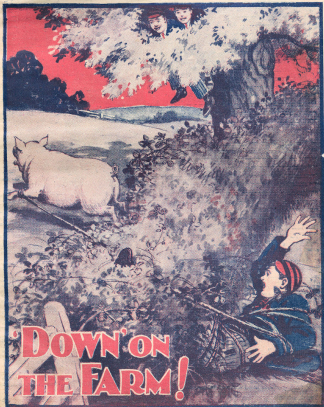


TOPPING SCHOOL YARNS OF ROOKWOOD AND ST. JIM'S—INSIDE!

# The GEM

2<sup>D</sup>



'DOWN' ON  
THE FARM!

MAN OF PROPERTY! MASTER OF BROAD ACRES! THAT'S GRUNDY—

# DOWN ON



## CHAPTER I.

Owner of Broad Acres!

**D**OWN on my farm—

Tom Merry & Co. smiled. It was a Wednesday half, and the classes of the School House were discussing the afternoon's programme when Grundy's voice awoke on their ears.

Clambering down the School House steps, Tom Merry and his chums met it in full tide, as it were, and they smiled.

"That fellow Grundy is going it again about his blessed fags," remarked Messers, with a shrug. "Why can't he give 'em a rest?"

"And so," grinned Tom Merry. "Goodness knows he was punished enough before, but since he's heard about his leggy—"

"Let's go and ask him about it!" suggested Lovelton.

"No fear!" sneered Blake.

"Since he heard from the lawyer bloke we've had Grundy's farm from charge-bell to rights out! I'm fed-up to the chin with the subject!"

"Yess, watah!"

"I mean, let's go and pull his leg a bit," smiled Lovelton. "I'll put the time away nicely."

"Oh—ok, all right! Good wheeze!"

With smiling faces Lovelton's chums followed him as he led the way towards George Alfred Grundy.

Being at a loose end that afternoon they were quite willing to spend a little time pulling Grundy's mighty leg—a remarkably easy process at any time.

Grundy was standing talking to his faithful followers, Wilkie and Gunn, and from the dismal expressions on his face it was clear they were beyond all.

"I expect they'll be a few thousand head of cattle, as the farmer says—No. 120.

it's pretty certain the farm's extensive," Grundy was remarking carelessly as they came up to the three.

Wilkie granted and Gunn shifted restively.

"I always knew I was cut out for a landowner—master of broad acres, you know," resumed Grundy. "I shall have the whole place brought up to date, and worked on modern lines—no out-of-date methods or machinery for me!"

"Oh, yes—quite, Grundy!" said Gunn. "But about this afternoon—"

"Shut up, Gussy—I'm talking!" said Grundy severely. "As I say, I shall have the place run efficiently by seeing to things myself. My goods took no interest in the place, I believe, but— Hullo, you fellows!" He nodded patronisingly to Tom Merry & Co. "Heard the news?"

"What news?" asked Lovelton innocently.

"About my bit of luck," said Grundy. "Just—well, a few days ago, that is—had a letter from my uncle's lawyer. The old chap's left me a farm and land—quite a decent-sized place, I expect, as he was rolling in tin, you know."

"My hat!" gasped Lovelton. "Not really?"

"Hai Jove!"

Considering the fact that they were fed-up with hearing Grundy talk about the news, Tom Merry & Co.'s expressions of astonishment were genuine.

"Is—that a fact, Grundy?" asked Tom Merry. "Did you say a farm or a house?" asked Lovelton.

"A farm—yes!" said Grundy. "Christmas Farm, near Fikinton, in Surrey. I'm taking Wilky and Gunn down to see over the place this afternoon. I may come back, as I may not!"

"There! You may not! You mean—"

"I mean that if things aren't as I'd like them I may not

### GRUNDY GOES BACK "ON" THE LAND!

He spends most of his time with his back to the land—or ploughing the ground with his nose!

"I mean that if things aren't as I'd like them I may not

—IN THIS LONG COMPLETE YARN OF THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S!

# GRUNDY'S FARM!

By  
MARTIN CLIFFORD.



return to St. Jim's at all," said Grundy calmly. "In any case, I've quite decided to waste no more time here. I'm a girl, you fellows, a fellow like me—a man of property—owner of broad acres—fooling about at school! Think of it! I shall probably return tonight, but I've quite decided to check up school and take charge of the farm."

"You'll take up residence there?" asked Leather seriously.

"Not exactly. "But what part shall you keep for your personal use, old chap—the piggy or the dairy paddock?" "I shall keep on the hillside, I expect," said Grundy. Fortunately not taking in Leather's frivolous question. "You know—the chap my uncle had to manage the farm for him—chap named Bugden. But he'll have to see the law, I can tell you! No stocking! No inclosures! No—Hoo, where the thump are you dodging off to, George Wilkins?"

Wilkins had been edging away stealthily, but his leader's hollow brought him back again.

"I—I wasn't dodging off, Grundy," he stammered. "But—but, dash it all, Grundy, we're not coming this afternoon!"

"You jolly well are!" "We're not!" said Gussy warmly. "We've looked over at the Warlock Cinema—paid for 'em! Think we're jolly well going fooling about a rotten farm—"

"A what?"

"A magnificent, extensive farm, with stacks of head of cattle and miles of broad acres, then, if you like

that better," granted Guss. "Why didn't you tell us before we looked over—"

"Because I hadn't decided then, didn't I?" bawled Grundy. "And haven't I ordered a car, you silly oaks! What about my arrangements?"

"But—"

"Shut up! That's enough! You're coming with me!" snapped the great George Alfred; and he turned again to Tom Merry & Co. Wilkins and Guss gave them a glancing look. Evidently Grundy's studies had heard quite enough about Grundy's farm without wanting to visit it.

"Go it, Grundy!" urged Tom Merry, winking at his chums. "Tell us all about it, old chap. You'll keep this chap Bugden in his place, I bet!"

"Won't I just!" said Grundy, nodding grimly. "I shall—"

Grundy went on to explain his farming programme, while Wilkins and Guss, seeing their chance, began to edge behind him, inch by inch.

"That's it—keep the fool gawking. Tom!" whispered Wilkins to Tom Merry's ear. Tom nodded and chuckled. He often felt sorry for Wilkins and Guss. The chums gradually edged to a circle round Grundy as he explained just how he intended to reorganize things on Chestnut Farm.

Inch by inch Wilkins and Guss backed away, and then they turned abruptly and sped away on the grass lining the grass drive. They vanished round by the cycle shed. By this time Grundy's beams were all wearing broad grins—a fact Grundy suddenly noted.

He broke off suddenly to ask what the thump they were grinning about.

"It—It was sheer delight at hearing you talk, old chap," gasped Tom Merry. "Go on—you were talking about making terraces grow on apple-trees, or something—"

"Idiot! Nothing of the kind. I was saying I'd turn part of the property into—into—Why, where the thump?"

Grundy broke off and stared. Obviously, he was looking for Wilkins and Guss. He saw them not.

Grundy spluttered with rage as he realized the truth.

"Well, of all the rotten cheek!" he roared. "They've gone—given me the dip, after all, the cheeky rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co.

"You—you cackling idiots—"

"Go on, old fellow—never mind those chaps!" gasped Tom Merry. "Tell us about the price both, and the track-racing chances—"

"And the (heavenly) herd of broad acres—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where are those rotten, you cackling fools!" bawled Grundy. "Why, the car will be here in a few minutes—it's due at two-thirty! And— Oh!"

Again George Alfred broke off. He had sighted two well-known figures cackling round by the back of the rackshop among the elm. They were Wilkins and Guss, sneaking their bikes across the grass under the trees, and making for the gates.

Grundy gave one mighty roar and went streaking in pursuit. Bike on truck on a well-laid, and Grundy took a header over it. Luckily he sprang on the grass, just missing raking the gravel with his nose by a few inches. He was up again in a flash, however, and he was tearing

The Cox Lament.—No. 1000.

across to intercept his feeble alarm, while the others followed to see the fun.

Wilkins and Gunn heard his roar and spotted him. Headless of blood roars they leaped into their saddles, and went peddling over the grass in a desperate attempt to escape.

It was a near thing. Wilkins tamped off the gears by the gates, and shot through them like a racing cyclist. Gunn was severely a yard behind him, but as he tamped on to the gravel drive Grandy ratched up.

"Stop!" he roared furiously. "Wilkins, you rotter! Grandy, you cad! Why— Ah, got you!"

But he hadn't. Grandy always was a fellow for jumping at conclusions. He had managed to grab hold of Gunn's saddle, but he hadn't got Gunn.

Gunn, looking desperate, drove madly at the pedals. Under-estimating Gunn's speed and his own strength, Grandy lunged on. It was a mistake, for, after making several giant strides, Grandy was obliged to let go. Having let go, the lever of speed and gravitation did the rest.

Grandy's body overtook his feet, so to speak, and he went down headlong with a bump and a roar, plunging up the dust with his nose.

Wilkins and Gunn disappeared up Rylocombe Lane in a cloud of dust.

Just then a large, leathered, open car buzzed to a standstill barely a yard from Grandy.

"Name of Grandy, young goats!" exclaimed the liveried driver, touching his cap to the junction. "Car was ordered by please."

"That's the chap, standing on his nose there," said Leather. "Grandy, here's your car, old fellow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grandy scrambled up, rying. He was weathered in dust, and his features looked as if they'd been combed with a garden rake. He climbed as he glared along Rylocombe Lane and saw his disappearing chums.

"The—the rotters!" he articulated. "The—the cad! I—I'll smash them for this! I—I'll spitain them! I—I'll—I'll—" He sneezed, and his eyes glowered. "I'll see if they'll give me the slip, though! Drive!"

"Yes, sir?"

"After those duds!" snapped Grandy, jumping into the car. "Quick! Run the boundaries down if they won't stop!"

"Oh, yes, sir!" grinned the chauffeur.

A moment later the big car had turned, and was speeding in pursuit of Wilkins and Gunn. Tom Merry & Co. chuckled.

"Good old Grandy!" laughed Tom Merry. "Let's hope those poor chaps get clean, though."

"Bilby ows, if you ask me," said Manners. "Fancy checking up a ripping car ride in the country on a spring afternoon like this just for a picture show at Weyland! Amn!"

"Just what I say," grinned Blake. "Give me the chance, anyway. Grandy's got heaps of tin, and he's bound to stand a good one, too."

"Well, that's so," admitted Tom Merry, nodding. "A long ride in this weather isn't to be sneezed at, even with Grandy. Pity he did'n't ask us."

"Coming back now," growled Digby, as he alighted the car retreating down the lane. "Let's try to wangle it, chaps!"

They had no need to do that, however. The car stopped, and Grandy leaped out, still heaping his browed nose.

"The—the chobby, ungrateful rotter!" he spluttered. "Dodged off down a leopards. Couldn't follow 'em, you know. Well, that settles it. The rotters can go to pot for all I care. I'll take you chaps instead."

"The!" snarled Blake.

"Yes," Grandy added grimly. "All ones paid, of course. I shall stand you fellows a decent tea at the farm. Jump in; look lively!"

Evidently the great George Alfred took it for granted that an order from him was enough without an invitation. But an order from Grandy, in the case, was satisfactory to Tom Merry & Co. They had been wondering how to spend the afternoon, leisure being off. Now an inviting way was open to them. Grandy was Grandy, certainly, and he was the best fellow they would have chosen for a host. But an afternoon's outing with a good tea at the end of it was not to be sneezed at.

"Railton's given me permission to take several fellows this afternoon," said Grandy. "Two got a late pass until eight o'clock, in fact. I'll treat indoors and fix late passes up for you fellows now."

"Flaw! Good man! That settles it, then," grinned Tom Merry. "No prog, and leave until eight. Ripping! Go ahead, old man! You're a realish benefactor, Grandy."

The Car Lingerer.—No. 120.

"Here, here!"

"Yes, wotnah!"

And while Grandy leaped indoors to fix up their late passes, Tom Merry & Co. tumbled aboard the big car. Little as they yearned for Grandy's company, they felt they could stand it until eight o'clock in such circumstances.

## CHAPTER 2.

### A LITTLE MISTAKE!

"PILKINTON, here we are!"

"Yes, this is the place, you fellows," said Grandy.

It was a long journey to Pilkinton Village; but Tom Merry & Co. enjoyed the swift run through the pretty Surrey lanes, with hedges and trees looking their best in the fresh green of spring. The only thing they did not enjoy about the run was Grandy's conversation.

Like the car, it went on without stopping. Grandy, according to Lovelace, had advised the secret of perpetual motion with his chin. He talked, and Tom Merry & Co. had to listen, and the burden of his conversation was the new and efficient administration that was to be decreed upon Chestnut Farm.

Tom Merry & Co. tried to change the subject to football, cricket, rowing, and swimming, without avail. Usually Grandy had plenty to say on these subjects. Now, apparently, he had nothing. Grandy was a man of one idea, and one topic—farming.

Long before the little sleepy village of Pilkinton bore in sight, Grandy's guests were led-up to the club with that subject, and more than led-up with Grandy. But they had had to put up with it. Short of throwing Grandy bodily overboard, or hitting him on the head with a spencer, they could do nothing to stop him talking.

"You, this is the show," remarked Grandy, sighting the name over the little village post office. "My hat! I shouldn't be surprised if this village belongs to me. May be on the estate, you know."

Tom Merry chuckled.

Grandy had surely never heard before of the distant uncle who had left him the farm, and he knew less about the property. But it was clear that he was expecting a lot. "Estate," echoed Tom. "But it's only a farm, ain't it?"

"More or less the same thing," Grandy explained. "It's quite possible that the property includes the village. May be ten miles, you know. That reminds me, kids. Mind, you keep your mouths shut before the servants and estate staff. No need to display your ignorance. Just leave all the talking to me."

"But Jove! Really, Grandy?"

"You shut up, Gramp! You talk too much, even for a school lad. Well, may as well discuss the car now."

"Discuss the car?" exclaimed Blake, staring. "What on earth for? The?"

"We can walk up to the farm; can't be far from here," said Grandy brightly, throwing aside the rag from his knees.

"Out you get, kids!"

"But—hold on, Grandy!" said Tom Merry. "Is the chauffeur picking us up here this evening, or at the farm?"

"Neither, you idiot!" asserted Grandy staring. "I only engaged the car to bring us here, of course."

"Shu—what?"

"I've told you once that I may not return to St. Jim's this evening," explained Grandy calmly. "No good paying for the car to wait hours for me if I'm not returning, is there?"

"But what about us?" teased Blake.

"Eh? Oh, you fellows! Well, I suppose you can't find it back. You'll have to return by train, of course. Must be a station not far away."

"Yes—you have said!"

"What? Look here—"

Grandy's booming voice was already drawing the attention of villagers, and Tom Merry groaned.

"Oh, don't start a row here, for goodness' sake!" he implored.

"What's starting a row?" howled Grandy. "Mind if I know why you shouldn't return by train—I shall stand all that!"

"Yes, but—"

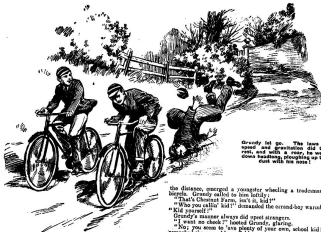
"Try up! Get out, and don't talk so much!"

"Oh, but Jove!"

Grandy had already ordered the driver to stop. The junction, giving Grandy grim looks, disconnected from the car. Grandy lavishly tipped the driver, and the big car buzzed away and vanished.

"Now for leading the farm," remarked Grandy. "That's the first thing, kids!"

"It jolly well isn't," said Tom Merry. "The first thing is



Grandy let go. The laws of speed and gravitation did the rest, and with a crash, he went down headlong, plunging up the dust with his teeth!

to find the station and get to leave the train back to Wayland. And if you call us kids again, Grandy, we'll dot you on the nose—hard!"

"Eh! Why, you cheeky—"

"Oh, ring off! Wait here a sec, chaps! Bound to be a phase at the post office!"

Ignoring Grandy's glare, Tom Merry ran back along the village street to the post office. Tom was back in a few moments.

"Station's two miles away," he reported, with a grunt. "But there's a train for Wayland at six, and that should just suit us. And Chestnut Farm's about a mile in the opposite direction—along the lane facing us—so the post office chap said, anyway."

"Oh, my hat! That means a three-mile walk—unless there's a blessed conveyance at the giddy farm!" growled Horner. "This comes of riding an outing with Grandy. Might have known—"

"You cheeky Hiel!" snapped Grandy. "What are you growling about? Of course there'll be a conveyance—bays of traps and things, I bet. And the hail'll be bound to own a car. I'll get him to run us to the station. Now come on, and don't waste time gawping."

And Grandy started again and started off along the road in the direction Tom had indicated. Tom Merry & Co. eyed each other slyly and followed. Grandy's manners tried them sorely. Yet they might have known what to expect.

For a mile the juniors trodged along between green hedgerows with only Grandy's conversation to spoil the walk. At last Tom Merry called a halt as they reached another lane branching off to the left.

"Here we are, chaps! Postmaster said take the first turning to the left, and this is it."

"Oh, good!"

They turned up the lane and walked on, cheerily now. Over to the left of them showed extensive farm buildings surrounded by pleasant meadows and well-kept fields. Men were working in some of the fields, and the whole place had an air of prosperity and order. Grandy's eyes lit up.

"That's Chestnut Farm," he remarked, his voice thrilling. "Looks a ripping place, what! Oh, good!"

"How the deuce d'you know?" demanded Tom Merry. "I can spot other buildings farther behind. Hello! Ask this Hiel, Grandy!"

From a gateway, evidently leading up to the big farm in

the distance, emerged a youngster wheeling a tradesman's bicycle. Grandy called to him loudly:

"That's Chestnut Farm, isn't it, kid?"

"Who you callin' kid?" demanded the errand-boy warily.

"Kid yourself!"

Grandy's manner always did speak stronger.

"I want no cheek!" roared Grandy, glaring.

"No; you seem to 'ave plenty of your own, school kid!"

remarked the errand-boy slyly.

"Who, you—you impudent young rascal!" gasped Grandy, with a magisterial frown. "Answer my question at once, or I'll punch your silly young head! Is that Chestnut Farm over there?"

"You guess't there!" asked the youngster, grinning.

"Yes, of course!"

"That's right, then—that's the place, mister! Keep straight on along this 'ere cart-track."

"Right! Next time a man asks a civil question answer him civilly!" sneered Grandy, by way of thanks.

"Man! Oh crones!" jeered the errand-boy. "How, how, how!"

He rode away rearing with laughter. Grandy snorted and huffed.

"Cheeky young cub! I know this was the place, without asking him, anyway! Come on!"

"May be peddler your legs," said Tom Merry doubtfully.

"The postmaster said a mile, and we haven't come—"

"Eh! You leave this to me, Tom Merry!"

The cart-track was very waddy, and it ran through two or three fields. But they reached the farmyard at last. Grandy fairly strutted with pride as he scanned numerous outbuildings. But he suddenly frowned as he sighted a youth seated on the yard gate.

He was a heavily-built youth, loudly dressed, smoking a cigarette, and he was busily engaged flicking at the mud beneath him with a light cane, an expression of sleepy boredom on his heavy features.

"L-look at that!" stammered Grandy indignantly.

"Well, what about it?" asked Tom Merry. "Only a chap taking life easy, old bean?"

"And do I pay my men to take life easy like that?" snorted Grandy. "I'll jolly soon show 'em that I mean business! No slacking on my farm! I'll begin as I mean to go on! That's me!"

He played himself before the sleepy-looking youth, who looked up suddenly and started.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, staring. "Where you spring from, kid?"

"I'll tell you quickly enough who I am," said Grandy impressively. "My name's Grandy, and I'm the new owner of this farm! Got that?"

The youth nearly fell backwards off the gate. But he recovered himself in time.

"New owner of this farm— By James!" he gasped. "Sure you ain't King George?"

"I want no blessed check!" roared Grandy angrily. "And I want no dollars about my farm, my man! See! You might as well know that right away. I mean business—root and efficiency are my mottoes!"

"How, how, how?" roared the youth. "Are these kids your helpers, boy?"

"You cheeky rotter! Get off that gate—at once, and get about your work, you rotten slacker!" yelled Grandy. "What the thump do I pay you for? What's your job here?"

"How, how, how?" Evidently the youth took Grandy for a fanatic.

"You-you cheeking fool!" bawled Grandy. "Right! You're cheeked—if you hear! You're no— You-oo! Grogg!"

Grandy roared backwards, shoving as the youth dug his stick into the thick mud and kicked it upwards, sending the mud spouting into Grandy's furious face. It was done playfully, but Grandy did not like it. He grunted and rose from his crouch, and then he went for the humorous youth.

His fist smote the fellow full on the nose, and the youth recoiled and went backwards. His heavily shod feet flew up, and he turned a complete somersault backwards, landing in the deep mud beyond the gate.

"Oh, my only hat!" grinned Blake. "Now for trouble!"

"But Jove! I really hope Grandy isn't making a mistake, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus excitedly.

"These scores little debts that Grandy had. Believing with force, the gaillard youth scrambled up, covered from head to foot in mud, and advanced back over the gate.

Then he rushed at Grandy, all his good-humored geniality gone.

Grandy put his fist up at once, but there were except aside, and a bit like a bag of mud he grabbed Grandy's collar.

"Lodge!" roared Grandy. "Why, you're cheeked! I—I— How dare— Yaccroop! Gag-pug gaggag!"

Grandy roared furiously as he was swept off his feet, drawn across the muddy ground, and his features contorted and in the mud. His furious roars ended in hoarse gurgles.

"Come 'ere with your teeth, would you?" belabored the brute youth. "I'll show you, comin' trespasser here and givin' your bleasin' lip! Take that!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Grabbing his stick, the youth laid it about Grandy's rear with a ferocity that brought wild howls of pain from Grandy.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Leathor. "Grandy's woke up the wrong passenger this time!"

"We'd better clip 'em!" said Tom Merry in alarm. "Haven't you seen— Oh, my man! Look!"

He pointed to the gate. On the top bar was printed in white letters a name—"Meadowcroft Farm."

"Oh, hal Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, understanding now. "We—we've come to the wrong farm, dear boy! That youngster must have been paid!" our legs! Great Scott!"

There was no doubt about it now. Obviously—from his manner and dress—the burly youth was the farmer's son, and it was no wonder he was angry.

Tom glanced quickly about him. Grandy was still roaring with anguish and struggling desperately, and his yells were already bringing others on the scene. Tom glanced these farmhands tearing across the stock yard, one of them carrying a fork, and he realized they would have to act quickly.

"Quick! Run for it, Grandy!" he shouted. "We've come to the wrong farm, you see! Load a hand, chaps!"

As he shouted, Tom dashed and baited the farmer's son full in the waistcoat. The youth yelped, recoiled backwards, and sat down with a thump in the mud.

Tom and his chaps fairly whirled Grandy to his feet, and then they turned and bolted at top speed along the cart-track.

"Oh, Oh, we're! Grogg!" gurgled George Alfred Grogg. "Oh, oh! You! Why—grogg—didn't you look first and—see, see!—look me up? I've had licked that spite in a minute if those others hadn't turned up! Jough!"

"You—you can!" gasped Blake. "Didn't you understand that it wasn't your father's farm at all? That rotter did was pulling our legs! It was Meadowcroft Farm. That was the name on the gate!"

"Oh rotter!" Grandy growled and growled. "It—is that a fact, you fellows?"

"Of course! I saw the name—"

"I don't believe it—I can't!" panted Grandy. "Look you, I'm jolly well going back, and Fin—Fin—Fin—"

fallen upon a gate by the lane side. It was a broken gate, hanging from its hinges. Beyond showed ill-kept, neglected fields, in one of which was a couple of straggly hares, leaning against each other for support—or so it seemed. Beyond those still showed a small, tumble-down house—a small farmstead in the last stages of decay and neglect. Even at a distance the whole place fairly yelled of neglect and dilapidation, while severely any livestock was visible.

But Grandy was not exactly staring at the farmstead itself. He had already taken a look at that. What he was staring at was the name in dirty, faded white paint on the gate. The name was "Chester Farm."

"Oh, hal Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "It—is that your farm, Grandy? Great Scott!"

## CHAPTER 3.

### STAY MARRIED!

"O H! Oh, why?" said Grandy feebly. The expression on Grandy's face would have moved a heart of stone.

Yet the name was there; there was no doubting it. Was it really possible that this was Grandy's heritage; that this obscure, this dilapidated building, with its air of desolation and neglect, was Grandy's farm?

Tom Merry & Co. did not doubt it, at all events. Grandy had swathed about his farm, had talked to all at St. Jan's, masters and boys, of his magnificent farms and of his "broad acres," and this was it. Certainly, the poor George Alfred had taken too much for granted.

But they could not laugh, though they wanted to badly. They felt too sorry for Grandy in his hour of disillusionment and bitter disappointment.

"Hard lines, Grandy!" exclaimed Tom Merry sympathetically. "Still, it's a farm, and it's freehold. It must be worth something, old chap. It's in a good position, too."

"If it is it, then your gobby uncle isn't the only one who's neglected the place," remarked Blake grimly. "That build-up chap must be a corker for work, Grandy. You'll need a bit of efficiency to get this place right, old man!"

"Yess, wainik!"

With a wretched expression on his ragged features, George Alfred led the way through the broken gate and along a muddy cart-track.

They soon reached the farm itself. Not a soul was in sight about the place, and the windows were dirty, the curtains bedraggled, the garden was overgrown with weeds, and the barnyard covered with rotting and rotting, a few straggly hares ambling about, and a couple of half-starved pigs wandered among the refuse.

Grandy growled and growled.

"What a rotten show!" he gasped. "Look at it! Where are the blessed cattle, see! The collector mentioned cattle on his letter. Was fellows know that. There's something funny about this!"

"No doubt about that!" grinned Leathor. "Talk about being— Down on misery farm!"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Grandy. He was not in the mood for light chatter. "Just look at the place! Where's that old Bagdad? And where are the rotten farmhands? That's what I want to know. And where's the livestock? My uncle was rich and he wouldn't let the place get like this if he knew it, whether he was interested in the blessed show or not!"

"Looks queer to me," remarked Digby. "Let's try the kitchen door. May be somebody at home."

But Grandy was already striding towards the back door of the farmhouse, his face red with wrath. The back door was wide open, with the spring hinges streaming inside. Grandy reached the threshold, and then he halted, giving a terrific snort as he did so.

His chaps saw the reason as they joined him and glanced into the big farm kitchen.

It was occupied. Seated at a big, long table were four men, three of them obviously farmhands, and not very pleasant-looking men at that. The fourth was better dressed. He wore riding-breeches and leather leggings and a rough tweed sports coat.

He was not a nice-looking man. His face was red, and his nose was redder. His eyes were small, and he had a straggly black mustache. In his hand was a pack of playing-cards, which he was just dealing out on the table before himself and his companions. On the table were the remains of a meal and several half-filled glasses.

It was not a pleasant sight to Grandy, the new owner of Chester Farm. He stared and stared, and his white growl as he stared.

"Why, you-you rotters!" he ejaculated. Tom Merry & Co. looked grim as they took in the significant scene. It was fairly clear now why Chester Farm was not in a flourishing affluent state of being.

There was a silence, and then the man in leggings jumped

to his feet as he sighted the group of juniors in the sunny doorway.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, starting. "What the heck do you kids want here! Clear out, sharp, confused you!"

"Not quite!" said Grandy thickly. "It's you who are going to clear out, you rotten stickers!"

"Who-what!"

"I jolly well want to know what this means!" said Grandy, his voice rising in his wrath and indignation. "I suppose you're Bagden, the man who's paid to look after this rotten show?"

"You—you—why, you cheeky, pie-faced young hound?" spluttered the man, starting in anger and amazement. "You, dang you, my name is Bagden. And who the heck might you be?"

"You'll never see enough!" howled Grandy. "So this is why Chestnut Farm has gone to rack and ruin! Playing rotten cards with the lands instead of doing your job! You've sacked—sacked at a moment's notice, you rotter!"

"I—I'm sacked!" stammered Bagden, his face growing purple with amazement. "Here, get out! What the thunder—" He was quite clear he did not grasp the situation. "You, a blamed kid, comes swooping here, telling a man—"

He jumped up from the table again; but instead of retreating at his threatening looks, Grandy stepped inside the kitchen and faced him.

"Hold on!" bawled Grandy, facing him with clenched fists. "If you want a scrap I'm ready enough, my man! But first I want to know a few things. I want to know why this farm has been allowed to get into such a rotten state, why the fields aren't cultivated, and where the stock is! Why, I haven't seen a single cow about the place yet! I fancy I've entitled to an answer, Bagden!"

"Yess wahsh!" Bagden stammered. The juniors had stepped in after Grandy, and it was clear that he was now more startled than angry. He glared at Grandy, but there was sudden alarm in his eyes now.

"You—you're entitled to an answer!" he exclaimed angrily. "What the blazes has it got to do with you? Who the thunder do you think you are? The blamed owner of this farm, or what?"

"Just that, my pippin! My name's Grandy, and I'm the new owner of Chestnut Farm!" snapped Grandy. "And if you've decided and robbed my uncle, you jolly well won't do the same to me, you stinking rotter!"

Bagden's expression became ugly, and he gave his collar man a meaning glance.

"So you're going to chuck us out, are you?" he snarled. "We'll thundering well see about that! I don't believe you're the blamed owner of the farm at all! You're trespasser, and I'm going to treat you as trespasser. Out you—sharp—Get out of his farm!"

"What?" gasped Grandy.

"Kick these young cuds of this farm, huh!" shouted Bagden, his face flushed with rage. "Sacked, are we? Bill—George—Lukie, look these blamed kids off the premises!"

To Grandy's utter amazement Bagden rushed at him. His hand was hooked in Grandy's collar, and Grandy was twisted round, rushed to the door, and a heavy boot plowed behind him.

Grandy roared, sprang forward in the muddy yard, and went down with a crash and a loud.

"Now then other kids!" shouted Bagden furiously. "Look lively, men! Remember you're sacked, according to that blamed kid. Let him see what— Out you go!"

He caught Arthur Augustus by the collar and roared him out. But before he could bring his boot into play Grandy was on his feet and rushing into battle.

Grandy was seething with disappointment and indignation, and here was his chance to give vent to his feelings!

#### CHAPTER 4. Trouble!

**SMACK!**

Grandy's clenched fist hit the burly Bagden full on the jaw, and he reeled with a startled yell, releasing his grip on Grandy. As he reeled, Grandy followed up with a mighty slam under Bagden's chin, and the man went down with a crash in the mud.

"Kick me off my own farm, would you?" bawled Grandy. "Come on, you rotter!"

Bagden came on, spluttering with rage and astonishment. He had obviously never dreamed a schoolboy could hit him like Grandy. The next moment the two were at it. But hard as Grandy could hit he soon found that Bagden could hit harder.

In fact, mighty fighting-man as Grandy was, he was not

of much use against a full-grown man like the bullie. The furious bullie hammered the junior unmercifully, and after only a few seconds Tom Merry rushed in that Grandy would be a hospital case if it went on.

He rushed in and grabbed at Bagden's arm.

"Hold on! Grandy—" "Clear off, Tom Merry!" bawled Grandy. "Think I can't handle the rotter? Who-ow!"

Crash!

The gallant George Alfred went spinning yards away, and crashed down, almost stunned. Bagden turned on Tom, but the rest of the juniors had also decided it was time to interfere. Bagden just had time to get in one brutal blow and then the juniors rushed in and swarmed over him.

"Come and help, you blamed boys!" roared the bullie to the starting, undecided farmhands. "You've lost your job! Come and give these young whelps a hiding, darn you! Kick 'em off the blamed farm!"

Bagden's desperate appeal did it. They rushed to the man's aid.

But they soon had cause to regret their decision. All three were laxy, faddy slackers, and they found Tom Merry & Co., hard on nails, and full of fight and courage. Grandy might be rather high-handed in seeking the men at a moment's notice, but they were not seeing him knocked about by a bullie. In any case, they were then shared Grandy's views that things were not as they ought to be at Chestnut Farm.

In the dirt, easily forward the struggle went on fast and furious.

Alone, George Alfred was not of much use against Bagden, but Tom's aid made a very big difference. The big bullie had the time of his life in those few hectic minutes.

But George, Bill, and Lukie had a far more unhappy time. Evidently they had imagined it just a matter of raking the legs of the farm and booting them out. If so, they soon discovered their mistake.

George—an unshaven little man, with a decided against—was the first to decide to quit. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had discarded his topcoat and his monocle, and, with Blake's enthusiastic aid, he taught George that boxing was not unknown at public schools.

Having disposed this, George, with a badly discoloured eye and a swollen nose, howled for mercy, and then ducked his head and hid for his life. Geary and Blake hastened his departure with a hailstorm of rotten turnips from a pile in the yard.

"That's the idea!" yelled Grandy excitedly. "Kick the rotten out!"

But, like George, Bill and Lukie didn't wait to be kicked out. With forehead hats hovering him, Luke also started to howl for mercy.

"Let a bludge alone!" he howled, ducking and making a rush. "Step, young gent: I give in, blow you!"

Like George, he looked for his life, with rotten vegetable whinnies around his ears. Two seconds later Bill also caught the complaint of cold feet, and peeled off, howling. All three vanished from sight over the stockyard wall.

"Now let's kick this other rotter out!" roared Jack Blake, grinning with enjoyment of the fray. "They started it and we'll end it! On the ball!"

Bagden was still putting up a fight, and even when the other six juniors joined Grandy and Tom he still hit out bravely, and with passion. But he soon went down, with eight juniors swarming over him.

He was whittled over and leg-splashed to the gate, and thrown bodily out. He scrambled up again, roaring.

"You—you young hounds!" he panted. "I'll— What about my traps! What about my— Yarrroooh! Stop, you blud— You! Oh thunder! Youp!"

Thump! Flop! Splash!

An aged tarant caught him neatly under the left ear. An old potato burst into chips under his right. He turned and ran for it, with various vegetables hurving about him.

"Yess wahsh! Fwy stop for this potato, Bagden!"

But Bagden had bugged more than he wanted already. He vanished, his furious yell dying away. Flashed and breathless, the disabused juniors returned to the kitchen, many of them nursing injuries they had suffered during that hectic fight. Even Grandy—though he looked a stinking sight—was feeling better.

"Well, that's settled these bawlers!" he remarked grindy. "I suppose I ought to have called in the police."

"Police! You silly cod!" roared Tom Merry. "You can't have a chap looked up for neglecting his giddy work, Grandy!"

"He's done more than neglect his work," said Grandy darkly. "Didn't that farm's cheap bid as ever? I tell you there's been something funny going on here!"

"Well, it certainly does begin to look like it," admitted Tom Merry.—No. 128.

Tom, after a pause. "Well, you'll need great before it's only to tell the chap things to his legs, old man! And now you're in a fine old peck, Grandy."

"Here's that, Tom Merry!"

"You've sacked the giddy manager and you've sacked the man," pointed out Tom grimly. "Who the dickens is going to run the farm?"

"You, of course, I shall get a fresh staff later. But, in any case, I shall run the farm myself, until it's restored to a state of efficiency and prosperity."

"Oh, my hat!"

"We'll have a look over the place, and then I'm going to make a start and get busy."

"What doing?"

"Working, of course, you darsney! There's the stock to look, and traps on a large scale, and I shall have my hands full, I can tell you!"

"You jolly well will if you're going to tackle four men's work on your giddy corn, old bean!" chuckled Blake. "But you're forgetting you've got to be back at school by eight!"

"Back at school!" repeated Grandy starting. "Don't you understand that I'm a landowner now—a gentleman farmer, not a school kid? Do, for goodness' sake, get that into your silly young heads! I'm finished with school!"

"But Jove! Grandy!"

"Day up, Grandy! You wag your silly chin too much, you know! You fellows don't realize that I've just reached a crisis in my life," explained Grandy, frowning thoughtfully. "I never expected this, of course," he added, nodding to the place with some disgust. "It's an emergency I didn't expect. But every emergency brings a man capable of dealing with it—the hour and the man, you know. Now's the hour, and I'm the man—see!"

"But Jove!"

"You kids can return to your dished school work—"

Grandy was carefully reasoning, when he broke off, faintly

staring.

Following his glance they were surprised to see a little, well-dressed gentleman on the far side of the stack-yard. He had not seen them, and had evidently just crossed by the far gate. He was short and fat, and he wore American glasses. The man was heavily dressed, and they caught the glimmer of diamond rings on his fingers.

"Who the deuce—"

The little man was acting rather strangely. He looked about him somewhat stealthily—or so they imagined. Then he climbed on to the gate and blinked round at the landscape. Then he wrote something in a book, and, putting down again, began to wander round the yard, blinking about him in a very keen and curious manner.

"Look at him!" breathed Grandy. "I told you there was something rummy going on here, didn't I! Who's that chap? What's he up to? Is that not fishy—"

"A giddy military inspector, perhaps," grinned Lowther.

"In his Sunday best. Or a traveler is—"

"Don't talk rot! He's a confederate of Bagdon's, for a pension!"

Having given his emphatic view, George Alfred started across the yard towards the little stranger with a very determined stride. The gentleman jumped and jerked round as Grandy grabbed him by the shoulder.

"Ah! Oh! Good-afternoon!" he murmured, blinking at Grandy's deeply suspicious face. "I—I wish to see Mr. Bagdon. I—I had arranged to meet him this afternoon, in fact. If you are friends of his— My name is Mackley—Mr. Charles B. Mackley."

"Friends of Bagdon's?" roared Grandy. "No thumping foot. Are you a friend of Bagdon, may I ask?" he asked coldly.

"Yes! Oh, certainly! At least our acquaintance is certainly friendly, through our business—"

"Then if you're a friend of that rotter," howled Grandy, with a sudden ferocity that made the little man keep a face into the air, "you can jolly well hoof it—hoop! Get off this farm!"

"Good gracious! My dear young fellow—"

"Close on!" howled Grandy. "I'm here here now, and I warn you I shan't stand any nonsense! Any shady games here, and I'll catch the police!"

"Police! Good God!"

"Yes. And now, out you get!" screeped Grandy.

He grabbed the little man by the coat collar, twisted him round, and ran him through the gateway. Mr. Mackley gasped, and he blinked more in fear than anger at George Alfred.

"How—how dare you!" he stammered. "I—I shall most certainly report this—this amazing affair to Mr. Bagdon, wherever you are!"

Grandy took a threatening step towards him, and Mr.

Tom Merry—No. 222.

Mackley fairly scudded away towards a little jet-water car that stood on the cart track.

"Next time I'll throw you out!" howled Grandy.

"Grandy, old chap—" began Tom Merry, half-laughing.

"You ring off, Tom Merry! Leave that gang of robbers to me!" snarled George Alfred. "Now we'll start our inspection, you see!"

"Oh, my hat!" grinned Horrie. "What a happy outing this! What about the giddy farmhouse too, Grandy? I'm hungry!"

"Same here! What about it?"

Grandy sneered. Apparently the farmhouse was off. But the juniors did not expect it in the peculiar circumstances. They followed Grandy on his tour of inspection.

The farmhouse was dirty and untidy. Apparently Mr. Bagdon lived alone at the house, and very obviously there were no female servants to keep the place clean. One bed-room—the best—bore signs of occupation, but that was all. It was Bagdon's bed-room evidently, and on the floor were two leather bags, one open and containing clothing, the other fastened and strapped.

"Looks as if he was booked for his giddy holidays," remarked Blake, with a glance at Tom Merry.

"More likely intended to do a bank with the spoons, or something," chuckled Lowther. "Let's get out of this!"

They wandered downstairs again. The furniture in the house was quite good stuff, but badly neglected.

"I'll soon get the place to rights," remarked Grandy.

"Now we're going round the property. One of you had better stay on guard in case that rotter Bagdon returns."

"I'll stay," and Horrie. "I'll get some tea ready, you know. Hoops of eggs and grub in the larder! I suppose it belongs to Bagdon; but we can pay him if he comes back—"

"Well, that's a good idea," admitted Grandy. "After all, I promised you eggs tea, and I'm a man of my word!"

So, with the hopes of a farmhouse tea after all, Tom Merry and the rest continued their tour, leaving Horrie in charge with strict instructions to pull out if danger threatened.

## CHAPTER 5.

## His Hand to the Plough!

"LOOK at that! Oh, good!"

The sight fairly gladdened Grandy's weary eyes.

They had toured the large hall, visiting the stable, barn, store-sheds, and other buildings. Most of them were either empty or filled with rubbish. Grandy was sunk deep in dejection by the time they had finished.

A nearer inspection of the two scrappy horses had deepened his dejection.

And then, quite suddenly and unexpectedly, on coming through a gap in the fence of one of the fields, they had happened upon a glad sight.

It was of a plough, with two fine, bonnie horses, powerful and glossy-skinned, standing by behind it. The field they were in was orderly, and half of it was ploughed up in neat, straight lines of freshly turned earth.

"Oh, good!" breathed Grandy, his eyes dancing. "So those brutes have looked after those fine bonnie, anyway."

"My hat! We may find things better than we supposed, after all, yet."

"But are you sure, Grandy?"

"Fit a pair of animals as any I've seen," said Grandy, beaming. "Fancy those laxy shakers leaving their job half done to play rotten cards! By Jove! There's only that strip to be done. I'll soon run that off!"

"But Jove! Are you sure you can manage it, Grandy?" inquired Arthur Augustus, Downing. "Ploughing is rather difficult—"

"But! I'll soon show you fellows what I can do!"

"But, I say, old man—"

"But! You ring off, Tom Merry! Think I could treat you with the job!"

And Grandy, the optimist, ran over to the plough and horses. He rather fancied himself at the plough, and he was anxious to impress Tom Merry & Co. They would have something good to tell at St. Jim's, at all events.

He took the reins and gave a tug.

"Go-up! Chuk, chuk! Go-up!"

The horses moved restlessly, but did not "go-up." Grandy shook the reins smartly and impatiently until they clapped against the glossy necks.

This time, as Grandy heeled on the reins, they did move. One started to back, and the other started to pull, shaking its head as if as puzzled and indignant as the other horse.



Possibly Grandy wasn't as skillful at handling the crisis as he imagined his man.

At all events things went wrong. "Whack!" roared Grandy. "Back—I mean grope, you beggar! Whack! Good! Oh, my jaw! What—"

After trying to hook, the starboard horse—to use a nautical term—began to wheel round in a half-circle, but as Grandy dragged desperately at the reins again it twisted round. At the same moment the port horse also backed, getting the reins over its face. It promptly wheeled round, shaking its head, and started to back into its companion.

"Whack!" shrieked Grandy. "What the deuce's the matter with those! Who—I mean, go—up! Not you! Whack! Oh, great nip! Steady! Whack! Oh, crikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovelace. "Go it, Grandy! I didn't know it was going to be a circus turn!"

Arthur Augustus, seeing fit to lend a helping hand, seized one horse by the bridle, and was immediately lifted off his feet as the animal reared up!

What was happening Grandy himself knew least of all. He shouted and shrieked and yanked at the reins, but only succeeded in making confusion worse. The plough, the horses, and Grandy seemed to be tied up hopelessly in a knot by now. And every moment the drama expected one or both of the animals to take fright, as they ploughed and backed.

Then, suddenly, just as Tom and Blake were about to rush to Grandy's aid, there came a ferocious bellow, and a short, fat man, with a red whisker-fringed face, and gaitered legs, came rushing breathlessly over the furrows from a neighbouring field. Behind him ran a startled farmhand.

"What the thunder— You darned young scoundrel, what you doing with these horses!" howled the fat man.

"Well, I'm danged!"

He gave Grandy a mighty buffet with his fat hand that sent the junior flying away with a howl. Then he jumped to the heads of the frightened horses, Gony having long since abandoned this post.

"Steady, Boss; steady, Jann, old gal!" he called soothingly. "Lead a hand here, Topper—look lively, dang it!"

Topper rushed up; and between them they succeeded in quietening the startled horses, and in corralling them, so to speak. Leaving Topper in charge, the irate farmer, his red face crimson now with indignant wrath, rushed at Grandy.

"H-h-ho, I say—" Grandy just managed to mutter, when the farmer's booby hand grabbed him by the collar, and he was whirled round. Then the farmer brought his stick into play.

"Yarrough! Why—yar—larro! Stop! Yarrough!" shrieked Grandy in uncorrelated anguish. "Why, you— Yarrough!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

For the second time that afternoon George Alfred got a licking with a stick—and, as it afterwards proved, it was by some other than the father of the youth from Mander-soft Farm! Grandy's neighbours, father and son, had signalled his arrival by barking his name!

By this time Tom realized that again a mistake had been made—just what he had feared, in fact.

"There!" bawled the furious farmer. "That'll teach you not to trespass on a man's land and play dangerous monkey-tricks with his animals, dang you!"

Grandy staggered away. He had been about to rush to attack the farmer in his rage, but—fortunately perhaps—he caught the drift of the old chap's remarks.

"What—what are you talking about?" he stammered, twisting his shoulders in anguish. "This ain't your land no hows."

"Oh! You young idiot!" spluttered the man hoarsely.

"Hold on, sir!" gasped Tom Merry, as the farmer looked like starting his cantrips again. "It's all a mistake! This fellow is the new owner of Chestnut Farm, reader. He thought this field and these horses belonged to him."

"Who—what!"

The farmer crimsoned afresh in angry disbelief, but Tom hurriedly explained, and Grandy showed his lawyer's letter. The farmer's rage fled, and he stared curiously at Grandy.

"Young fool!" he granted. "You ought not to have tried to handle two horses, without any experience. No you're the new owner of Chestnut Farm, are you?"

"Yes!"

"Then you'll oblige me by gettin' that stack of a half-fif years in several times here hence," he roared, pointing to the gap. "I've been tryin' to get that hay stack Bagden to see to 'em for months. They're not my job!"

"Bagden's gone!" growled Grandy, still wriggling. "I've asked the rotter! Caught him playing cards with the boys, and I've beaten him off the premises!"

"But thing you could have done, too, young gent," growled the farmer. "I know all about Mister Bagden! And, if you'll take my tip, you'll ask him about cattle and things like that, too."

"Why, you mean—"

"I ain't aarin' nothing," said the farmer darkly. "I ain't for me to say, but— Anyway, you'll oblige me by getting this dang gap stopped, as it's caused trouble enough, that's all!"



The whole stack broke asunder, and Bagden vanished beneath several hundred-weight of closely-packed hay!

And, shaking his head, the farmer ambled back to his horses, still breathing hard. The justice returned to the next field, giving each other quietly. That the farmer wanted to give a friendly warning seemed clear, but to dare not say more. Grandy himself was too dazed—and too much hurt—to discuss the matter.

"Better get this gap filled, Grandy," said Tom Merry, nodding to it. "I spotted some barbed wire in the barn we were in last."

"Yess, wallah! We'll lead you a hand, dere hay!" remarked Arthur Augustus, crossing the gap reflectively. "In fact, I wathch fancy I could do that little job myself, Grandy. Pray allow me to undertake the job."

Arthur Augustus crossed quite eager to tackle the job of mending the gap in the hedge bordering the two farms. He and Grandy loaded the big bundle of rusty barbed wire on to a barrow, and Arthur Augustus trundled away with it.

"And now for some work," remarked Grandy, taking off his jacket and glancing about him grimly. "First job is to get those pigs into the pigsty and feed 'em, and then I'll tackle the brin. You fellows—"

"Are we going to tackle 'em?" remarked Blake politely. "If there's time after tea, old chap, we'll lead a band with the good work!"

"You, 'em's ready, 'em's," announced Herrie, looking out into the yard. "Naps, boiled lams, and toast, and heaps of jam and stuff! Come and pile 'em! Whose's Grady?"

"He'll be along soon, I expect," grinned Tom Merry.

"What about you, Grandy?"

"Eh?"

"You's ready, old man?"

"How 'em?" asked George Allred. "You, eh? When there's work to be done! I'll have my tea later on—hid!"

And Grandy scowled and began his tanning career.

## CHAPTER 8.

### Feasting!

"THIS here's prime!"  
"And the eggs are ripping, so's the butter!"  
grinned Tom Merry. "Nothing like real farm butter!"

"Put the jam, there?"  
"Right-ko! Who's got the giddy mustard—pass the mustard there, Dig!"

There was a hum of chatty talk in the kitchen of Grandy's farm. The jokers were hungry, and saw no reason why they should not satisfy their hunger, even if Grandy didn't. Herrie had cleaned the place up a bit in addition to getting tea ready, and they were enjoying themselves. From the yard without they heard sounds of scuffling, much running about, and various grunts and squeals.

"Only Grandy chasing the giddy porkers!" remarked Blake. "Let 'em enjoy themselves that way if he wants to."

"Sounds as if he isn't enjoying himself, though!" grinned Mooty Leather, standing up to glance out of the window.

"Oh, my hat! He's trying to tame 'em! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Having boiled tea, the jokers wandered out into the yard again. Tom Merry and Leather decided to have a walk round, while the others elected to help Grandy.

They found the great George Allred chasing after a squealing pig and making desperate throws at it with a

rope, looped at the end. Evidently he was not finding it such an easy job to round up the boozians.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Moseers. "Isn't that just like Grandy? Oh, grub! If only I'd brought my camera! Why on— Oh, great pig!"

Crash!

"Yarrocough!"

From the yard came a crash and a wild howl. Grandy had succeeded at last in roping the frightened porker—only too well. For the sudden lurching tug as the rope tightened round the pig's towing jerked Grandy forward, and he tripped on the rough, cobbled yard and went crashing down on his nose.

It must have hurt the pig also—the rope, at least, must have done—for it squealed shrilly and set off at a rare pace across the yard.

Grandy followed, fairly howling with pain and astonishment. He had to follow simply because the rope had got round his legs. Moreover, it was not like Grandy to let go once he had got a hold!

The porker rushed on towards a hedge, a dense, heavily laden, in which it had speed a hole. Grandy realised the pig's intention, he would have loved still leader.

Just near the hole in the hedge a large tree stood, and on a lower branch of this sat Tom Merry and Mooty Leather, watching the amusing situation with unrestrained enjoyment.

Screaming with fright and pain, the unfortunate porker fairly broke all records for the piggy heading, as it were. The rope was tight round Grandy's legs now, and he was towed across the muddy, garbage-strewn farmyard, with his hapless head banging heavily on the hard cobble.

Grandy's wild yells were unavailing, fairly drowning the squeals of the pig. Tom Merry & Co. stood and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go to, the favourite for the beam stakes!"

"Two to one on the porker!"

"Ride him, cowboy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You sneaking fool!" shrieked Grandy, striving in vain to get the brake on. "Help! Rescue! Yarrocough! Murder! Help!"

Having reached the hole, the porker dived through, the brambles having no effect upon his thick skin; but not so Grandy. With a wild yell, George Allred, now his feet disengaged through the hedge, and then the hedge smote him full in the face!

For a moment there was a tap-of-war between the porker and the hedge, but the porker won. Grandy was towed mercilessly through the brambles and the porker tore on across the field, while Grandy howled with pain, beads himself with fury.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Merry and Leather almost fell from the tree as they rocked to and fro, checking their aching sides.

The porker—still leading—had spotted an open gateway now, and he made a bee-line for it. But he hadn't counted on Mr. Mackley!

The well-dressed little gentleman came striding through just as the pig reached it, and with a startled yelp Mr. Mackley jumped. But instead of jumping aside, Mr. Mackley tried to do the split—and made a poor job of it.

Seeing the opening, the porker dived through, and it being a tight squeeze, Mr. Mackley's legs were taken clean from under him. Having no visible means of support, that gentleman crashed down, obeying the stern law of gravitation.

Fortunately for himself, but unfortunately for Grandy, he came down plumb on top of that unhappy porker.

Crash!

Grandy was fairly flattened—he hadn't breath left in him even to raise a howl.

The porker reared on, this time tearing the rope free from Grandy. It vanished, and its terrified squeals died away.

Mr. Mackley rolled off Grandy, and staggered to his feet, gasping. Grandy lay and panted. Nearly weeping with laughter, Tom Merry & Co. ran up and helped him to his feet.

"Goodness! Good!" whined Grandy helplessly. "Oh, crikey! Over-ve!" He stood hugging his head dully, and then he sighted Mr. Mackley bearing against the post-pot.

"Oh! You—you rotter!" he choked. "So—so it's you! You—you've come back again, have you?"

"What—what— Good god! Something knocked us over—some confounded animal!" spluttered Mr. Mackley.

"I—"

"And I'll jolly well knock you over, too!" bellowed Grandy, getting his wind back with a rush. "What are you after here, you sneaking rotter!"

"Really, you—you impudent young rascal!" heeled Mr. Mackley.

"How dare you! Where is Mr. Bagden? I



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demanded to see Mr. Bagdon. I shall protest most strongly against this raffishness."

He looks off and jumped back as Grandy made a rush. But Tom Merry and Blake grabbed Grandy and held him back. It was clear that George Alfred believed the little man was "in" with Bagdon.

"Hold on, Grandy, old man!" gasped Tom. "You can't—"

"Looze!" roared Grandy furiously. "I'm going to teach this ruffian to keep off his lawn in future! Looze! Why, hi!"

With a mighty tug, Grandy tore himself free and made a leap at Mr. Mackley. That timid little gentleman gasped his alarm and turned tail and bolted for his car like a mouse on the sinder path.

Fortunately he had turned it on the curbstone, and he reached it well ahead of Grandy. He banged in the clutch, and the car, its engine already rattling, looped away. It vanished down the track and turned on to the lane.

Grandy came back gasping, but slightly modified. "I'll teach the lad to come smoking round my farm again!" he swore. "The dashed cheek of the fellow coming back again—just as Bagdon did, you know. He's sly, something, like his cousin scoundrel!"

"You—you sily owl, Grandy!" gasped Tom Merry. "The fellow may only be a traveller, or something like that! You'll be getting—"

"Not! You shut up, Tom Merry! Am I master here or not? I'll jolly well— Why, what's up now?"

From somewhere in the distance came a series of wild hoots and yells for aid.

"Help, help! Woeon, dash boys! Help!"

"Great pip! That's old Gussy!" exclaimed Blake in alarm. "Come on!"

And, followed by the startled juniors, Blake tore off in the direction of the wild wails.

## CHAPTER 7.

### Mind the Wire!

THE startled juniors ran hard. They could not see Arthur Augustus, but they knew where he was—indeed, his wild yells soon guided them to the spot. They fairly pelted across the fields. They imagined

Gussy struggling desperately in the grasp of the burly Bagdon. Grandy, despite his soles and pains, fairly flew. He was itching to get in a few more "lets" on Bagdon's pasture.

But it wasn't Bagdon. Grandy's famous "lets" were not likely to be of much use against the enemy that had Arthur Augustus in its grip.

Suddenly tapping some rising ground, the rearing St. Jim's followed got their first sight of Gussy—or, at least, of a word-long affair from which Gussy's wild wails were proceeding.

It was barbed wire! Arthur Augustus was all barbed wire, in fact. He could scarcely be seen for barbed wire. He had barbed wire to the left of him, and to the right of him, and in front and behind him. He was encompassed round and about with barbed wire.

For the moment the startled rescuers could see nothing but a dancing, struggling, heaving, bobbing mass of rusty barbed wire. But as they drew nearer they glimpsed Gussy inside it—as through a glass darkly.

How it had happened the juniors could not guess, but it had happened. Possibly Gussy did not know.

They glimpsed his hatted face and scratched hands. He was wrapped in the wretched stuff like a hapless fly in a spider's web.

"Gussy!" gasped Blake. "Gussy, old man, what on earth—"

"Help!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, in anguish. "Woeon! Help a fellow instead of woeon! There stars! you wretched idlers! Help!"

"Oh, sithy! How on earth—"

Tom Merry postposed his finding out how Gussy had managed it for the time being. Obviously Arthur Augustus was in a parlous state, and badly needing rescuing, not assisting. Together the drama made a start to unravel the Chinese puzzle. It proved a difficult and decidedly painful puzzle—especially for the hapless Arthur Augustus.

"Mind the wire!" warned Lovemon, using the time-honoured Army phrase.

Amidst yelps and wild howls from Gussy, they started to assist and arrived him. As he worked, Gussy looked, the more miserable, among that misery song. "Down on misery farm!"—possibly to cheer Gussy up. But after Grandy had threatened assault and battery, Gussy desisted. Grandy seemed to take it as an insult to himself and a reflection on Chestnut Farm.

"But how on earth did you manage to do it, Gussy?"

demanded Jack Blake, as they released him at last. "You're an awfully clever fellow, I know, but—"

"Woeily, Blake, I did not do it on purpose, you sily ass!" gasped Gussy, snapping a scratched and perspiring face. "It was woeily howwid, you know. I fastened one end to the post, there, and was draggin' it across the wretched gap, when suddenly the other end came loose. Now back again, and w'apped itself round me."

"Tom Merry to do these things!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is nothin' to laugh at, you wotehnik!" panted Gussy, his face red and indignant. "Howweh, I woeily do not know what happened aish that. The more I struggled to woteh myself the more w'apped up I became. It was woeily—howwid!"

"You must have unweaved the whole lot before starting the job," suggested Tom Merry, sipping the mass of barbed wire.

"Oh, yes! I thought it would be easier that-way. Heh, woeily, I think it was a mistake, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was no doubt about it being a mistake. The laughing juniors dashed across on the wire, and then, between them, they managed to get several long strands to bridge the gap as a temporary fence. Then, leaving the rest of the wire in a bundle, they started back.

Tom Merry happened to look at his watch, and he gave a startled gasp.

"Great pip!" he ejaculated. "We've barely time to catch that train. Grandy, you'd better look up the farm and leave the rest to chance. Mr. Ballton will be able to suggest something—perhaps let you run down again to-morrow, old chap!"

"Whe-!" Grandy glared. "You sily owl! Think I'm leaving this farm to look after itself! Mind! What about the Hwootnik!"

"Dai Jove! Yes, what about the wretched froth and animals, Tom Merry!" and Arthur Augustus, forgetting his horns at that. "Woeily, you know, I do not approve of leavin' the poor brutes to fend for themselves—even for a night!"

"And that's not all!" screeled Grandy. "What about Bagdon, and that rotter Mackley? I want to know what's going on here!" he went on grandly. "There's a jolly good reason why the farm's been neglected. I don't believe Bagdon's a farmer at all!"

"What the blamp—"

"It's my honest belief," said Grandy indignantly, lowering his voice, "that this place is the headquarters of an international gang of thieves, or something—probably robbers, you know! I've read about such things!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can laugh! It's my honest belief that Bagdon's a leading member of the gang, and that that burly chap, Mackley's, the chief. He's got a car, and wears diamond rings—I've spotted 'em. He's the head of the gang, and he's not such a fool as he pretends to be. Why should he be so furious at finding us here? Answer me that!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You sily cutwot! It was you who were so waxy at finding him here, Grandy!"

"Ros! You can peck!" said Grandy darkly. "But I've been thinking it all out, and—you'll see! Anyway, I'm going to stay on, if only to head the rotten gang out!"

"But you'll get the sack if you don't return to St. Jim's tonight, you idiot!"

"Now St. Jim's! Haven't I already told you I've finished with school?" bawled Grandy, in intense exasperation. "I'm staying on here! You kids steer off if you want to! Think I care for Ballton now!"

"I think Gwenday is right, dash boys," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head. "In fact, I woteh think I will stay with him!"

"Whe-ut!" yelled Blake.

"Yaa, wotehik! It would be a most inhuman act to leave the boys and things to fend for themselves, you know," explained Gussy thoughtfully. "They will require leedin' this evening, I suppose, and certainly in the mornin'. Yaa, I think I had better woteh with Gwenday. You youngsters can return to St. Jim's."

"You—you fasthuss ass!"

"I refuse to be called a fasthuss ass, Jack Blake," said Gussy, with dignity. "Yaa, I have quite made up my mind. It would also be woteh to leave Gwenday to guard the farm on his own, you know!"

"But—but you'll be woteh!"

"I see no reason why a fellow should be asked for dole who he considers to be the right and proper thing to do, Blake!"

"You—you—"

"It is useless to argue, Tom Merry! My mind is quite made up. I will remain here with Grandy!"

"Good man, Gusy!" said Grandy, with some relief. "He'll run the place easily until I can engage a new staff, old chap. You kids can shove off as soon as you like!"

"You can do what the station you like, Grandy!" scapped Blake. "But Gusy's coming with us. That's that!"

"And the sooner we start, the better!" said Tom Merry gruffly. "Grandy, you awful idiot, you really must come!"

"Hut! Who the thump are you to give me orders, Tom Merry! I'm my duty as a property owner and farmer to consider. I'm staying!"

"Oh, all right!" said Tom gruffly. "It's your own funeral! But Gusy's coming!"

"I am not!"

"You, you are!" said Blake. "Grab the dollar, chaps!"

"What's that?"

They surrounded Arthur Augustus, who eyed them brightly—until they laid violent hands upon him, and then he yelled:

"But Jove! Welcome me, you lads! Welcome!"

"Not much!" said Tom Merry, glancing at his watch again. "Where! We'll miss that rotten train unless we fairly get a charge! It's done on three miles, remember?"

"Oh, my hat! Come along, Gusy!"

"I refuse! Welcome me, you fellows! Welcome, Grandy!"

"I'll jolly soon do that!" howled Grandy.

And he rushed in to the attack, determined to rescue his valisees from harm. But while Tom and Blake hung on to Arthur Augustus, the remaining four found George Alfred easy to handle.

"Sorry, old man!" said Lowther, as they brought Grandy crashing down and sat on his chest. "Sorry we can't stay, but we had we must depart. Good-bye, Gusy, old chap!"

Professing and resisting feebly, Arthur Augustus was rushed away from the farm on to the mid-truck. Lowther & Co. held Grandy until Merry, Blake, and Gusy were well ahead, and then they jumped up and rushed after them, leaving Grandy to wriggle up as best he could.

Grandy tore after them; but he gave it up at last, and turned back. As a matter of fact, Grandy, much as he would have liked Gusy's company, felt sure in his mind now he had gone. Grandy was a decent fellow, and though he was determined to defy St. Jim's himself, he hesitated to drag anyone else into possible trouble. So he tramped back to the farm, quite anxious to hold the fort alone, whatever trouble or danger might meet him. Grandy had unbounded confidence in himself, and feared no foe.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. were rubbing the yelling Arthur Augustus along at a breakneck speed. Tom Merry was not feeling at all easy in his mind in regard to leaving Grandy behind. Not counting the risk of being sucked from St. Jim's for such daring recklessness, there was no little possibility of trouble from the vengeful Bagdas.

They soon reached the village, and, by good luck, a disengaged and ancient taxi sprang them just outside, and they halted it and tumbled inside. It was bound for the little country station to pick up possible passengers, and Tom Merry breathed with deep relief on finding the London express was not gone.

"You—you old fellows!" choked Arthur Augustus, as they waited on the platform. "Alas! this was only treatment I shall be laugh at you as my friends!"

"We're only saving you from the sack, old man," said Tom Merry soothingly. "We'll report the state of affairs at Chestnut Farm to Hildren, and you can be sure we'll do

what he can for Grandy's property—whatever he does for Grandy himself."

"You—yes—"

"Hallo, here's the giddy train!" said Lowther. "Take it smiling, Gusy, old boss!"

"I refuse! I stoutly refuse to come even now, you wretches!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

He started to struggle again, and the local station staff were treated to the sight of a dishevelled, yelling youth in a battered topcoat and an angling bag slung loosely into an empty compartment of the London express.

Once inside they released Arthur Augustus, and Lowther slammed the door. The whole crew—

"And that's that!" remarked Tom Merry, with great cheer. "We're sorry, Gusy, old boss, but it's for your own good, you know. Grandy's a born idiot, but— Here, look out!"

He was too late. They were all too late.

Arthur Augustus was not done yet. He was a fighter to the last ditch, as it were. And he had noticed that though Lowther had slammed the door, it was not fastened.

He acted in a flash, whipping from his seat and fairly jumping at the door. It flew open, and he tumbled out on the platform just as the train was moving.

Blake's frantic grip was too late, missing him by an inch. Gusy sprang on hands and knees on the platform, and a porter rushed up.

"You young hildjet!" he roared, and, running after the train, he slammed the door full in Blake's face. Blake frantically struggled with the handle. But the train was gaining speed. It was too late and far too dangerous to jump out now.

Gusy scrambled up, gasping, and sighted Blake shaking a furious fist from the window as the train vanished under the bridge.

Arthur Augustus had won. Ignoring the scolding old porter, he dozed himself down and hastily left the station. Outside, the taxi was waiting in the hope of a passenger, and Gusy realized his hope.

"Chestnut Farm!" gasped Gusy, climbing in. "You know it, my man?"

"Yes, I know it, sir!"

And the ancient taxi rattled on towards Chestnut Farm with the noble and victorious Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Grandy was not to hold the fort alone, after all.

## CHAPTER 8.

### A Night Alarm!

"BED-TIME, D'Arcy," remarked George Alfred Grandy, with some satisfaction. "We can't do much more now, you know, and we've got to be up jolly early in the morning, mind!"

"Very well, dear boy. I shall be very glad indeed to get to bed!"

And Arthur Augustus spoke truly. He was tired out—dusted, in fact. Grandy found large work hard work.

Supper was over at Chestnut Farm, and Grandy and his assistant had done justice to it. They had been working very hard. The necessity of such work had appealed to the noble Gusy, and he was really a help to Grandy.

The pigs had been fed, and the fowls and all the other livestock—what little there was at Chestnut Farm—had been fed and put to bed for the night, so to speak. It had not been accomplished without error and hard work, but it had been done. And after that the two enthusiastic workers had set about the unpleasant job of cleaning the living-rooms and two of the bed-rooms of the farmhouse.

Luckily they had found enough clean blankets and sheets

## Would You Believe It?

The only horses in Venice are the  
Bronze Horses outside the Library  
of St. Marco.



In one hour a swarm



of locusts made this tree  
look like  
this



All the  
rail-roads were torn  
up & first-class  
roads substituted.  
40,000,000 first-class  
water buses would be  
needed to carry all the  
passengers.

for two beds, and had aired them before the big kitchen fire. Now they had fed themselves and were ready for bed.

The evening had passed without any visitors, either the country or anyone else. They had sent Bagdon's luggage to the farmer's farm by the taxi-driver, and only Grandy expected over to see Bagdon again.

"He's bound to come round, Grandy," Grandy remarked proudly. "And it'll be dark when he does come. He may bring the whole gang with him, so get ready for a warm time."

"Bai Jove!" This was not very cheerful feelings for Grandy. He did not want his sleep disturbed by Bagdon or any gang. "Bai Jove! You are really worried about nothing, dear boy. Why should that worry—"

"There's something jolly mysterious going on here, I tell you," said Grandy impressively. "There's a mystery and a secret round this farm. You can take that from me, Grandy. I know! What about that cheap Mackley? I tell you, my opinion's this."

Grandy gave his opinion at length, and with a wealth of imagination that surprised Grandy. But it also bored him stiff, and he was thankful when Grandy's bed-room door closed upon him. He was beginning to realize what being and long-suffering fellows Wilkins and Green, Grandy's study-mates at St. Jim's, really were and what they had to put up with.

Arthur Augustus went to bed at once, and scarcely had his head touched the pillow when he fell fast asleep. Arthur Augustus, at all events, was not going to let Bagdon or anyone else trouble him.

But Grandy Alfred Grandy did not find sleep come so easily. He had had a very exciting day, and his mind was full of Bagdon and his dark suspicions of that gentleman. That Bagdon and Mackley were accomplices in some mysterious and criminal work Grandy was assured. Grandy's mind worked in dark and mysterious ways.

Through the open window came the usual night noises of a farm and the country—the bark of a dog, the quacking of geese, the clatter of hens, and the occasional grunt of a pig. But these presently died away, and silence fell on Grandy's farm.

But Grandy could not sleep. He had selected the best bed-room for himself—the big bed-room at the front of the farm that Bagdon had used. It was clean and tidy now, and Grandy was very pleased with his quarters, and the bed was comfortable. Yet Grandy could not sleep.

He heard twelve chimes from a distant clock at last. And it was just as the last lingering note had died away that he heard another sound from outside—a sound which made him suddenly become tense and wide awake.

It was the rattle of the thick creper below the window. And Grandy knew by the sounds that it could not be caused by the wind.

"M-my hat!" he breathed.

Undoubtedly it was someone or something tearing at the creper on the wall.

The sound increased in volume. There was no wind, and the curtain hung motionless against the open window. Grandy fixed his staring eyes upon the curtain, and suddenly he saw a shadow against it.

Then the sound ceased for a moment—only for a moment—and then the curtain bulged inward as a head and shoulders were forced through.

Grandy trembled with excitement. It was a man, and he knew who it was most likely to be. Again the midnight visitor stopped, listening for a few seconds, and then he came clambering over the sill into the room.

It was undoubtedly Bagdon, the discharged bailiff.

Grandy recognized the burly, broad shoulders, the riding breeches and logging coat, in the deep gloom. And Grandy's first impulse was to leap from the bed and bring himself upon the fellow.

But courage overcame the impulse. What was Bagdon after? It might be nothing. But Grandy felt certain it was not that. What had he returned at dead of night for in this mysterious manner? Grandy, despite his eagerness to get his famous "left" into play, determined to discover that. So he waited and watched.

Just inside the room Bagdon stood and waited, listening devoutly. Grandy knew that his eyes were fixed on the bed, and he lay tense and still, but ready for trouble if it came.

But clearly Bagdon was not out for trouble with Grandy. He suddenly moved across to the fireplace and fumbled on the mantelpiece. Grandy watched him lift a bulky object down.

There was a rattle and a clink of metal. Grandy knew what the object was without seeing it. It was the big broken, old-fashioned clock that stood there.

Grandy wondered what on earth the fellow wanted with such a useless article. But it was only a momentary wonder, for just then Bagdon moved swiftly to the window with his ladder in his hands, and that satisfied Grandy.

"No, you don't, my rippin!" he ejaculated.

Grandy's voice, cool and calm, cut through the silent air like a knife, and Bagdon jumped convulsively. And in that instant Grandy leaped from the bed and made a rush.

The clock smashed to the floor, and the next moment Bagdon and the new cover of Chestnut Farm were locked in a desperate, whirling struggle.

Once his sudden alarm was gone, Bagdon fought like a wild bull. But so did Grandy. Despite his recent experience with the burly billy, Grandy had no fear of him whatever. Grandy was a fellow who never knew when he was beaten, who would never admit himself anything but a match for the best.

The wallstead went over in the mad struggle, and there was a terrific crashing of crockery. Again and again they crashed into the bed, painting and gazing. There was a shout from the next room, and Arthur Augustus, startled, came rushing on the scene.

"Help, Grandy!" yelled Grandy, slipping his pyjama-dog figure in the doorway. "Help! Callar the—"

Yoo-coop! Crack!

Grandy went spinning against the wall and slid down, half smothered before a powerful and merciless right-hander.

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus was not very quick on the uptake, and he scarcely guessed the position for a moment. But when he did grasp it he was far from being backward in coming forward. He rushed furiously at the dimly seen form of Bagdon.

Had it been daylight, or had Grandy been a trifle more pertinant, he would have seen the left-hander coming. As it was, poor Grandy rushed fairly into it.

The man's iron-belted feet crashed between his eyes, and Grandy was simply lifted from one end of the room to the other. He hit the opposite wall, and slumped down, almost knocked out.

"You—you rotter!" choked Grandy.

Grandy scrambled to his feet, dizzy and shaken. Bagdon was stooping now—as if groping for the smashed clock. But at Grandy's renewed attack he straightened up with an oath.

"You—you damned little rot!" he snarled savagely. "You will have it, then!"

Cooking by the heat of the sun on the steps of the Capitol. America's Parliament House! The temperature was 99° in the shade and an egg was broken and fried in 4 minutes.

The speaker's heat that may be generated in the Nevada type of electric furnace.

Facts from Far and Near. Fifty miles of salt! In Western Utah, U.S.A., there is a desert of salt which stretches for 50 miles. It looks at first glance like snow. But desert is one of America's chief salt supplies. The smallest church in the world is claimed for this tiny building on the Greek Island of Paros.

He ducked nimbly to avoid one of Grandy's famous pile-drivers, hit out recklessly, and as Grandy rocked on his heels under the stunning hit, the brute kicked Grandy's feet from under him and leaped for the window.

Grandy crashed down with almost every scrap of wind knocked out of his body. Bagdon's bulky form showed against the gray moonlight at the window, and then it vanished. Suddenly the fellow wasn't rinking capers, clock or no clock!

Game as ever, Grandy sprang up again, furious at thought of his money snatching. He leaped for a chair in the darkness, fumbled for his trousers and jacket, and whipped them on. Then he showed his bare feet into slips, and leaped for the window.

He heard Arthur Augustus call in shrill, but he did not heed. That Bagdon need have got up to the window by means of a sawn-up and the creeper he knew, but Grandy had no use for these aids. He just balanced a moment on the sill, and then he dropped out into the still spring night air.

Fortunately the farm rooms were low, and the drop was not a dangerous one. He landed on all fours in mud, but not half-winded, shaken much, but not otherwise hurt.

Across the stockyard he glimpsed a dark figure, and he went streaking after it. Bagdon had gained nothing by his haphazard entry, he knew, and a more cautious fellow would have let it go at that. But Grandy was not like that. Grandy was out to wash Bagdon a lesson by giving him the feeling of his life.

It was rather a large order for George Alfred.

But Grandy was out to do it, and he stroked off after the usual. Bagdon had vanished round the corner of the cart-bay by the road gate, and Grandy skipped round it in pursuit. He ran right into Bagdon's arms, for the fellow was waiting for him there.

"Get you, you young hound!" he roared. "No, it's no good you struggling, you little rat! You're going to spend the rest of the night in less comfortable quarters than my darned bed-room, darn you!"

He wrapped his arms round Grandy, and tried to lift him. Grandy's right arm was almost pinned, but, startled and taken by surprise as he was, Grandy acted promptly. He whipped up his arm in a jabbing upper-cut that sent Bagdon's head back with a nasty jerk.

What happened next Grandy hadn't a very clear idea.

He felt Bagdon's arms loosen their grip, and then something like a battering-ram slammed into his face. It was Bagdon's vicious fist, of course, though Grandy scarcely realized it.

All he knew was that he was flung clean off his feet, and then he fell down again with a mighty thud that shook every bone in his body. But it did more than that.

Instead of falling on solid ground, Grandy heard the crash and splinter of timber, and felt boards shift under his weight.

Then a deluge of horror gripped him as he felt suddenly the timber around to drop from under him. He was falling—falling into deep blackness, and he clutched out desperately for support, but found none.

Down he went with a terrific swoop amid a crashing of wood. The dim form before him, the shadowy shape of the cart-shed, the misty moonlight—all vanished abruptly, and he fell down into deep, velvety blackness with a horrible dark mass of stagnant water in his nostrils, his arms sticking.

Up above Bagdon stood as if turned to stone.

It was clear that he did not understand what had happened for the moment. Then he gave a scared gasp.

"Good god! The old well!"

He understood now, knowing the place well enough. He stepped closer to the running gap in the ground, half covered by timber still. He looked downwards and listened.

After that one terrified yell of Grandy's, no further sound had come on to him. All was still and silent in the still-sounding well. He stood for fully three minutes, waiting and listening, his heart thumping with fear. Then he turned, gritting his teeth.

"It—it was an accident!" he told himself savagely. "The darned old cow took! And—and it isn't a big drop, and she's not!"

He made up his mind suddenly, his eyes glittering. Feeling about in the gloom, he dragged more timber over the hole—there was plenty lying against the wall of the shed. He covered the hole, and then went off back to the farm-house again, a better, evil look on his face now. The new owner of Chestnut Farm was out of his way now, at all events!

The Gas Lantern.—No. 1028.

## CHAPTER 9.

### Grady's Turn!

"**B** At Jove! Oh, oh, oh!" Thus Arthur Augustus. His head was reeling, and though he wanted to rush for the window and go after the reckless Grandy, he was utterly unable to pull himself together. That peep of Bagdon's had been like the kick of a mule.

He leaped dithering against the bedrail, heaving his spinning head. Then he started towards the window, tread on a piece of broken jug with his bare feet, and drew his leg up with a yelp.

"Oh, my eye!" he gasped. "Hal Jove!"

He moved more carefully after that. But he found the window on the windowed, and he lit it, with shaking fingers. Then he dashed down at the foot, remaining with water,



Grady shouted and shrieked and yelped at the R.

and covered with jagged pieces of china, and then Grady sighted the clock.

He picked it up, surprised at the lightness of it. On inspection, it proved to be an imitation marble affair, and there were no works inside. The space behind the clock-face was empty save for several sheets of folded paper—recognised bill, they seemed to be by Grady.

Arthur Augustus lifted the clock-face back to the mantle-piece, supposing it had been knocked off it in the struggle. Then he started to kick aside the pieces of jug, having donned his slippers by this time. But suddenly he stopped and picked up what seemed like a bundle of papers from the floor.

It was a small bundle, and Grady was about to throw it on the window-sill when something about the feel of the paper struck him as strange.

He looked at it slowly, and then he gasped.

"Oh, great Scott!"

With Bagdon that troubled, Grady slipped off an elastic

head and opened out the crisp, rustling strips of paper. As he expected, they were all blanketed.

Arthur Augustus fairly blushed at them.

That they had come from the space at the back of the old clock he did not doubt. And it came to him as more than possible that it was his bundle the closely Bagden was after.

"Great Scott!" breathed Arthur Augustus, forgetting Grady in his excitement. "Why, there must be close on five hundred pounds here, but Jesus! How very, very strange!"

Arthur Augustus was startled, bewildered. But he allowed his wits to work, and he realized that if Bagden was after the bundle, then he would not give up the attempt easily. Sooner or later he would return.

The junior reflected for a moment, and then he hurried into his own bedroom and went to the bed. He dragged the sheet back, disclosing the mattress—a straw-filled one. There was a big jar in the corner of the mattress—a fact Grady had noticed when making the bed that evening.

Swiftly Arthur Augustus removed the bundle of banknotes down into the hole in the mattress, and replaced the cover and sheets. Then he returned to the other room.

That the banknotes belonged to Bagden he did not believe for one moment. Had they belonged to the man, he would certainly have come for them openly—have demanded to be allowed to get his property from the bed-room. But instead, he had come like a thief in the night and had broken into the house to get them.

Arthur Augustus hesitated in some doubt now. Should he leave the house unattended and go to look for Grady? He had heard no cry for aid yet, and it was only now that Grady began to worry about him.



ed at the risk, but only succeeded in making confusion worse!

Putting the light out Arthur Augustus crept downstairs and opened the door leading on to the front garden. He stared out into the moonlight, blaming himself now for not ignoring his duties and rushing after his friend. He only stood for a brief fraction of time, but quite abruptly a horse leaped round the corner of the house and leaped full upon him.

Arthur Augustus crashed back, his head striking the stone door behind him with terrific force.

He lay there, half-stunned, and instantly Bagden twisted his nose and knelt on his back, pinning him down helplessly.

The ex-hill did not speak. He was breathing hard, and his face showed white and strained in the moonlight. He whipped from his pocket a length of cord, ran round a strand between his teeth, while he twisted the helpless junior's wrists together.

Only then did Arthur Augustus begin to struggle, but it

was too late. His wrists were held in an iron grip, and the cord was twisted round and used fast. Next his arms were tied, and then his feet, until he was trussed up like a chicken on a spit.

"You—you foolish scoundrel!" choked Grady. "Help! Wynn, Grady! Help!"

"About up!" snapped Bagden, speaking down. "I'll soon stop your cry, damn you!"

He hauled a hand-saw into a hall, managed it between the junior's teeth, despite his struggles, and tied it fast, effectively gagging him. Then he raised Arthur Augustus, hung him over his shoulder, and strode across the yard again. He reached a bare, dragged upon a door, and went in.

It was dark in the barn, but Bagden knew his way about without a light. He stepped to a ladder in the middle of the floor, and with the junior across his shoulder like a sack, he mounted to the loft above. The trapdoor was open, and he heaved his burden through somehow and climbed after it.

"Now you can stay here a bit, youngster!" he snapped. "I dare say somebody will find you sooner or later, and if they don't, that's your lookout!"

With that Bagden climbed down through the trapdoor again, dragging it shut after him. Arthur Augustus, wriggling helplessly with anguish and dismay, heard the bolt shot into its socket, and then silence. The ex-hill seemed to have won in the end!

## CHAPTER 20.

### A Scheming Rascal!

**T**OM MERRY & Co. tramped dinnally up the gravel drive to the Belmont House at St. Jim's. Lights twinkled in both School House and the New House across the quad, and they knew it was close on bedtime for the pupils.

Toggles had let them in, and had gratefully told them to report to Mr. Railton at once—which obviously meant trouble. Though they had caught the London express and reached Weyland safely, they still had to tramp down Weyland to the school—a good three miles. And they were tired and dejected.

They were not dead that was not all. What Railton would say when he knew two of their number were not returning that night, they could only dimly conjecture.

"Keep quiet," said Tom Merry, trying to speak cheerfully. "We're for it, but those men, Grady and Gussy, are for a much worse! We'll have to make it as easy for the silly wags as we can, though. Don't let goodness' sake tell Railton that Grandy—the born idiot—was in it!"

"Rather not! This comes of accepting Grady's invite!" growled Blake. "No wonder Wilky and Gussy weren't having any! Something always goes wrong with Grady's outings."

They entered the House and tapped at the Housemaster's door. A moment later Mr. Railton—who was busy in his study even at that hour—was eyeing them grimly.

"You are late, boys?" he announced sternly. "What explanation have you to offer? I gave Grady permission to take you— Bless my soul! Where are Grady and D'Arcy, Merry?"

Tom Merry explained as best he could, trying hard not to make the case black against the truant.

"This is amazing and wonderful!" said Mr. Railton, as Tom Merry finished. "And you state that those two wretched boys have actually stayed at the farm for the night!"

"Yes, sir! But—but they felt it was their duty, sir—they were thinking of the livestock!"

"You—you leave her teacher-headed Gussy—I mean D'Arcy—in, sir," added Blake desperately. "He was thinking of the animals and—"

"Aburd!" snapped the master. "I am sorry that Grady found mischief so serious at the farm. Nevertheless, their behaviour in delaying rates is inexcusable. They must be brought back without delay."

"We—we came on the last train, sir!" stammered Tom. "I am well aware that with a conveyance it is impossible to-night," said Mr. Railton tartly. "You should have tried to communicate with the school on the phone, Merry. Bring Kildare here at once."

Tom hurried off in search of the captain of St. Jim's. He soon found Kildare, and brought him along. The Housemaster explained the situation to the senior, and Kildare glanced.

"It is monstrous!" said Mr. Railton. "The boys must be brought back, and shall be severely punished for this. You will take an early train in the morning, Kildare, and bring the truant back!"

"Oh—oh, yes, sir—certainly, sir!" gasped Kildare.

"Darrell can go with you, and—yes, I think Merry, Lovelover, and Blake should go!" snapped the man. "If Grandy and D'Arcy refuse to accompany you, you will use reasonable force, Kildare."

"I'll bring them back all right, sir," said Kildare grimly. "Very well. You juniors go to bed at once! Merry, you, Blake, and Lovelover will report to Kildare at nine o'clock."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

And Tom Merry & Co. left the Boatman's study and went to their respective apartments. But Tom Merry, at least, got little sleep that night. He was wondering what Grandy and Gang were doing at the farm—how they were faring. He would have slept but had he known!

"Filkinton! Here we are!"

"This the show?" demanded Kildare.

"This is the station," grinned Tom Merry. "We're now a nice three-mile walk to the farm—unless we're lucky!"

Kildare snorted—Darrell snorted.

Choosing after transit was not in their line. Being lefty Sixth-Form men, they felt it was undignified. None the less, if severely, they found the outing attractive, though they pretended otherwise. It was a lovely spring morning, and even changing trunks out of a lower Form was better than a stuffy Form-room.

"Three miles!" exclaimed Darrell. "Oh, good! If those kids escape the sack I'll run them myself for this!"

They came out of the station, and Tom Merry looked about him, hoping to see the dilapidated taxi in the offing. But it wasn't.

"Our luck is out, Kildare!" said Tom Merry. "We'll have to lead it."

Kildare and Darrell snarled again. They started out on the three-mile tramp—there was nothing else for it. Possibly Kildare and Darrell were not so disgusted as they pretended to be, however. In such a morning a tramp between the green-wooded hedges was far from being unpleasant. Tom Merry & Co. enjoyed it, at all events.

It was well after eleven o'clock when they arrived near the farm.

"This the place?" exclaimed Kildare, staring.

"This it, old bean," answered Tom, smiling. "Not much to look at."

"What a dismal hole!" was Kildare's grim comment. "If I had that place left me—"

"I shouldn't mind, anyway," said Blake. "After all, it is worth something. My hat! Doesn't seem to be a real about."

They neared the farm, and Tom Merry's face looked rather serious as he noted the deadly stillness of the place. Certainly the lawn and other livestock were making noise enough, but for the rest all was silent, and the whole place seemed deserted.

"Rummy!" said Blake, a trifle anxiously. "I hope in goodness nothing is aint!"

"Search as if the stock hasn't been fed yet," remarked Mesty Lovelover grimly. "Gills a yell!"

He shouted the names of Arthur Augustus and Grandy at the top of his voice. There was no answer. They had reached the farmyard by this time.

The front door was closed, but not locked. They entered the house and shouted again. No answer. By this time Tom Merry and his chums were serious indeed.

"Sure the kids intended to stay here, Merry?" asked Kildare.

"Of course! I can't understand it," said Tom. "Let's go upstairs!"

They tramped upstairs. There was a gasp of amazed alarm as they went into the front bedroom. The window-curtains and the bedspread disorder told their own tale.

"Somebody's been scrapping in here," remarked Kildare. "This looks serious!"

"That chap Bagden must have come back and kicked us a stumpy," said Tom quietly. "I don't like the look of things, Kildare. He's a dangerous man, and might do anything in his fury. Plow! Look at the place. Look as if someone's been searching for something!"

It certainly did. Drawers in the dressing-table had been ransacked out, and all kinds of rubbish lay in confusion about the floor. The whole room appeared to have been ransacked.

They went into the next bedroom, and found things more or less the same there. They went downstairs again, looking very grim. Tom Merry pointed to the table. A lamp was standing there, and Tom had already noted that the curtains were still drawn.

"That means they've not had breakfast here, or even drawn the curtains," he said quietly. "It's fast as they can get away."

must have left the room when they went to bed last night. The state of the bedclothes in each room shows they went to bed. Besides, we saw clothes belonging to both Gangy and Grandy there."

"Looks to me as if they got up in the night and went off half dressed," said Lovelover. "Something jolly serious has happened!"

There was a silence. The more both seniors and juniors thought about the strange state of affairs, the less they liked it. That something had happened in the night seemed certain. And where were the juniors now? Obviously some of the stock had been fed yet. The row in the farmyard was enough to tell them that.

"It's that fellow Bagden!" said Tom Merry, in dismay, starting from the doorway. "We'd better search the place, Kildare. They may possibly—Hullo! Look who's coming, Blake!"

A man was just approaching the farm from the cart-track—a big man, in riding breeches, leggings, and a shabby sports jacket.

"Bagden!" breathed Blake. "Hallo, he's stopped!"

They saw Bagden step in his stride and look behind him. Then they saw the reason. A small two-wheeler car was speeding up from the lane. A small, well-dressed gentleman jumped out as it stopped, and shook hands with Bagden.

"That's the Johnny we told you about—a man named Mackley," said Tom breathlessly. "Look here, Kildare, there's something funny between those two men. I vote we let 'em go, and watch 'em!"

"Good where?" said Lovelover.

Kildare frowned, and then he nodded. On the way the juniors had told them of Mr. Mackley and of Grandy's suspicion. And the two seniors had laughed at Grandy's romantic ideas regarding the well-dressed gentleman. But Kildare realized something was wrong now, and he nodded. "Hullo! Here, they're coming in, I fancy! Get back into the parlor there!"

The two seniors and the juniors hurriedly backed into the front room, and Kildare partly closed the door. He hoped that the two men would not enter that room, and his hopes were not disappointed.

Bagden led his companion into the kitchen, and headed him a chair. Then he drew back the curtains and placed ink and writing materials on the table.

"I've sorry I couldn't see you yesterday, sir," he said to Mr. Mackley in a strangely subdued voice. "I was called away for the afternoon and evening. As for these young rascals, wherever they are, they will not dare to trojan here again. I have informed the police—"

"The boy who would have attacked me was undoubtedly insane," said Mr. Mackley, shaking his head. "It was a most remarkable adventure, and I cannot understand—"

"Don't worry about them; I've fined the young rascals, and they will not dare to come here again, Mr. Mackley," said Bagden, hurriedly, as if anxious to get to business. "And now about the sale. I'll be as glad as you to get it all fixed up and done with."

He glanced sharply at Mr. Mackley.

"As I told you, I don't hold no truck with lawyers and darning agents," he said, with a grunt. "I've had enough of them. If you're willing to pay me the deposit to-day, I'll give you a receipt, and I'll hand you over the deeds to-morrow and thank the deal."

"It is somewhat unusual, Mr. Bagden, but I am quite willing to do that, of course. One hundred pounds I think you stated—"

"That's it—a hundred, sir," said Bagden, his eyes glowing as he watched Mr. Mackley draw a cheque-book from his pocket. "I think you'll agree I'm selling the place cheap, eh?"

"Oh, certainly!"

"I am not complaining about the price, Mr. Bagden," said the little man hurriedly.

He slipped pen in ink, and started to write out the cheque.

Tom Merry turned his head and gave Blake a meaning look. Kildare and Darrell looked a trifle mystified. But Tom and his chums understood it all now—understood it only too well. Through the crack of the door they had seen all and heard all. And the police fairly took their breath away.

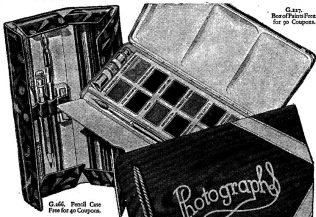
They could scarcely believe their eyes and ears. They knew now what business Bagden had with Mr. Mackley. The latter gentleman wished to purchase the farm, and Bagden was selling it to him; or, at least, aiming to get two hundred pounds deposit!

The sheer impudence of Bagden fairly took their breath away.

Obviously, Mackley trusted the little man, and obviously he did not dream that Bagden was anything other than the



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## "DOWN ON GRUNDY'S FARM!"

(Continued from page 14.)

owner of the farm. Yet how on earth did Bagden propose to get hold of the funds which were bound to be in the hands of the soldiers of Grundy's wife.

And then Tom Merry understood—or thought he did. Bagden was using the hundred pounds deposit. When Mr. Mackley came on the morrow to clinch the deal he would find that Bagden had disappeared. And all he would have to show for the mortgage would be a worthless receipt signed by the sleeping rascal.

"Place!" bawled Tom, and he signed to the others to keep silent.

There was silence in the other room save for the scratch of Mr. Mackley's pen. Then Mr. Mackley stood up after blotting the cheque.

"There is the deposit, my dear sir," he remarked, in his timid voice. "I will come here again to-morrow at ten, as you suggest. I may say that I am very glad indeed to gain possession of this—"

Mr. Mackley said no more—he did not get the chance. For just at that moment Bagden did something that flung the watchers with sudden horror.

He pocketed the cheque, gave one swift glance about him, and then he hit the unsuspecting Mr. Mackley full on the temple.

It was a brutal blow—utterly unexpected by the victim or the startled watchers. Mr. Mackley collapsed without a cry and slumped down.

"That's settled you, you old fool!" sneered Bagden.

He stepped over his victim, twisted him round on his face, and whipped some card from his pocket.



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But that was all. For at that point Kildare and his companions woke up from their stunted inaction.

"On the brats!" snarled Kildare, and he rushed out into the kitchen.

He was followed instantly by Darrell and the rest, and Bagden gave a startled cry and leaped up. He glimpsed the St. Jim's fellows rushing at him, and with another started yell he turned and fairly leaped out into the yard.

"After him!" sneered Kildare. "Leather-Blacks, you attend to the other poor chap—quick!"

And there was a wild, mad rush out into the stock-yard in pursuit of the rascally Bagden.

### CHAPTER II.

#### Gussy Does a Good!

"O! O! O! Oh, hai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus growled.

Never had the bigman swiff of the Fourth spent such an awful night in his life.

Hours he had spent struggling to release himself. And it was in the early hours of the morning that he succeeded in doing this. He had found a rusty old spike in the loft, and by means of that he had seen his bonds uncoiled.

The greatest relief of all was when he had removed the horrid gag from his aching jaws.

But it was done at last. Yet even then Arthur Augustus had found himself little better off. He was free from his bonds, but still a prisoner in the loft. The trapdoor was locked beneath, and all his frantic efforts were unavailing to move it.

He gave it up at last, and flung himself down to rest on the dirty saw littering the loft. He was anxious not on his own account, but as regards Grundy. What had happened to Grundy? He regretted now that he had not leaped through the window after that reckless youth. But it was too late for regrets.

For hours Arthur Augustus lay watching the daylight brighten through the many chimneys and gaps in the broken tiles of the roof. And it seemed many hours later when suddenly he jumped up from his straw couch, trembling with excitement and hope.

He had heard voices, and then shouting. He caught his own name more than once. Then, before he could answer, the voices died away and silence reigned.

But he had recognized the voices. And now he started to shout for help at the top of his voice, his heart leaping with joy. But his relief slowly faded as no answer came.

Yet he could not believe Tom Merry & Co. had left the farm, and suddenly a bright idea came to him. Noting a gap in the tiles just above his head, Gussy started to tug at them with frantic haste. At last he got one loose, and heard it go sliding down the roof. A moment later he had wrenched another free. The rest was easy. Soon he had made a gap in the roof wide enough for him to clamber through.

He hauled himself up, and assembled out into the open. Luckily the roof was not steep; but it was moss-green and slippery. He sprawled on the roof, clinging on to the edges of the tiles. Below him was a drop of many feet to a half-demolished barnstack.

Gussy was too excited even to think of pulling now. Dare he stick a slide down the roof? The hay below would break his fall. Yet the weight of his body might send him hurtling off the stack.

It was risky, and Gussy was just wondering if the risk was worth it when quite suddenly slammer brakes cut from the farmhouse across the stock-yard.

The next moment a burly, well-known figure rushed from the doorway of the farmhouse.

It was Bagden, and after him came polling Best Kildare, then Darrell and Tom Merry.

"Hai Jove!" gasped Gussy.

He was surrounded, but it was just the impulse Gussy needed to force him to act. Without hesitation he let go, and began to slide down the roof.

He reached the edge and went plunging over, to fall with a mighty thump on the hay—a thump that knocked every scrap of breath from his body.

But he did not pitch off the half-demolished stack as he had feared. Instead, the whole stack broke asunder.

Fortunately it had been packed carefully. Indeed, that much seemed certain. At all events, it broke up into a mass of flying trunks, and filled the air with dust.

Gussy's intention had been just to escape—nothing more. He had not given a thought to the fleeing Bagden. Yet Gussy's remarkable attempt to escape proved Bagden's Waterloo.

For the stack collapsed just as the rascal was speeding past, and Bagden vanished, with a smothered howl beneath several hundredweight of cloudy packed hay.

"O'good heavens!" gasped Kildare.

He pulled up just in time.

A wildly straggling figure was raised up among the scattered trusses, and from it came yells for aid in a familiar voice.

"Great Pip! It's that young sike, D'Arcy!" gasped Darrell, running up just then. "Lead a hand, Kild!"

Between them they managed to rescue the hapless Arthur Augustus. He was unscathed in hay from head to foot, and his dirty features were scarcely recognizable.

But it was undoubtedly Grady. His accounts were too well-known to mistake that.

"Grady?" gasped Tom Merry, peering up just then. "Oh, great pip!"

"Lead a hand!" bawled Kildare. "Never mind the kid; he's all right!"

"Wally, Kildare!"

To judge from his groans and yelps Arthur Augustus was far from being all right. But the two saviors ignored him for the moment. They began to drag outside the trusses with frantic haste, and soon they found the dazed and half-conscious Bagden.

He was dragged out and laid down on the straw. He was choking and half-conscious.

Between them they carried him into the farmhouse, and laid him on the kitchen couch.

Mr. Mackley was standing up now, and seemed to have recovered somewhat from the foul blow he had received. But all eyes were on Bagden now.

His eyes glittered as he glared back at them and gasped for breath. But apparently he realized the game was up.

"Now, you scoundrel!" snapped Kildare. "I fancy you realize we've got you!"

"Damn you!" snarled the rascal. "Let me go!"

"Not much, you swindling scound!" snapped Tom Merry. "These fellows know all about you now, my poppin! Where's Grady—the owner of his farm?"

"Find out, scoundrel!"

"Right! Possibly the police will get that out of you," interrupted Kildare calmly. "Test over for the village lobby, Kild!"

"Here, hold on!" panted Bagden hoarsely. "I—I'll tell you, but I swear it was an accident, and the kid won't be swabbed!"

"Where is he?"

The rascal hesitated, and then he seemed to make his mind up.

"He's down the old well!" he panted. "Behind the cartshed! It was an accident! I struck him last night, and he fell down it. The timber over it gave way."

"Snake-Laverth!" snapped Kildare. "Look after this rascal! Watch him, and pull it as soon as Darrell!"

They dashed out. They sighted the cartshed at once, and Tom Merry soon showed them the old well.

The rotten, damp timbers were hung aside uselessly, and Kildare glanced down into the murky depths and shouted:

"Grady! Grady, are you down there, kid?"

There came an answer instantly—a faint, answering cry, and Kildare breathed deeply in his relief.

"Hold on! We'll soon have you out of that, kid!" he called. "Merry, let's have some rope—quick! I fancy the kid's all right! And we'll soon have him out of that!"

And Tom Merry sped away on search of a rope, his heart thumping with relief. Grady's voice sounded faint, exhausted, but he was safe.

Kildare proved to be right. A rope was fixed to the gatopost, and Kildare himself went down it into the murky, evil-smelling depths. He found the well was built of a circular tunnel of ancient brickwork, and he found it no easy matter to get down. But he did it, and at the bottom, resting in an exhausted state on a mass of wet straw and rubbish, he found the missing George Alfred. The junior was exhausted and spent, having attempted, again and again through that long night, to climb up the steep, slimy tunnel of bricks.

But he was safe now. Kildare brought him up in his arms, and he was rushed to the farmhouse and put to bed between warm blankets. Luckily, no bones were broken, and after a good sleep Grady was himself again, and it was all they could do to prevent him engaging upon a fight with the baffled Bagden.

That worthy was only too well aware now that the game was indeed ended for him. And wisely he confessed to his mistakes. He soon did that when Kildare threatened to bring the police into the matter—a course even Grady was not inclined to take.

And it was just as Tom Merry had privately suspected—and the neighbouring farmer had suspected and hinted.

Grady's uncle had never taken much interest in the

farm, and during his long illness he had left it to Bagden. During that time Bagden had been less fastidious, his soul all roused. He had sold the cattle in batches, and he had sold hay and wheat, and other farm produce, and pocketed the proceeds. He admitted when charged with it that the few hundred pounds odd found in the old stock-case was money paid for livestock and produce sold. It belonged now to Grady. Then Grady's uncle had died, and, knowing a few sower would soon be investigative matters, Bagden had planned to abscond with his hoard of ill-gotten gains.

And just as he was about to make his getaway, Mr. Mackley had turned up. That gentleman, used as he was physically, was a keen business man—a fine professor, in fact—and he had had his eye on Chestnut Farm and land for a long time. Looking for a suitable place to build his studies, he had happened upon the farm and taken a fancy to it at once. It just suited his purpose, and he fancied it could be purchased cheaply, to judge by the state of the place. He had thereupon approached Bagden, who had instantly seen his chance to make a final haul before departing, and he had put off his getaway until the deal was brought off. With the cheque for the deposit in his pocket, Bagden intended to put Mr. Mackley away, a prisoner until his cheque was cashed, and he was clear—a clever plan that would undoubtedly have succeeded but for the unexpected arrival of Kildare & Co.

On Kildare's advice Bagden was released, and told to make himself scarce. And thankful he was to go. Then, after arranging with the neighbouring farmer to see to the stock on Grady's farm, the party returned to St. Jim's.

Fortunately, the Head took a sympathetic view of the case, and Grady and Gony got off with a severe wipping. And that ended Grady's career as a farmer.

"Such a career is mine below my abilities, of course," he confided to Wilkie and Gony later. "I'd liked to have liked the place into shape, but—well, I think I shall take Kildare's advice and sell the place to that chap Mackley, and invest the money for my future, you know."

And that was what George Alfred eventually did.

THE END.

(George Alfred has found that being a man of property is not so easy as it sounds! Don't take next week's grand prize, "FATTY WYNN'S LEGACY!" It's packed with thrills and gripping adventures!)

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## The GEM Information Bureau!



Where is getting worse! Can't anyone find a question he can't answer? Come on, chums, have a shot!

"WELL," shouted the Editor, "here we are in the beginning of spring. Spring! A wonderful time, spring, and I want everyone in this office to wake in it this spring. If you don't, summer going before the summer! With those words the old Ed collapsed on to the floor. "Help!" shouted the Ed, with his legs waving in the air. I helped the Ed, up on to his feet again. "What ever happened!" he groined fiercely. "Something happened to the spring, I think, sir," said I. "I mean, the spring of your chair. Shall we get along with the readers' letters?" "Yes!" roared the Ed. "Spring 'em over here—I mean, bring 'em over here. Now, what's the first conundrum this morning? Ah! A little query from our old friend, Pat O'Flanagan. He wants to know whether there is a lemur in the world bigger than Caracra."

"You can tell Pat that such a lemur exists. His name is Alfred Montane, and he's a Swin. He stands one inch taller than Caracra, the Italian, and weighs 7 lb. more."

"Has Caracra ever lost any fights?" asked the Ed.

"He lost to J. Maloney on points after a ten-round contest," I told him. "That was at Boston in October last year. And he lost a fight in December, 1888, with Young Strickling, on a foul."

"Now comes a question in natural history, my lad. After your recent stay at the Zoo you ought to be well up in natural history. Will Cummings wants to know something about the woodpecker."

"The woodpecker's a bird found in many parts of the world. In Britain the commonest is the green woodpecker, known in some parts of the country as the Yaffle. It gets this curious name from the noise it makes—a sort of laughing cry, and can often be heard in wooded parts of the country, though it's difficult to spot. Its plumage is for the most part green-gloss in colour, but it has a white patch on its head and a patch of yellow down by its tail. It looks very pretty, believe me. Thus there's the good woodpecker, who has a habit of tapping the branches of a tree with its beak, and making a noise like a rattle."

"The woodpecker peck wood, I'm told," is that correct?" asked the Ed. "Yes," said I, "and make their nests inside the trunks of trees after they have hollowed these out with their powerful beak."

"I must look out for one next time I'm in the country," the Ed remarked. "If you see one," I said, "be sure to keep your hat on, Ed. They peck other

kinds of wood as well as trees." I thought the old Ed would have socked me on the spot for that bit of cheek, but he was too busy finding a trouser among the letters on his desk to notice.

"Now then, said he, "can you tell Henry Williams what processes are made of?"

"Processes are does made of dour-don. The word comes from the North-American Indians, who made the shoes all in one piece, and embossed the tops with stars. Traders and soldiers in North America copied the idea. There is also a venomous snake, found round the Rockies, called the moccasin, and another name for this snake is "cotton mouth," owing to the white rim round its mouth that looks like a lump of cotton."

"Tom Turpin would like us to tell him if motor-cycling is as popular in this country as on the Continent."

"Tell Tom that there are more motor-cycles used in Great Britain than in any country in the world. We use, as a matter of fact, twice as many as Germany, the total number of machines being reckoned at 800,000. The United States, though it's such a big country, has only 150,000 motor-cycles in use."

"And can you tell our chum what the highest speed record at a motor-like is?"

"Yes, Ed, a new record was set up last year by J. E. Wright. He rode a British-built machine, and the engine had twin cylinders, and was fitted with a supercharger. Wright raised the speed record to 120.75 m.p.h., and that's some going."

"Why," shouted the Ed, "your whiskers don't grow as fast as that! Can you tell Joe Spurling what a grcko is?"

"A grcko is one of the funniest-looking animals in the world," I told the Ed. "A grcko is about eight inches long, with a flat head, no eyes, a tail shaped like a leaf, and feet so constructed that it can walk on a ceiling upside down without slipping off. They live on insects, and get their name from a Malay word, 'go-tee,' which is an imitation of their cry."

"A Bristol reader wants to know what a tomahawk is like."

"The earliest tomahawks, which were war-bowdies used by the North-American Indians, were made of chipped stone, with a point at each end, something like a pickaxe. They were fixed through a hole at the end of a short wooden shaft. Sometimes the stone head would be fastened to the handle with animal sinews, and sometimes, instead of stone, they would be made of iron. The Indians had an interesting way of converting these war-like weapons into pipes. They would do this by hollowing one end of the stone out in the shape of a pipe-bowl, and by hollowing the wooden shaft, would make a pipe. After a fight the tomahawk would be buried with great ceremony by the victor's chief, and if another fight started they would dig the tomahawk up again. From this custom

we get the expression 'to bury the hatchet,' meaning to pack up a row and make friends."

"Fred Goodley, a Plymouth 'Gambler,' would like us to tell him how he can get into the mounted police."

"If Fred wants to get into the mounted branch of the police force he must become an ordinary constable first of all. To do that he must be over 20 and under 31, and stand 5 ft. 3 in., at least, in his bare feet. If Fred is accepted, he will go through a preparatory class, which lasts for about two weeks, and while he's in this class he will be paid 50s. a week. He can get particulars and an application form from the Chief Constable of his town if he asks for them."

"What's a tom-tom?" was the Editor's next question.

"That word comes from the East-India and Asia," said I. "Sometimes it's pronounced tom-tom. The name is given to the drums beaten by savage tribes for purposes of signalling. Strictly speaking, though, a tom-tom is the name for the flat metal discs used in the Far East as gongs."

"Another reader," said the Ed, "is puzzled about the word salt-cellar. He can't see why the thing we get salt in on the table should be called a cellar. He thinks a cellar should be used to keep salt in, not salt."

"Well, Ed," said I, "that word cellar doesn't mean salt at all. The word should be 'saler'—it comes from a Latin word, salicium, and means salty, or to do with salt. So a salt-cellar is really a salt salt. It's quite correct to call a salt-cellar a salt, and if you ask someone to pass the salt, and they pass the cellar without any salt inside, you shouldn't throw it at them, because they'd be absolutely acting according to the rules."

"Wait a minute, my lad. I haven't half finished with you," said the Ed. "What's a mouze?"

"That, Ed, is the North American Indian name for the North American elk. The word mouze means triameter, and they call this animal a mouze because it nibbles the branches of the tree. Rather amusing, what?"

"What is a jigger?"

"A jigger is a hoist, or winch, which can be used for hauling or lifting in a confined space. Hydraulic jiggers are used for the unloading of ships, and are mounted on a low frame with trolley wheels."

"Well," said the Ed, staring at my colossal anatomy with an expression of deep respect, "it seems a shame to keep you here on such a nice morning, when you might be out getting some fresh air. Ha, ha! A little fresh air wouldn't hurt you either, old son. Have you ever tried growing something on that nozzle of yours? Seems a bit of space wasted to me. What about a nice bed of watercress?"

"Nothing doing, Ed," I told him. "But, talking of fresh air, what about your holidays? I don't think two weeks is long enough."

"Two weeks?" roared the Ed. "Why, you always have a month's holiday here. All my staff have a month's holiday—two weeks when they're away, and another two weeks while I'm away. Now then, think that over while you're out at lunch." "I can see, Ed," said I, "that you know what's going on behind your back." "But I do!" snapped the Ed. "And I know what's coming off in front of your waistcoat—that's your whiskers. Get along now and get 'em off!"

A Splendid New Complete Yarn of Rookwood School.

# EXPELLED—BY REQUEST!

By  
**OWEN CONQUEST.**



## CHAPTER I. Well Bowed!

**"KEEP smiling!"** Jimmy Silver, of the Rookwood Fourth, gave that good advice.

But Monty Manders did not smile. The new tailor at Rookwood was looking doubtful and dismal. Jimmy Silver came on him looking under the old Rookwood benches with a letter in his hand and a grin frozen on his face. Judging by appearance, the new junior was not enjoying life at Rookwood School.

That was not, perhaps, surprising in view of the fact that he was the nephew of Mr. Manders, the Modern master, and a member of Mr. Manders' House. Mr. Manders was no doubt an affectionate uncle; but, if so, his motto seemed to be like that of Hamlet: "I must be cruel only to be kind." Certainly, Mr. Manders never ran any risk of spoiling his nephew by sparing the rod.

It was morning "quarter," and Jimmy Silver looked bright and cheery, as he generally did. He had a cricket ball under his arm, being on his way to the nets to improve the shining hour with a little bowling practice before the ball went for third school. But he stopped to speak to the doubtful Manders.

Jimmy had a sympathetic nature, and he could feel for a fellow who was Roger Manders' nephew.

Monty was wriggling a little, which looked as if he had lately experienced the arcturular cane.

"Seen through it?" asked Jimmy.

"Oh! Yes!" granted Manders. "I can tell you, I'm fed-up! This letter is from a man at Highcroft, my old school. They want me back there, you know. I should have gone back to Highcroft this term if Uncle Roger hadn't insisted in and persuaded the wiser to send me here. He means well," growled the hapless Monty. "He thinks I shall do better under his eye. How?"

"You'll like Rookwood in the long run," said Jimmy conciliatorily. "After all, it's a jolly good deal better than Highcroft, isn't it?"

"Fathered!" said Manders. "I asked Uncle Roger to let me off. He said he was shocked at my ingratitude. I wouldn't have avoided his being shocked, you know, but he gave me six as a hint to keep off the subject. I minded that a lot."

Monty Manders wriggled.

"They want me at Highcroft for the cricket," he went on. "Of course, Uncle Roger wouldn't understand that. He doesn't think much of cricket, or of anything but

chemical stinks. I upset a jar in the chemistry class, just to show him that I was no good at stinks, and got a detention for this afternoon. What a life!"

"Come down to the nets now," said Jimmy. "If you can play cricket you'll get a chance here."

"My dear man, I could play your head off. But I want to play for Highcroft. I've tried to get sent away!"

growled Manders. "I've checked my Form master and checked the Head, but instead of booking me out they've only lashed me. I've tried to make Uncle Roger tired of me, and I think he's getting a bit tired; but he relies on the cane to bring me to what he calls a proper frame of mind. And I can tell you he lays it on!"

Monty Manders gave another wriggle.

"Can you bowl?" asked Jimmy. "We want bowlers."

"Lead me that ball," said Manders.

"Here you are! Come along. You can't bowl in the quad, fathered!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, in alarm. "Stop, you are!"

Monty Manders, instead of heading for the cricket ground, was moving off towards Manders' House. Jimmy Silver hurried after him.

Manders had taken a businesslike grip on the round, red ball. His arm came up with a swing.

"Stop!" roared Jimmy.

The quad was crowded in morning "quarter," and dozens of fellows stared at Monty Manders as he prepared to bowl. He stood facing the windows of Manders' House, apparently having selected that House as his objective. Even a new kid ought to have known better than to whip a cricket ball in the crowded quadrangle. And Jimmy Silver jumped at young Manders to stop him. But he was not in time.

Whirr!

The ball shot through the air like a bullet.

Crash!

A pane in Mr. Manders' study window flew into fragments. The ball dropped in the study.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Jimmy.

There was a clattering of falling fragments of glass. A jagged gap was left in the middle of the pane.

The next instant the window was thrown open, and the lean and angular figure of Mr. Manders appeared there. And Mr. Manders' face, crimson with anger, glared into the quad.

There was a shout from fifty fellows who had seen Monty Manders' remarkable performance. Classical fellows and Moderns gathered from all sides, staring at the broken window and the enraged face of Mr. Manders.

Mr. Manders held up the cricket ball in his hand. It had dented at his foot, accompanied by fragments of glass, as he sat in his study.

"What—what—who—what?" stammered Mr. Manders, almost too enraged to speak. "Who—who—whose is this ball?"

"Mine, sir!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Yours! You, Silver—you have dared to haul a cricket ball through my study window! You—you—you—!" gasped Mr. Manders.

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Jimmy. "It's my ball, but—"

"You threw it!" roared Mr. Manders. "If it is your ball, you threw it! Silver, I shall take you to Dr. Chidcolm at once!"

"But I didn't, I never—"

"Silence! Do not prostrate, Silver! You are an sneaky and dishonest boy! Wait!"

Mr. Manders disappeared from the window. A few

The Gun Lovers—No. 108.

Monty Manders is happy! He's  
been expelled—at last!

moment later he came striding out at the door of his House.

Lowell and Ruby and Newcome had joined Jimmy Silver.

Lowell tapped Monty Mander on the arm.

"You're out to even up, you tick?" he said.

"Took your grandmother!" answered Mander.

Mr. Mander came striding through the crowd of Bookwooders. He dropped a heavy hand on Jimmy Silver's shoulder.

"Come!" he booted. "I shall take you to the Head! I shall demand your instant expulsion from the school for this outrage! I shall—"

"But I tell you, I never threw the ball!" booted Jimmy Silver.

"Silence! Come!"

"It was I, uncle!" said Monty Mander in a voice as gentle as that of the roosting dove.

Mr. Mander pumped.

"You, Montague? You?"

"Yes, sir, I was showing Silver how we land at Highcroft!" said Monty.

Mr. Mander glared at his nephew.

"You—you—you were showing Silver how—how—how you land at Highcroft!" he muttered, like a man in a dream.

"Yes, sir. Not a bad shot at the distance, was it?" said Monty.

"By!"

Mr. Mander's voice seemed to fall him. He glared at his hapless nephew like the fabled basilisk.

"I—I don't mind if you take me to the Head to be expelled, sir!" said Mander.

Some of the fellows groaned. As Mr. Mander had declared that he would take the offender to the Head and demand his expulsion, justice required that he should deal with his nephew as he had proposed to deal with Jimmy Silver. As that was exactly what Monty Mander wanted, his affectionate uncle was not likely to gratify him.

"You—you young rascal!" Mr. Mander leaped his voice at last. "This—that is a trick—another trick—to induce me to send you away from Bookwood. I shall not send you away from Bookwood, Montague. I shall give you detention for every holiday this term! I shall stop your allowance to pay for repairing the window! I shall also cane you! Go into the House!"

Mr. Mander transferred his heavy grasp from Jimmy Silver's shoulder to his nephew's, and searched Monty Mander off.

"May I have my ball, please?" asked Jimmy Silver demurely.

Mr. Mander very nearly threw the ball at him. Then he disappeared into his House with his nephew.

There was a clack from the crowd of Bookwooders as they disappeared. Monty Mander's many manoeuvres to get sent from the school were causing a good deal of entertainment at Bookwood. But as for, at least, the junior from Highcroft was not getting any back. His manners and customs were calculated to tire not the patience of the most affectionate of uncles, but Mr. Mander did not seem tired at yet.

Monty's only hope was that he would tire in the long run, but undoubtedly Mr. Mander displayed great staying power in this peculiar contest.

## CHAPTER 2.

### Electrical!

"WHAT the thump!" ejaculated Tommy Dodd.

Tommy Dodd of the Modern Fourth had run into his study on Mander's House for his hat.

There was quiet practice on Little Side that afternoon. Classics and Moderns together, under the eye of Halloway of the Sixth.

Monty Mander was in the study, which was not surprising, as he was under detention for every holiday, since his performance with the cricket ball and Mr. Mander's study window. It was his occupation that was surprising.

There was a coil of box on the study table, a small dry battery, and an electric bell. Monty had a ball-pouch in his hand, and this—and he was whittling it with his pocket-knife to make it chinner. He looked up with a grin at Tommy Dodd.

"What on earth's that game?" asked the captain of the Moderns Fourth.

"Detention task," explained Mander.

"How?"

"Not official!" added Mander. "I've sorted this out for myself. Ain't I here for scientific studies, and isn't it jolly useful to learn how to fix up electric bells? I've bagged these things from the lab to improve my young set."

The Gem Library.—No. 1208.

"Is it a jape?" asked Tommy, mortified.

"You've guessed it in two," admitted Mander.

"Bumped if I see it! What's the good of whittling away a wooden ball-pouch?"

"To make it fatter?"

"What do you want to make it fatter for, you fatted?"

"So that a man might sit on it without noticing it was there."

"Sit on it?" repeated Tommy Dodd blankly. "Who's going to sit on that ball-pouch, you say?"

"O, my prospectus said! My uncle, as jolly old Blake spore remarks!" answered Mander cheerfully.

Tommy Dodd checked.

"I'd advise you to give Mander a rest," he said. "He's getting rather fed-up with you."

"That's what I want! The sooner he's fed-up the better! Think I wanted to chuck classes at Highcroft to study sticks at Bookwood?" granted Mander. "It wouldn't have been so rotten if they'd put me on the Classical side. But Uncle Roger jawed the pater's head off, and led his way! Why can't a man mind his own business?"

"Mander never could!" chuckled Tommy Dodd. "But if you want to be a Classical instead of a Modern, you're a silly man!"

"Same to you and many of them!" answered Mander.

"I won't lick you," said Tommy Dodd considerably. "You got enough of that from your jolly old uncle!" And Tommy took his hat and left the study, leaving Monty to his peculiar task.

When that task was finished, Monty Mander gathered up his various materials and concealed them in various nooks.

Then he strolled cheerfully downstairs.

He stood in the doorway of the House for a few minutes looking out over the old quad, with a glimpse of the cricket ground in the distance, dotted with white figures. Jimmy Silver & Co. were there, and evidently enjoying life.

Monty Mander granted. Detention on a bright afternoon in early summer, with the other fellows playing cricket, was neither gratifying nor comforting. But it was the price he had to pay for his campaign.

Mr. Mander, in point of fact, was a funny and rather middle-class gentleman, and his intervention in his nephew's school career did not evoke gratitude. Monty's father, an easy-going gentleman, had given way to his domineering brother, and Monty had been sacrificed. Which really could not be expected to please the Highcroft fellow, who wanted to remain a Highcrafter.

"Montague?"

The new junior expressed a groan at the sound of his uncle's sheep voice. He turned round from the doorway.

"Yes, sir!"

"Perhaps you have forgotten that you are under detention, Montague," said Mr. Mander in the dry, sarcastic way that made so many Modern fellows long to knock him. "I beg to remind you!"

"Yes, sir!" groaned Mander.

"I have prepared a task for you, in my own study, Montague," said Mr. Mander. "You will work under my own eye."

"Oh, dear!"

"What did you say, Montague?"

"N-o-thing, sir!"

"Follow me!" rapped Mr. Mander.

Monty followed the lean, angular figure. He sat at Mr. Mander's study table with his task before him. Bright sunlight glimmered in at the windows of the study.

Mr. Mander sat down to work out papers for his science class. Monty worked at his task.

For a while her there was silence in the study. Then Mr. Mander rose. He turned a searching eye on his nephew.

"I shall now leave you, Montague, for exactly half an hour," he said.

Monty suppressed his desire to shout "Hurray!"

"I shall expect you to have made due progress with your task when I return," added Mr. Mander. "If you have not done so, you know what to expect. It appears that at your former school you fell into idle habits. I shall endeavor to cure that, Montague, while you are under my charge."

"Thank you, sir!" said Monty meekly. "You're awfully kind!"

"If that is intended for impertinence, Montague——" Mr. Mander's hand strayed towards a cane.

"Oh, no, sir!" said Monty hastily.

"Take care, Montague!" said Mr. Mander in a deep voice.

With that impressive warning, Mr. Mander quitted the

study. A few minutes later, Monty, from the window, saw him crossing over towards the Head's house.

Monty undoubtedly knew what to expect if he did not make due progress with his task during his uncle's absence. Nevertheless, he gave no further attention to that task after Mr. Manders was safely off the scene. Quite other thoughts were in his mind.

He drew from his pockets the various gadgets he had packed into them. They he set to work, swiftly and deftly.

The telephone in Mr. Manders' study stood on a small table by the window, at a little distance from the House-master's writing-table. Monty proceeded to fix his electric bell to the under side of that little table, beneath the telephone.

When that bell rang, anyone answering its summons would certainly get the impression that it was the telephone bell ringing.

From the bell the flux ran down, concealed beneath the table. The floor was covered with thick linoleum. Monty Manders jerked up the linoleum directly behind the chair on which Mr. Manders was accustomed to sit at the study table. Through the hole the flux emerged from beneath the linoleum.

With his pocket-knife he cut a small hole through the linoleum directly behind the chair on which Mr. Manders was accustomed to sit at the study table. Through the hole the flux emerged from beneath the linoleum.

In further length he worked round the central leg of the swivel-chair and passed under the cushion on the seat of the chair.

Monty removed that cushion and placed the flat bell-push on the chair. He connected up the flux with the bell-push.

Then he replaced the cushion, completely concealing the push and the wire from sight.

Nothing remained in view to betray the preparations he had made for the entertainment of Mr. Manders.

CHAPTER 3.  
Trouble on the Telephone!

MR. MANDERS was looking almost cheerful as he walked back to his House. He had just met Jimmy Silver, and—as it seemed—disappointed him. That was enough to "hook" a gentleman of Mr. Manders' peculiar nature.

He walked into his House. In passing, he gave Leggett of the Fourth form for looking in the passage. Then he arrived in his study. Monty Manders was still there, and so deep—apparently—in his detention task that he did not even observe his uncle's entrance. Mr. Manders looked over his shoulder, and granted. Monty had made due progress, after all, and there was no occasion to rag him, which was rather a disappointment to Mr. Manders.

Monty looked up readily. "Um?" said Mr. Manders. "Silver has just spoken to me, Montague, on the subject of—of cricket. It seems that he desires you to play in that rather childish game. I wish you to understand, Montague, that I object strongly to your wasting your time in such a way. If you desire to retain my good opinion, you will not take up cricket this term." Monty gazed at him.

"Not take up cricket in the summer term?" he ejaculated. "Certainly not! I regard it as a frivolous waste of time," said Mr. Manders. "Such exercise as you require for health may be obtained in the drill square, and I should approve of your taking quiet walks with—some careful scientific work for company."

"Oh crumb!" exclaimed Monty Manders. "Do not utter ridiculous ejaculations, Montague!" "Exp—but really, sir—"

"Say no more! You are neglecting your task!" Monty Manders suppressed his feelings. He laid over his detention task again; but there was a glimmer in his eyes as Mr. Manders went round the table to his secret chair.

Mr. Manders sat down. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Mr. Manders started. The beam from the direction of the telephone came the instant he had sat down, which was annoying. He was not aware that it could not possibly have come before he sat down—in the peculiar circumstances.

He rose from his chair, whisked across to the telephone by the window, and looked the receiver from the hook.

"Number, please!" came a feminine voice from the hallway.

"What—what?" exclaimed Mr. Manders. "The bell ring. Am I wanted, or am I not wanted?"

"Sorry you've been troubled!"

Swift from Mr. Manders. He jammed the receiver back



A gaze in Mr. Manders' study window threw into fragments, and a moment later his enraptured face appeared. In his hand he held the cricket ball!

on the hook, and returned to the study table. He had a number of papers to correct before tea, and he did not want to waste his time on wrong calls on the telephone.

He dropped into his chair again. It was quite unknown to Mr. Manders that, by slipping into his chair, he pressed the bell-push under the cushion. So he was surprised when the bell rang again immediately.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Manders. He jumped up again angrily, and the bell ceased to ring. He grabbed the receiver off the hook with a grab that made the instrument rock.

"Number, please!" came the feminine voice.

"What?" asked Mr. Manders. "What?"

"Number, please!"

"I was rung up!" shouted Mr. Manders. "Do you hear me! My bell rang!"

"Sorry you've been troubled!"

Mr. Manders breathed hard and deep. He got up the receiver again, and turned to the study table. His eyes fixed in a glare on the face of his nephew looking up.

"Montague! What are you gazing at, Montague!"

"Oh dear! Waa-waa I'm grinning, sir!" gasped Monty Manders.

"You had better be careful, Montague! Your detention is over at four-thirty. But if you desire to be detained till six—"

"Oh! No!" gasped Monty.





Moody Manders gave his uncle one look; then he dropped his hat and ran.



"Fool!" roared Mr. Manders.

"What-a-a-!"

"Idiot!"

"Sir!"

"Ha-hy!" shrieked Mr. Manders. "Judo!"

There was no answer from the exchange. Perhaps the operator was too automatized to answer; or perhaps she was not listening-in. At all events, there was silence on the wire. Mr. Manders, grieved to fury, slammed the receiver on the hook, with a slam that sent the instrument spinning.

It crashed over, and Mr. Manders, clutching at it to save it, knocked over the little table on which it stood. The table cracked, and the telephone quaked, and Mr. Manders roared. The words that escaped Mr. Manders in the heat of the moment would certainly have caused Dr. Chisholm to request his prompt resignation from the Rockwood staff had the headmaster overheard them.

Madly Mr. Manders gave a violent start and ceased to make excited remarks.

Now that the telephone table was overturned, Mr. Manders could see what he had not been able to see before. He could see that a bell, of whose existence he had had no suspicion, was fixed to the under-side of the table. He could see that a wire ran from that bell and disappeared under the hollows.

Mr. Manders gazed at it. He gazed at it first in sheer astonishment. Then comprehension dawned upon his mind. He jerked up the edge of the line and tracked the fine that ran underneath.

He tracked it to the hole where it emerged from the line and wound up the lag of the spiral chain. Now that he was on the track, Mr. Manders was a regular Gipsy-grook! He tracked the floor to its end, where it joined up with a fat bell-post under the cushion on the chair.

Then he knew!

It was not the telephone bell that had been ringing except on the one occasion when Dr. Chisholm had called him. It was the other bell, fixed under the telephone table by some miscreant hand. Mr. Manders had rung it by the simple process of sitting down in the spiral chair. He understood at long last!

Who had dared to play such a trick! There was only one answer to that question. Mr. Manders foamed out a name:

"Montague!"

He clutched a name from the table. Leaving the telephone where it lay, he rushed from the study. He wanted to see Monty Manders—and he wanted to see him badly!

Jimmy Silver jumped. Cricket on Little Side ceased suddenly. Every fellow there, Classical and Modern, stared at the wild and frenzied figure that came whirling down to the cricket ground. Mr. Manders had often been seen looking cross. He had often been seen lookingasperated and angry. But he had never been seen looking like this before.

"What the trump—" exclaimed Jimmy.

"What on earth—" stuttered Tommy Dodd.

"Is he potty?" ejaculated Babsy.

Monty Manders gave his uncle one look. Then he dropped his hat and ran. He knew that Mr. Manders knew! And he bolted.

"Stop!" shrieked Mr. Manders. "Young recalcitrant-trickster—stifain—stop!"

Brawling the case, he rushed in pursuit. Monty Manders did not stop. He flew!

Monty Manders ran like a hare. After him flew Mr. Manders, brandishing his cane. A roar of laughter followed them as they vanished into the distance, both going strong.

Later that afternoon a taxicab, with a junior inside and a lion on top, rolled out of the gates of Rockwood School. Mr. Manders gazed after it from his window as it went. Monty Manders from inside the taxi, waved a cheery hand to a crowd of Rockwood fellows. Monty Manders was on his way home! Uncle Roger was done with him! And he was done with Uncle Roger! Jimmy Silver ran up to the taxi.

"Expelled!" he called out.

"What's that?" answered Monty Manders.

And he shrieked.

Jimmy Silver shrieked. Monty Manders had brought it off at last; and he was going back to Highgrove. And never had a fellow been so pleased to receive the order of the boot!

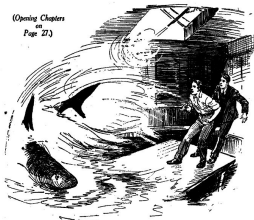
THE END.

(Hold Monty Manders! He's got his copy at last! You'd best Jimmy Silver & Co. confidentially to the GEM each week! Next week's tapping game is entitled: "CRIME INFERED!")

Start Now on Our Gripping Adventure Serial!

# THE ISLAND CASTAWAYS!

(Opening Chapters  
on  
Page 27.)



## Trapped!

**I**N all the stories of desert islands I had read I had always thought what a wonderful thrill it must be to step on to an unknown land where possibly no foot had trodden before, but there was practically no thrill as we trodged over the sand of Necessity Island, seeking shelter from the gale.

I thought we all felt like trippers who had come down to Mangin on a wet and squally day!

In all the stories the sand had been a deep blue, the sand had been golden, the palm-trees beautiful, and the coral stood a picture of sheer delight. But with us the sea was gray and lagoon and angry. The sand was very firm, but otherwise very ordinary sand.

The palm-trees bending in the wind looked bedraggled, and I bore the marks of the coral strand from my feet up to my thighs.

We were all heavily loaded with the stuff brought from the ship, and pretty well down up, and were jolly thankful to reach a point beyond the lagoon where the jungle stretched almost down to the edge of the sea and afforded shelter, and there we flopped down. I know I coveted Nigger, who went dashing after some birds, sending them squawking out to sea.

And then Jill said:

"What about a cup of tea?"

It seemed awfully funny, but Jill knew what she was talking about. She had got the tea and milk, dad had brought off pots and pans, the Dud had carried the big stone jar of water, and all we wanted was a fire.

"That's just it" said Dudley. "No doubt when we become really expert savages we'll make a fire by rubbing two sticks together, or using a piece of glass, Magnesian. I'm sorry that my match-box is soaked through, for I'd give anything for a cigarette!"

"Cigarettes all right?" asked dad.

"Practically—in a silver case, you know."

THE GAZETTE—No. 1238.

"So are my matches," said dad, taking a silver box of vestas from his waistcoat pocket. "They're dry, but there are only half a dozen of them, and when a fire is lighted it must be kept going."

"And Jill is hereby appointed keeper of the fire!" I said, and then felt a gulp in my throat—Cranbridge School and the evening of Greek and Latin seemed so terribly far away. "Come on, Dad, let's collect the sticks."

I think old Dad felt much the same as I; I know neither of us spoke as we collected the sticks and some dry leaves, and then we stood around with lightning-sheltering dad and these precious matches. The first was a washout, it spluttered and went out, but the second caught the dry leaves; there was a crackle, a lick of flame, and then swirling smoke.

And then came a howl! From the black dog who had been circling round the water's edge. He could not resist, and at first I thought some great stone had fallen on his gam, but as I ran towards him, I saw that a huge blue crab had him gripped by the leg.

The dog was clearly in agony, and I ran back, snatched up the axe, and then, using for the crab, severed the claw, turned the crab over, and finished it with a blow of the axe. It was a terrible lathsome-looking thing, but I carried it up to the fire. Mother doubted if it was edible, but dad said we should probably have to learn things like that by experiment, being careful to eat very little at first, and then judge by effect.

"It's a pity I didn't stick to my idea of being a doctor," said Dad. "The rooster trade is rather out of it here."

"I don't know," said Jill, with a laugh. "You're a regular Dreyfus Sande and a new one on the Maglo."

"But probably no garage round the corner!" I said, as I went to get some more sticks; and when I came back I found the boat had got the bottle broken, and dad was carrying from the big joint of cold beef we'd had on land on the ship. He'd thought of the meat and the pickles and a couple of loaves of bread, but had not brought plates, so we pulled some big leaves off a tree behind us and told another that the washing-up problem was solved.

Jill had thought of eggs, and I don't think I'd ever enjoyed a meal more than I did our first food on the island. We'd eaten precious little all day, and had a strenuous time of it. Mother and Dad had eaten practically nothing for days, and she said she was exhausted of her appetite. I know we reduced the size of that joint of beef, and there were precious few pickles left.

As soon as the meal was over dad and I started to make a sort of blanket tent for mother and Jill, and we propped up the tarpaulin on some short stakes to act as a store-room and a place of shelter should it rain in the night. It was still blowing a gale, but when I went to the point, half dreading to look towards the reef, I saw beyond it through the spray the old Maglo in just about

**SHUT IN WITH A SHARK!**  
Barry and Dudley trapped in  
flooded saloon!

the same position, and I went back and reported to dad. The others were collecting fuel for the fire, and dad was sitting by the fire smoking his pipe.

"If the old tub will only last through to-morrow and we can get a good day's work upon her, we ought to be all right," I said.

"All right!" said dad, with a strange little laugh. "Barry, you're the world's champion optimist! I tell you, old chap, that unless we can get a lot of things off the Maglo before she goes for good we're in a pretty hopeless position. But here come the others, so keep up your optimism, Barry!"

And it wanted some doing—we were all tired out. Darkness fell with the midwinters of the Tropics; the fire was our only light. Mother and Jill went off into their tent, and we three rolled up in blankets close to the fire. From the jungle came weird cries. Dad had the sporty rifle beside him; Nigger crouched down by me, half asleep, but one ear constantly cocking up. The wind was still strong; behind it came the thundering surf on the coast and the wail of gony. Dad, who had had a ghastly time with sea-sickness, slept like a log now he was on land.

It seemed years since morning. The horizon light coming to me—poor young Pollard being washed away with that frightful scream on his lips, the funeral flow of Captain Sanderson, the firing on deck, the sinking of the boat, and that swim to the island.

Every bone in me seemed to ache; it was an effort to throw some more wood on the fire. We were stranded on an island in the Pacific. We had no idea of its position or its size. We possessed, with some reason, that it was uninhabited. We were pretty certain that it was well off the steaming route, and in that case we might be prisoners for years, perhaps for life.

And in the morning the Maglo might—or might not—be afloat!

From sheer weariness I lay back and dozed. I was vaguely conscious of dad putting some more wood on the fire, and then I suddenly cast out the thoughts which would keep crowding to my brain, and I dropped off to sleep.

It was the warm glare of the sun and Nigger licking my face which woke me in the morning, and I sat up blinking; and then the grey thoughts and the grey outlook seemed to have vanished with the greyness of the skies.

This was a Pacific island as it should be. The sand was golden, and the sea was just like those poorer artists paint it; birds were strung in a jangle of wonderful grooves, some huge crimson flowers had opened out on a green-covered tree close to us, and I saw a big blue and gold bird with a solid red beak go flying past.

I was on my feet at once, and rushed to the point. Nigger dancing round me. The Maglo was still there, lying with a big log towards the shore and her bows under water, but surrounded by a calm blue sea which frothed into surf over the reef. The wire hawser was gone, and I tingled with excitement.

I ran back to the others, threw some sticks on the fire—which had burnt perilously low—and looked at the chronometer, wrapped in an old macintosh in case of rain or flying sand. It was half-past five.

Dad was sleeping peacefully. I knew he had had a rotten night, so I let him sleep on; but I shook the Dad, who had had a jolly good evening, and he jawned and rumbled.

"There's a job of work for you, old lad!" I said. "We've got to get breakfast and make an early start on the wreck. She's just as she was. You go and get some more sticks. I'm going to wake young Jill; she'll have to do the cooking."

And robbed his eyes.

"You're ten dashed strenuous, Barry—that always was your trouble!" he said sleepily. "We're likely to have all the time we want on this blessed island without any trouble!"

"It will be a thin time unless we get all we can from the boat," I told him; and he roused himself at that, and I made for the rest of biscuits. Mother was fast asleep, but Jill stirred on the mat she was upon her, and then looked up with a start. I explained the situation in a few words, so as not to disturb mother, and Jill said she would be up and doing.

I went and foraged in our store-room. There was the remains of the beef, a last

of bread, a tin of biscuits, some butter, and several tins of condensed milk; so the only thing Jill had to cook was the tea.

Dad was very sick about being unable to shape, and we certainly looked doleful as we sat round the fire having breakfast; but it was a cheery meal—the tea-broth that the Maglo was still afloat, and the sunshine and glorious air had changed the whole outlook. Of course, there was no knowing how much of the ship's stores would have been ruined by water. Dad was anxious about the price levels he had been bringing out to New Zealand, for if we could get them we should be sure of eggs—and later chickens—to eat.

"The Pacific Poultry Farm," said Jill.

Dad was afraid the birds would have been drowned, though the chicken-boat on the lower deck was up in the stern and he had tied a tarpaulin over them after he had fed them the previous morning.

As soon as the meal was over we set off for the wreck, and I went over first in the basket, and whilst Dad was fastening the basket back I made for the chicken-boat and pulled off the tarpaulin. Three birds lay on the floor, but about a dozen pullets and a couple of cockerels sat on the pebbles—bedraggled, dazed wrecks of birds, but still alive.

Leaving them to get some air and sunshine, I went and loaded Dad over, yelling out to dad that most of the birds were still alive and that I'd give them a feed.

"Go easy with the feed!" he shouted back. "The malle and wheat will be needed as need."

I gave a low whistle at that. It was clear that he thought we were taking up passenger quarters, and as I headed my brother over I took in as much of our new home as was possible.

As soon as Dad got out of the basket, and Dad began to haul it back, I told him the first thing was to make for dad's cabin and rescue what remained of the sack of poultry-feed he had brought; then we could send the birds over in the basket and float the home over.

Dad nodded.

"One of the first jobs will be to knock up some sort of raft," he said. "This sailing gear is going to be too slow, and anyway, it wouldn't take heavy stuff."

We made for the saloon, knowing that we had got a stiff day's work before us. At the foot of the stairs the water came up to our waists. There was a great rent in the side, through which the sunshine was streaming and which showed the open sea; and as we worked in, knowing we must cross the half-submerged saloon to gain the cabin, a sudden swirl of water closed the door behind us.

"Now, what on earth caused that?" asked the Dad; and then we both let off a yell and made a plunge for the door, but it had stuck.

"The table!" I shouted, and my voice sounded thin in my ears and I was in a ghastly state of funk. "It's our only chance!"

And a great tail lashed the water; we saw a glimpse of a white belly and a tail-end moust.

We were dead in a half-submerged cabin with a huge shark!

#### Shot in with a Shark!

THE lashing tail of the shark only just missed us as we stood horror-stricken in the half-submerged saloon, and then we let off a wild yell in the hope of scaring the brute, and made a plunge for the big table in the centre of the cabin.

I suppose the distance could not have been more than three yards at the outside, but it seemed a ghastly long way, and in the open sea we should not have stood so curiously; but the shallow water and the cramped space handicapped the shark, and we clambered up on to the table.

There was a mighty whack, and a rattling of the wood-work at the side of the cabin as the powerful tail lashed against it, and the water was churned into foam.

"This is bright!" said Dadly, with a forced grin, which was pretty ghastly. "Yell for the gunner to fetch that rifle; it's our only chance, Barry."

"Help!" we yelled together.

"Shark!"

And then I chanced upon a bit. The table was on a short curve to the hooding over of the ship, and when we had scrambled on to it the water had just covered the lower edge; now it was clear, and that showed  
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#### THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

FROM BARRY MATY'S own life as he found himself aboard the Maglo, with his father and mother, BARRY, his younger brother, and Jill, his younger sister, one day with them. During a terrible storm in the Pacific, the crew was wrecked, and they were left on a small island. Barry and his family were landed in the saloon. With an extraordinary amount of luck, they were rescued, and the island was discovered. They then struck a new reef, and, after a long and arduous search, they were rescued by a boat and a man who told them the island, which they discovered BARRY MATY'S.

(Now continue the story, as told by Barry.)

that the tide was still going out, and I pointed it out to Dad.

"The shark must have come in through that opening at high tide and got trapped. With the water going out he can't be able to get out."

Dad was watching that dark fish, motionless in the deepest part of the water now.

"It's his tail that puts the breeze up," he said, and as that moment the shark made a slight movement on the cavernous mouth opened and they closed with a terrific snap, and there occurred a hiss and thud in that horrible black space, which gave me a creepy feeling down the spine, and I felt the Dad shudder as he let his another yell for help.

Crank! Half-landed in his angry plunge at us, the shark had leaped out furiously with his tail, and a log of the table had gone. Hastily we moved along to the other end as our current dipped into the water, and then we heaved a reading, tearing noise over the slight above our heads, with that head boarced over when we first ran into the great gate. "A board" was pulled clear, then another, and we saw dark white and excited.

"Mind the glass!" he shouted, and reached a pane with the beam end of his table.

As the glass sagged down on the further end of the table the light seemed to go mad, flashing wildly round.

Crank! Dad had fired, and the explosion in the cabin was deafening; we saw the churning water round us stained with crimson, and that awful tail was lashing the water and smashing spray-wood in a vain right smother a maul-horn.

After dad fired, and then, half-blinded by the smoke and shock of the acid fumes, we saw the long, toad-shaped body give a convulsive wriggle, and roll over, the mouth opening and closing in a vicious snap, the tail shaking on the floor.

"Gosh, shooting!" said the Dad. "That's finished him, dad. Now we can get on."

I envied the Dad his ability to be so jolly cool about it. Now that the danger was over I had a horrible feeling of wanting to be sick, and I suppose I must have looked pretty well all-in, for I saw dad looking at me a bit anxiously, and my brother caught hold of my arm.

"Steady, old boy!" he said. "That brute's as dead as the fish now, and we've got a mighty lot to do, and we've got time to do it in."

"Father!" I said, feeling ashamed of feeling so rotten. "We've a waiting job to do before the tide comes in!"

"And there's a job for you on deck, Barry," said dad in a quiet sort of way. "I want you to look those fowl over. Daddly! If I will get the stuff from the cabin. Can you open the door yet?" Hang on, and I'll come and push from the other side."

I felt horribly awkward as I stepped into the blood-stained water, and I looked away from that shark. The water had fallen several inches, and the three of us managed to open the jammed door.

And as soon as I got into the sunshine on deck I felt chunks better. Somehow the island looked a picture of beauty with its healthy palm-trees and the tropical luxuriant vegetation growing almost to the water's edge. On the yellow streak of sand by the coral reef another fish, still there looking anxiously out to the wreck, and Nigel was running up and down.

"What's up?" called Jill. "What does the fowl mean, Barry?"

"A shark's been here!" I shouted back. "So ready to receive poultry. We've got to send the birds over in a tick."

While I was waiting for the others, I took a look round for material which would form a raft. Only the beams were covered with water now, but at high tide it would be pretty well covered again, and anything like a heavy sea would pass it to pieces. My brain reeled at the thought of the things we wanted from the wreck. Where should we start first?

But dad was a systematic man, and he had got things jugged out. The fowl were to be attended to first, partly on humane grounds, and partly because of the value they would be to us if we were in for a long stay on the island. He came up with a good-sized bag of poultry food, which Dad brought up a couple of minutes.

"Now mother will be happier," he said, "and young Jill will have a happier camp. Good on, dad! I'll tie these cases on to the boat, and go off above a frying-pan and a soapstone in with the poultry food. Mother's dead case is some cooking utensils."

Dad seemed to resent his system being interfered with, but I made for the cook's galley, grabbed a frying-pan, a dish, and a couple of soapstone, packed them in the basket with the bag of corn, and then Jill was heading in. I knew I thought she looked dashed pretty standing there on that coral reef, hankering in the line, with her blue skirt fluttering in the slight breeze, the accents of her white jersey rolled up, and her dark, lustrous hair tumbling. For pretty thin what she'd been pushed up for some party. Then I wondered if she'd ever push up for a party again, and that gave me a nasty feeling, and I was glad when we got the basket back, and I had the job of helping dad catch the marred fowl.

We got these into the basket, and tied a sack over the top. Dad's idea was that Jill should feed them as she took them out, and she would not be likely to go away, and that we could look the fowlhouse over on the rising-tide. He said that they would be able to pick up a living on land. Anyway, whenever he sparring with the food, as he wanted to now and then.

"You're banking on a seed-time and harvest in this quiet retreat, then, dad?" said Dad, as the fowl were being packed away.

Dad shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm not banking on anything, boys," he said.

(Well, Barry & Co. have landed safely on the island, but what are they going to find there? Don't miss our next week's great installment—you'll enjoy every line of it.)

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