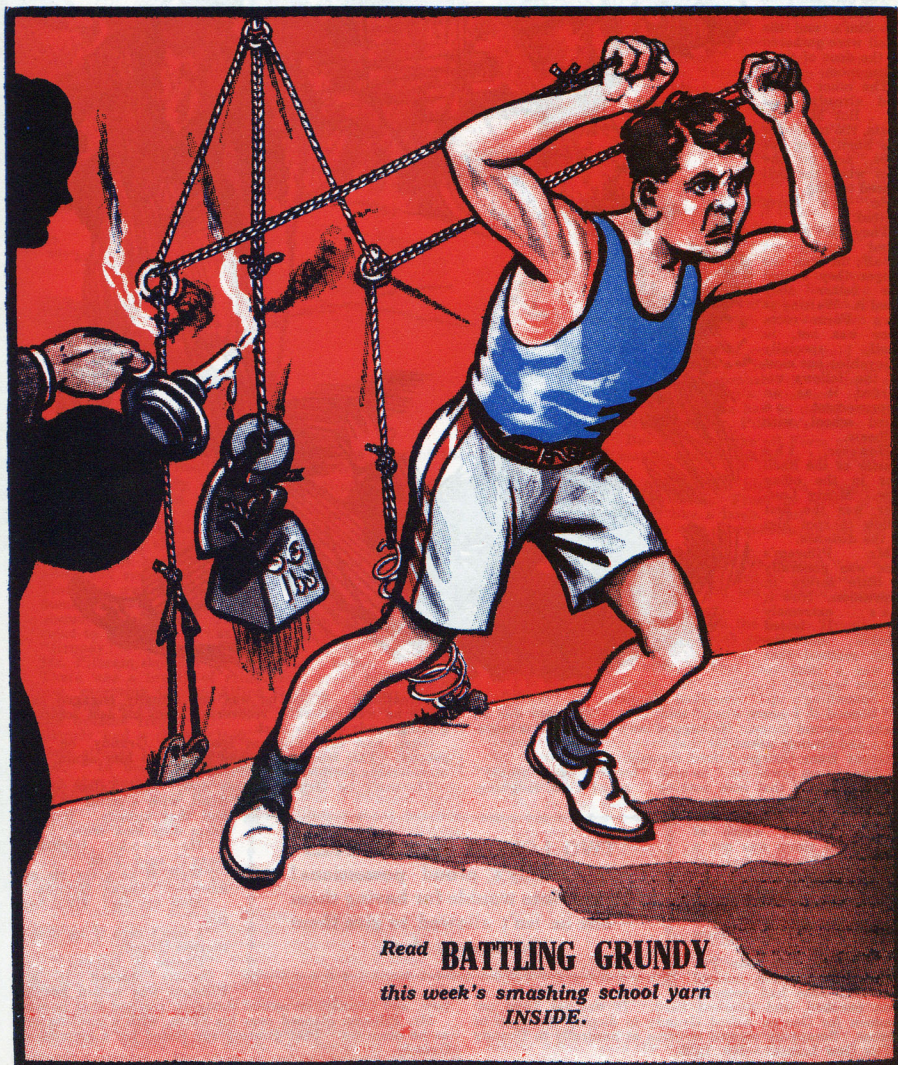


A BIG SURPRISE FOR EVERY READER! (Full particulars on pages 14 and 15.)

The GEM

2^D



Read **BATTLING GRUNDY**
this week's smashing school yarn
INSIDE.

BATTLING

CHAPTER 1.

Going for Grundy.
 "W A R E,
 beaks!"
 murmured Monty
 Lowther.

"What—" began
 Tom Merry.
 "Look at Pil-
 beam!"

Tom Merry
 looked at Mr. Pil-
 beam. So did most
 of the other Shell
 fellows.

The bell had gone
 for third school at
 St. Jim's, and the
 Shell were gathered
 at the door of their
 Form-room.

The other Forms
 had already gone
 in. But Mr. Pil-
 beam, the master of
 the Shell, was, for
 once, not on the
 spot when the bell
 ceased to ring.

So his Form
 waited.

They did not
 mind waiting—not
 at all; in fact, the
 longer they waited
 the better they
 liked it. Waiting at
 the Form-room
 door was not, in
 itself, specially
 enjoyable; but most
 of the fellows re-
 garded it as an
 improvement on
 third school with
 Pilbeam.

However, the
 master of the Shell
 was in the offing
 now. Monty Low-
 ther was the first
 fellow to spot him
 in the distance.

Mr. Pilbeam's
 face was generally
 a little severe in
 expression. Now it
 was extremely
 severe. It boded
 trouble; and the
 Shell realised that
 it was a time to
 "ware beaks!"

"Something's up!" remarked Manners.
 "Blessed if I know what," said Tom. "Pilbeam was all
 right in second lesson. He ragged only one chap this morn-
 ing; and Grundy asked for that."

Grunt from George Alfred Grundy.
 "The old ass jawed me," he said, "for nothing, as usual!"
 "Do you call that nose nothing?" asked Tom, laughing.
 Grundy rubbed his nose,

and grunted again.
 Grundy's nose, which at
 the best of times was not a
 thing of beauty, was at
 present red and swollen. It
 was a rather large size in
 noses—always rather
 prominent on Grundy's
 rugged countenance. Now
 it leaped to the eye.

A less keen eye than Pil-
 beam's would have noticed
 that that nose had recently
 been punched and punched hard. It was far from un-
 common for George Alfred Grundy to display the signs of
 combat. Scrapping seemed to come as naturally to Grundy



as breathing. When he was not actually engaged in a
 scrap he was generally recovering from his last scrap, or
 getting ready for his next.

Often had Mr. Pilbeam spoken to Grundy on that
 subject. This morning he had spoken to him again, with
 considerable acerbity. It annoyed Grundy.

"It can't be Grundy's nose now," said Talbot of the
 Shell, with a smile. "We've
 had that already. But Pil-
 beam does look cross."

"He looks frightfully
 waxy!" said Tom.

"Well, if he gives me any
 more—" began Grundy.

"Shut up, ass! He'll hear
 you!"

"I don't care if he does!"
 snorted Grundy.

"Cheese it, fathead!"
 Grundy "cheese" it. Mr.

Pilbeam was within hearing
 now, and Grundy, on second thoughts, realised that he was.

Mr. Pilbeam glanced over his Form, with a glinting eye,
 as he came up. That glinting eye rested for a moment on
 Grundy.

TWO LOVELY BLACK EYES
Are Grundy's proud possessions!
He gets into trouble for having them
—but he isn't allowed to give them
to anyone else!

READ THIS RIPPING LONG YARN OF ST. JIM'S—AND LAUGH!

GRUNDY!

By
Martin Clifford.



Then the master of the Shell opened the door of the Form-room, and the Shell marched into their places.

They went in very quietly. That glint in the Form master's eye was not lost on them. The Shell were not always a particularly quiet and orderly Form. But with that glint glinting in Pilbeam's eye they knew that it behoved them, like Agag of old, to walk delicately.

Standing at his high desk, Mr. Pilbeam looked over a silent and respectful Form.

The Shell waited, tensely. Something was coming, before third lesson. Somebody, it seemed, was "for it." The Shell fellows rather anxiously wanted to know who it was.

"Grundy!"

Mr. Pilbeam shot out the name like a bullet. There was a breath of relief from every fellow in the Form, excepting George Alfred Grundy. It was Grundy again who was booked for trouble—and the rest of the Shell could breathe freely.

Grundy had a dogged look.

Once already that morning he had stood up to Pilbeam's "jaw." In break he had told his friends, Wilkins and Gunn, that he had had enough of it, and a little too much, that he was fed-up to the teeth, and that if Pilbeam didn't jolly well look out he would tell Pilbeam what he jolly well thought of him. And now Pilbeam was beginning again!

"Grundy!"

"Yes, sir!" grunted Grundy.

"Stand out before the Form!"

Grundy tramped out.

"This morning," said Mr. Pilbeam, "I spoke to you concerning the disgraceful disfigurement of your face, Grundy. It must be the twentieth time this term that I have had to speak to you on the same subject. You are, I think, the most quarrelsome boy in the school. You appear to be engaged in incessant disturbances and brawls. No other boy here is so constantly in trouble, Grundy."

Grundy breathed hard.

He had had all this before, in second lesson. It was all ridiculously absurd and unjust, of course—at least, in Grundy's opinion. But, just or unjust, he had had it all

once that morning, and it was time that Pilbeam let it drop. Grundy very nearly told him so. Fortunately, he did not quite tell him so.

"Having already advertised to this matter," resumed Mr. Pilbeam, "I should not have referred to it again, Grundy, but for a circumstance that has caused me extreme annoyance and perturbation."

Mr. Pilbeam paused a moment.

"The Head," said Mr. Pilbeam, in a deep voice, "noticed you in the quadrangle during break, Grundy."

"Did he, sir?" said Grundy.

"He did. He noticed that your face was disfigured by the signs of recent fighting, and he has remarked to me on the subject. It appears, Grundy, that Dr. Holmes has already observed several times that your face has been marked in this manner. He has now mentioned it to me. He has very specially called my attention to the matter."

The murder was out now, so to speak. The Shell knew why their Form master had been a few minutes late for third school, and why he had turned up with Olympian wrath on his brow. He had been getting a "beak's jaw."

Dr. Holmes, of course, would not have regarded it as a "jaw." Gently and tactfully, in all probability, he had drawn the Shell master's attention to a little matter which, he had no doubt considered, had escaped Mr. Pilbeam's notice.

But Pilbeam, like all Form masters, was touchy on such a matter as intervention in his Form by the headmaster.

The gentlest and most tactful hint was enough to get Pilbeam's rag out, so to speak. From the Head, of course, Pilbeam had to take it like a lamb. But he did not feel like a lamb, and in his own Form-room he did not look like one.

Grundy stood doggedly silent. His opinion was that the chief beak might as well have minded his own business. But even George Alfred Grundy did not think of stating that opinion.

"As I have already dealt with the matter," went on Mr. Pilbeam, "I shall not now punish you, Grundy. But I am giving you a very serious warning. This must cease! A quarrelsome temper must be kept in check."

"I'm not quarrelsome, sir," explained Grundy.

"What? What?"

"I don't think, sir, that there's a more peaceable fellow at St. Jim's. It's rather unfair to call me quarrelsome." Grundy spoke with warmth. "I know I punched Cardew of the Fourth yesterday, and he had the cheek to hit me on the nose—"

"What?"

"But he was cheeky, sir. And that row with Figgins the other day—"

"Grundy!"

"Figgins was cheeky, sir. A School House man can hardly take cheek from a New House tick," said Grundy warmly. "As for my fight the day before with Noble, it was a misunderstanding. I thought he had said something he hadn't said—and hit him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" hooted Mr. Pilbeam.

"And that scrap with Wilkins, sir, was simply nothing. Wilkins is a friend of mine—"

"Grundy!"

"And that row with Tom Merry, sir, was about the cricket—"

"Be silent, Grundy! Your absurd excuses only make the matter worse," said the master of the Shell severely. "Say

no more; but listen to me. On the next occasion—on the very next occasion—when I find you showing traces of fighting, I shall administer a severe caning. If that does not suffice, Grundy, you will be reported to the headmaster for a flogging. And if that," went on Mr. Pilbeam, in a very deep voice, "does not suffice to impress upon you the error of your ways, I shall have to consider requesting the Head to send you away from the school."

Grundy jumped.

"Me, sir!" he ejaculated.

"You, Grundy! Now go to your place."

"But, sir—"

"Silence!"

"That's all very well, sir; but—"

"Take a hundred lines, Grundy! Another word—"

"But really, sir—"

"Two hundred lines, Grundy!" hooted Mr. Pilbeam.

And if you utter another syllable, I shall cane you on the spot."

George Alfred Grundy opened his mouth—and closed it again. Silently, choking down his indignation, George Alfred went to his place. And third lesson started in the Shell Form room.

CHAPTER 2.

Hard Cheese!

"TOM MEWWY, deah boy, if you are suah you can spare me—"

"Quite!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"If you are weally, weally suah—"

"Really, really, and truly, truly!" declared Tom Merry.

That assurance, however, did not seem wholly to relieve the doubts of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. There was a wrinkle of thought on Gussy's noble brow. He polished his celebrated eyeglass, jammed it into his aristocratic eye, and gazed at the captain of the Shell—dubiously.

"You see, we want to beat the New House, deah boy," he remarked. "I vewy much want to walk ovah to Wayland this aftahnnoon to see my tailah. It is wathah important—"

"Could anything be more important?" asked Tom Merry gravely.

"Pewpaws not, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "But I vewad beatin' the New House in a House match as bein' equally important."

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom.

"As a mattah of fact, Tom Mewwy, I should nevah forgive myself if we lost the House match owin' to my standin' out!" said Arthur Augustus. "On the othah hand, it is weally vewy important for me to see my tailah this aftahnnoon."

The Terrible Three of the Shell grinned. Gussy of the Fourth was a good man, a very good man, at games. But really he was not indispensable in a House match. Really, the School House had quite a good chance of beating Figgins & Co., of the rival House, without the aid of Gussy.

"So I am wathah on the horns of a dilemma, deah boy," said the swell of St. Jim's seriously.

"As Desdemona remarks in jolly old Shakespeare," said Monty Lowther, "I do perceive here a divided duty."

"After all," said Manners, "what's a House match compared with a new pair of trousers? Nothing at all."

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"It's all right, Gussy," said Tom reassuringly. "You can combine both duties, as it happens. By going over to see your tailor this afternoon, you can help us win the House match."

"But then I should not be able to play, you ass—"

"Yes; that's how!" said Tom affably.

"You uttah ass!" retorted Arthur Augustus. "If you cannot be sewious about a sewious mattah, Tom Mewwy—"

Tom Merry chuckled.

"It's really all right, Gussy! Take my word for it! Dig will be glad of a chance in your place."

"Yes, rather," said Digby of the Fourth.

"That's all vewy well," said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass on his clum, "I shall be vewy glad for you to have a chance in a House match, Dig; but we want to win—"

"Can't I play cricket?" demanded Dig warmly.

"Yaas, wathah," assented D'Arcy. "You are a vewy good man at games, Dig. But when it comes to replacin' the best man in the team—"

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"That's all right; I'm not standing out," said Tom Merry.

"I was not alludin' to you, Tom Mewwy."

"If you mean Talbot, Talbot's playing."

"I do not mean Talbot."

"Well, Blake's playing, too—"

"I was not speakin' of Blake. I believe you are deliberately misunderstandin' me, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus severely.

"Go hon!"

"Howevah, if you weally think that Dig will be useful in my place—"

"I'll leave it to Dig!" said Tom. "Do you think you could play up to anything like Gussy's form, Dig?"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus, as the group of School House men chortled. "I am wathah afraid of the result, you men; but I will leave it to you, Tom Mewwy. Pway do your vewy best, Dig."

"Why?" asked Dig blandly. "If I'm as good as you, it will be all right. No need to do my best."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I vewgad that remark as uttahly asinine, Dig. Howevah, I will leave you to it, and I hope you will not make a feahful muck of it."

And Arthur Augustus, having made up his noble mind, walked into the School House, leaving the other fellows laughing. Ten minutes later he emerged, looking, as usual, a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, and went down to the gates, to start for Wayland. Tom Merry & Co. adjourned to the changing-room.

CHAPTER 3.

The Man with the Black Patch!

"BAI JOVE!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

He stared. He jammed his monocle into his eye and stared again.

The swell of St. Jim's was about to step over a stile, which gave admittance to a footpath across the fields, when he sighted Trimble of the Fourth. Baggy Trimble was coming towards him across the field, and going strong.

It was quite unusual, indeed unprecedented, for Baggy Trimble, the fattest fellow at St. Jim's, or anywhere else, to be seen putting on speed. Trimble's motions were generally leisurely—very leisurely. Some of the fellows, indeed, wondered how Baggy ever shifted his weight about at all. He had a lot to shift.

But he was shifting it now with great energy. With his mouth wide open, emitting agonising gasps, Trimble came racing across the field as if the footpath were a cinder-track. His eyes were almost starting from his head, and he puffed and blew, and blew and puffed a great deal like a steam-engine. Arthur Augustus, with one leg over the stile, paused, and gazed at him in wonder.

"Bai Jove!" he repeated.

Baggy Trimble came pounding up. His fat face brightened at the sight of a St. Jim's man ahead, and he howled breathlessly as he drew nearer:

"Ow! Help! Help! Ow!"

"What evah is the mattah with Twimble?" murmured Arthur Augustus in astonishment.

His glance swept past the fat Fourth-Former; but he could see no sign of pursuit. Trimble seemed under the impression that he was hotly pursued; but for a great distance behind him there was no one in sight.

"Ow! Ow! Groogh!" Trimble came panting up to the stile. "Ow! Help! Givve me a hand over! Stand by a chap, you know! Keep him off! Ooooooh!"

"Weally, Twimble—"

"Ow! Help a fellow over!" gurgled Trimble. "He's after me! Help! Gimme a hand, you brute! Oh jiminy! Oooooooh!"

"But weally, you know—"

"Oh, cwikey!"

Trimble came plunging headlong over the stile. As Gussy was in the way, and did not seem to think of moving, Trimble naturally plunged into him. Arthur Augustus, with all his elegant and dandified ways, was a sturdy fellow, but he was not built to stand a charge with Baggy Trimble's weight behind it. He staggered and sprawled.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Trimble, as he sprawled over Arthur Augustus. "Oh dear! Oh jiminy! Keep him off!"

"Gwoooooooh!"

Trimble scrambled up into a sitting position. In the breathless excitement of the moment he did not seem to observe that Gussy was the underdog, as it were, and that he was sitting on Gussy's noble countenance. He seemed quite unaware of it, as he sat and spluttered. But Gussy was aware of it—he could not help being aware of it. He was, in fact, painfully aware of it.

"Gwoogh!" came from beneath the ample form of Baggy. "Oooogh! Gewwoff! You fat maniac, gewwoff my face! Ooooooh!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Trimble. Oh crikey I—Yaroooooh!" Trimble roared, as a ferocious snate landed on his fat ribs and he rolled off. "Oh! Ow! Wow!"

Arthur Augustus scrambled to his feet. He gasped for breath, and glared down at Baggy.

"You silly ass!" he roared. "You fearful fathead! What do you mean by knockin' a fellow oval and squashin' him? Bai Jove! I am goin' to give you a fearful thwashin'—"

"Keep him off!" gasped Trimble. "Who?" howled Arthur Augustus. "There is nobody aftah you, you wretched funk! What are you afraid of?"

"Oh dear!" gasped Trimble. He picked himself up and stared back with bulging eyes across the stile into the empty field. "Oh jiminy! I—I thought he was just behind me! Oh crikey!" Baggy leaned on the stile and pumped in breath. "Ow! He ought to be run in! Ow! He jolly nearly got me! Oh dear!"

Arthur Augustus' wrath cooled down. It was clear that the fat junior had been badly scored.

"You wotten funk," said Gussy. "What's the wow? Some of the Gwammah School chaps been waggin' you, or what?"

"Think I'd have run away from the Grammarians, you ass?" hooted Trimble.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yah! It was that tramp—that foot-pad—Oh dear! He came on me suddenly!" gasped Trimble. "He was going to rob me! Oh jiminy! If I hadn't cut he would have had all my money off me!"

Arthur Augustus grinned.

"And that would have made him wick for life, I suppose?" he remarked sarcastically.

"Luckily, I haven't much about me—not more than fifteen pounds or so—"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Still, a fellow doesn't want to lose even that!" said Trimble.

"Of course, I could telephone to Trimble Hall for more, if it come to that. Still, a fellow doesn't want to be robbed."

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus put his elegant leg over the stile again. Trimble blinked at him in alarm.

"I say, you're not going that way?" he exclaimed. "He's in the next field—you'll run right into him."

"I twust, Twimble, that you do not suppose that I am afraid of a wascally twamp?" said Arthur Augustus.

"You silly ass!" hooted Trimble. "He will knock you sky high."

"I should uttally wufese to be knocked sky high by a twamp, Twimble. I am certainly not goin' wound a longah way because of a twamp."

Arthur Augustus dropped on the inner side of the stile and started across the field. Trimble watched him with bulging eyes.

"Come back, you dummy!" he yelled. "I tell you it's that tramp—the man with a patch over his eye—that's been robbing people—the bobbies have been looking for him for a week! I say, come back, you fathead!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus marched onward, leaving Faggy Trimble on the safe side of the stile staring after him. No doubt it was rather reckless of Gussy; and any St. Jim's man except Baggy might have hurried after him to lend him aid in case of need. But that did not occur to Baggy.

"Well, I've warned him!" gasped Baggy. "The silly ass!"

And Baggy Trimble, feeling himself still too near the footpad for comfort, turned away and proceeded on his travels.

Heedless of Trimble, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went on his way.

He reached the high hedge and passed through a gap into the next field. It was a large field, stretching away before him like a prairie, over many acres, and the footpath across it was a lonely one. As Gussy came through the hedge a hulking, frowsy figure appeared suddenly before him, and Arthur Augustus came to an abrupt halt. A hulking, unpleasant-looking man in tattered clothes, with a stubby chin and a black patch over his left eye barred his way. There was a disagreeable grin on the stubby face, and it dawned on Gussy that the ruffian had been watching him through the hedge and waiting for him to arrive.

Arthur Augustus drew a quick breath, and his heart beat a little faster. He had never seen the man before; but he could recognise him from the description he had heard. Trimble's fears, after all, had not been unfounded. There had been two or three robberies in the vicinity in the past week by a ruffian with a black patch over his eye, and the Wyaland police had been busy looking for the man. They had not found him—but evidently Arthur Augustus had!



Swift as lightning Arthur Augustus jabbed his flat home to the footpad's jaw. The man staggered back!

"'Old on!" said the ruffian, as he planted himself in D'Arcy's path. "'Old on a tick, young covey!"

Arthur Augustus breathed hard. He cast a quick glance to right and left. But there was no help in sight. The place was a lonely one—a solitude of pasture land. In the distance the brown backs of two or three grazing cows could be seen; but that was all. Far away across fields and hedges was a blur of smoke from a farmhouse. The man with the black patch grinned evilly.

"There ain't nobody 'ere—nobody, except me," he grinned. "'And over any loose cash you got about you, young covey. And your bloomin' ticker, and that pin! And—"

"I wufese to do anythin' of the kind!" said Arthur Augustus; and his voice was firm, though his heart was beating rather uncomfortably. "If you fancy you are goin' to wob me, you wascal, you are labahin' undah a mis-apprehension."

The man stared at him.

"Strike me pink!" he ejaculated. "Strike me pink and blue! I don't want to 'it you—I fancy you'd fall down dead if I did, you tailor's dummy! But if you don't 'and over what you got about you—" He came closer to the swell of St. Jim's, his knuckly hands clenched, his eyes gleaming under his beetling brows, his stubby jaw thrust out aggressively. "Now, then—"

Arthur Augustus acted suddenly. He had no chance—not the remotest ghost of a chance—in a struggle with the hulking brute. But he was not the fellow to submit to robbery if he could help it. He hated the idea of running—especially from a disreputable rascal like this. But there was no other resource, and Gussy put his pride in his

pocket to that extent. What he had to do was to get past the ruffian, and get a start for a run, and that Gussy did, with a promptness, a decision, and a vigour that took the black-patched man entirely by surprise. Obviously, the ruffian did not expect sudden and drastic measures from the slim and elegant schoolboy, whom he could have crushed in his horny hands. But he got them.

As the aggressive chin was thrust towards him Arthur Augustus, with the swiftness of the lightning flash, jabbed his clenched fist at it, so suddenly that the hefty blow came home before the ruffian knew what was happening.

Crash!
D'Arcy's knuckles rang and ached with the force of the blow. The surprised footpad, almost up-ended, crashed over in the grass.

Like lightning D'Arcy leaped past him, and ran. For a moment or two the black-patched man lay sprawling, spluttering oaths. Then he scrambled up, his eyes blazing with fury, and rushed in pursuit of the fleeing junior.

Tramp, tramp, tramp! came the heavy footsteps pounding behind the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus did not look back. That heavy tramp behind him was enough. He knew what would happen to him if that savage ruffian laid hands on him now. Twice, it was known, the brute had beaten pedestrians on lonely paths, who had refused to submit to his exactions. Arthur Augustus threw dignity to the winds, and ran for his life. Holding his hat on with one hand, he fairly flew.

Without a pause he ran up the lane towards the Wayland road. Once on the main road where cars were continually passing he would be safe. Panting, breathless, he ventured at last to look back. The ruffian, also panting, crimson with exertion and fury, had stopped at the stile,

and was glaring after him, across it, with burning eyes. But he had stopped. He was getting too near to help to carry the pursuit farther. And Arthur Augustus, almost pumped by this time, was glad enough to see that he had stopped, and he slackened speed a little.

A savage oath was shouted after him and a savage fist shaken. And then the ruffian swung away, and tramped back into the fields. Arthur Augustus had escaped—by the skin of his noble teeth. He halted, gasping, panting, his forehead bedewed with perspiration, and fanned himself with his hat.

"Oh cwumbs!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Oh cwikey! Oh deah! Ow!"

CHAPTER 4.

An Interrupted Scrap.

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY stared.

His lip curled.

He sneered.

Grundy was surprised, and contemptuous. Strolling along that green lane with a moody brow, Grundy had been thinking chiefly of his many grievances. Meddled with by his Form master and called to order, simply because he punched cheeky heads; kept out of the cricket team by the junior captain of St. Jim's, simply because Tom Merry did not know of good men when he saw one; turned down on a half-holiday by his own pals, simply because Wilkins and Gunn fancied they could play cricket. It was no wonder that George Alfred Grundy was moody, and feeling that the cheese was hard. And then he came in sight of Arthur Augustus, running like a hare up the lane towards him. He wondered for a moment what was up, and then he glimpsed the footpad in the distance, staring across the stile, and understood. The ruffian vanished the next moment, and Grundy's eyes fixed scornfully on the panting Gussy. He stared, and he sneered. A St. Jim's man, running away from a measly tramp! Grundy sniffed with scorn.

He came up with a jeering face, and surveyed Gussy as the swell of St. Jim's alternately fanned his heated countenance with his hat, and mopped his perspiring brow with a cambric handkerchief.

"What sort of a funk do you call yourself?" inquired Grundy.

Arthur Augustus stared round. The polite question was the first intimation he had of the Shell fellow's proximity.

"Weally, Gwunday—" he exclaimed.

"Running away from a measly tramp!" said Grundy derisively. "My hat! What is St. Jim's coming to, I'd like to know?"

"You cheeky ass!" roared Arthur Augustus. "That is the wotth that the police are lookin' for! He was goin' to wob me!"

"Were you going to let him do it?" jeered Grundy. "I suppose you were, if you hadn't been able to leg it. If that's the man the police want, why didn't you collar him?"

"Collah him!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, collar him! I would have!"

"You uttah ass! How could I collah a gweat twamp like that?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Do you think I can handle a gweat huge wuffian, you sillay dummay?"

"Pretty plain that you can't," sneered Grundy. "But it's pretty thick for a St. Jim's man to run away from a tramp. You might think of the credit of the school and all that before you funked."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus looked at Grundy of the Shell as if he could have eaten him. Arthur Augustus was absolutely fearless. Nobody had ever dreamed of questioning his courage. Nobody, indeed, could have ventured to do so without getting prompt proof of it on the spot. To scrap with a hulking tramp who could—and would—have reduced him to a battered wreck, would not have shown courage, but foolhardy folly. It had gone against the grain to run; but it had been Gussy's only resource. And to be twitted with "funk" by an unthinking, unreflecting fathead, because he had done what any fellow would have done in the circumstances, roused Gussy's deepest ire.

His noble eye fairly flashed at Grundy of the Shell. He jammed his hat on his head, shoved his handkerchief back into his pocket, and clenched his hands.

"You sillay, fatheaded, cheeky outsiders!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "You dundah-headed, obstepwewous, chucklehead, do you dare to insinuate that I am a funk?"

Grundy laughed.

"I'm not insinuating; I'm stating a fact!" he retorted. "I can believe my own eyes! I saw you bolting from a measly tramp! You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself! Of all the rotten funks—"



All sorts and conditions of new boys have made their debut at Greyfriars School, but for sheer cool cheek Roger Quelch takes the whole giddy biscuit factory! His incorrigible propensity for japing his Form-master, his open flouting of authority—to Roger these are trifles light as air! But there's method in the newcomer's madness—a method that is surprising as it is unique. Make the acquaintance of this amazing character in Frank Richards' sparkling book-length yarn,

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"You impertinent wottah—"

The two exchanged glances.

"Oh, cheese it!" jeered Grundy. "You're a funky worm, and that's the long and short of it! You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself—and I can tell you I'm jolly well ashamed of you! And I can say— Yaroooooh!"

Smack!

Grundy broke off with a yell, as Gussy's open hand smote him full across his rugged features.

"There, you cheeky wottah, take that!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Now put up your hands, and I'll jollay well show you whethah I'm a funk or not!"

"By gum!" gasped Grundy. "Why, I'll mop you up—I'll make shavings of you—I'll wipe up all Sussex with you!"

He jumped to the attack.

Arthur Augustus did not give an inch. With his hands up and his eyes gleaming, he faced the burly Shell fellow, hitting out. In size and weight Gussy was nowhere like a match for Grundy of the Shell; but he was a first-class boxer, he was strong and active, and his pluck was unlimited. He had, as a matter of fact, no chance, in the long run, in a scrap with Grundy, for size and weight were bound to tell. But he neither thought nor cared about that. Grundy had called him a funk, and Gussy was ready to fight till he fell.

Grundy came on furiously, Grundy was always ready for a scrap—as ready with his fist as with his tongue, or a little readier. That smack on his rugged visage had quite banished any recollection of Mr. Pilbeam's warning from his mind. And the next moment the "tomato" nose, which had drawn his Form master's eye on him, and had even attracted the severe attention of the Head, looked more like a tomato than ever—a rich, ripe, and red tomato. As D'Arcy's knuckles jolted on it, with all D'Arcy's beef behind, Grundy felt as if it had been driven almost through his head.

"Ow!" gasped Grundy.

He staggered for a moment; but he came on again, more fiercely than before. And now Gussy had to give ground. Sheer weight drove him back.

But he gave ground slowly, obstinately, fighting every inch. And skill compensated a great deal for disadvantage in weight and size and reach. Grundy's drives were terrific; but most of them were brushed away like flies.

Again and again D'Arcy's fists rattled on the nose, the mouth, the eyes, and the cheekbones of George Alfred Grundy.

But when Grundy did get in a drive, it was a hefty one. Arthur Augustus had to gasp when Grundy's fists came home.

For a full five minutes the fight went on, wild and whirling. Arthur Augustus was in a blaze of wrath, and Grundy in a state of wild excitement. One or two passers-by in the lane stopped to stare at the scene. There was a whir of a bicycle, but neither combatant heeded it in the wild excitement of the scrap.

The bike jingled to a stop, and the cyclist jumped down. He leaned the machine on a tree, and strode towards the fighting juniors.

"Stop that!"

It was Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's. And as both the juniors were too excited to heed even the voice of the captain of the school, Kildare grasped them by their respective collars, wrenched them apart by main force, and sent them both spinning on the ground.

"Ow!" gasped Grundy.

"Oh! Bai Jove!" spluttered Arthur Augustus.

They sat up, blinking at the frowning Sixth-Former. Kildare glared down at them.

"You young rascals!" he exclaimed.

"Weally, Kildare—" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"How dare you fight without gloves—or at all, for that matter? Grundy, you are a young ruffian!"

"Wha-a-at?" gasped Grundy.

"If you must scrap, pick out a fellow of your own size and weight!" snapped Kildare. "I suppose you began this, too! You're always mixed up in some row or other." "Thank I'm going to have my face smacked!" bawled Grundy.

"You are goin' to have your wotten face smacked every time you have the feahful cheek to call me a funk!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Kildare, I wequest, you not to intah-feah I am goin' to thwash Gwunday!"

Grundy scrambled up.

"You're going to have the licking of your life!" he spluttered.

Kildare stepped quietly between them.

"D'Arcy! You will take fifty lines, and clear off at once!"

"Weally, Kildare—"

"Get going!" snapped the captain of St. Jim's.

"Oh, vevy well!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"But I weally considah, Kildare—"

"Shut up, and clear!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked up the lane, gasping as he went. He was still wrathful; but it was, perhaps, fortunate for the swell of St. Jim's that Kildare had arrived on the spot. Still, he had his tailor to see at Wayland; and that, after all, was more important than thrashing Grundy, even had Grundy been, so to speak, thrashable.

Kildare fixed his eyes grimly on the Shell fellow. Grundy mopped a streaming nose, rubbed a painful eye, and returned his glare undaunted. He could see that Kildare was going to lay the blame on him—the usual sort of misunderstanding and injustice that Grundy was accustomed to.

"So you started this shindy, as I supposed," said the St. Jim's captain. "You seem to be nothing but a quarrelsome hooligan, Grundy."

"Pile it on!" said Grundy bitterly. "I never get justice. I'm used to that!"

"You called D'Arcy names—"

"I called him a funk, and so he was a funk! He was running away from a measly tramp, and I told him he was a funk!" snorted Grundy.

"You young idiot!" said Kildare. "Do you think a funk would have stood up to a fellow nearly twice his size and weight? I'm afraid you're a good deal of a bully, Grundy."

Grundy stared.

"Me," he gasped—"a bully! Well, I like that!"

"You'll go back to the school now," said Kildare. "Go straight back, and stay there!"

"It's a half-holiday—"

"Quite! You'll spend the rest of your half-holiday within gates, as you can't behave yourself out of gates. Take a hundred lines. They will help to keep you out of mischief. Cut off!"

Grundy looked at him. There was rebellion in his look. But even Grundy realised that rebellion was useless against the captain of the school. When Kildare said jump, even the egregious George Alfred understood that he had to jump.

He gave Kildare a long, long stare, and then, with deep but bottled-up indignation, he turned and tramped away. Kildare remounted his bicycle and rode on; and Grundy, with feelings too deep for words, tramped home to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 5.

Pilbeam Keeps His Word.

TOM MERRY & CO. came off the cricket field in a cheery crowd. The House match was over, and the School House had pulled it off; "paid" had been duly put to Figgins & Co. without the aid of Arthur Augustus. Which was exactly what was to have been expected from the point of view of the School House; though the New House men attributed their victory to a series of extraordinary flukes.

Having changed, Tom Merry & Co. were discussing the game, and thinking about tea, when Grundy of the Shell came in. And when Grundy of the Shell came in, many eyes were turned on him, and there were many smiles.

Fellows who had heard Mr. Pilbeam's solemn warning in the Form-room that morning had wondered how long it would keep the obstreperous George Alfred from scrapping again. Not long, was the general opinion; and evidently, from Grundy's looks, the general opinion had been well-founded. Grundy had been scrapping again, and, to judge by appearance, he had been scrapping hard.

"At it again, old bean?" remarked Monty Lowther, as he scanned the scars of war on Grundy's visage. "Who's the happy victim this time?"

"You awful ass!" said Tom Merry. "Get that chivvy out of sight before Pilbeam spots it!"

"Who gave you that nose?" asked Manners.

"Grundy, old chap, you ought to be a bit careful," said Talbot of the Shell. "Pilbeam meant every word he said this morning."

Grundy smiled—a bitter smile.

"Of course, you think I'm to blame for this scrap!" he sneered.

"Of course!" assented Tom Merry.

"The of-coursefulness, as that Indian chap at Grevfriers would say, is terrific!" remarked Monty Lowther. "But who was the happy man?"

"I've licked D'Arcy for cheek—sheer cheek—" said Grundy.

There was a howl in chorus from Blake and Herries and Digby. They converged on Grundy with warlike looks.

"You blessed hooligan!" exclaimed Blake. "Have you been pitching into Gussy? Why, you ruffian——"
 "Hold on, you mou!" exclaimed Talbot hastily. "Grundy looks as if he's had enough to go on with. And Pilbeam——"
 Grundy was looking warlike. If Blake & Co. wanted trouble, Grundy was not the man to disappoint them. If Grundy did not exactly thrive on trouble there was no doubt that he lived, and moved, and had his being, in it. But his chums, Wilkins and Gunn, gathered Grundy's arms and marched him away. They, at least, thought that Grundy had collected enough trouble for one day.

"Come and bathe your nose, old chap!" murmured Wilkins.

"And your eye, old bean," said Gunn.
 "I'm ready to mop up the House with those cheeky Fourth-Form fags——"

"Yes, yes; but come on."
 "Remember Pilbeam, old bean."

Grundy snorted, but he suffered himself to be led away. And when he looked at his damaged visage in the glass he realised clearly that it needed some attention. There was a shadowy shade under one eye, and there was a cut on his lip, a bruise on his cheekbone. And his nose, which had looked damaged that morning, now looked a perfect wreck. It was swollen, it was bulbous, and it was flaming to the view.

"Oh crumbs!" said Grundy. "Pilbeam will be sure to notice this! He will make out that—that I've been quarrelling."

"Um!" said Wilkins and Gunn. They were rather perplexed to know what else Mr. Pilbeam could make out when he saw Grundy's battered "chivvy."

First-aid having been rendered to Grundy's damaged countenance, he was marched off to his study, No. 3 in the Shell. It was tea-time, and over tea Grundy gave his friends an account of what had happened.

"And Kildare sent me in, to be gated," he said, his voice thrilling with indignation. "Making out that I was to blame, you know. And he knew that that cheeky fag smacked my face——"

"Well, if you called him a funk, what the merry dickens did you expect D'Arcy to do?" exclaimed Wilkins. "You asked for it, didn't you?"

Grundy stared at him.
 "Don't be a silly ass, Wilkins!"

"Well, look here——"
 "If you can't talk sense, George Wilkins, you'd better shut up," said Grundy.

"But look here, Grundy——" said Gunn.
 "If you're going to talk cheeky rot, like Wilkins, you'd better shut up, too, Gunn."

Wilkins and Gunn shut up. Really, it was not much use talking to Grundy! Tea went on in silence, Grundy glowering over the table at his chums. Even his own chums misjudged him, and fancied that he was somehow to blame. It was undoubtedly thick!

The study door opened, and a fat face grinned in. Baggy Trimble blinked round the study, and grinned at Grundy's ornamented countenance.

"Hi, he, he!" chorled Trimble. "I heard that you'd come in looking as if a mule had kicked your nose, Grundy! He, he, he!"

Grundy jumped up. Once more he was called upon to deal faithfully with a fag who was cheeky.

"You fat freak! I'll jolly well——"
 "Here, you keep off!" exclaimed Trimble, in alarm. "I say, I came here to tell you that Pilbeam's coming. I fancy he saw you when you came in. He, he, he!"

"Pilbeam coming here!" ejaculated Grundy.
 "Well, I saw him on the stairs," grinned Baggy, "and he had a cane under his arm. When he sees that nose—— He, he, he! Yaroooh! Leggo, you rotter! Oh jiminy!"

"For goodness' sake, Grundy, don't start ragging if Pilbeam's coming!" exclaimed Wilkins.

Grundy did not heed. Advice was always wasted on Grundy, especially good advice. A fat fag was not going to cackle at Grundy in his own study; and Grundy proceeded to make that clear to the fat fag. He grasped Baggy Trimble by the collar, slewed him round, and planted a large size in boots on Baggy's trousers with considerable vim.

There was a terrific yell from Baggy as he shot through the doorway. It was followed by a heavy bump in the passage. Simultaneously with the bump came a sharp voice.

"What——what——what is this? What does this mean?"
 "Oh, my hat! Pilbeam!" breathed Gunn.

"Ow! Wow! Yaroooh! Keep him off!" roared Trimble.
 "Ow! I'm hurt! Wow!" Baggy roared on his top note, perhaps because he did not notice Mr. Pilbeam in the passage—or perhaps because he did.

Mr. Pilbeam, with a brow of thunder, stepped into the study. His eyes fairly glinted as they fixed on Grundy.

"Gandy! I saw you from my study window—you have been fighting again this afternoon! Your face is disgraceful—positively disgraceful, sir! Grundy, I gave you a warning—I gave you a solemn warning! And within a few hours I find you have been fighting again——"

"The—the fact is, sir——"
 "Do you deny it, Grundy?" thundered the master of the Shell.

"You see, sir, I was not to blame——"
 "I will be just," said Mr. Pilbeam. "I will certainly be just. I will allow you to speak in your defence! With whom have you been fighting?"

"D'Arcy of the Fourth, sir!"
 "Upon my word! You have been fighting with a boy younger than yourself, not physically a match for you, and one of the best-conducted boys in the House! And you tell me you were not to blame! I will hear nothing more, Grundy! Bend over that chair!"

"Really, sir——" protested Grundy.
 "Bend over!" Mr. Pilbeam fairly hooted.

"But, sir——"
 "Bend over!" Mr. Pilbeam's voice was like that of the Great Huger Bear, and Grundy, speechless with indignation, bent over.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Mr. Pilbeam had told Grundy that he would be caued severely for his next offence. There was no doubt about the severity of the caning. The master of the Shell laid it on as if he fancied that he was beating a carpet. Three strokes landed, without a sound from Grundy. Grundy was tough. But at the fourth he yelped, at the fifth he howled, and after that a succession of wild bellows from Grundy kept time to the swishing of the cane.

Wilkins and Gunn looked on in silence. Mr. Pilbeam was quite breathless when he had finished. He breathed hard as he tucked the cane under his arm.

"Now, Grundy——"
 "Oooooooh!" roared Grundy.
 "Let that be a warning to you, Grundy. The next time you offend you will be reported to the Head for a flogging! Take care, sir!"

Mr. Pilbeam quitted the study. Grundy stood wriggling and gasping. His rugged face was quite pale.

"And that," gasped Grundy, "that's justice! That's the sort of justice I get, you fellows! Me, you know—absolutely blameless—innocent—as a babe! What are you grinning at, you silly idiots!"

And without waiting for Wilkins and Gunn to explain what they were grinning at, Grundy grabbed up a fives bat and started towards them. Wilkins and Gunn hastily left the study—to grin in peace at a safe distance from Grundy.

Grundy did his prep that evening—standing.

CHAPTER 6.

Keeping the Peace.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY wedged his celebrated monocle into his eye, and gave Grundy of the Shell a look. It was a look that might have withered a stone image.

Grundy breathed hard.

It was break, the following day; and the Shell and the Fourth were out. Grundy's decorated countenance drew many smiling glances. But the glance that Gussy gave him was far from a smiling one. On Gussy's noble "chivvy" there were the signs of hard knocks; souvenirs of his fight with Grundy the previous day. Grundy was indifferent to the marks of warfare; possibly because he had no beauty to spoil.

It was a different matter with the swell of St. Jim's, who was exceedingly particular about his personal appearance. A bruised cheek and a red nose worried Gussy—deeply. Punishment he could bear like a Spartan. But a fellow's looks!

Hence the withering glance he bestowed on George Alfred as he passed him in the quad. Grundy, breathing hard, glared back, and clenched his hands. Fortunately, Wilkins and Gunn were with their chum, and they collared his two arms simultaneously.

"Cheese it, old man!" said Wilkins.
 "For goodness' sake," said Gunn, "don't start ragging with D'Arcy again!"

"He looked at me!" breathed Grundy.
 "Well, a cat may look at a king," remarked Wilkins.

"I've a jolly good mind——"
 "Chuck it, old bean! Remember Pilbeam!"

"I never finished licking him yesterday," said Grundy.
 "That cheeky ass, Kildare, butted in, as I've told you. That ass Kildare thinks he can order a fellow about because

he's a prefect in the Sixth." Grundy snorted. "I can tell you, I had a jolly good mind to hit him."

"You—you—you had a jolly good mind to hit Kildare of the Sixth!" stuttered Wilkins.

"Yes. Still, I know it is rather bad form to hit the captain of the school," said Grundy. "So—so I didn't. But I came near it."

Wilkins and Gunn exchanged a glance. Grundy frowned darkly. Perhaps it had not been wholly a regard for good form that had kept Grundy from hitting Kildare of the Sixth. Certainly such a performance would have been followed by terrific results for Grundy. But George Alfred was evidently dissatisfied with matters as they stood.

"I'm not a man to be ordered about," he explained.

"Well, the prefects do order Lower School men about, you know," murmured Gunn. "We all get the same."

"Yes, that's all right, of course," said Grundy. "No objection to the prefects ordering you about, that I can see. There's such a thing as discipline. It's rather a different matter with a fellow of my position."

"Eh? How is it different?"

"For goodness' sake——" gasped Wilkins, dragging at Grundy's arm. It seemed that Grundy's chums were going to have a strenuous time keeping him out of further trouble with Pilbeam. Grundy dragged his arm loose.

"Let me alone, Wilkins! I've stood enough cheek from Fourth-Form fags! I never finished licking Cardew the other day——"

"Too big a job for you, old bean," said Cardew, shaking his head.

"Oh, come on!" said Levison, pulling Cardew away.

"Too big a job for me!" roared Grundy. "My hat! I'll jolly well show you whether it was too big a job for me! I'll jolly well——"

"Chuck it, you ass!" exclaimed Wilkins, grasping Grundy again, and dragging him back by main force.

"Let go!" roared Grundy.



There was a hush in the crowd as the master of the Hall appeared. His face was pale with anger. "Grundy! How dare you!" he rapped out.

"Don't be a silly ass, Gunn!"

"But I don't see——" began Wilkins, rather warmly.

"You never see anything, Wilkins! You're rather a chump, as I've often told you." Grundy glared after the elegant figure of Arthur Augustus, disappearing across the quad. "Well, I'll let that cheeky fag off! But if he looks at me again——"

There was a chuckle, and Grundy stared round. Levison, Clive, and Cardew of the Fourth were passing under the elms, and having heard Grundy's remark, they seemed entertained by it. Grundy gave them a morose glare. Grundy, it seemed, was not to be looked at; still less was he to be laughed at.

"Well, what are you cackling at?" demanded Grundy, beligerently.

"Can you ask?" inquired Ralph Reckness Cardew mildly. "No need, surely, to ask fellows what they're cackling at when you're around, Grundy."

"I punched you the other day, Cardew!" said Grundy.

"You did," agreed Cardew, "and I returned the 'giddy compliment. Your jolly old boko still has a list to port."

"If you want me to punch you again——"

"Pleased!" yawned Cardew.

"Look here, you fathead——" exclaimed Gunn, coming to Wilkins' assistance.

"Will you let go?"

Cardew laughed, and walked away with his friends, leaving George Alfred Grundy struggling to free his arms from his devoted chums.

Wilkins and Gunn were glad to see Levison & Co. disappear. Keeping Grundy in the paths of peace was no easy task.

"For goodness' sake, Grundy, remember Pilbeam!" urged Wilkins. "It's a flogging next time. You don't want to be up before the beak."

"Blow the beak."

"Well, you can't blow the beak, really, you know," said Gunn. "Look here, let's go and have a ginger-pop."

Grundy grunted; but he allowed himself to be led away in the direction of the school shop.

A good many fellows had dropped into Dame Taggles' little shop, in break. Among them were the chums of Study No. 6 and the Terrible Three of the Shell. Tom Merry & Co. smiled as Grundy came in; Grundy's nose evoked smiles on all sides at St. Jim's that morning. Blake

and Horries and Dig did not smile; they gave Grundy grim looks. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass on him, with the same lofty and withering look that had already so exasperated the burly Shell fellow.

Grundy disposed of ginger-pop, with a belligerent eye on the swell of the Fourth. Arthur Augustus met that eye, and his aristocratic lip curled. That did it! Grundy spun round towards him, and again his worried and distressed chums intervened.

"Look here, Grundy—let's get out—"

"If you think I'm going to have that cheeky Fourth-form cad sneering at me—" roared Grundy.

"For goodness' sake—"

"Bai Jove! Are you alludin' to me, Gwunday?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Are you applyin' that oppow-bwious epithet to me, you cheeky wottah?"

"What's the row?" exclaimed Tom Merry, looking round. "Can't you keep quiet, Grundy?"

"Can Grundy ever keep quiet?" said Monty Lowther. "Isn't Grundy the Big Noise?"

"You need not hold that cheeky wottah back, Wilkins," said Arthur Augustus calmly. "I was intewwupted yestah-day when I was thwashin' him, but I am quite weady to finish thwashin' him to-day. A feahful thwashin' is what Gwunday wants."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Blake.

"Cheese it, Gussy, old man!" said Tom Merry. "Don't let's have a row. Keep quiet, Grundy."

"Mind your own business!" roared Grundy.

Tom Merry looked at him.

"Keep quiet!" he repeated. "If you start a shindy here, Grundy, you'll go out on your neck!"

"I'd like to see any fellow put me out on my neck!" roared Grundy. "And as for that tailor's dummy—"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus pushed back his spotless cuffs. "Let that wottah come on, you fellahs! I am goin' to thwash him! I insist upon thwashin' him."

"You hear that?" roared Grundy. "Let go, Wilkins! Let go, Gunn, you dummy! I'm going to mop up the place with that tailor's dummy!"

"You're jolly well not!" gasped Wilkins, dragging manfully at Grundy. "Come on out of this! Lend a hand, Gunn!"

"Ow!" gasped Gunn, as Grundy gave him a shove on the chest, which caused him to sit down suddenly.

"Grundy!" gasped Wilkins, still holding on.

"Will you let go?" roared Grundy.

"No; I jolly well won't!"

"Pway let him go, Wilkins! I am quite weady for the wuffian!" Arthur Augustus' eyes gleamed. "Let the wottah come on!"

Grundy, only too eager to come on, wrenched at Wilkins, and almost dragged himself loose. But Wilkins grasped again, and dragged him back. They waltzed for a moment or two amid a yell of laughter from the juniors in the tuckshop.

"Let go, you dummy!" shrieked Grundy. "I'll jolly well punch you if you don't let me go, you silly fathad!"

"Look here, you frabjous ass!" gasped Wilkins. "You're jolly well not going to scrap—see? Now, then—Oh crickey!"

Thump, thump thump!

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

Wilkins staggered and gasped as Grundy thumped him. Grundy, in his excitement and exasperation, did not seem to mind whether he punched friend or foe, so long as he punched somebody. Wilkins caught the first thump with his chest, the second with his neck, and the third with his chin. It was not, perhaps, surprising that Wilkins hit out without waiting for the fourth. Crash!

"Oh!" gasped Grundy.

He caught Wilkins' thump with his eyes, and staggered back. There was a heavy bump as Grundy sat down.

Wilkins glared down at him.

"There, you silly ass!" he gasped. "Now go and eat coke; and be blowed to you!"

And George Wilkins, red with wrath, tramped out of the tuckshop, leaving Grundy sitting on the floor. Wilkins, for the present, at least, was evidently done with striving to keep George Alfred in the paths of peace.

Grundy staggered up, with his hand to his eye.

"Why, I—I—I—I—I—I!" he gasped. "I—I—I'll smash him! I—I—I'll pulverise him. I—I—I—I—I—I!" Speechless with wrath, Grundy rushed out after Wilkins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Bai Jove! It's wathah a stwenuous life chummin' with Gwunday."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Hallo, there's the jolly old bell!" exclaimed Blake. And the juniors streamed away to the Form-rooms for third school.

CHAPTER 7.

"For It!"

MR. PILBEAM almost jumped. He stared at Grundy, of his Form, as if he could not believe his eyes; as indeed he hardly could.

The Shell were gathered in the Form-room for third lesson. Most of them were looking at Grundy when the Form master stopped in. Mr. Pilbeam, looked at him, too. He looked at him almost unbelievably.

The previous evening he had administered the promised severe caning to Grundy. He had repeated his warning that the next offence would be punished by a Head's flogging. One never knew what to expect from Grundy of the Shell; but assuredly Mr. Pilbeam had not expected the next offence to occur so soon. He was simply astounded to see George Alfred Grundy sitting in Form with a black eye.

Black eyes were exceedingly uncommon at St. Jim's. Even Grundy seldom sported a black eye. He was sporting one now, and it was, as the Shell fellows agreed, "some" eye. Wilkins certainly had not meant to give Grundy a black eye; he had never dreamed of it. He had only meant to stop Grundy thumping him. But a cause is always followed by an effect. A tremendous jolt in the eye could scarcely fail to blacken that organ. And Grundy's eye was as black as the ace of spades.

Grundy had hardly realised it till he turned up in the Form-room. He had spent the last few minutes of break hunting for Wilkins, and vengeance. But when he came in with the Shell he realised what had happened. That jolt in the eye had done its deadly work. And Grundy, in addition to a swollen nose, a cut lip, and a bruised cheek, had now a terrific black eye to show his Form master.

Grundy looked dogged. He was "for it" again, and he had no doubt that Pilbeam would make out that he was to blame. Grundy had quite given up expecting justice.

There was a dead silence in the Form-room as Mr. Pilbeam gazed at Grundy. A pin might have been heard to drop.

"Grundy!" Mr. Pilbeam spoke at last, and his voice was very deep. "Grundy!"

"Yes, sir!" said Grundy.

"You have been fighting again!"

"No, sir!" said Grundy.

"What—what? Your face is further disfigured. Your eye is blackened. Your appearance is absolutely disgraceful. Do you dare to tell me that you have not been fighting, when you appear in Form with a blackened eye!" thundered Mr. Pilbeam.

"It wasn't what you'd call fighting, sir," protested Grundy. "I wasn't really scrapping. I was just punching Wilkins—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! This is not a laughing matter!" exclaimed Mr. Pilbeam. "Silence, Grundy! You—you were—were just punching Wilkins."

"Yes, sir; that's all. Only punching him a bit," said Grundy, "and the silly ass hit me in the eye."

"Upon my word! I shall not inquire into the dispute, Grundy, as you undoubtedly were to blame."

"Well, I like that!" exclaimed Grundy warmly. "Ask Wilkins; he will tell you that I wasn't to blame. He knows."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Wilkins.

"Inquiry is unnecessary. I have no doubt—"

"But really, sir," protested Grundy, "I was only punching Wilkins for holding me back when I was going for D'Arcy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Grundy, I have warned you—warned you solemnly. You know what to expect. You have deliberately disregarded my commands. It seems impossible for you to avoid continual quarrelling and fighting. We shall see, Grundy, whether a flogging will prove more effectual as a warning. After third school you will go to the Head for a flogging."

"I—I say, sir—" gasped Grundy.

"You need say nothing, Grundy!" thundered the master of the Shell. "You will be flogged. I shall report this occurrence to your headmaster, and you will receive a flogging from Dr. Holmes. And if that does not correct you, Grundy, I can only repeat what I have said before—that your next offence will be followed by expulsion from this school. I will not, sir, allow this Form, and this House, to be continually disturbed by outbreaks of hooliganism on your part. I trust, Grundy, that a flogging will prove effectual. I trust so, for your own sake."

"But, sir——"

"Silence!"

Third lesson in the Shell Form room proceeded in an electric atmosphere. Grundy sat with dogged indignation on his face. He was for it; there was no doubt about that. If anything was required to fill the cup of Grundy's bitter indignation to overflowing, it was the evident fact that the Shell agreed with Mr. Pilbeam, and looked on him—George Alfred Grundy—as being in the wrong. They sympathised with a fellow who was up for a flogging; but they obviously considered that Grundy had asked for it.

After third school, when Mr. Pilbeam dismissed the Shell, he called to the hapless George Alfred.

"Grundy, I am now going to see the headmaster. You will remain in the Form-room until you are sent for.

Grundy breathed hard.

"I'd like to explain, sir——"

"Silence!"

The Shell streamed out, and Mr. Pilbeam whisked away. Grundy was left alone in the Form-room to await the summons to the headmaster's study.

"Poor old Grundy!" said Tom Merry, as he went into the quad with his friends. "He really does ask for it."

"Begg and prays for it," agreed Manners. "Let's hope that a flogging will do him good."

"Let's, for Grundy's sake," grinned Lowther. "Pilbeam meant every word he said. If Grundy doesn't chuck it, he's up for the sack. I fancy Pilbeam won't be sorry to see him go."

"Poor old Grundy!"

Many fellows said "poor old Grundy!" Wilkins, generously forgetful of that thumping in the tuckshop, was deeply distressed. Gunn shared his distress. Grundy, as a chum, was rather trying. It was not every fellow who could have got on with Grundy. But they really liked old Grundy. He had many good points. Still, even Wilkins and Gunn, sorry as they were, took the hopeful view that a flogging might do Grundy good.

Many eyes were on Grundy when Knox of the Sixth led him out of the Form-room to the Head's study. Grundy went with head erect; "pride in his port, defiance in his eye," as the poet expresses it. He felt that he was suffering injustice; but he could suffer and be strong!

The Head's door closed behind Grundy.

Baggy Trimble sneaked along Head's corridor, and returned grinning to report that he had heard a sound like the beating of a carpet, and another sound like the yelling of a Red Indian on the warpath.

Evidently Grundy was going through it.

Two or three fellows kicked Trimble. Grundy had asked for it, and got what he asked for; but a Head's flogging was not a grinning matter.

Grundy reappeared at last.

His face was pale, and he seemed to walk with difficulty. Wilkins and Gunn joined him, and in sympathetic silence they took an arm each, and walked Grundy away.

He was not seen again till dinner. At dinner he had a worn look, and shifted continually in his seat.

His manner was subdued when he came out of the House after dinner. Baggy Trimble grinned at him as he came out.

"He, he, he!" came from Baggy.

Grundy looked at him. But he gave him only one look, turned, and walked away. Apparently the hope of his friends and well-wishers was well-founded, and the Head's flogging had done Grundy good!

CHAPTER 8.

Not Nice.

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY made his way slowly up to the box-room. His attire consisted of a zephyr and shorts, and the grim look on his face boded ill for someone—or something. As a matter of fact it was something.

Since Mr. Pilbeam's determined attempts to stop Grundy from having permanent black eyes and the like, Grundy had been rather chary of hitting people. But a man must keep fit. Grundy had that as his maxim, and as he could not now keep fit by punching other people, at any rate, without risking the direst consequences, Grundy had made his own arrangements.

Up in the box-room to which he was now going, Grundy had fixed a patent exerciser which he had constructed himself out of elastic, rope, an old iron, and some old weights. For half an hour every day Grundy was to be found in the box-room working his exerciser while a cheery crowd of juniors looked on and offered advice. Much as Grundy would have liked to have sent them about their business, he was unable to do so.

On this particular morning Grundy was delighted to find that no spectators had gathered at the door of the box-room to watch him at work. To one of a greater intellect than the great George Alfred, it might have occurred that there was something strange in this absence of the audience, but not to Grundy—oh, no!

George Alfred entered the box-room and immediately got to work on his exerciser. Seizing a rope in each hand, and standing with his back to the apparatus Grundy proceeded to lean forward so that he was supported entirely by his arms. In this position he began to perform weird exercises, which he believed would develop his muscles.

In this attitude he was unable to see the door behind him, so that he failed to notice a hand, holding a lighted candle, come round the doorway, and hold the flame directly underneath the main rope of the apparatus. The first thing he knew about it was when the rope burnt through and Grundy suddenly nosedived straight on to the floor!

"Yoooop! Yowowowow! Groooooooh!" Grundy fairly roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the doorway, followed by the rush of many feet hastily retreating downstairs.

"Ooooh! Grooch! Yowowowow!" Grundy sat up and rubbed his nose.

He was on the point of leaping to his feet and giving chase down the stairs when he realised that in doing so he might meet Mr. Pilbeam, who would immediately assume that he had been fighting—if he saw his nose. So Grundy waited until his nose had returned to something like its normal shape, and then went slowly downstairs. He changed quickly into his ordinary clothes, and then strolled disconsolately into the quad.

"He, he, he!"

Grundy spun round. Baggy Trimble of the Fourth was regarding him with a fat and derisive grin.

"You cackling fat slug!" hooted Grundy.

"Oh, shut up!" said Trimble.

"Wha-a-a-?" Grundy stared at him, hardly able to believe his ears. He, George Alfred Grundy, was told to shut up by Baggy Trimble. It was time for the skies to fall. "Wha-a-a-? What did you say?"

Trimble grinned cheerily.



"The Open-air Heroes"

The cheery Chums of St. Frank's are under canvas—and under water, too! There's been dirty work at the cross-roads—involving Nipper & Co. in a whirl of hectic excitement and breathless adventure. Here's a unique series of summer school stories which you simply must read. "The Open-air Heroes!" is the title of this week's rollicking BOOK-LENGTH complete yarn.

NELSON LEE

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"I said shut up, and I mean shut up!" he retorted. "There's too much jaw from you, Grundy! Chuck it!"

"Why, I—I—I—" gasped Grundy.

He made a stride at Trimble. Then he remembered. Trimble knew, as most of the fellows knew, that Grundy was going to be bunked if he scrapped again. Trimble—even Trimble—was venturing to check Grundy, in those strange and peculiar circumstances.

Baggy jumped back in alarm. But as Grundy checked himself, Baggy recovered his courage. It really did not need a lot of courage to check a fellow who was going to be sacked if he lifted a finger.

"Keep your distance, you cad!" said Trimble.

"You—you—you worm!" gasped Grundy. "You—you—you—" His hands clenched convulsively.

"That will do!" said Trimble, wagging a fat forefinger at him. "No more of that, Grundy! If you want a licking, say so."

"A—a—a licking!" gurgled Grundy.

"Just that!" said the fat Baggy cheerily. "I'd knock you spinning as soon as look at you. Just shut up and clear off, before I kick you."

Grundy fairly writhed with rage. The fury in his face was so alarming that Baggy Trimble backed away, doubting whether Grundy might not forget even the awful penalty that hung over his head. Grundy glared at him with a ferocious glare, turned on his heel, and strode away.

A fat cacochination followed him.

"He, he, he! Funk!"

Grundy spun round. This was more than flesh and blood could bear, especially from Trimble.

"You worm!" gasped Grundy. "I'll jolly well smash you!"

"You'll jolly well get the sack, if you do!" grinned Trimble. And Grundy, thus reminded, stopped once more, and unclenched his fists.

"You—you worm—you fat rotter!" gasped Grundy helplessly.

"Shut up!" said Trimble.

"I—I—I'll—"

"When I say shut up, I mean shut up!" said Trimble. "Another word from you, Grundy, and I'll jolly well smack your head!"

Grundy gazed at him. In the distance Mr. Pilbeam could be seen, standing at his study window. Grundy dared not hit Trimble. He yearned to do so, with a deep yearning, but he dared not. It was not clear to Grundy that he had brought this on himself. But it was clear to him that it was frightfully unselfish.

Trimble waved a fat hand at him.

"Clear off!" he said. "Hook it, Grundy! For two pins I'd kick you!"

"K-k-k-kick me!" gurgled Grundy.

"Just that!" said Trimble cheerfully. "I'd kick you as soon as look at you, Grundy! Sheer off while you're safe!"

It was rather unfortunate for Baggy that the Terrible Three came along just then. The expression on Grundy's hapless countenance made them smile; but they took a hand in the proceedings. Tom Merry grasped Baggy by the collar.

"That will do. Trimble!" he remarked.

"Ow! Leggo!"

Tap! Tap! Tap! Trimble's bullet head tapped thrice on the trunk of an elm, and three fiendish yells came from Trimble.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Mustn't chip a fellow when he's down, you know," said Tom. "Now, you men, all kick together, and see if you can land Trimble across the quad."

"Yaroooooh!"

Baggy Trimble fled without waiting to be landed across the quad. Grundy breathed hard.

Tom Merry & Co. smiled and walked on. Grundy, with a moody brow, drove his hands deep in his pockets and tramped away. Grundy was not enjoying life these days; and the fact that he had only himself to thank for it did not comfort Grundy in the least—he was not even aware of it.

CHAPTER 9. Rough on Grundy!

"ROT!"

"Look here——"

"Rot!" repeated Grundy.

It was Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday. There was a Form match that afternoon—Shell against Fourth. Grundy had offered his services to play for the Shell, his services being declined without thanks. But that was not the cause of the frown that now overshadowed the rugged brow of Grundy. He was used to that. He still offered his services, because hope springs eternal in the human breast. But he had really given up expecting Tom Merry to do the sensible thing in cricket matters.

Grundy was looking excited now. As usual, he was a fellow with a grievance. He glared at Wilkins and Gunn.

"Utter rot!" he repeated. "Are you my pals or ain't you my pals? Think a fellow wants to mooch about on his lonely own on a half-holiday? You're jolly well coming out!"

"But we're playing for the Shell!" said Wilkins.

"Playing cricket, you know!" said Gunn.

"So you said last Wednesday!" exclaimed the exasperated Grundy.

"Well, Tom Merry's asked us to play for the Form——"

"Tom Merry's a silly ass!"

"Thanks!" said Tom, with a smile.

"You can chuck it!" continued Grundy. "Look here, I expect you to come out with me!"

"Can't be done!" said Wilkins.

"Dash it all, Grundy," exclaimed Gunn warmly, "you wouldn't chuck a cricket match, I suppose, if you were asked to play!"

"That's a very different matter. I play cricket!" said Grundy, stressing the verb. "You fellows only foodle about!"

"Oh dear!" said Wilkins.

"Come down and see the game, Grundy!" suggested Monty Lowther.

"Oh crumbs!" said Wilkins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" snorted Grundy.

"Thanks, we will!" said Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, are you coming out or not?" demanded Grundy, with a glare at his chums that was far from chummy.

"Can't be did, old man! You see, cricket——"

Potts, the Office-Boy.



"Rot!" roared Grundy.
 "You see," said Gunn, "cricket—"
 "Shut up, you silly ass! Go and eat coke, and be blowed to you!"

And Grundy turned and stalked away, followed by a chortle from the Shell fellows.

Grundy caught the sound, and understood what they meant, and frowned more darkly as he went down to the gates. More injustice—though really Grundy was used to injustice by this time.

Grundy tramped away by the lane to Wayland. He was going to the pictures that afternoon, and he had wanted the company of his friends. But his friends seemed to prefer cricket, even to Grundy's fascinating company. Grundy had been strongly tempted to punch their heads, as, of course, they deserved; but it was days now since Grundy had punched a head. In the peculiar circumstances he had to get on the best he could without punching heads.

"St. Jim's cad!"

Grundy started and looked round. Three Grammar School fellows loomed up in the lane, coming through a gap in the hedge. Gordon Gay and Frank Monk and Carboy grinned as they bore down on Grundy.

"Fancy meeting you!" grinned Gordon Gay. "My hat! Where did you pick up that eye?"

"And that nose?" grinned Monk.

"Did you win it in a raffle?" chuckled Carboy.

Grundy breathed hard and deep. He was in a mood for punching—he was longing to punch somebody. And here were three Grammarians, the old foes and rivals of St. Jim's, all ready to be punched. Grundy's eyes gleamed with the light of battle, and he clenched his fists.

Then he suddenly remembered. Grammarian heads were only made to be punched; but they were not to be punched with impunity. Grundy simply dared not turn up at St. Jim's with fresh signs of battle upon him.

Choking down his wrath and his desire for a fray, Grundy quickened his pace and strode on past the Grammarians.

"Here, hold on!" shouted Gordon Gay. "We're not done with you, yet, Grundy. Bag him, you men!" Grundy broke into a trot.

St. Jim's men and Grammarians seldom met without a ragging, and Gordon Gay & Co. seemed in a playful mood. It went sorely against the grain with Grundy to turn his back on a foe; but he did. And the Grammarians laughed loudly as they had a view of his vanishing back.

The Shell fellow scudded across a field, and was relieved when he glanced back to see that the Grammarians were not pursuing. With a glum brow Grundy plodded on his way, going by the fields now. Passing through a belt of willows he came suddenly on a frowsy, tattered form sprawling under a tree, smoking a foul pipe. A bloodshot eye gleamed at him from an unwashed face, the other eye being covered by a black patch. Grundy, staring at the man, recognised the tramp he had glimpsed in pursuit of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy a few days ago.

"My eye!" ejaculated the black-patched gentleman, apparently surprised and gratified by a well-dressed school-boy fairly walking into his hands in that lonely spot. "Ere! 'Old on!"

He scrambled up.

Grundy was not afraid of the tramp—Grundy was afraid of nobody. He was the fellow to hit out recklessly, had the footpad been twice as hefty as he was. But Grundy was

learning amazing self-restraint these days—with the sack impending over his head. He hated to run—and he remembered how he had chipped D'Arcy for running from that very tramp. But he ran! No fellow could be blamed for scrapping with a highway thief—but Grundy had put himself out of court, as it were. He realised bitterly that Pilbeam would, as usual, take it for granted that he was to blame if he went back to the school battered and bruised. Before the black-patched man was fairly on his feet Grundy was running—and he charged through the willows and disappeared across the next field at a great speed.

He dropped into a walk when he came out on the Wayland road. With a gloomy brow he walked on to the picture palace. Grundy was undoubtedly up against it now. The fellow who had always been ready with a punch as with a word was driven to using his feet instead of his hands—and Grundy felt sorely that it was very rough, very rough indeed!

CHAPTER 10.
 Horrid for the Head!

DR. HOLMES started a little and peered round in the dusk over his glasses. The shades of night were falling fast, as a poet has already remarked.

The shades of night, however, did not bother the headmaster of St. Jim's, as they would have bothered any St. Jim's man. The Head was under no necessity to get in in time for calling-over. At his usual slow and stately rate of progress the old gentleman pergerinated along the dusky lane, thinking chiefly of a happy chat he had enjoyed with the Vicar of Wayland, in which they had compared notes, and views, respecting certain disputed passages in Æschylus. They had not agreed about those disputed passages; but they had agreed to differ. And the discussion—as was natural on so entrancing a subject—had rather prolonged itself, and Dr. Holmes had left the vicarage rather later than he had intended.

Footfalls behind him in the dusky lane fell on his ears, unheeded at first. But presently they drew his attention, and he peered round in the gathering shadows.

Someone had been walking, for some little time, behind him, but had neither passed him nor come up to him. The Head was a good walker, but a slow walker, and it was a little odd that the other pedestrian had not come up with him. Now he was half-way to the school and in the most solitary spot in a very solitary lane, and the footfalls behind him seemed to accelerate.

Back into the Head's mind came the recollection of the stories he had heard of a ruffianly footpad who had been rather busy in the vicinity of late. The local police were looking for a tramp with a black patch over one eye who had committed several robberies with threats of violence; but they did not seem to have found him yet.

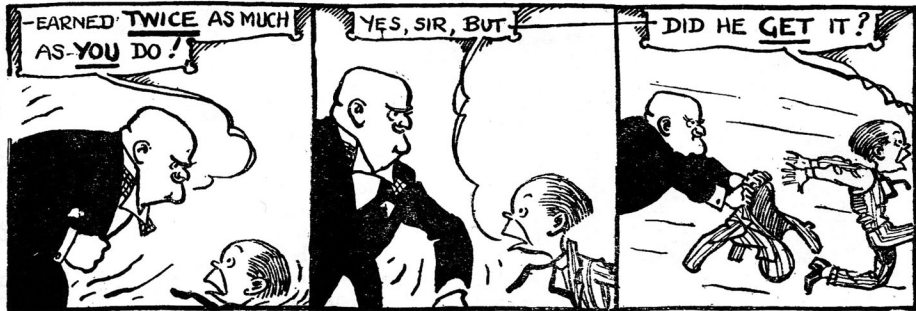
The man was still at large, and probably still in the vicinity. And it occurred to the Head that it would be exceedingly disagreeable to encounter such a character in this very solitary spot.

He peered round, and in the deepening shadows of the lane he sighted a shadowy form in the distance.

He quickened his pace.

(Continued on page 16.)

A Pointed Question!



YOUR EDITOR'S

And so on and so forth, query after query.

Hundreds of letters are sent out every week from the GEM Office to enthusiastic querists all over the world, but still the tide of questions rolls in unceasingly.

In the circumstances, your Editor recently decided that the time had come to make a special effort to satisfy the urgent and world-wide demand for information of this sort.

The whole GEM Staff was called into conference, and

THE BIG PLAN

was eventually evolved.

This, briefly, is the idea: It is to present GEM readers with the whole amazing story of how Tom Merry first left the care of his old governess and guardian, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, to go to school; how he came to St. Jim's, and how he first met his chums, Manners and Monty Lowther; of his early rivalry with Jack Blake, and of the rise of Figgins & Co. of the New House.

The magic pen of Martin Clifford gives to this enthralling narrative an epic quality which I know will be appreciated by every "Gemite," past, present, and future.

Nothing like this great project has ever been attempted before—every reader will simply revel

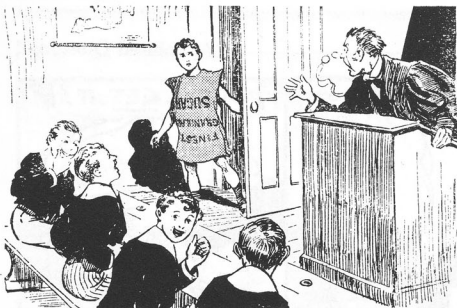


Holding his bat upside down, Tom thrust at the ball and, of course, missed it completely. But he stopped the ball all right—with his leg! A howl of laughter went up from the juniors—and a howl went up from Tom; he was hurt!

IN the many years during which the adventures of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's have been chronicled in the GEM, a vast number of letters have reached the Editor, making inquiries as to innumerable details in the lives of the principal characters in the stories.

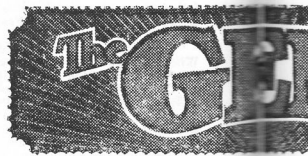
Tom Merry & Co. are, without any doubt, the most popular and widely-known schoolboy characters in the world. Their names are known wherever the English language is spoken—from China to Peru. Everywhere are to be found boys who regard Tom Merry & Co. as their personal chums—boys who follow every detail of their careers. These boys—readers of the GEM—feel they have only one grouse. It is that they are not "in the know" regarding Merry's earlier days at the famous school. Constantly they clamour for information:

How did Tom Merry come to St. Jim's?
Was St. Jim's the first school he went to?
Who was junior captain before Tom Merry?
How did the Terrible Three first come to be so-called?



Mr. Welch looked at Tom Merry as if he were mesmerised, as the strangely-attired new boy calmly marched in and took his place. "Merry!" he gasped at last. "This is—is incredible!"

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 1,220.



Hundreds of thousands of boys and girls every week's GEM, the cover of which shows a wise reader will give his newsagent or ord number—GAY.

What Tom Merry was
First Went to

LACE COLLAR AND A VELVET SUIT!

DR'S BIG PLAN!

in the great story of Tom Merry & Co.'s early history, of their schoolboy feuds and gigantic japes; their triumphs and their failures. One by one, the now familiar characters make their appearance upon the stage, as it were, and each takes his place—high or low, according to the character that is in him—in the life of the great school.

GEM 2ND



of boys and girls will be talking about next of which is shown here in miniature, but the a newsagent's order for next week's unique number 2-DAY!

Merry was like when he went to School!

The first story in this great panorama of school life will begin in next Wednesday's GEM. Hundreds

of thousands of "Cemites" all over the world will be waiting for its appearance—it will fulfil their aspirations and hopes of years.

For instance, how many of my readers knew that Tom's first school was Clavering—not St. Jim's? Quite a number of the St. Jim's characters of to-day started their school life at Clavering. How Clavering faded away into the background of things, and how St. Jim's took its place, will be fully explained in subsequent stories.

In these announcement pages you will see four unusual incidents which our artist has illustrated. These are taken from next week's grand opening story. How vastly different was the Tom Merry of yesterday from the experienced schoolboy of to-day. It did not require a great deal of skill to pull his leg when he first came to school and, of course, his Form



The boy in Etons held Tom Merry at arm's length and shook him. "Hallo, what do you call yourself?" "My name is Tom Merry," replied the youth in the velvet suit. "Tom Foul would be a better name, I fancy!" chuckled Lowther. Manners, in the doorway, laughed uproariously.

fellows speedily took advantage of the fact. Still, the right stuff was in Tom Merry, and, when the corners had been knocked off him, he was a boy of whom any master might be proud.

Even Mr. Railton deserves a special mention here, for the popular Housemaster of St. Jim's was originally the Headmaster of Clavering, whilst those familiar names, Monty Lowther and Harry Manners, occur very frequently in the opening story which has been specially prepared for you.

The foregoing will, I am sure, make you all impatient to get next week's fine story in your hands. The wait, believe me, will be worth while. Meantime, do your Editor a good turn, and your friends, too, by telling them about our BIG PLAN.

Spread the glad news round, then, chums, and take prompt steps to secure your copy of next week's GEM by ordering it in advance from your newsagent.

The first story in this amazing series will be called:

"TOM MERRY—NEW BOY!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Don't miss this on any account whatever! It's a real out-and-out gem!

YOUR EDITOR.



Instead of a glorious spread Tom withdrew from the fatal hamper a well-knitted comforter, a packet of cough lozenges, a hot-water bottle, and a bottle of medicine. Tom's guests looked at the surprising array of articles, speechless with amazement.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,220.

The Head of St. Jim's, of course, could not run. Even had not his dignity forbidden it, his running days were long over. But he walked quickly—very quickly. Aschylus dropped from his thoughts—he had come back, as it were, with a sudden jump, from ancient Greece to modern England.

The footfalls sounded closer and clearer.

The man behind was running now. Dr. Holmes felt a very uncomfortable thrill. He could not help suspecting that the man behind had followed him till he was well away from the town, and far from aid, and intended now to overtake him.

He glanced back again; and had a glimpse of a frowsty figure, and a stubby face with a patch over one eye.

"It was the tramp!"

"Bless my soul!" murmured the Head.

He accelerated. He was walking very fast now—quite rapidly. Behind him sounded running feet.

The man was coming on fast. Even had the Head condescended to run, he was not useful in a foot-race. He walked on fast, and the running footfalls came closer and closer, the old gentleman's heart beating most unpleasantly as he listened to them.

The dusky lane was absolutely deserted, save for the headmaster and the ruffian who was following him. Hedges, dotted with trees, loomed dimly on either side, shutting off the fields. Few used that lane after dark, and it was rapidly growing dark now.

Dr. Holmes realised only too clearly that there was no help at hand. St. Jim's men, probably, had been along that lane half an hour ago—probably a good many of them, as it was a half-holiday, and that lane was the shortest cut home from Wayland. But it was call-over now at the school, and St. Jim's men had to be within gates before this. The Head and the black-patched gentleman had the lonely lane to themselves.

The footfalls drew abreast of the Head, and passed him. For a moment he thought, with deep relief, that the unpleasant stranger was going on his way. But that relief lasted only a moment. The man swung round in the road ahead of him.

He came to a halt, directly in the path of the headmaster. Dr. Holmes set his lips.

There was a grin on the tramp's stubby face, and the single bloodshot eye glittered in the shadows. An aroma of mingled rum and tobacco reached the Head, exuded by that very unpleasant stranger.

"Old on, old covey!" said the black-patched man.

Dr. Holmes set his lips.

There had been a time, in old college days, which were now but a memory, when Herbert Henry Holmes could have handled that frowsty ruffian. But much water had passed under the bridges since the days when Plancus was consul, so to speak. As matters stood, the Head simply had no chance in a struggle with the black-patched gentleman. But his courage was as high as ever; and though his heart was beating unusually fast, he fixed his eyes with lofty calmness on the rogue who barred his path.

"Let me pass, please!" said Dr. Holmes, and there was not a quiver in his voice.

A hoarse chuckle came from the black-patched man.

"I don't think!" he remarked.

He came a little closer to the Head, his eye gleaming, his stubby chin jutting out threateningly. Dr. Holmes retreated a pace. The black-patched man followed him up. He retreated another pace, and the ruffian followed him up again.

"What do you want, my man?" asked the Head, as calmly as he could.

"Not much," said the black-patched man, with grim humour. "Only all you've got about you, old covey!"

"If it is your intention to attempt to rob me—" began the Head, with stately dignity.

He was rudely interrupted.

"Stow it!" said the footpad. "Stow it, old gent! 'And it over now, and don't jore!"

"Stand back!" rapped out the Head, as the ruffian came closer.

The bleary eye gleamed at him.

"You goin' to give a bloke trouble?" asked the tramp, in a threatening tone. "Ow long do you think it would take me to knock you into the middle of next week—what? If you don't want to be made into a 'orspital case, old gent, you 'and it over—and sharp!"

"I shall certainly not submit to be robbed, you scoundrel!" exclaimed the Head, his voice vibrating with scorn and indignation. "Stand back! I will give you nothing—noting! You shall be sent to prison for this!"

"Well, it wouldn't be the first time I've been in quod!" said the black-patched man. "But they ain't got me yet. You 'anding over the stuff, old gent?"

"Certainly not!" rapped out the Head.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,220.

"I ain't waiting," said the black-patched man, in a tone of savage menace. "If I 'it you, you'll get 'urt! Now, then—"

"Stand back, you scoundrel!"

The black-patched man did not stand back. He made a jump at the Head. Lonely as the lane was, there was always a possibility of a passer-by; and the footpad had no time to waste.

"Now, you old fool!" snarled the footpad, as he leaped at the headmaster of St. Jim's. "Oh, my eye! Strike me pink!"

The Head of St. Jim's was an old gentleman—a sedate gentleman, and a dignified gentleman; but he was not to be bullied and robbed if he could help it. He struck out at the ruffian with a swiftness and vigour worthy of his younger days; and the black-patched man reeled back from the blow with a howl of rage.

The next moment he was springing at Dr. Holmes again, like a tiger. His tobacco-stained teeth were clenched and his single visible eye blazed with fury.

"You will 'ave it, then!" he snarled.

Once more the Head struck out manfully; the next moment he was crumpling up helplessly in the grasp of the ruffian. There was a crash as he went down into the road, with the footpad sprawling over him.

"Oh!" gasped the Head faintly.

He struggled feebly. The savage face of the footpad loomed over him in the gloom, and savage blows rained on him.

"Help!" shrieked the Head. "Oh, help, help, help!"

"Stow it!" snarled the tramp. "Stow it! Strike me pink—"

"Help, help!"

There was a sound of running feet on the road. It came to the headmaster's ears as he struggled, and he shrieked again:

"Help, help, help!"

CHAPTER 11.

Something Like a Scrap!

"HELP!"

Grundy of the Shell started, and listened. Grundy had forgotten his wrongs and grievances at the pictures. Grundy liked the thrilling dramas of the silver screen. With breathless interest Grundy watched thrilling scene after scene, and listened to the weird and wonderful Hollywood variety of the English language in the "talkie." So interested was Grundy that he not only forgot his wrongs, but he forgot calling-over also.

When he emerged from the picture palace night was falling on the town of Wayland, and Grundy realised that he would be too late to answer "Adsum" to his name at roll-call in the House.

Pilbeam, of course, would be down on him. Grundy snorted at the thought, and started for the school. He started at a trot, and kept up the trot as he went along the winding lonely lane. He was going to be late; but in view of his Form master's "down" on him, he was not going to be later than he could help. As he trotted actively along in the thick shadows, he was startled by cries for help ahead of him in the gloom.

He quickened his pace.

Grundy was in a hurry to get in; and certainly—most certainly—he was not looking for a scrap. But Grundy was not the fellow to pass such a call unheeded.

"Help, help!"

Grundy put on a spurt.

"Oh, my hat!" he ejaculated, as he came on the scene.

'An old gentleman—Grundy knew he must be an old gentleman, because he had a glimpse of silvery hair—was on the ground, struggling in the grasp of a frowsty tramp.

Who the old gentleman was Grundy did not know, but a black patch over an eye told him who the tramp was. Even in the thick gloom he saw that black patch, and knew the man.

"You rotter!" roared Grundy.

He came up with a rush and hurled himself at the tramp. Scrapping was barred for Grundy of the Shell; but he did not stop to think of that now. He did not stop to think of anything. He saw what he would have described as "some old coder" being cruelly ill-used by a hulking ruffian, and he went for that ruffian with both hands, and without a second's pause. It was not, as a matter of fact, Grundy's custom to stop and think before he acted—seldom indeed did he look before he leaped. But on this occasion there was no doubt that Grundy was right.

The black-patched man looked up from his struggling victim with an angry snarl, as Grundy came running up;

but before he could decide what to do Grundy was upon him, hitting out.

Crash! Crash!
Grundy was a hefty fellow. He had a tremendous punch—as a good many St. Jim's men were aware. Now the black-patched man became aware of it.

Grundy's left caught him in his single eye, and the next second Grundy's right crashed on his stubby jaw. The footpad rolled off the headmaster as if a traction-engine had struck him.

He roared as he rolled.
"You rotter!" yelled Grundy. "Let the old codger alone! My hat, I'll jolly well make you!"

The tramp, with a ringing oath, was on his feet in a moment. He leaped at Grundy with savage fury.

Grundy stood up to him manfully. Big and hefty as George Alfred Grundy was, he was neither so big nor so hefty as the tramp. But he did not think of that, or care about it. There was, indeed, no retreat for Grundy now if he had thought of retreat. But he did not think of it. He stood up to the tramp, giving blow for blow, his teeth set and his eyes blazing.

"Come on, you rotter!" panted Grundy.
The footpad came on like a tiger. Grundy was driven back across the lane, fighting every inch.

Blow after blow crashed on him, but Grundy gave back very nearly as good as he received. And Grundy could stand punishment. There were many things that Grundy could not do, but that was one of the things he could do.

He had to give ground, but he fought hard. The tramp's single eye was half-closed, his nose streamed crimson. Grundy's face, in a few moments, looked like raw beef. But he stood to it undauntedly.

Dr. Holmes, dazed and breathless, tried to rise. He supported himself on his elbow and gazed dizzily at the fight.
"Grundy!" he gasped. "Bless my soul! It is Grundy of the Shell! Bless my soul! Oh dear!"

He had only a glimpse of Grundy in the gloom, but he had recognised Grundy's voice, and Grundy's burly figure was not easily mistaken. The Head, staring dizzily across the dark road at the shadowy fighting figures, knew that it was George Alfred Grundy of St. Jim's who had rushed so valorously to his aid; though Grundy, for his part, had not the faintest idea that it was his own headmaster whom he was rescuing from a footpad.

Grundy was too busy to give the old gentleman any attention. He had his hands more than full with the black-patched man.

Dr. Holmes struggled to rise. Little use as he was in it combat, he was feverishly anxious to go to the aid of the boy who was fighting with the ruffianly tramp. But the hapless headmaster was almost knocked out by the brutal blows that had fallen on him before Grundy's arrival on the scene. He fell back helplessly, his brain swimming. The effort to rise exhausted what remained of the old gentleman's strength, and he was hopelessly hors de combat. Half-fainting as he was, he tried to shriek for help; but only a husky whisper came from his lips.

There was a crash in the road, at a little distance, as Grundy went down in the grasp of the footpad. He had had to give ground more and more, till he was driven against a tree and could go no farther. Now the ruffian's savage grasp was on him, and Grundy rolled on the ground in the clutches of the black-patched man.

Blow after blow crashed on him, but Grundy still fought. He was dazed and dizzy with the rain of blows; but still he fought and struggled and jabbed and pounded; and the footpad, though he had the upper hand, was getting some painful punishment.

Dr. Holmes made another effort. He dragged himself to his knees, struggling to rise. But his brain swam, and he pitched over again and lay in a dead faint.

Savage blows were raining on Grundy of the Shell. Once he tore himself loose from the ruffian, and struggled away, panting wildly. But the fierce grasp was on him again the next moment, and he was dragged over.

Fiercely he drove his fists into the stubby face. But he was down, and the ruffian was over him, raining blows. Grundy still fought; but he was near the end of his tether now.

Honk! Honk!
From the darkness of the lane two bright headlights flashed and glowed, and the honking of a motor-horn boomed through the shadows. A car was coming whizzing along from the direction of Wayland.

The savage grasp on Grundy suddenly relaxed. The footpad glared round him savagely, blinking in the blaze of the headlights as the car came to a halt with jamming brakes.

With a fierce oath he left Grundy, dashed to the roadside, and leaped through a gap in the hedge. Two men had

jumped from the car, and the man with the black patch made his escape only just in time.

Grundy staggered up.
"Oh crickey!" he gasped. "Oh crumbs! Oh my hat! Help! I say—ow! Ow!"

One of the motorists stopped by the still figure of the headmaster. The other ran towards Grundy. He peered in horror at the schoolboy's bruised and bleeding face.

"Good gad! You've been through it, kid!" he exclaimed. "Here, get into the car—we're going to Rylcombe! We can make room for the two of you—"

Grundy gasped and shook his head.
"Thanks! I've got to get back to my school—I'm late for roll-call. There's an old codger there! Give him a lift—I'm all right!"

"You don't look all right!"
"Right as rain!" gasped Grundy. "A bit of punching doesn't hurt me. It's all right!"

And leaving the kindly motorists to look after the "old codger," Grundy of the Shell tramped on rather dizzily towards the school.

CHAPTER 12.

Grundy Surprises the Natives.

"GWEAT Scott!"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcey fairly jumped. He stared at Grundy of the Shell as that youth tramped into the lighted House, as if he could hardly believe his eye or his eyeglass.

"Gwunday!" he gasped.
"My only hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Grundy!"
"Great pip!"

A dozen fellows crowded up to stare at Grundy. A score more crowded at their heels. Amazed eyes were fixed on the Shell fellow. Wilkins gave a groan.

"He's done it now!" he said.
"Fairly done it!" sighed Gunn.

"Bai Jove! You've been scwappin', Gwunday!" said Arthur Augustus. "You look as if you had been through a fearful scwap."

"Jever see such a man for askin' for it?" said Cardew.
"Great gad! What a picture!"

Grundy blinked round at the surprised faces. There was a fat chuckle from Baggy Trimble, and some of the fellows were grinning. But most of the School House juniors looked serious enough.

Grundy had done it this time. All the damages, all the disfigurements he had ever displayed before were as moonlight unto the sunlight, as water unto wine, compared with his present decorations.

Both his eyes were blacked, his nose was swollen to nearly twice its usual size, his lip was cut, his face bruised and battered. Obviously, he had been through such a fight as had never come his way before.

"Poor old Grundy!" murmured Monty Lowther. "It's the boot this time!"

"Well, he's begged for it!" said Manners, with a whistle.
"When Pilbeam sees that chivvy—"

"Grundy, old man!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What on earth have you done this for? You know jolly well—"

George Alfred Grundy blinked at the juniors through swollen, dizzy eyes. He did not know exactly what he looked like; but he knew that he must look frightfully battered. The black-patched man had a heavy hand.

"I—I say, do I—do I look bad?" he gasped.
"Oh crickey! Yes, rather!"
"Frightful, old chap!" gasped Wilkins.

"Awful!" said Gunn. "Fearful! Dreadful, old fellow!"
"Yaas, wathah!"

"What did you do it for?" exclaimed Blake. "You've been behaving yourself for two or three days. Couldn't you keep it up, you ass?"

"It wasn't my fault," gasped Grundy. "I—I've had a fight with a tramp."

"My only hat!" said Blake. "Mean to say you've been out picking trouble with tramps? I should have thought you had enough here."

"Yaas wathah! It was weally vewy fatheaded of you, Gwunday, to pick a wov with a twamp."

"You silly chump!" gasped Grundy. "I—"
"Come away, old chap!" said Wilkins anxiously. "Get out of sight before Pilbeam sees you, for goodness' sake!"

"Bai Jove! Heah's Kildare!"
"Grundy!" Kildare of the Sixth came on the scene, and stared blankly at the Shell fellow. "Is—is that Grundy?"
"Ow! Yes!" gasped Grundy.
"You've been fighting again, you young rascal! Is that what made you cut call-over?" exclaimed the prefect.

"I—I had a row with a tramp!" gasped Grundy. "It wasn't my fault. You see—"

"Grundy!" It was Mr. Pilbeam's voice. There was a hush in the crowd of fellows, as the master of the Shell swept on the scene. Mr. Pilbeam's face was almost pale with anger. Never had Tom Merry & Co. seen their Form master looking so angry. "Grundy, how dare you!"

"I—I—I—" gasped Grundy.
 "You—you—you have dared to return to the school in this—this state, after missing call-over!" gasped Mr. Pilbeam. "In this shocking, terrible, disgraceful state!"

"I couldn't help it, sir!" groaned Grundy. "You see, I had a fight with a tramp."
 "You dare to tell me that you have been fighting with a tramp!" hooted the master of the Shell.

"I had to, sir! I—"
 "I have warned you against pursuing your quarrelsome and disorderly conduct in this school, Grundy. You have been caned. You have been flogged. I have warned you that on your next offence you would be expelled. Now you have offended, more seriously, more outrageously, than ever before! Do you know that your appearance is absolutely disgraceful?"

"I—I—I—" gurgled Grundy.
 "Both your eyes are blacked!" almost shrieked the master of the Shell.

"I—I never asked him to black them, sir," stammered Grundy. "I—I assure you, sir, I—I didn't want him to black them. It—it was jolly painful, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Silence!" hooted Mr. Pilbeam. "Silence!"
 "Besides, one of them was black already, sir," groaned Grundy. "I—I'm not to blame, sir—really not to blame, sir! I'm no more to blame now than I was last time."

"Oh, bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus; and the juniors grinned.

"No more than last time!" exclaimed Mr. Pilbeam. "Last time you were flogged, Grundy, because you were to blame."

"I wasn't really, sir," explained Grundy. "That was rather a mistake of yours, sir. I told you so at the time."
 "Upon my word! Grundy, I have warned you what to expect. I shall keep my word, sir. You will be expelled!"

"I—I say, sir, I—I wasn't to blame, really," stammered Grundy. "I—I had a fight with a tramp—an awful beast, sir!"

"You are perfectly well aware that you should not fight with tramps, Grundy, any more than with your school-fellows."

"But—but I had to, sir. You see—"
 "Do you mean to tell me that some tramp attacked you—that he struck the first blow?" hooted Mr. Pilbeam, evidently unprepared to believe such a statement even if Grundy ventured to make it.

"Oh, no, sir! I hit him first!"
 "You struck the man first?" shrieked Mr. Pilbeam.

"Yes, sir. I got in two good ones, one in his eye, and the other on his jaw," said Grundy. "Then we scrapped for—"

"Say no more! As soon as Dr. Holmes returns to the school, I shall take you to him!" thundered Mr. Pilbeam. "I shall request him, sir, to expel you from the school, and I have no doubt that he will do so immediately. You have been warned, Grundy. You have been given every chance, and now you choose to disgrace yourself, and your school, more recklessly, more impudently than ever! You leave the school to-morrow, Grundy!"

"I—I say—"
 "Not a word more! Go! Go, and make yourself a little more presentable; a little less like a prize-fighter; a little less outrageously disgraceful before you see your headmaster! Go!"

Grundy, gasping, went. Wilkins and Gunn helped him away. Mr. Pilbeam, frowning darkly, went back to his study.

"Poor old Grundy!" murmured Tom Merry. "The game's up now! Pilbeam means that!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"

There was no doubt that Mr. Pilbeam meant it. His grim expression showed as much as he stalked away, frowning.

"Well, the dear man's asked for it," said Cardew. "He keeps on askin', doesn't he?"

"What the merry thump did he want to fight with a tramp for?" said Levison. "I should think, even Grundy might draw a line at fighting with tramps."

"Perhaps the tramp looked at him," grinned Blake. "He wanted to fight Gussy the other day for looking at him."

"Yaas, wathah! He weally is a feaful ass, you know," said Arthur Augustus. "But I am vewy sowwy he is goin'!"
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to be bunked. I am wathah glad that I did not finish thwasin' him, aftah all."

"Poor old Grundy!"

"I suppose the howling ass couldn't keep quiet for long," said Blake. "He was barred from scrapping in the school, so he had to go out and look for a tramp to scrap with. Sorry for the ass; but if a man begs for a thing like this, he can't be surprised at getting it."

And the School House juniors went to prep, excitedly discussing Grundy's "latest." And there was no doubt in any mind that Grundy, who had asked for it so long and so earnestly, was to get it at last. Pilbeam was a man of his word. And Pilbeam was fed-up to the back teeth with the obstinacy and obstreperousness of George Alfred Grundy. The chopper was coming down; and the game was up for Grundy at St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 13.

Hero or Fathead?

TOM MERRY looked into Study No. 3 in the Shell after prep. So did a number of other fellows. They were rather anxious to know how Grundy had fared. Grundy could not be called exactly a popular fellow in the House. And there was not a man who did not agree that he had tired out the patience of his Form master, and deserved what was coming to him. Still, fellows were bound to sympathize with a fellow who was down on his luck—that was only human nature. And apart from the impending "sack," it was evident that Grundy had had a high old time. The most terrific combat among his many combats at St. Jim's had never made him look anything like he looked now.

Grundy was in the study, and he was, as all agreed, a picture. Wilkins and Gunn, like good chums, had done all they could for him, rather to the detriment of prep. Grundy was brushed and tidy, washed, and newly swept and garnished, as it were. But there was, after all, little that could be done. Nothing could alter his black eyes, his swollen nose, his cuts, and his bruises. Grundy really was awful to look at.

"Seen the Head?" asked Tom.

"Not yet," said Grundy. "I suppose Pilbeam will send for me. I—I hope the beak will give me a chance to explain that I wasn't to blame for this."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Monty Lowther.
 Wilkins and Gunn looked worried and dubious. Grundy had explained to them, but they were very dubious.

"Grundy says he had to pitch into that tramp," said Wilkins. "He thinks the tramp was robbing some old gent, or something."

"Thanks!" hooted Grundy. "No thinking about it! I've told you the man was pitching into an old codger."

"Yes, yes, old chap!" said Wilkins. "But as you say it was dark, and you never saw who the old codger was, and—"

"Think I had time to look at the old codger? I can tell you, I had to scrap!" said Grundy hotly. "Some motorists picked the old codger up, and took him on to Rylcombe. They offered me a lift; but, of course, I couldn't go to Rylcombe. I had to get back to the school. If they could be found, they'd be witnesses!"

"I say, that alters the case," said Tom Merry. "Mean to say you pitched into a tramp to save an old gent from robbery?"

"Of course I did! Think I'm the fellow to get into a shindy for nothing?" demanded Grundy.

Tom Merry gasped.
 "Well, yes! Yes, rather! Aren't you always getting into shindies?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Oh, don't be a silly ass!" snorted Grundy. "I hope the beak will take my word, if he gives me a chance to speak. I wish I knew who that old codger was—and I wish I knew who those motorists were—but—"

"He, he, he!" came from Baggy Trimble. "Better make up a better one than that for the Head, Grundy!"

Grundy stared round at the juniors.

"I suppose you men believe me?" he roared.

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" stammered Tom. "But—but you're such a silly ass, you know."

"You see, you may have fancied the tramp was up to something, if you were spoiling for a scrap!" grinned Lowther.

"You see, it's rather your way to hit out first and ask questions afterwards!" chuckled Blake.

"I—I hope Grundy will get away with it!" said Wilkins. "If—if it's as he says, he—he wasn't to blame! But he's such a fool—"

"What?" hooted Grundy.

"Well, you know what a fool you are, old man," said Wilkins, shaking his head. "It's exactly like you to get

into a shindy with anybody that came along, and fancy that he had done something—"

"I tell you he was hammering an old codger—"

"Puzzle—find the old codger!" chortled Trimble.

"I saw the old codger on the ground—just a glimpse of his white wool," said Grundy. "He was yelling for help."

"Sure it wasn't a couple of tramps scrapping, and you butted in for nothin'?" asked Cardew.

Grundy started.

"No! Yes! I'm sure! At least—yes, I'm sure! Yes, you silly ass, of course I'm sure!"

"Let's hope Pilbeam will feel sure, too!" smiled Cardew.

Kildare came along the passage. The juniors cleared out of the way. Evidently he had come for Grundy.

George Alfred was wanted now! Why the summons had been left so late, nobody knew; but it had come at last. Kildare glanced into the study, and stared for a moment curiously at Grundy's battered face.

"You're wanted, Grundy!" he said. "Come along!"

Grundy followed the Sixth-Form man, leaving the passage in a buzz. Whether Grundy, for once, had done the right thing, and was really, for once, blameless, or whether he had made one more of his fatheaded mistakes, the juniors could not make up their minds. But the latter theory outweighed the former. Grundy, with great efforts, had kept the peace for some days; but every man in the House had expected him to break out again, sooner or later. Now he had broken out—that was all! And it was exactly like Grundy to make an idiotic mistake—to pitch into somebody on an entirely erroneous supposition. That was Grundy all over!

The hapless hero followed Kildare, who left him at his Form master's study. Mr. Pilbeam's eyes glittered at Grundy's disastrous visage. Such a visage had never been seen at St. Jim's before; and Mr. Pilbeam was grimly determined that such a visage should never be seen there again.

"Grundy, I have been unable to send for you before, as Dr. Holmes was delayed for some reason; but the Head is now in his study, and I shall take you to him. Follow me!"

"I hope you'll let me explain, sir—"

"There is nothing to explain—except that you are a quarrelsome, troublesome, ruffianly boy, unfit to remain in this school."

"I—I had to help that old codger, sir—"

"What? What?"

"That tramp was pitching into an old codger, sir!" gasped Grundy. "He had him on the ground, mopping him up like billy-ho! I went to help him—"

"Nonsense! If you interfered in some affray between ruffianly characters, Grundy, you are more to blame than I supposed."

"I think it was some respectable old codger, sir—"

"Nonsense!"

"I know he was yelling for help, sir," said the hapless Grundy, "and I pitched into the tramp. It was too dark to see who it was, of course—"

"You should have been in the school before dark, Grundy! Make no further excuses—follow me!"

"But—but, sir—I—I really think that old codger—"

"Silence! Follow me!" hooted the master of the Shell.

And Grundy, in a dismal mood, followed his Form master to the Head's study.

CHAPTER 14. The Old Codger!

DR. HOLMES rose to his feet.

He was looking a little pale and a little shaken. There were several marks of rough usage on the old gentleman, though Grundy's fortunate arrival on the scene in Wayland Lane had saved him from real injury. But the Head was not feeling his usual self.

The kindly motorists had landed him at the doctor's house at Rylcombe, and after the ministrations of the medical gentleman the Head had been sent home in the doctor's car. Since then he had rested, and he had dined, and he was feeling much better. He had been very anxious about Grundy; but the motorists had told him that the schoolboy had walked away to the school, which had relieved his anxiety. But he felt sure that the Shell fellow must have been hurt in that desperate affray; not seriously, no doubt, as he had been able to walk home afterwards, still, he must have been damaged. Now that he was feeling better, and able to attend to the matter, the Head had gone to his study, and he was thinking of sending for Grundy when Mr. Pilbeam arrived with the individual in question.

Dr. Holmes's gaze fastened on the junior's face in horror. Grundy was tough, and hard as he had been handled, he was quite able to walk home, and, except for aches and

pains, which were numerous, he was more or less as usual. But his looks were awful! Never had the Head seen a youthful face so disfigured.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head, gazing at Grundy. "That—that—that is Grundy, I presume! Really, I hardly recognise you, my poor boy!"

"It is Grundy, sir!" said Mr. Pilbeam. "It is Grundy, of my Form, sir—though, as you say, it is really difficult to recognise him in his present disgraceful state. I have brought him to you, sir—"

"Thank you, Mr. Pilbeam," said the Head. "I was about to send for the boy."

"Then you were aware, sir—"

"Certainly!"

"Indeed, sir! I did not know you had seen him—"

"Certainly I saw him, Mr. Pilbeam! The poor boy looks dreadful!" said the Head. "I fear that you feel the effects of your struggle, Grundy?"

Grundy blinked. Mr. Pilbeam stared. This was not what either of them had expected. However, it was agreeable enough to Grundy, whatever Mr. Pilbeam may have felt.

"Yes, sir," said Grundy. "I'm feeling a bit knocked about, sir. I've had a fight with a tramp, sir."

"Quite so, quite so!" said the Head. "I trust that the ruffian will soon be arrested. The police are searching for him now. Thank you for bringing this brave lad here, Mr. Pilbeam—"

"Er—"

"This brave, indeed heroic, boy!" said the Head warmly. Mr. Pilbeam wondered whether he was dreaming.

"Dr. Holmes! I—I have brought this boy to you—"

"Exactly! Grundy, I am sorry to see you so disfigured—you shall have every care—"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Grundy, as astonished as Mr. Pilbeam, but much more pleased.

"Dr. Holmes! This—this boy—" stuttered the master of the Shell.

"A credit to your Form, Mr. Pilbeam."

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"And to his House, and to the school!" said Dr. Holmes heartily. "St. Jim's, sir, is still worthy of its best traditions when it produces a boy like this boy Grundy."

"I—I—I fail to understand you, sir!" The master of the Shell wondered, in bewilderment, if the Head was wandering in his majestic mind. "This boy, after my many warnings, after many punishments, has returned to the school in this outrageous, this disgraceful state! Warnings and punishments have produced no effect, and so—"

"Give a fellow a chance, sir!" gasped Grundy. "I never get a chance! I want to tell the Head about that old codger—"

"What?" ejaculated the Head.

"There was an old codger, sir!" gasped Grundy. "That tramp was pitching into him, and I went for him—for the tramp, I mean—an old codger with white wool—"

"Grundy!"

"The boy is telling some absurd story, sir—"

"I tell you there was an old codger," almost wailed Grundy, "and if the old bean could be found, he would be a witness—"

"Bless my soul!" gasped the Head. "Grundy! Are you—are you alluding to—to your headmaster, sir, as—as an old codger?"

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"There seems to be some misunderstanding here," said Dr. Holmes. "Has not Grundy told you, Mr. Pilbeam, that he came to my aid when I was attacked in Wayland Lane by a ruffianly tramp—"

Mr. Pilbeam almost tottered.

"You, sir—you? What—what—what—" The master of the Shell fairly stuttered.

Grundy jumped.

"You, sir?" he howled.

"Did you not know that it was I, Grundy, when you so gallantly came to my assistance?" exclaimed the Head.

"Eh? No! Oh crikey! You—you— Was that old codger with white wool— I—I—I mean, an old gentleman with white hair, sir—"

"Please do not use such an expression, Grundy! I am sure you mean no disrespect, my dear boy, but the term is not respectful. Then you did not know that it was I whom you so bravely assisted?"

"Oh dear! Oh, my hat!" Grundy gasped. "You, sir! Never dreamed of it, sir! I just had a glimpse of an old codger with white wool— I—I—I mean, an old gentleman with white hair, sir—"

"Dr. Holmes!" gasped Mr. Pilbeam.

"Let me explain, sir," said the Head. "Grundy does not appear to have been aware of my identity when he so bravely, so heroically, entered into a terrible struggle with

(Continued at foot of next page.)

Get Your Questions Answered Here!



The Oracle knows everything! His memory's longer than his whiskers—and that's saying something!—ED.

THE Editor got so fed-up with that parrot of his, chums, that he sent me off to the Zoo with it, and told me that if they wouldn't buy it, I was to give it to them. So off I trotted, with the cage in one hand containing the parrot, concealed by a large duster. Adolphus, the office-boy, came with me, his features camouflaged by a spacious grin.

When we got to the gate the keepers shouted: "Come in! Come in!" and, before we knew where we were, we were pushed inside a large cage with a glass in front of it. Young Adolphus said: "Look out, Whiskers, they've stuck us in the reptile house." I told Adolphus it didn't matter, it was nice and warm, but our young hopeful wouldn't be cheered up, and I must say I felt a bit down in the mouth myself, chums, when I read the notice hanging in front of the cage. He said: "Feeding-time, Fridays, one hour before closing-time." As it was Monday, naturally the prospect of waiting nearly a week before we got fed didn't appeal to either of us.

Presently a kind keeper came along and had a chat with us through the wires. He told us a lot of things about the Zoo.

"It may interest your readers," he said, "to know that there's another Zoo that's been built out in

Bedfordshire, at a place called Whip-snade. It covers 500 acres of ground, and is enclosed by an enormous fence. There are fields, woods, and a very steep hill, like a precipice, in this new open-air Zoo, and the lions, tigers, bears, wolves, and antelopes will be able to live in surroundings very much like their own places where they live in a wild state."

I asked the keeper if there was any chance of our being moved to this place, but he shook his head, and gave us a bag of monkey nuts and a tin of condensed milk. He said that over six tons of nuts were used to feed the monkeys every year, and fifty tons of herring and white-bait to feed the seals. He told us a lot more, and then we told him some, so he let us out, and we rushed back to the Editor's sanctum as fast as we could, believe me.

The Ed. saw that he wasn't catching me napping.

"That visit to the Zoo seems to have made you extra keen," said he.

"It has, Ed.," I retorted, "extra keen to get to lunch. Monkey nuts aren't very filling, believe me."

Seizing an Annual he flung it at my head. It fell crash on to the parrot cage, and the poor old parrot started yelling for help.

"Didn't you get rid of that confounded parrot, you old ape?" roared the Ed. "No, sir," said I. "But the keeper told us he'd like to meet you. They haven't got an Editor yet in the Zoo, and there's a ripping cage just by the snake-house would suit you down to the ground."

The old Ed. tried to pretend he hadn't heard and went on asking me questions.

"What is a caracole?"

"That's a word used in horsemanship, Ed., to describe a display of fancy riding."

"What's the difference between a bloater and a kipper?"

"A bloater is a herring that has been cured, but hasn't been split open. A kipper is a herring that has been split open. A kipper is also the name given to the salmon at certain periods in the year, during which he develops a sharp beak, or 'kipp.' The first kippers seen are in fact, not herring, but kipper-salmon, salted, split, and smoke-dried."

"What is the Juggernaut?"

"The festival of the Juggernaut in India consists in thousands of pilgrims dragging an immense carved car through loose sand during the rainy season to a temple near Puri. There are many stories of pilgrims being crushed to death beneath the wheels of the Juggernaut, but they are very exaggerated, believe me."

"After that, perhaps you can tell Herbert Nockels something about hog-hunting?"

"Hog-hunting is usually called pig-sticking," I told the Ed. "The wild boar has been hunted and killed with spears since the old days, and in Bengal bears used to be hunted in this way, until the bears became too scarce, and wild pigs were substituted. The Bengalese used to use a short, heavy javelin with a broad blade, and the spear was introduced by British officers in India."

"Do these wild pigs live in the jungle, Whiskers?"

"Sure thing," said I. "The pigs are first of all driven out of their hiding places by beaters, and sometimes dogs and guns loaded with small shot are used to rouse them up. These wild boars are very fast runners and plucky fighters when they are stirred up, and the fellow who is after sticking one has to have his wits about him, believe me."

BATTLING GRUNDY!

(Continued from previous page.)

a desperate ruffian to save me from harm. I was attacked in Wayland Lane by the footpad who has been terrorising the district of late. He attempted to rob me, sir, and, as I resisted, he used me most savagely and brutally. It might even have cost me my life, had not this gallant lad come to my aid in answer to my cries for help—"

"Is it possible, sir?"

"The brave lad has suffered for his courage, his generous devotion!" said the Head. "Grundy, I was about to send for you, to thank you—to express my gratitude, my dear boy! I am deeply pained to see you looking so disfigured—"

Grundy grinned. He could grin now!

"Oh, that's nothing, sir!" he said cheerily. "I'm not made of putty!"

"Hem, hem! I thank you, Grundy—I thank you from my heart, my dear lad! I am proud of you! I am sure your schoolfellows will be proud of you! You are a credit to the school, Grundy!"

"Oh crickey! I—I mean, thank you, sir!" gasped Grundy.

And the Head shook Grundy warmly by the hand; and Mr. Pilbeam, almost dazed, shook him by the hand also; and he left the Head's study as if he were walking on air.

"Bunked?"

More than a score of voices asked that question as the grinning Grundy came down the passage.

Grundy chuckled.

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"No jolly fear!"

"Flogged?"

"Ha, ha! No."

"What did the Head do, then?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Shook hands with me," answered Grundy.

"What?" yelled the juniors.

"Weally, Gwunday—"

"Mean to say you got away with that yarn about the old codger?" howled Cardew.

"Yes, rather!" chortled Grundy. "You see, the Head was the old codger—"

"What?"

"It was the beak! He was the old codger all the time!"

"My only hat!"

"The—the—the Head?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather! He was the old codger!" chuckled Grundy.

"Fancy the old codger turning out to be the Head! Fancy the Head turning out to be the old codger!"

"Great pip!"

"Then—then—then it's all right?" gasped Wilkins.

"Right as rain!" said Grundy cheerily.

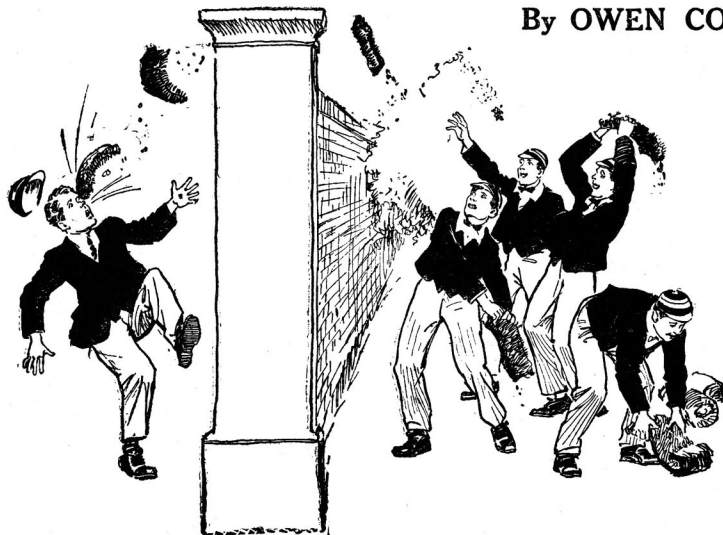
And right as rain it was! Grundy was not "bunked." So far from being bunked, Grundy was the hero of the hour. What the future might hold in store might be doubtful; but for the time, at least, it was certain that there was no danger ahead for Battling Grundy!

THE END.

(Grundy's come out of it all right, after all! Now turn to pages 14 and 15 and see the sensational announcement about next week's GEM!)

THE "TURF" SENSATION!

By OWEN CONQUEST.



CHAPTER 1. Too Zealous!

"WE'LL watch the races, and then—"

Carthew of the Sixth stopped.

He was quite startled—he could scarcely believe his own ears, in fact.

It was the voice of Jimmy Silver of the Fourth.

The leader of the Classical juniors at Rookwood was standing by the gates, chatting with his chums Raby, Newcome, and Lovell.

It was a Wednesday half, just after dinner. Pankley & Co., their friendly rivals of Bagshot School, had invited Jimmy Silver & Co. over to Bagshot to watch their swimming gala that afternoon, and Jimmy was just outlining the afternoon's programme.

"And then," Jimmy Silver went on cheerily, "we'll have tea and bunk home again. As Pankley's invited us, I expect he'll stand us tea."

"Bound to," assented Lovell.

"Yes, that's pretty certain. Anyway, we'll catch the Latcham two-fifteen—though there are heaps of trains this afternoon, and—Hallo! What's biting Carthew?"

Jimmy broke off to whisper that as he suddenly became aware of Carthew's startled gaze fixed on them.

Finding the eyes of the four juniors upon him Carthew recovered himself and walked on, passing quickly through the gates. But he did not go far. He walked on into the lane for a few paces, and then he crept quietly back and took his stand behind the massive stone gatepost.

One of Carthew's pleasant little ways—and one which made him so unpopular—was a habit of moving about quietly and eavesdropping. Carthew, being a prefect, imagined it was part of his duty to spy on the juniors, in the hope of catching them out.

That was his hope now. Unfortunately for him he did not notice that the sun was behind him, and that his moving shadow spread out across the gateway.

Jimmy Silver noted it at once, and grinned as he silently pointed the shadow out to his pals.

didn't mention Latcham races, Jimmy—"

"I mentioned races, though," said Jimmy in an alarmed voice. "He might guess—if he did, we're done! You know what a sneaking cad Carthew is, and how big his ears are! Supposing he followed and caught us there; means the sack if he did—"

"We'll chance it, anyway," said Newcome.

"Yes, rather! We're going to the races, and Carthew isn't going to spoil our fun or anyone else. If Pankley dare go we dare, eh?"

"Oh, quite! We must be jolly careful, though. We'll keep a sharp look-out for beaks."

"Especially that sneaking rotter, Carthew!" grinned Jimmy Silver, his eyes fixed on the shadow.

"Anyway, let's get in—nearly time to start. And—Hallo! Who's left these turfs here? Anyone might trip over 'em! Chuck 'em over the wall, chaps!"

As he spoke, Jimmy Silver stooped and grabbed one of a pile of turfs on the gravel drive. They had evidently been left there by Sergeant Kettle, who was returning the patch of lawn before his lodge.

Jimmy slung the turf over the wall. Scarcely a second later three more turfs followed it as Jimmy's chums swiftly copied his example.

Whizz, whizz, whizz, whizz!

There was a sudden gasp beyond the buttress of the wall, followed instantly by a fiendish yell.

"Yahooooo! Why, what—Yooooop!"

The shadow across the gateway moved convulsively. Then Carthew staggered into view, clawing soil from his eyes, his mouth, and his hair.

The first turf had missed Carthew, but it had caused him to look upwards—just in time to get the second in his face, the third likewise, and the fourth on his official head.

Carthew danced in the gateway, with soil in his eyes, his mouth, and down his neck. He looked a sight.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver & Co. "Who—what is it? Why—?"

CARTHEW LISTENS IN
to Jimmy Silver & Co.'s plans. But
he receives a shock when he tries
to frustrate them!



Carthew's heavy foot slammed down on the plank, which twisted over, and the next minute there came a yell and a splash.

"It's Carthew!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Now who'd have thought— Oh crumbs! Look out!"

The juniors scattered and bolted as the raging Carthew made a sudden rush at them.

"You—groogh!—little fiends!" he gurgled. "Why, I'll—I'll smash you! Grrooogh! Come back!" he bellowed.

Then Fate stepped in to spoil their getaway.

At the top of the steps appeared the tall, athletic form of Dicky Dalton, master of the Fourth. He stared blankly at the astonishing sight of a Sixth-Form prefect, smothered in soil, chasing four juniors madly.

"What— Silver, Raby, Newcome, Lovell—stop! Carthew!" he called sternly.

"Oh dear!"

The juniors pulled up in dismay. Carthew, not having heard, much less seen, Mr. Dalton, did not pull up and stop. He rushed up, grabbed Lovell by the collar, and started to use him as a punch-ball.

Thump, thump, thump, thump!

Lovell howled.

"Carthew!" shouted Dicky Dalton angrily. "How dare you! Stop! Stop that at once, sir!"

Carthew stopped, suddenly aware of the presence of a back.

"Yow! Ow, ow, ow!" wailed Lovell.

"What—what is the meaning of this?" snapped Dicky Dalton. "How dare you strike a junior in that manner, Carthew? For a prefect—"

"Look at me!" almost yelled Carthew. "These young fiends have chucked turfs at me. Look at me!"

"Silver, have you dared to throw turfs at Carthew, a prefect?"

"Ahem! We—we couldn't see Carthew through a brick wall, sir!" mumbled Jimmy Silver, quite truthfully. "You see, we bunged—I mean, chucked—that is, we threw the turfs over the wall, and Carthew happened to be there."

"They knew I was there!" raved Carthew. "They did it purposely, the little fiends!"

"Kindly moderate your expressions, Carthew! Silver, did you know that Carthew was on the other side of the wall when you threw those turfs over?" demanded Mr. Dalton sternly.

"We certainly didn't see him, sir!" said Jimmy meekly. "How could we see through a wall eight feet high, sir? Carthew had just walked through the gateway—we saw him go. And—and—"

"Well?" snapped Dicky Dalton.

"If Carthew happened to sneak back and hide behind the wall to listen to what we were saying, it wasn't our fault, was it, sir?" said Jimmy innocently.

"Ah!" said Mr. Dalton; he was well aware of Carthew's

little habits. "Were you hiding behind the wall, then, Carthew?" he asked calmly.

"I—I—I—" stammered Carthew. "I—I knew the young fiends were up to something, and—and—"

Carthew halted. It had been on the tip of his tongue to explain just what he had overheard; but he stopped himself in time. He wanted to make better use of what he had overheard than that! He stopped, flushing at the look in the master's keen eyes.

"I think I understand," exclaimed Mr. Dalton—and he did understand quite well. "Silver, Raby, Newcome, and Lovell, you will each do one hundred lines for interfering with those turfs. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!" said Jimmy Silver meekly.

And they went.

Carthew gritted his teeth with rage.

"One hundred lines each!" he stuttered. "Is—is that all the punishment you're giving them for assaulting a prefect, sir?"

"That is all, Carthew! And I would advise you, Carthew, for your own sake and for the prestige of the prefects of Rookwood, to alter some of your methods of carrying out your duties."

With that Mr. Dalton walked down the steps and across the quad.

Carthew went indoors with a face as black as thunder.

Yet he almost grinned as he made for the nearest bathroom. He was thankful indeed that he had not told what he had overheard. If Jimmy Silver & Co. did dare to go to Latham races, then Carthew would have the revenge he wanted. He would catch them in the act—catch them on the racecourse itself!

Carthew grinned. He was rather a "blade" on the quiet, was Carthew, and, actually, he had wanted badly to visit the races, but had not dared to risk it. Now he did dare—he had an excellent excuse for visiting Latham races. He would combine pleasure with business, catch Jimmy Silver & Co. in the act, and thus square many accounts with those juniors!

CHAPTER 2.

Mr. Manders Chips In!

"YOW! Ow, ow, ow! Oh, the awful beast! Ow!"

Thus Tubby Muffin of the Fourth.

Jimmy Silver & Co. happened upon Tubby in the hall as they were starting out for Bagshot. To judge from the way Tubby was rubbing his rear it was clear that he had a pain in that portion of his anatomy. "What on earth's the matter, Tubby?" asked Jimmy Silver. "Somebody been using you as a football, old fat man?"

"Ow, ow! Yes; that beast Carthew! All for nothing, too!"

"Been raiding his study cupboard?" said Newcome. "That's nothing, of course, to you!"

"No, I haven't!" groaned Tubby indignantly. "I say, Jimmy, that awful beast's after you for something!"

"My dear man, Carthew's always after us! But what—"

"Tried to pump me about you!" snorted Tubby. "Offered me a bob to tell him where you chaps were going this afternoon! Then, just because I told him I didn't know, the beast kicked me instead. Ow, ow!"

And Tubby Muffin rolled on, still groaning and rubbing himself.

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, a broad grin spreading over his cheerful features. "If that dear man isn't still on our giddy trail!"

Carthew was a very suspicious fellow indeed.

"Oh, my only topper!" gurgled Lovell. "Did you ever know such a burbling chump as Carthew! Always suspecting giddy folly in others just because he's a giddy goat himself."

"Well, if he follows us, we'll let him!" grinned Jimmy. "Keep your optics open, my infants!"

"Yes, rather!"

They did so, and soon spotted Carthew. He was seated on one of the seats under the old beeches, reading a book—or he appeared to be reading. But they knew he was merely watching the gates for them.

They crossed to the gates, studiously refraining from glancing in Carthew's direction.

"Now we'll soon know if he's on our giddy trail!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "Don't look round—just leave it to your Uncle Jimmy. I'm afraid Carthew won't spot a winner this afternoon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors walked on towards the station, taking the path through the woods. It was a warm afternoon, and they took it easy, having heaps of time to catch their

train. In any case, there were plenty of trains that afternoon for Latham.

"One every twenty minutes, I believe," chuckled Raby, as they tramped on cheerily. "We'll let dear old Carthew see us board the Latham train if he does follow us."

"No need," grinned Jimmy. "He overheard me say we were taking the Latham train. What he doesn't know, though, is that we get off the giddy train before Latham—at Bagshot. Now for it!"

They had reached a little hollow in the woods. Through the hollow ran a ditch, crossed by a single plank. The juniors crossed it.

Down in the hollow they could not see the distant Carthew, nor could he see them.

The moment Jimmy Silver was across he stooped down and tugged hard at the plank.

"Lend a hand, Lovell!"

"What-ho!" grinned Lovell, understanding now.

Together they tugged madly at the plank. It came up with a sucking sound from the clay at last. Lovell released his grip, and, with leisurely care, Jimmy balanced the far end of the plank on the extreme grassy edge of the opposite bank of the ditch.

"An old stunt," smiled Jimmy. "But we've no time to deal with Carthew as he should be dealt with. This will be enough to damp his ardour, and we don't want the born idiot trailing us all afternoon."

"Rather not! Ha, ha!"

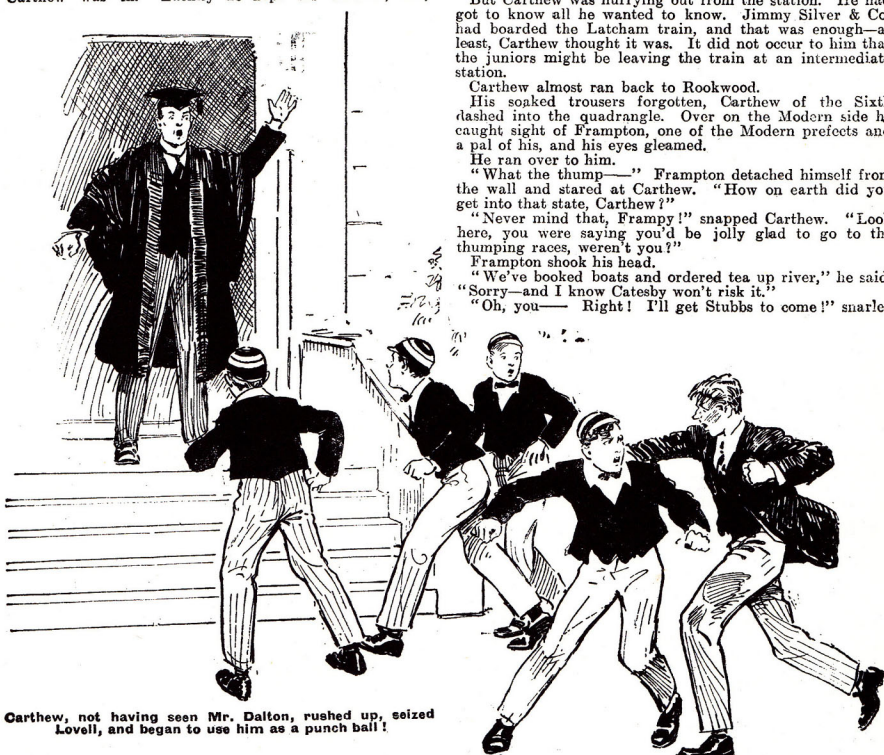
They hurried on, and slipped into the shelter of a thicket farther along the footpath. Then they waited.

It was not a long wait. Afraid of losing his quarry, Carthew had hastened his steps, and was nearly running as he reached the hollow. Not seeing the juniors ahead he grunted and darted across the plank bridge—or, at least, that was his intention.

A couple of strides would have taken him across. But he only made one stride, and he made it with a rush.

Splash!

Carthew was in. Luckily he kept his balance, but,



Carthew, not having seen Mr. Dalton, rushed up, seized Lovell, and began to use him as a punch ball!

even so, he was splashed from head to foot in water. And as the ditch was stagnant and half filled with dead leaves and other woodland rubbish, it was not at all clean water; in fact, it was decidedly green and slimy.

And it smelled abominably.

"G-good gad!" panted Carthew. "What— Oh, good gad!"

He understood as a yell of laughter reached him from somewhere ahead. That heavy splash had told Jimmy Silver & Co. all they wanted to know, and Carthew's face went fendish with rage as he heard it.

The prefect splashed ashore, weeds and slime clinging to his shoes and trousers. From the knee downwards he was soaked.

But he did not heed his condition at the moment. Speechless with rage, he rushed up the far slope of the hollow. He reached the footpath just in time to glimpse three youthful figures bolting along the woodland path, while hilarious laughter came floating back to him.

"The— the little fiends!" he choked.

Jimmy Silver had hoped the little lesson would have dissuaded Carthew from tracking them farther, but it was a forlorn hope. Carthew went tearing in pursuit, heedless of flapping trousers and squelching shoes.

In his choking rage the prefect thought only of revenge. He arrived on the platform just as a train, crowded with sporting gentry, rumbled out. A glance showed no signs of Jimmy Silver & Co., and Carthew's eyes gleamed. He addressed a porter.

"Three boys wearing Rookwood caps entered the station just now!" he snapped. "Did they board the Latham train?"

The man nodded.

"Yes—I saw 'em!" he assented.

"They went on that train—the Latham train?"

"Yes—I shoved the last kid in and banged the door on him!" snapped the porter. "Reckless young imps! I warned 'em not to—"

But Carthew was hurrying out from the station. He had got to know all he wanted to know. Jimmy Silver & Co. had boarded the Latham train, and that was enough—at least, Carthew thought it was. It did not occur to him that the juniors might be leaving the train at an intermediate station.

Carthew almost ran back to Rookwood.

His soaked trousers forgotten, Carthew of the Sixth dashed into the quadrangle. Over on the Modern side he caught sight of Frampton, one of the Modern prefects and a pal of his, and his eyes gleamed.

He ran over to him.

"What the thump—" Frampton detached himself from the wall and stared at Carthew. "How on earth did you get into that state, Carthew?"

"Never mind that, Frampy!" snapped Carthew. "Look here, you were saying you'd be jolly glad to go to the thumping races, weren't you?"

Frampton shook his head.

"We've booked boats and ordered tea up river," he said.

"Sorry—and I know Catesby won't risk it."

"Oh, you— Right! I'll get Stubbs to come!" snarled

Carthew, and he hurried away towards the School House, leaving Frampton to stare after him.

Just then Frampton sighted Catesby emerging from the Modern doorway, and he walked over, and together they went down to the gates. Frampton was grinning, but his grin would have faded abruptly had he only looked back.

For at an open window above the spot where Frampton had been standing stood an angular, acid-faced gentleman in cap and gown. It was Mr. Manders, and the Modern master had overheard most of what had passed between Frampton and Carthew.

"G-good gracious!" Mr. Manders gasped. "Carthew—a prefect! I could scarcely believe my ears! He was actually attempting to persuade one of my prefects to go to the races! Abominable! Frampton!"

He called to the Modern senior, but Frampton was already out of earshot. Mr. Manders fairly rushed out of his study, and whisked to the stairs, intending to rush out and speak to Frampton. But on the stairs he sighted Knowles, another Modern prefect.

"Knowles! One moment, Knowles!"

Knowles stopped.

"Yes, sir!"

Mr. Manders gasped. But his eyes were gleaming now. Mr. Manders was a very unpleasant gentleman in many ways, and he hated the Classical side and all its occupants. What an opportunity to show the Head how lax discipline was on the Classical side! Such abominable conduct did not occur on the Modern side!

"Knowles," snapped Mr. Manders, "I want you to accompany me to the Latham races this afternoon."

"Wha-what?"

Knowles jumped. Like Frampton, he was more than a bit of a "goer," and he would have loved to go to the races. But—not with Mr. Manders!

"I have received information," said Mr. Manders, almost grinning with joy, "that certain Classical prefects are visiting the racecourse. In the circumstances I feel it is my bare duty to follow them and to apprehend the reckless miscreants!"

"Oh!" gasped Knowles. "But—but I've rather an important engagement this afternoon, sir—"

"You will cancel it, Knowles! Be ready to accompany me to Latham in five minutes, and I will meet you in the hallway."

"But—but, sir—"

"That is enough, Knowles. Kindly obey my orders!"

And Mr. Manders rustled away to get changed for a visit to Latham racecourse. Meanwhile Carthew and Stubbs were just starting out for the station on the same errand. It looked as if Mr. Manders was booked to make a capture that afternoon whether Carthew did or not.

And that was just what Mr. Manders did.

CHAPTER 3. Not Guilty!

"I SAY, you fellows—" yelled Tubby Muffin.

"What the thump—what's the matter with Tubby?"

Jimmy Silver & Co. stared.

They had had a jolly afternoon. They had seen the Bagshot School swimming gala, and afterwards Cecil Pankey had stood them a tophole tea in his study, and then they had started back. And it was just as they entered the hall doorway that Tubby Muffin rushed up to them in a state of wild excitement.

"I say, you fellows—" he yelled. "Have you heard—"

"My dear man, we heard you nearly a mile away," chuckled Lovell. "What's the excitement, fatty?"

"He, he, he! It's a scream!" gasped Tubby Muffin. "Old Carthew's copped at last—his number's up! He, he, he! He's booked for the high jump! He, he, he!"

Evidently Tubby found great joy in the prospect of Carthew being for the high jump.

Jimmy Silver stared at him, and then at each other. They had forgotten all about Carthew.

"What on earth do you mean, Tubby?" demanded Jimmy Silver. "Carthew copped? What's he been up to?"

"He, he! He—he's been copped by Manders at Latham races!" spluttered Tubby, getting it out at last. "Fact! Honour bright! I spotted Manders and Knowles yanking Carthew and Stubbs in. I heard that beast Manders stop and tell Dicky Dalton!"

"Oh!"

"Oh, my only hat!"

The chums eyed each other blankly. Even yet they did not grasp the position however. Jimmy Silver caught the fat youth by the collar.

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"Is that a fact, Tubby?" he gasped. "Has Carthew actually been collared there by Manders?"

"Yes—and the cad was nearly weeping when I spotted him!" said Tubby gleefully.

"Well, my only summer bonnet!" gasped Jimmy Silver, beginning to guess something of the truth. "You see what's happened, you fellows? Carthew must have gone after us, and he's been copped there."

"That's it for a pension! Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silver!"

It was Bulkeley's voice. The captain of Rookwood strode up and eyed the juniors grimly.

"Silver, Raby, Newcome, and Lovell, you're wanted in the Head's study!" he rapped out.

"Oh crumbs! I—I say, Bulkeley, what's up?" asked Jimmy.

"You ought to know," said Bulkeley, eyeing the juniors curiously. "Where have you been this afternoon?"

"Only to the races," said Jimmy cheerfully.

"You—you young fools!" gasped the shocked Bulkeley.

"You—but cut off sharp to the Head. If you have been to the races you'll find it no grinning matter."

"Very well, Bulkeley!"

They started off at once for the Head's study. It was never wise to keep a beak waiting. Raby, Newcome, and Lovell were looking a trifle apprehensive, but Jimmy was smiling.

He was looking very solemn and meek, however, as he stood with his clums before the Head a few minutes later. With the Head was Mr. Manders, Mr. Dalton, and Carthew and Stubbs. Stubbs looked on the point of collapse, and Carthew was white and much agitated.

"Here they are, sir!" he gasped, as the juniors lined up. "Ask them—make them tell the truth that—"

"Be silent, Carthew!" rapped out the Head, who was looking far from good-tempered. "Silver, I wish you to tell me where you have spent this afternoon."

"Certainly, sir! At the races, sir!" said Jimmy meekly.

"The—the what?" almost bellowed the startled Head, while Mr. Dalton fairly jumped. "You—you've been at the—the races! You—you dare—"

"We—we didn't know there was anything wrong in going, sir," said Jimmy innocently, though he felt a qualm as he noted the Head's eyes. "It's a half-holiday, and—"

"Answer me at once, Silver!" barked Dr. Chisholm. "Have you four boys been to the Latham races this afternoon?"

"Oh, sir! Certainly not, sir," said Jimmy Silver, in a shocked tone. "We've been to the Bagshot races—the school swimming races, sir. One of the Bagshot fellows invited us—fellow named Pankey, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

There was a sudden deadly silence.

Carthew almost collapsed as he understood. Mr. Dalton's mouth twisted slightly, almost as if he were trying hard not to grin. Dr. Chisholm looked at Carthew. It was an awful look—for the hapless prefect.

The Head nodded to Jimmy Silver & Co., and those juniors, with innocent expressions on their youthful faces, went quickly—while the going was good, as it were.

From the room behind them boomed the Head's voice as he resumed his few words of censure for Carthew!

Out in the passage Jimmy Silver & Co. relaxed their fixed and angelic expressions. They grinned, and then, after putting a fair distance between themselves and the Head's sanctum, they yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Carthew!" sobbed Newcome. "And this is what he gets for it all. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Old Dicky Dalton spotted it, though," said Jimmy Silver, wiping his eyes. "He could see it was a leg-pull on our part, but he wouldn't give us away to the giddy beak. Isn't he a sport?"

"Yes, rather! And isn't Carthew a dream?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

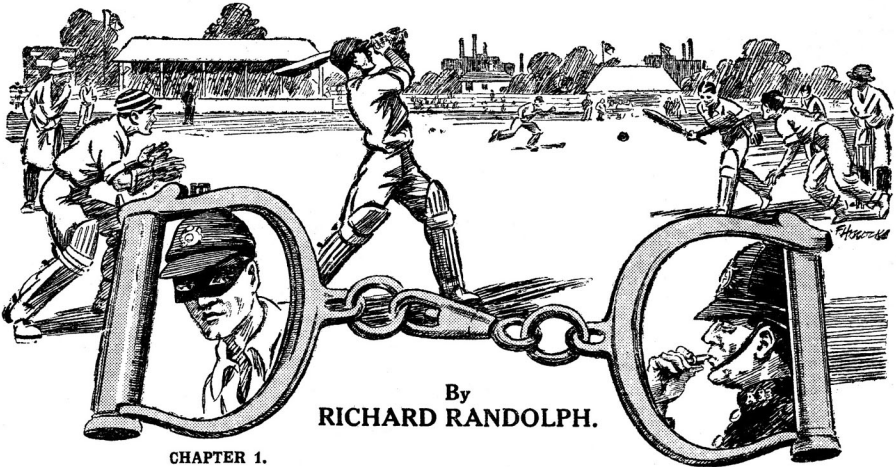
The juniors were still roaring when Carthew and Stubbs, their faces white still and their eyes burning with rage, came tramping along the passage. Carthew sighted the laughing juniors and made a blind, furious rush at them.

Jimmy Silver & Co. scattered, yelling, and this time Carthew didn't follow them. He had had quite enough of trailing Jimmy Silver & Co. And before bed-time that night he had had more than enough, for the whole school soon heard the yarn—Jimmy Silver & Co. saw to that—and the whole school yelled with laughter over Carthew on the trail!

THE END.

(Another ripping story of Rookwood next week, boys, entitled: "Tubby Takes the Cake!")

THE CRICKETER CRACKSMAN!



By
RICHARD RANDOLPH.

CHAPTER 1.
Rod Chooses!

YOUR father's left you in my care, Roderick. I'm glad of that. He was the best friend ever I had, and his son is my rightful charge. I haven't seen you since you were little more than a baby—Norchester and Torbridge are far apart, and Jim and I have both been busy. But you're very like him, and that's all to the good."

The speaker stood on the hearthrug in the sitting-room of the house that no longer belonged to Rod Rodney, now that his father had gone. John Redgrave was sturdy and rugged of face, fifty or more, the kind of man whom most people trusted on sight.

The boy who faced him was something short of eighteen. He had chestnut hair and grey-blue eyes that looked at everyone fearlessly and straight. There was a touch of red about those eyes now, for he and the guardian his father had appointed for him were just back from that father's funeral.

"I'm glad you think me like him," replied Rod Rodney. "I've always wanted to be.

He had no luck, but his pluck never failed. He didn't seem to care much about himself since mother died; but he held on for my sake. Used to say that he'd make up for his failure by giving the world a man who would succeed. I don't know, but I think remembering that will help me to make good. Just how do things stand, sir? I'm afraid I didn't quite grasp what the lawyer said."

"No wonder, lad! You'd other thoughts in your mind. Don't call me 'sir,' though—make it Uncle Jack. That's what he'd have liked—he and I were like brothers, and your mother and my wife like sisters."

"All right, Uncle Jack. I do feel as though I'd known you ever so long."

"How do things stand, you ask me? Well, they might be worse. All claims on your father's estate will be met, and there may be a small balance to come to you. Fifty pounds or so at best—perhaps not more than twenty. What do you want to do? I'm not a wealthy man; but I'm ready and willing to keep you at school a term or two longer if you think it's any use to you."

Rod was tempted. He knew now that even the winning of the Cambridge scholarship would be of no good to him, for it was not big enough to pay for all his expenses at the University, and he could not expect help from his guardian in that direction.

But this last summer at Nunwick! Captain of cricket—he had already been appointed to that high honour—most likely captain of the school! No trouble about work, since

the scholarship must be let slide. It would be a great time. But—

Ah, there it was! He had his way to make, and to go back to school would not help him in that. He put temptation aside, with a picture before his mental vision of the school cricket ground and the pavilion, of white-clad figures moving quickly on the greensward.

"I don't think I ought to go back, Uncle Jack," he answered. "I ought to start in to make a living. Don't know what I'm good for, but I'll do my best at whatever I can find to do."

"That's the spirit, lad! You just come home with me, and I'll get you a job in Hyde's Mills. My boy Ralph's there, and, as you know, I'm manager of the biggest of the three mills. Ralph hates it, but he's got to stay; he must learn to work. You won't like it, I reckon. But if you tackle it in the right way you'll get a chance. The cotton trade's badly down; but it's due to improve soon, and it will offer scope to a boy with brains."

"Will there be enough money for me to pay my way?" asked Rod. "I don't want to be a burden on you."

"You can make as much as will pay for your grub and leave you a few shillings for yourself. You needn't be too proud to take from your dad's oldest friends a bed and a roof over your head," replied John Redgrave, with gruff kindness. "When you're earning a bit more

we'll make our profit out of you—that is, if you want to stay on with us. And—see here, Rod, my lad—it's not an easy thing for a father to say—but if you can do anything to steady Ralph down, you'll more than repay all we can do for you. You're level-headed. Ralph's not. You're the sort that makes a good pal. His pals are all the wrong sort seems to me."

It surely was not easy for John Redgrave to say. Not even to his wife, from whom he had no secrets, had he ever admitted as much. But somehow he saw hope for Ralph in Rod Rodney. If Ralph only took to this straight-eyed, clean youngster, he might break away from Alured Hyde and the rest of the crowd that were making a wastrel of him.

"I'll try," Rod answered. "And if Ralph's anything like you—"

"He's not—nor like his mother, neither! Danged if I know what he is like, unless it's a monkey on a stick! No, forget that, Rod. But my boy's in with a set that fairly makes my gorge rise."

"If I can be his pal I will, Uncle Jack," Rod said, and meant it every word.

But he was soon to find that he was up against a hopeless proposition.

ROD RODNEY MAKES TWO ENEMIES—
And wins an unknown friend!

He and John Redgrave slept at the Torbridge Arms Hotel that night. Rod had said good-bye to his old home without minding much. It was but an empty shell now that his father and mother had both gone. In the morning they saw the solicitor who had matters in hand, were assured that there was nothing to trouble about, and departed for the station. Mr. Thoms, the lawyer, who had a son at Nunwick, wished Rod the best of luck as he shook hands with him.

"Ted will be sorry to hear you're not coming back to them," he said kindly. "More than Ted, too. They've made a hero of you. You'll miss the cricket, but I am sure you have chosen rightly."

"Miss the cricket?" said John Redgrave. "Ay, school cricket; but we'll offer the lad something better than that, I reckon. You've played for your county yourself, Mr. Thoms, so you must have a notion that Norlandshire isn't off the cricket map!"

The lawyer smiled. His own county was one of the minor brigades; Norlandshire had ere this won the first-class championship.

"I shall be glad, but not surprised, to hear of Rod's playing for the county of his birth," he said. "I'm sure he'll make good, in cricket and in more important matters."

Those were cheering farewell words. Rod had thought Richard Thoms rather a dry old stick. He would never think so of him again.

The Swanker!

IT was late afternoon when Rod and his guardian reached Rochester, the afternoon of a gusty April day.

Rod had no recollection of the big town in which he had been born; and the first sight of it rather depressed him. It was certainly not beautiful, and the many great mill buildings in and around it were gaunt and ugly.

But the clouds shifted and the sun shone out just as they reached Lilac Villa, the home of the Redgraves; and when they bundled out of the taxi, Aunt Molly—for so Rod had been told he must call her—came down the short garden path with a smile on her comely face that was like part of the sunshine. Her husband had written to her, and she was ready for Rod.

She kissed him. He had not anticipated that, and it rather took him aback. But her words: "For your mother's sake, dear lad!"—made him blink, made him feel at once that here was another true friend.

"You'll have to share Ralph's room," she told him. "We're at rather close quarters here; there was more room in the old house that we moved from. But we live in the hope of better things coming for cotton, and we live comfortably enough, I think."

Rod was sure a little later that they did. Lunch on the train had been anything but a satisfactory meal; but that high tea made full amends for its deficiencies. The steak and kidney pie was the best of its kind he had ever tasted; the butter was every whit as fresh and good as the famous Torbridge butter; and the scones and cakes were simply great.

"Ralph come in?" asked the master of the house. "Not yet," replied the mistress.

"Has he been home in good time these last two nights?"

"Not very early, I'm afraid," answered Ralph's mother; and Rod saw trouble in her face.

John Redgrave said no more. He guessed what that admission meant. Somewhere in the small hours, with too much liquor on board! Trust Ralph to take advantage of his father's absence!

"Well, I'll have to go," said Redgrave, when he had finished his meal. "I'm booked to attend that meeting. Ralph knows about Rod, I suppose?"

"Not yet, Jack. He'd gone to the mill before your letter came. But I'll explain. I hope the boys will be friends."

John Redgrave's reply to that amounted to something only a little better than a grunt. Already he had begun to doubt whether Rod would have a chance to do any good with Ralph. He would not blame the newcomer if he failed.

Rod was still busy with cake when he heard the front door opened. There followed the sound of low voices in the hall. One of them was impatient, the other had a note almost of pleading in it. Rod heard no words—did not try to hear them—but could easily guess that the welcome he had been given would get no backing from Ralph.

He made up his mind not to take offence if he could help it.

Ralph, when his mother had made him and Rod acquainted, was civil—just barely civil.

"Well, I suppose we can squeeze one more in," he said. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,220.

"I'm glad there was another bed to go into my room, though it will make it a tight fit for both of us. The gov'nor will have his way. I say, mater, I can't eat this pie. Haven't you any sardines? Ugh! And all the tea's been drunk, too!"

He had lifted his voice, for his mother had left the room. She replied from the kitchen.

"I'm making you fresh tea, and you shall have sardines in a minute or two."

"It's a jolly good pie," said Rod. "I never tasted a better."

"Ah, your appetite's keener than mine, I dare say. I know who you are, of course, but that's about all. What school did you go to?"

"Nunwick."

"Never heard of it. Rotten little show, I reckon."

Rod had to swallow something in his throat before he could answer that politely.

"Small—yes," he said. "There were only about fifty of us. But it wasn't rotten, by long odds."

"Five hundred and more at my school—Norchester Grammar, y'know. And I was in the cricket eleven and the Rugger fifteen. You play Rugger?"

"No, I'd like to all right. But Soccer is better for small schools where there aren't many big fellows."

"Cads' game, Soccer," answered Ralph.

Mrs. Redgrave came in at that moment with tea and a tin of sardines. Rod choked down his resentment once more.

"Thanks, mater," said Ralph, none too graciously; and his mother went out again. She thought it wisest to leave the two boys to themselves. But she was rather sorry for Rod.

Ralph dosed half a dozen sardines liberally with vinegar and pepper, and ate them without a morsel of bread. He poured three cups of tea upon them and then began to butter scones. For at least ten minutes he had completely ignored Rod's presence.

Rod had risen from his seat and moved to the hearthrug. To make friends with this fellow was not going to be easy.

But he had promised to try, and he must do his best. He drew away from the fire.

"Cricket?" demanded Ralph curtly.

"Yes."

"Any good?"

"They thought me good at Nunwick. I'm not a duffer, anyway."

"Ah! Doesn't take a fat lot to make a champion in a little county grammar school. I'm in the mill eleven—and we've over a hundred playing members—and my pal, Hyde, plays for the county. He says I may get a chance one of these fine days. Box?"

"A bit."

"Good! We'll go round to Hiam's very soon. Mustn't damage your block, I suppose—the gov'nor and the mater would squeal. But I guess I can show you a thing or two."

Rod wondered. To him Ralph looked weedy and none too fit. He was far from having his father's physique, and his taste in victuals did not suggest that he was in good training. Rod knew himself fit to fight for his life. He was younger by at least three years than Ralph, perhaps a stone lighter, three inches shorter, and with less reach of arm. But he doubted whether Ralph would prove his master in the art of self-defence.

Rod Rodney was ambidextrous. He batted and threw right-handed; but that was merely a matter of choice. Now and then, when steady play was called for, he changed to left, having found that doing so restrained his impulse to hit. He practically always bowled left. His left hand had the hardest punch, but the right could also do its bit. He did not see why he should tell Ralph all—or any—of this. He was not out to swank.

Ralph seemed to him the most complete swanker he had ever yet encountered. At Nunwick anyone who had bragged as Ralph did would soon have been taken down.

But Rod had yet to meet Alured Hyde, son of the chief shareholder and managing director of the Hyde Mills. Joseph Hyde was a man who valued himself pretty highly, but not without reason. His son—the only one left alive out of five, the other four having all gone under in the Great War—was Ralph's model and chum.

"Come along!" said Ralph unceremoniously. "We're going round the corner to Hiam's, mater!" he yelled.

Mrs. Redgrave did not answer. She thought that perhaps Rod might have preferred not to go out that evening; but it was no good arguing with Ralph.

And, having been bred in a sporting atmosphere, she had no feeling against Horry Hiam's Boxing Saloon. She thought Horry himself a dreadful-looking man; but she had never spoken to him, and never expected to speak to him. Norchester had nothing against him—and boys would be boys!

The Boxing Saloon!

NORCHESTER was wrong in having nothing against Horry Hiam. But the town did not know him yet for what he was—that was all. The police might suspect that fights without gloves sometimes took place at the saloon; at present they had no notion of anything worse. But fist fights were the mildest form of the illegal activities of the saloon. There were also cock-fighting and dog-fighting; and behind these things which were far more criminal.

On the face of it Hiam's Saloon seemed respectable. It was in a good quarter of the town. Horry Hiam had plenty of clients. His fees were low—for the lads who flocked to his place had not too much money. But even so it was plain that he could make a good living out of them, for he had only to pay his son Harry and two assistants. The more advanced of his pupils instructed the less advanced, and became thus unpaid aides.

Some said that Hiam's front name was Horace; others said it must be "Horrible." The former guess seemed the more probable; the latter the more fitting. For Horry Hiam was as nearly like a gorilla as a man well could be.

Yet, in spite of his appearance and his rough manners, he was not unpopular. Most of the lads liked him better than his son Harry.

Harry, about eighteen, was better-looking than his sire, though he was cross-eyed. Harry lacked cheeriness. He had had no choice as to his way of life, and he was not very happy in it. It must have been from his dead mother that he got the gleams of better things that now and then made him feel uncomfortable about what went on in and under—more especially under—Hiam's Saloon.

The house was an old and big one. There were few in Norchester older. It had an extensive cellarage, with secret approaches, and at least one secret room on the ground floor. The electricity company sent in big bills to Horry even for the June and September quarters. More wiring had been done in that house than they knew of. But Horry was too wide to try to tap the juice free. There were electric lights in plenty in the two big cellars; they registered on the meter, and Horry settled the accounts without a murmur. He did not want questions asked or investigations made.

Only the youth Harry was in the saloon when Ralph and Rod entered.

"Slack to-night, Harry?" remarked Ralph.

He spoke far more pleasantly than he had done to Rod.

"It's early yet, Mr. Redgrave," said Harry. "We'll have plenty here before long."

Harry was a humble member of the train of followers that Alured Hyde and Ralph Redgrave had gathered. Sometimes he had his doubts as to those two—they did things that did not seem to him quite sporting. Horry Hiam's notion of what was sporting was not an exalted one, but he had a notion. And that was something to his credit, seeing what few chances he had had.

"We're on for a bout, this chap and I," said Ralph. "Get the gloves, Harry."

Both Rod and he removed jackets and waistcoats. Ralph also changed his boots for pumps. Harry found a pair of pumps to serve Rod's turn; and Ralph was not too well pleased with Harry for doing that. Ralph liked all the handi-cap he could get.

But he had not yet guessed how badly he was going to need it.



Ralph recovered his balance, threw himself forward and punched. It was a foul blow, and Rod went down!

Harry Hiam saw that before the two had been at it more than ten seconds.

He knew Ralph's form to a hair. Ralph was flashy in his boxing as in other things. Against a weak opponent he looked really clever. But when he ran into one who could use his fists and his wits he soon grew flustered.

Just how good the other fellow might be Harry Hiam could not even guess. There was really nothing to test him. When he hit it was a mere light tap; but that did not prove to Harry that he could not hit hard. And when Ralph hit him it seemed as though he had allowed it—as was indeed the truth.

But Ralph failed altogether to realise the position.

"Oh, get a move on you!" he said, after a couple of minutes or so. "This isn't a kindergarten. If you can't hit harder than that you couldn't tumble over that Japanese screen the mater thinks so much of—and I could blow that down!"

"I can hit harder," answered Rod quietly.

There seemed to young Hiam something ominous about the calmness of his tone. The finest fighter Harry had ever met had had much the same quiet way of speaking.

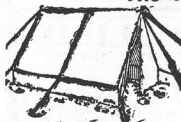
"I've been going easy with you," Ralph said. "Now I shall punch!"

"Right-ho! Let's both punch!" returned Rod.

(Continued on the next page.)

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THE CRICKETER CRACKSMAN!

(Continued from previous page.)

He had seen that he could never make friends with Ralph by letting him have his own way. The fellow needed to be taught a lesson. But had he the stuff in him to profit by it?

Ralph hit as hard as he knew how, and used all the science he had acquired. He was not a dud. Technically he knew the game. With a bigger heart and more muscle he would have made a decent boxer—never more than that.

He was up against a born fighter—a cool fighter, wary, resolute, strong. The boxing instructor at Nunwick—an old Army champion—had found in Rod Rodney such a pupil as he had never had before and never looked to have again. Rod countered or guarded nothing but the body blows. Those to his face he simply eluded. Ralph might punch; but what he punched at had shifted like quicksilver.

And what he took in return hurt—hurt badly, even though the gloves were not lightly padded. There was sting in every punch, and some of them made Ralph gasp.

"My word, that chap's got a hefty left!" muttered Harry Hiam.

Completely outclassed and outfought, Ralph grew furious. He made in tigerishly, and managed to get home on Rod's chin.

In return he took one near the mark that sent him reeling, though not to the floor.

Rod dropped his hands. It looked as though his opponent had had enough.

Ralph, recovering his balance, threw himself forward, and punched.

It was a foul blow. Not because Rod was unready—that was his own blame. But it was definitely below the belt.

Rod went down. He lay for a few seconds doubled up with pain.

Then he rose to his feet. He would not have been counted out had it been a ring battle, though a fellow less fit must have been.

"Want any more?" asked Ralph truculently.
"Not of that sort," answered Rod, with a little gasp of pain.

"Know when you're licked?"
"Licked? Never by you, until you're ten times as good as you are now. But I know when it's time to stop."

Then Rod was sorry he had spoken. Those scornful words had raised between him and Ralph Redgrave a barrier that would not easily be removed. But in any case there was no hope of real friendship between those two. The bulldog, game to the last breath, and the cowardly jackal, cannot run together.

Something stirred in Harry Hiam that was new—something stronger than any of the vague impulses towards better things he had had before.

He wanted to hit Ralph—to damage him. He could have done it, for he had skill and more strength than he looked to have. But it was unnecessary. The stranger could do all that Harry could—and a heap more.

Harry had no notion who the stranger was. Ralph had not in any way accounted for him. That did not matter.

There was about him the glamour that had been about Fighting Fitz, that other quiet-spoken boxer. From that evening Rod was a hero in the cross-eyed regard of a fellow of whom he had hardly become aware, of whom he never thought again till some time later.

Before Ralph could answer there was a noisy irruption of young men into the saloon. At their head was a fellow of twenty-four or so, dark, and handsome, after a rather sinister fashion.

"Hallo, Alured!" was Ralph's greeting. "You're in the nick of time. Here's a chap that would like to take you on with the gloves."

"I never refuse a challenge," replied Hyde, with a toss of the head.

"That's reet," shouted one of his sycophants.

"They were a motley lot. There were mill-hands among them, and fellows smartly dressed, who might have to do with the mills, but were not hands, with two or three of a type different from either, without the manners or education of the second class or the toil-marked hands of the first. But all owned Hyde as leader, and recognised Ralph as his lieutenant, though there might be among them a few who had less faith in young Redgrave than they had in the mill magnate's son.

Hyde swaggered; but there was more behind his swagger than behind that of Ralph. He really could do things. He was streets ahead of his pal as a boxer. He had made a thousand-odd runs, and scored a couple of centuries for the county in the preceding season. He had ridden winners in races over the sticks. Alured Hyde was no duffer; but he was a most complete wrong 'un.

"I haven't challenged anyone," said Rod.

Again Harry Hiam thrilled with admiration. Yes, Hyde was pretty good with the mauleys, and ready on occasion to fight with them bare, as Ralph Redgrave never would. But he was not as good as this stranger.

"Who is he?" Hyde asked, with a sneer that brought unpleasant lines about his mouth.

"Oh, my guv'nor's kind of adopted him!" Ralph answered. "Rodney's dad was an old pal—you know the sort of thing. He's coming to work in the mill, I fancy—like you an me, Ally, though not so hard."

There was a guffaw at that. All three knew that Ralph did not work any harder than he was obliged to, and that Alured Hyde's seemingly important job carried salary without any real responsibility.

"Are you on, Rodney?" inquired Hyde.

"Not to-night," Rod replied, stripping off his gloves.

"Funked?" Hyde sneered.

"I don't think so. Some other time, perhaps."

He put on his boots, jacket, and waistcoat, and made his way out.

Hyde and Ralph laughed jeeringly. Some of the rest echoed their laughter. But not many there believed that the stranger was afraid of Alured Hyde. He had the air of being afraid of no one.

(There's no hope of Rod and Ralph being chums now! Rod's in for a pretty tough time in his new surroundings! Don't miss next week's fine instalment of this great serial!)

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