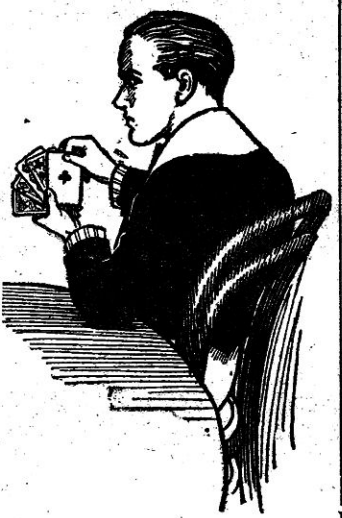
And Racke junior has no right to the name of Aubrey, Trimble says. He was christened Peter. That may or may not be true. Most that Baggy says is not. It does not matter much, anyway. Peter is a good, honest name, and when it was exchanged for Aubrey by "Young Moneybags" there was no need for the Peters to object. The Aubreys might reasonably have objected, perhaps.

Racke senior especially enjoined upon Racke junior—whom we will allow the name of Aubrey, since Trimble's testimony carries no weight—the necessity of getting on the friendliest terms with D'Arcy, because Gussy was the son of Lord Eastwood. You all know how ready Gussy always is to be polite and kind to a new-comer. He was willing to be decent to Racke, though he saw that to be more than commonly friendly might lead to charges of sucking up to the new boy on account of his wealth.

And at first there was some sort of friendliness, though from the outset Gussy found little enough in Racke to like. The fellow seemed to like him, and that went a long way with the swell of St. Jim's, who is far too polite and kind-hearted to be an adept at choking anyone off.

But with the rest Racke soon put himself wrong. He coveted Study No. 10, which has some small advantage over other studies on the Shell passage. He offered to buy out the Terrible Three. They promptly bumped him.

Then he turned his attention to the Fourth, thinking that it would be quite nice



if he could get in with D'Arcy. Gussy explained that the Shell and the Fourth were not allowed to mix in that way. Racke saw nothing in that objection; probably he thought he could bribe Mr. Railton with a ten-pound note. He did try to bribe Blake, Herries, and Digby to move out that room might be made for him. But Blake, Herries, and Digby moved him out without delay.

They were not satisfied that Gussy should refuse to see what an utter outsider the fellow was. Arthur Augustus, in his large charity, thought that Racke must have his good points, and that his defects were mainly the result of a want of good breeding. He accepted the new fellow's invitation to an outing. Crooke and Levison—a very different Levison from the shrewd, decent fellow of to-day—went also. Those two had no objection to champagne and cards on the seashore; but Gussy had, and he moved off. Mr. Railton came along in time to see him going, but not to recognise him. Racke told the Housemaster that the other member of their party was not a St. Jim's boy, and so Gussy escaped the punishment the other three got. Still, he was not willing to give up Racke. The fellow seemed to have a real liking for him; and Gussy would not lend ear to the suggestion of his chums that his noble birth and his money accounted for Racke's friendliness.

It was Lowther who suggested the scheme which put Racke to the test. A story was allowed to reach the ears of Young Moneybags—as St. Jim's had christened the new boy—which ran that through war losses Lord Eastwood had become practically a pauper, and that Arthur Augustus would have to leave the school. If there had been the smallest spark of real friendship in Racke he would not have done as he did. He showed his absurd purse-proud arrogance in a manner that settled him once and for all with D'Arcy.

He has never made a friend among the decent fellows, and he never will. Crooke is his one intimate. Mellish, Scrope, Clampe, Trimble, and one or two more may toady to him, but they do not like him.

Levison has long ago shaken him off; and there are no fellows at St. Jim's whom Racke hates more than he does Levison and his chum Cardew, who was also for a brief time a member of the gay dog set, rather out of idleness and slackness than from viciousness. Many a foul trick has Racke attempted against Ernest Levison. The worst of all was when he did all he knew to get his enemy sacked, by a lying story of a blackguardly assault upon him—an assault really made by a man whom Racke had treated savagely and cruelly. The story is told in "After Lights Out," that fine yarn which appeared in the "Boys' Friend" Library last year.

Then there was the time when Racke & Co. did their uttermost to spoil Levison's credit with Tom Merry by locking him up and keeping him from a footer match. They knew how much it meant to the erstwhile black sheep, who was now going straight, not only because he had grown no end keen on footer, but also because Tom's faith in the reality of his reformation was helping him.

Then there was the plot against Levison's sister—as thoroughly low and caddish as anything could be. Even Crooke shied at it when it was first suggested. Racke paid dearly for that in the long run, as he has paid for other treacheries. But he has never had more than he deserves.

Against Cardew the scheming Racke made use of Lacy of the Grammar School. And Cardew had a very bad time indeed of it before things were cleared up. To some extent he had brought his trouble upon himself, but most of it was of Racke's contriving.

There are others whom Racke hates with all his heart. Tom Merry is one, of course. Grundy is another—honest, outspoken Grundy, who may be an ass, is yet far too decent to have much use for Racke & Co. Talbot is more especially hated by Crooke; but Racke shares the feeling.

I do not know what Racke's good points are. At times he has shown that he is less of a funk than his pals; sheer savagery sometimes lends him courage for a while. But that is not much to his credit.

He is a gambler and a cheat, spiteful and treacherous, snobbish and mean. There is little of the boy in him; his very faults are not like the faults of the boy, and he has none of the boy's redeeming qualities. He cannot be loyal even to his friends; and, though he can spend money lavishly on his own shady pursuits and to impress the crowd, he has no generosity.

A pretty thorough-paced blackguard all round, this one!

Next Week!

No. 7

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY.

Printed and published weekly by the Proprietors at The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, England. Subscription, 7s. per annum. Agents for Australasia: Gordon & Gotch, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, and Wellington, N.Z. South Africa, The Central News Agency, Ltd., Cape Town and Johannesburg. Saturday, March 2nd, 1918.

THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA.

FOR NEW READERS.

The twins are Philip Derwent, of Highcliffe, and his sister Philippa, of Cliff House. They have a cockatoo, named Cocky, which has been until recently with Flip (Philip) at Highcliffe, but is now at Cliff House. Flip has made an enemy of Gadsby, who is plotting against him with Vavasour. His best chums, Merton and Tunstall, are away from the school for a time, owing to a serious accident to one of Merton's eyes in a fight with Ponsonby. In their absence Flip gets too friendly with Pon, and the rest of the nuts, and, without any real taste for it at the outset, takes to gambling. He is made reckless by failing to hear from his chums, who seem to have thrown him over. As a matter of fact, Gadsby and Vavasour have intercepted and kept back a letter from Tunstall to him. There is also a coolness between Flip and his sister; the Cliff House girls consider that Flip did not back up Merton staunchly. They are gated owing to an anyonmous letter, and thus no full explanation is possible between the twins. Flip goes with the nuts to a gambling den at Courtfield, quarrels with Pon, and is knocked senseless just as the warning "Police!" is heard.

Their Brothers.

"WHAT'S the matter, Marjorie?" asked Flap.

It was the evening on which Flip had gone with the nuts to the gambling den in Courtfield; and at Cliff House the girls had finished prep, and had an hour or so to spare before supper.

Over by the fire, Miss Clara Trevlyn stood in eager and animated conversation with Phyllis Howell. Flap had been there, too; but she had seen Marjorie Hazeldene sitting alone, and had come over to join her.

"My head aches rather," replied Marjorie listlessly.

"It's something more than that, I know," Flap said. "Aren't you interested in the discovery?"

Phyllis held a letter in her hand. Anyone who knew the scrawl of the genial Bob Cherry might have recognised it in that letter. Bob had been set a task by Phyllis, he had completed it, and he had written to say so.

He frankly admitted that his brains had not accounted for the discovery made. He gave the credit of it chiefly to the Bounder and Peter Todd, who were far more acute than he. But, anyway, Bob had got it done; and the suspicions of the Cliff House girls as to who had been behind the anonymous letter which had got five of them a gating were confirmed.

Phyllis had not told Bob when she wrote to him that they suspected Bunter as the writer and Skinner as the fellow who had suggested the trick. She had named no names. She had merely told what had happened, and had said that they believed someone at Greyfriars was guilty.

Now Bob wrote that, under the searching examination of Herbert Vernon-Smith and Peter Todd—a combination of keenness and talent far too great for Bunter's obtuse brain—but Bob did not say exactly that—Bunter had confessed, and had inculpated Skinner. In fact, Bunter protested that he really had nothing to do with it—nothing that could be said to matter. He had merely told Skinner about the mixed hocky practices, and had written the letter; Skinner had done all the rest. Practically, therefore, the whole guilt was Skinner's.

The Famous Five and their two colleagues—no one else had been taken into the secret—could not quite see it as Bunter saw it; but they were ready to allow Skinner a full half of the guilt.

"And we have dealt with them accordingly," added Bob significantly. "We know why Skinner put the Owl up to it. He has had a down on you four for some time—ever since he was brought to book for those lies of his about Derwent. But you need not be afraid that we were unmerciful; they didn't get it as hot as two or three of us thought they deserved. Harry and Frank and Inky are all a bit soft-hearted, and if the other four of us were in a majority, as of course we were, we couldn't do just what we liked. So there was no boiling oil in it, and not even any tar and feathers, which Johnny and I considered the correct card. Still, they didn't like what they got—'nuff said!"

Marjorie looked up at Flap's question.

"I'm interested, in a way," she said slowly. "But I can't get any pleasure out of it."

"Well, I don't say it's pleasure," said Flap. "But I'm not going to say I'm sorry those two were punished. It was a horrid, mean trick!"

"I'm not really sorry, though I feel that it's wrong to want revenge, and you can't call this anything but revenge," Marjorie replied. "It isn't as though we hadn't known; you were all quite certain that it was those two. And it isn't as though the punishment will do them any good. They will be just the same after it. I wonder whether punishment is ever really any use at all? It only seems to make people harder."

"But what would you do with them?" asked Flap, in surprise. "It seems as if punishment is necessary, unless people are to do just what they like."

"Suppose everyone felt that they didn't like doing what hurt other people?" asked Marjorie gently. "Wouldn't that be better?"

"Of course, it would! But don't you see that it isn't the way that people are made—at least, it isn't the way most people are made," said Flap, shrewdly enough. "If everybody was like you, my dear—but nobody is like you! I don't know anybody else half so unselfish."

"Well, I'm being selfish enough now," answered Marjorie, with a wan smile. "For I'm worrying about my own private worries when you all feel cheerful."

"I don't know about being so very cheerful. I'm not. I can't make Flip out. Sending Cocky back like that looks as if he doesn't want to make friends, and that's altogether too bad."

"Flip's all right," Marjorie said. "Oh, I know it isn't easy for you, Flap; and I know he isn't perfect. But he's ever such a dear, really—I wish Hazel——"

She paused, and her face went crimson. She had not meant to say as much as that.

"Marjorie, you know I wouldn't ask you to tell me anything you didn't want to, but is it Hazel again?" Flap asked, lowering her voice.

Marjorie nodded, and the tears came into her eyes.

"I had a letter from home this morning," she said. "He's been writing there, in the queerest way. It's quite upset them, and they want me to look after him better. But how can I?"

"I don't think they ought to expect it," Flap said.

"I always have looked after him—as much as he would let me," Marjorie answered simply. "But he is so difficult. Flip is open and frank, but Hazel—lately he has seemed even more unreliable than ever; and I had thought that he had made up his mind to go straight. Harry Wharton has done ever so much for him, and so has Herbert Vernon-Smith. I feel grateful to them, but I'm afraid Hazel doesn't. And Flip promised to stand by him if he could."

"If Flip said that, he will," said Flap cheerfully. "Buck up, Marjorie! I'm not saying that because of what you tell me about Flip, though it makes me feel glad. But Hazel isn't without friends, even if they are really more your friends than his—which isn't such a very surprising thing."

"What are you two plotting there?" came the clear voice of Clara Trevlyn across the room.

"How to get even with the very objectionable Bunter and the still more iniquitous Skinner, I should think," said Phyllis, laughing.

"Not they! That isn't Marjorie's line!" replied Clara, with something as nearly like a snort as a young lady could be guilty of. "Marjorie can forgive anyone! Why, what's the matter, Flap?"

For Philippa Derwent had suddenly put a hand to her head, and was staggering as if from a blow.

She did not answer. She could not. For a moment she was hardly more than half-conscious.

Marjorie's arm was round her at once, and she laid her face on Marjorie's shoulders.

The rest began to crowd round her. But Phyllis, in her quick, decided way, made them stand back.

"Don't bother her!" she said sharply.

Among them they got Flap upstairs. She lay on her bed, still dazed, but slowly recovering.

At length she gave a long sigh, almost a gasp, and said:

"Something has happened to Flip—something dreadful! I'm sure of it!"

Only her three chums were with her. Phyllis had locked the door against the rest.

None of them spoke a word of disbelief. They had come by now to have full faith in the curious and mysterious sympathy which existed between the twins. Lately one has read of telepathic messages sent from mind to mind when bodies were far apart. This was not quite like that, for in such cases there seems always to have been a will to send the message of good or evil tidings. But Flap knew when anything had gone seriously wrong with Flip without any effort on his part to send her news of it.

But there was no regularity in the working of the sympathy. If there had been the sense of evil would have come upon Flap earlier.

For it was not when he entered the place to which he had been lured by Pon that she had had her message, but at the exact moment when he was struck down by the brutal hand of Chiker, just as the warning of "Police!" caused the gamblers to make a rush for safety!

Deserting a Pal.

IT was a false warning. The police had not yet got upon the track of Messrs. Hawke, Cobb & Co., though doubtless they would do so sooner or later.

The scheme was Gadsby's. He had talked it over with Chiker, and an arrangement had been come to that in certain eventualities the warning should be given. The lights would be put out at once, of course. There would be a general sauve qui peut; and in the course of it Mr. Bert Chiker was to see that certain things happened to Flip.

Just exactly how the thing should be done was left to Mr. Chiker, whose notions naturally tended to the most brutal way of doing it.

In one point Chiker had altered the plan. Gadsby had not thought it necessary to take Hawke and Cobb into the secret, and he had meant that the false alarm should extend to them as well as to their dupes.

Chiker had not taken them into the secret; but he had seen in the trouble between Flip and Ponsonby a chance to keep right with them, while avoiding letting them know too much. Communications had passed between him and the sweet pair of rascals, and when the warning came they were ready.

Almost before the rush for the exit had begun Mr. Cobb's rake was busy in the darkness. If the gamblers had forgotten all about their stakes Mr. Cobb had not forgotten, and in the kindness of his heart he was willing to take care of their money. He meant to take such very good care of it, indeed, that there was likely to be no further need for them to worry about it.

Oaths in the darkness—the fierce thrusting of men who cared for no one else when they believed themselves in danger—a howl of pain from someone who had gone down in the press and was being trodden upon—a squeak of fear which sounded as if it might have come from Vavasour—and Pon and Gadsby found themselves carried along with the crowd through a dank passage into the fresh air.

"Where's Vav?" asked Cecil Ponsonby.

"Here I am, by gad—what's left of me!"

Vav ranged up alongside them. They could not see the condition he was in; but he could feel that he had come out of that rush in a very dishevelled state. He had been pressed up against the wall, while the other two had travelled in the middle of the throng, though without any more choice in the matter than Vavasour had had.

"That chap Derwent——" began Gadsby tremulously.

Now that the thing had been done Reginald Gadsby had not the sense of triumph he had anticipated.

It was not that he was in the least repentant. But he was afraid. He had never been in anything quite so rascally as this before; and it was not all over yet. Many things might happen to overturn his plans, and there would be at best a period of suspense that must seem long to him before he could be sure of anything.

"Hang the fellow!" snarled Ponsonby. "I'm not goin' to wait for him! I hope the police have collared him! That ought to settle his hash!"

It was on the tip of Gadsby's tongue to say that the police were not really concerned." But he thought it best to keep that dark—at any rate, till Pon had had time to digest what had chanced, and to make it clear that he had thrown over Flip Derwent once for all.

"I don't know," said Vavasour, in a twittering voice, that sounded as if it came from somewhere high up in his head. "I—I —— Oh, let's get out of this! We're in danger here, absolutely!"

Most of their fellow-gamblers had faded into the night, making their exit over walls and through back gardens, to scatter at once. Some of them made for their homes, others for their pubs; some, the less frightened, promenaded the High Street of the town to make it clear to any members of the police-force who might be about that they were not subjects of reasonable suspicion.

But what the three nuts naturally wanted was to get to Highcliffe at once.

Not one of them cared what happened to Flip—apart from the manner in which anything that happened might react upon them, of course. Pon cared as little as Gadsby. His mood was a darkly savage one.

"Yes, let's clear," he said. "We can't stay to talk here. But just mind this—if Derwent's nabbed, we weren't with him! Stick to that, by gad, an' we're safe!"

"But he'll give us away! I'm sure he will, absolutely," twittered Vav.

"You idiot! He won't do anythin' of the sort. I've done with the bounder; but I know him too well for that. Come along, you two!"

In a few minutes they were clear of the town and on the road to Highcliffe.

"Now, Pon, what's the game to be?" asked Gadsby, very willing that Pon should lead now.

"If that chap's nabbed he'll either spend the night in the cells, or else he will be walked off straight away to the old man," replied Pon. "In either case, it's the sack for him, an' from our point of view that's about the best thing that could happen. We could never get along with him after the row to-night."

"But suppose he drags us in?" asked Vavasour. "He may, you know, old sport! I don't trust him not to."

"You would in his place—eh?"

"Well, I might, Pon—I don't deny that. I shouldn't see payin' the piper while other chaps got off. You wouldn't, either; an' I'm sure Gaddy wouldn't—absolutely!"

"Derwent will keep a close mouth, an' face the music alone if he has to face it," said Pon confidently. "But if he lets on—well, it's a dashed lie, that's all!"

"But it ain't!" Vavasour said, much puzzled.

"It is if we say it is," retorted Gadsby, tumbling to Pon's meaning at once. "We're three to one, dash it! Ain't that good enough? The game is to sneak in without anyone's knowin' we've been out. Derwent's been away with the team, an' he left them because he wanted to look in at this sweet place at Courtfield—see? He didn't meet us—oh, dear, no! How could he, when we weren't there? I don't think he'll sneak; but if he does we've got him fairly set!"

"Someone else may let on," Vavasour protested.

"Not likely! See here, Vav, are you yearnin' to do the brave little hero act, an' stand by your pal Derwent to the last?" sneered Gadsby.

"No fear—absolutely! I don't mind pitchin' them. But if we're bowled out——"

"It's the sack, anyway, you utter idiot!" snapped Pon. "What will a few lies matter one way or the other if that happens?"

They stole in unperceived by anyone, as far as they could tell. A quarter of an hour or so later Gadsby put his head into No. 7.

"You chaps seen Derwent?" he asked of the inmates of that apartment.

"No," replied Smithson. "We don't often see Derwent now. I believe he's at Lantham with the team."

"Said he'd get back by the early train, by gad!" said Gadsby. "I shall know how much faith to have in his dashed promises in future."

"Well, I don't mind telling you that I'd rather trust Derwent's promises than I would yours," said Yates frankly.

The plain speaking did not seem to offend Gadsby. He was smiling as he went back to Pon and Vavasour.

A Prisoner!

"EVERYBODY'S cleared," said Mr. Jerry Hawke. "Now we can have the bloomin' light on agin."

The light revealed to Mr. Hawke the fact that not quite everybody had cleared. He started as he saw Flip lying there. Mr. Cobb let out an oath of surprise.

"Oh, it's all right!" said Chiker coolly.

"All right be hanged!" snarled Cobb. "Nice sort of thing for us if that kid's done in, I must say!"

Mr. Cobb did not appear to consider that it was also anything but a nice sort of thing—which was what he really meant—for the victim and his people. But that was not the sort of consideration at all likely to occur to the mind of Mr. Cobb.

"He ain't done in," said Chiker confidently. "I'on'y got a whack on the napper. That ain't goin' to kill a boy, you bet! Why, I've 'ad whacks in my time that would have made a dent in a stone wall, an' none the worse for it two days afterwards. So've you two, I know; I lay you've both got middlin' thick 'eads."

"It's the young swell that that cussed young Ponsonby was rowin' with," said Hawke. "Was it Pon that hit him, Chiker?"

"Couldn't 'ave been," answered Chiker, well knowing who had dealt the blow which had felled Flip. "Ponsonby, as you call 'im, had jest been knocked down by this 'ere kid."

"Ah, well, we can say it was," Mr. Hawke rejoined. "He might be made to shell out somethin' for us keepin' it dark from his pore victim. Look 'ere, Chiker, this is your job, you know. You've got to get rid of the——"

"Don't talk rot!" snapped Chiker. "'E ain't no body; as alive as you or me, 'e is. I'll get him out of the way easy enough, if you two elderly shiverers will on'y bear a 'and. I live nex' door, you know, an' the kindness of my 'art is such that I don't mind givin' the pore kid a doss there till 'e comes round a bit."

"Don't you touch him, 'Awke!" said Cobb.

But Mr. Hawke consented to help carry Flip next door. It seemed to him quite the easiest way of dealing with an awkward situation.

Cobb reconnoitred, and came back to report the coast clear at the back. Meanwhile, Hawke was feeling in Flip's pockets.

"This is the young 'ound that won twice on the numbers," he growled. "I don't see the sense of lettin' 'im carry all that oof away."

"It was on the blessed board," replied Chiker discontentedly. "So I s'pose Cobb's got it. I don't care a fat lot whether Cobb ponies up to you, 'Awke; but I'm goin' to see to it that 'e shells out my share!"

Mr. Cobb, on returning, allowed that Mr. Chiker was entitled to a share of the plunder, and suggested that ten pounds would be treating him liberally. Mr. Chiker could not see eye to eye with Mr. Cobb as to the liberality of the proposition, but took the ten pounds.

Chiker fancied that Gadsby was going to be as good an an annuity to him. But in so fancying he overrated Gadsby's command of money, and perhaps he did not pay sufficient heed to the difficulty he would experience in putting the screw on the Highcliffe junior. It was true that he would be able to make things very hot indeed for the erring Reginald if only he could afford to tell his story. But could he afford to tell it? And was not Gadsby crafty enough to perceive his difficulty?

Hawke and Chiker got Flip, still insensible, but obviously not "done in," over the wall, and through a back door into the next house. There Chiker led the way down to a cellar.

"You don't live underground, do you, cocky?" asked Hawke.

"No, I don't. My chambers is on the ground floor," replied Chiker, grinning. "But the place for this kid is in the bloomin' vault—safest there, old pal!"

"Well, I don't know what your game is!"

"Oh, yes, you do, 'Awke! My game's to 'inder any trouble comin' to us over this—that's my game. An' a very useful game to you, too, let me remark!"

Chiker had lighted an end of candle. By its light Hawke looked at him doubtfully.

"You've got somethin' up your sleeve, young feller-me-lad!" he said severely. "But go careful! We don't want no inquiries." Best thing you can do with the kid is to bring him round sharp as possible, an' get him to his school."

"That's the ticket! Don't you worry no more about it, 'Awke! I'll see to it, an' save you and dear old Cobb all the trouble."

"Well, I wash my 'ands of it," said Hawke, still doubtful.

"They look as if they could do with a bit of washin'," answered Chiker.

Together they passed up the steps to the ground floor. But as soon as Hawke had left the premises Chiker returned to the cellar.

He stood looking down at Flip, thinking hard.

There was nothing spiteful in his aspect, though he looked the brute he was. Chiker would not have done all this for the sake of personal vengeance on Flip, though he had a dislike for the boy. It was greed that had prompted him. Well-paid though he was for his work on munitions, he was usually short of money, owing to his gambling habits. He was not one of those who supplied the capital for the enterprise of Messrs. Hawke, Cobb & Co. Chiker's part was to bring in the pigeons to be plucked; and he had also been of use to the syndicate in finding a place suitable to their operations.

"It's a better game than the other," he muttered. "I can make them young swells pay through the nose for this little job! This young 'un will give trouble when he comes to, I reckon; he's got plenty of spirit. Maybe I'd better tie him up."

Only a brute would have tied up a fellow much his inferior in strength and weight, after having knocked him senseless. But then a brute was needed for the first operation; and Chiker was, beyond doubt, a good deal of a brute. He tied up Flip's legs securely, but not very tightly, and his hands more tightly.

Just as he had finished, Flip gave a low groan, and opened his eyes.

His head was aching horribly, and he could not understand what had happened to him.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"Never mind that, kid! You're all right, you know," said Chiker.

"Why, confound you, you've tied me up!"

"That's so. It may surprise you a bit to 'ear that I knew that afore you told me."

"What's the game?" Flip demanded. "I know you, of course; but I'm hanged if I can think why you should play a trick like this on me!"

Chiker shook his head in a very serious way.

"It's for your own good," he said. "I can't tell you no more than that. That ought to be enough for you, I reckon."

"By Jupiter, you're a rummy reckoner, then! Do you think I'm going to believe that you've kidnapped me out of loving kindness? You look the sort to do that, don't you?"

"Things 'ave 'appened," said Chiker vaguely. "If you was to be let to go back to 'Ighcliffe to-night it wouldn't be for your good."

(To be continued next week.)

NOTICES.

Correspondence Wanted.

By F. Ham, 14, Alicia Street, Hull—with boy reader, 15-16, in Australia.

Will Horace Rowney, of Grimesthorpe, write to Fred Wood, 1, Hessle View, Headingley, Leeds?

Will W. Jess, of Belfast, write to J. B. Sugden, same address as formerly?

By Gideon Smit, 117, Sir Lowry Road, Cape Town, South Africa—with boy readers, 12-14, in other Colonies.

By S. Necrews, Whyndham Arms, Whyndham Street, Swansea—with boy readers overseas.

By Alex. Laggan, Norene Crescent, Carfin, via Motherwell—with boy readers, age 15, in America.

By A. Watkins, 1, Mayfield Park, North Fishponds, Bristol—with boy readers in any British Colony.

By V. J. Hall, 26, West Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme—with boy readers, 15-16, in New Zealand, South Africa, India, and Canada.