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THE RIVAL WEEKLY!

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

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



Blake sprang out into the road, and rushed swiftly towards the cyclist. His chums followed him fast, and the Terrible Three leaped out of the trees on the other side of the road. (See Chapter 12.)

CHAPTER 1. No Admittance!

THERE was a large card pinned upon the outside of Tom Merry's door in the Shell passage in the School House. It bore an inscription in large capital letters, daubed in with a large brush and a liberal supply of ink. The supply of ink, indeed, had been so liberal, that a good deal of it had run down from the letters to the bottom edge of the cardboard, giving the important notice a streaky appearance. It ran—the notice, as well as the ink—

“EDITORIAL OFFICE!
“NO ADMITTANCE EXCEPT ON BUSINESS!”
Which proved to all who were interested, and to St.

Jim's generally, that the staff of “Tom Merry's Weekly” were engaged upon the production of a new number of that celebrated journal.

It was really high time for a new number. The journal was, as Monty Lowther declared, weekly in name and weakly in constitution. It only appeared on occasions, when the numerous staff of editors and sub-editors were not too busy about cricket, rowing, scouting, or ragging. When Tom Merry, as chief editor, made up his mind that another number was imperatively necessary, he was accustomed to rounding up the staff into the editorial office, very much as a cowboy rounds up steers into a corral. In fact, the chief editor had been seen on one occasion driving his staff into the office with a cricket-stump.

Next Wednesday:
“A CAPTURED CHUM!” AND “THE CITY OF FLAME!”

Tom Merry's study was crowded now. There were ten juniors in the room, and they were all editors. They had plenty to do. Tom Merry, editor-in-chief, was busy upon a leading article. Monty Lowther was compiling, or perpetrating, his usual column of comicities. Manners, also as usual, was very busy about photography. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the fashion editor, was concentrating his mighty intellect upon the subject of the latest thing in curly brims for top-hats. Jack Blake was dealing with cricket in a masterly manner. Herries had a column on dogs. Robert Arthur Digby dealt with pets.

Figgins & Co. of the New House were also there. Figgins was turning out a new instalment of the "Horrid Hun; or, The Imperial Poisoner," his war serial. Kerr was engaged on the history of the Scottish regiments at the front. Fatty Wynna, who was musical, was doing an article on the Welsh harp, which he said would give the paper a tone.

Ten pens scratched away busily.

There was a pile of manuscript on the table from outside contributors. This had to be gone through, and selected or rejected. It also came in useful for providing penwipers.

Naturally, the crowd of editors and sub-editors did not want to be interrupted in their editorial labours. Hence the prominent notice on the door.

Fellows who came along to the study to "jaw" saw the notice, and passed on. Those who looked in and "jawed" in spite of the notice were greeted with abusive epithets, or a cushion, or in extreme cases an inkpot. Skimpole of the Shell had received an inkpot. He had stepped in with an article on Socialism, and stepped out again a little more rapidly streaming with ink. He was now very busy in a bathroom.

The ten pens drove away manfully, and the latest number of the "Weekly" grew and grew under the efforts of the staff. There was silence in the study save for the scratching of the pens, and an occasional chuckle from Monty Lowther. Lowther, like a true humorist, was greatly tickled by his own jokes, though common or garden readers had been seen to persecute them with grave and puzzled faces.

Grundy of the Shell came along the passage, and stopped at the door of Tom Merry's study. He read the prominent notice, and snorted. George Alfred Grundy had a most expressive snort.

He turned the handle of the door, and opened it, and looked into the study. Tom Merry looked round, and pointed with his pen to the passage.

"Travel!" he remarked concisely.

"I've come—"

"Didn't you see the notice on the door?"

"Yes, fathead!"

"No admittance except on business. Bunk!"

"Yaas, cleah off, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You are intewwuptin' the editorial labahs, you know."

"I'm here on business," said Grundy.

"Outside, please!"

"Look here—"

"Only editors and sub-editors admitted on business," explained Tom Merry. "No dogs or outsiders admitted! Good-bye!"

Grundy snorted again.

"You're doing a number of the 'Weekly,'" he remarked.

"Yes. Sheer off!"

"I've got a contribution."

"My hat!"

Tom Merry smiled at the idea of George Alfred Grundy contributing to the "Weekly." Grundy had never struck him as possessing literary tastes. Grundy was a tremendously big fellow, with a four-point-seven punch, and in a "scrap" he was admittedly first-class. But the things that he couldn't do were innumerable. He couldn't play cricket, though he firmly believed that he could. He couldn't see that he was an ass, a fact which was perfectly obvious to everybody else in the two Houses at St. Jim's.

He was a new fellow in the school, and he had come like Caesar—to come, to see, and to conquer. That idea, however, had been somewhat knocked out of him in the The Gem Library.—No. 390.

Shell at St. Jim's. Grundy's idea was that he ought to have a hand in everything that was going on, and an authoritative hand, too. He found few fellows to agree with him on that point. Wilkins and Gunn, in his own study, agreed with him—perhaps for the sake of a quiet life. Outside his own study it surprised and exasperated Grundy to find that he was generally sat upon.

Grundy produced a roll of manuscript from his pocket. It was covered with very large writing, in sprawling characters, and in the original orthography for which Grundy of the Shell was distinguished.

"Look at that!" said Grundy.

Tom Merry pointed with his pen to the pile of manuscript on the corner of the table.

"Put it there!"

"What for?"

"We're going over the outside contributions later."

"I want it to go in."

"That depends on the quality—"

"Oh, the quality's all right!" said Grundy confidently.

"And upon the amount of space at the editor's disposal, after the regular contributions have been shoved in."

"Bosh!"

"Eh?"

"I want this to go in," said Grundy. "I've been looking over an old number of the mag. It struck me as being very weak."

"Why, you cheeky ass—"

"I thought it was piffle from start to finish, to tell you the truth," said Grundy. "What with Figgins's fat-headed serial—"

"What!" ejaculated Figgins.

"And D'Arcy's silly rot about silly clothes—"

"Bai Jove!"

"And Lowther's idiotic chestnuts—"

"You silly ass!" roared Lowther.

"And a silly piffing leading article—"

"Why, I did the leading article!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Yes, I thought perhaps you did," assented Grundy. "It was rot from beginning to end. Your spelling is bad, too."

"My spelling?"

"Yes, you spelt 'beginning' without a double G."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to cackle at, that I can see," said Grundy.

"Now I'm going to talk to you plainly—"

"You're not going to talk at all. You're going out."

"I never stand any rot," pursued Grundy, unheeding.

"I want my story to go in. It will save this number from being as rotten as the last, if there's one good thing in it. Mine's a war story. Look at it!"

"All in good time."

"Look at it now," said Grundy. "Run your eye over the first page, and you'll see what a ripping story it is."

Tom Merry looked round for a cushion. There wasn't one within reach, so he sighed, and took Grundy's ripping story, and glanced over the first page. Some of the staff glanced over it, too, and there was a chuckle in the editorial office. The story was entitled "Licking the Germans." Evidently it was a war story. And it began:

"The sun had sett, and depe darkness shaddowed the British lines in Belljunn. A thunderus kannonade rored from the Jerman lines. High in the air sailed the murderus shels, pored out by the jigantic guns of the savage Huns. The ground was covered with dedd and dying, and the rore of the heavy guns, mingled with the shreeks of the wounded, the grones of the injured, the mones of the damiged hoarses, and the yels of the beastly Jermans, not to mention the horse cries of the still and silent forms stretched out under the wite and gostly lite of the moon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The gravity of the editorial office was completely gone. The staff of "Tom Merry's Weekly" were doubled up.

Grundy of the Shell glared at them.

"You silly duffers!" he shouted. "What are you cackling at? That's what I call good, descriptive writing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear!" moaned Tom Merry. "It's a little too descriptive. You see, the hoarse cries of silent forms—"

"And the light of the moon in the deep darkness——"

"Go away, Grundy!"

"Take it away and bury it!"

"I expected something of this sort," said Grundy bitterly. "It's just the same with the cricket—you keep out a good man because of paltry jealousy. Now you want to keep my story out of the 'Weekly' because it would show up your own rot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang!

Grundy grabbed his big fist down on the table, with a concussion that made the inkpot dance. There was a yell from Lowther as a stream of ink obliterated several of his best jokes at one fell swoop.

"You fathead! Wharrer you at?"

"I'm not standing this!" roared Grundy. "And I tell you plain——"

"Chuck him out!"

"Give him the ink!"

"Outside, you fathead!"

"Are you going?"

"No, I'm not going!" bellowed Grundy, and his emphatic fist smote the table again with a bang. "And I say—— Leggo—yarooh! I'll scalp you—I'll pulverise you! Oh, my hat!"

The whole editorial staff piled on Grundy. He was seized on all sides by indignant editors and sub-editors. In a wild and whirling crowd, the staff swooped him through the doorway.

Crash!

Grundy of the Shell landed in the passage.

"Gimme the ink!" yelled Tom Merry.

Grundy sat up, blinking. Blake handed out the ink, and Tom Merry, with a skilful sweep of the inkpot, jerked its contents fairly upon Grundy's head.

Splash!

"Yooooooo! Grooooooh!"

Then the door slammed. Grundy staggered to his feet, the ink streaming down his face. He fairly hurled himself at the study door. He burst into the study again like a cyclone; but the editorial blood was up now, and the editors struggled to get at him. Many hands grasped him on all sides, and he was bumped on the floor, and then hurled into the passage again.

This time he stayed there.

It was several minutes before he recovered sufficiently to crawl away to his own study. In the editorial office there was a sound of chucking, followed by a scratching of pens. The staff were busy once more, and the new number was growing; but in that number there was not included the ripping story, "Licking the Germans."

CHAPTER 2.

Grundy Means Business.

WILKINS and Gunn smiled.

They couldn't help it.

Grundy had limped back into his study, and his study-mates found his appearance irresistible. His rugged countenance was almost obliterated by ink, his collar was torn out, and he was covered with dust.

Grundy of the Shell was always looking for trouble, and generally finding some. He looked now as if he had found trouble upon an unusually extensive scale.

"Groooh!" said Grundy, as he came in.

"Had an accident, old chap?" asked Wilkins.

"Gug-gug!"

"There's a bath-room in the next passage," hinted Gunn. He certainly thought that George Alfred Grundy needed a wash.

"What are you grinning at?" demanded Grundy.

"Grinning! Was I grinning?" murmured Gunn.

"Yes, you were. Why, you are now, you silly ass! Is there anything funny in a chap being smothered with ink by a set of cheeky rotters?" roared Grundy.

"Not at all—ha, ha, ha!—not a bit of it. 'Tain't funny—ha, ha, ha! Excuse me!" gurgled Gunn, "but—but you are rather inky, you know. What's the little game? Is this a Christy minstrel dodge? Here, keep off!"

Gunn dodged round the table.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"A CAPTURED CHUM!"

Grundy glared through the ink and breathed hard.

"There's nothing funny in this," he panted.

"Of course there isn't!" murmured Wilkins. "Shut up, Gunny. There's nothing to cackle at—he, he!—nothing at all."

"You're cackling yourself!" howled Grundy.

"Was I?" Wilkins made a manful effort and recovered his gravity. "Ahem! Hum! H'm! What's happened, old chap? You do look inky, you know!"

"I've been to see the silly editors of that silly weekly," growled Grundy. "I took them my new story—the one I showed you. Now, you fellows know what that story's like. Why, you gurgling idiot, what are you cackling at now?"

"N-n-nothing! They accepted the story, of course?"

"They refused it. Sheer jealousy."

"I suppose Lowther didn't want anything new in his line in the paper," said Wilkins soothingly.

"Lowther!" repeated Grundy. "It wouldn't clash with Lowther's stuff. Lowther's stuff is comic."

"Yes, that's what I mean—I—I mean, of course, you're right!" stammered Wilkins. "What reason did they give for—refusing that ripping yarn? Didn't they like the spelling?"

"What's the matter with the spelling?"

"N-n-nothing, of course."

"They didn't give any reason," said Grundy. "They simply cackled. Every fellow I've shown that story to has cackled. I'm blessed if I know why. What's wanted at the present time is really thrilling war stories. Now, you fellows know that I never stand any rot. I've been kept out of the cricket, because there's a dead set against me. I'm not going to be kept out of the school magazine in the same way. I'm determined on that."

"But—but if they won't put your stuff in——"

"They've got to."

"You're going to wallop the lot of them?" asked Wilkins innocently.

"How can I wallop ten chaps at once?" growled Grundy. "You'd hardly believe it, but they actually chucked me out of the study."

Wilkins and Gunn could quite believe it; but they assumed expressions of sympathetic surprise.

"You don't say so!" murmured Wilkins.

"Awful cheek!" said Gunn.

"But I'm not standing it. I'm resolved that my story goes into this number. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, you know. When Tom Merry sees my story being devoured by all the readers, and when they ask for more, he will understand what it is he's trying to miss. If he really understood literary merit, I think he'd have sense enough to put my work in. He's bound to want to buck up the paper, if he can. He can't like it being such a heap of dashed rubbish, I suppose. Well, my story's going in."

"B-b-but how?" stammered Gunn.

"I'm going to put it in."

"Without the consent of the editor?"

"I shan't take any notice of the editor. Mind, I'm not asking to be paid for this story; I give it gratis. Under the circumstances, I feel entitled to disregard a silly editor who doesn't know a good thing when he sees it!"

"Ye-o-a; but how——"

"There are ways and means," said Grundy darkly. "You fellows are going to help me."

"Oh, we'll help!" said Wilkins. "We'll talk it over, over tea——"

"Blow tea! I'm going to get a wash now. But that story's going in, and if you fellows can suggest a way, I'll be glad. I can't think of a way at present, but it's got to be done. You know I never stand any rot."

Grundy swung out of the study, leaving Wilkins and Gunn grinning at one another. How George Alfred was to get his story into the "Weekly" without the consent of the editorial staff was a mystery. But George Alfred had evidently made up his mind, and G. A. Grundy was a determined chap.

Grundy tramped away frowning to a bath-room. He met Levison of the Fourth in the passage. Levison had a sheet of manuscript in his hand, and was on his way to the editorial office. He stared at Grundy's inky face.

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

"My only hat!" ejaculated Levison. "Where did you get that face, Grundy?"

Grundy did not reply to the question. He made a rush at Levison of the Fourth. He was feeling an intense desire to wallop somebody, and Ernest Levison had come along in the nick of time, as it were.

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Levison. "Oh, my hat!" He fled along the passage, with Grundy after him breathing fire and slaughter. Levison ran for his life, and reached Tom Merry's study, and there open the door and rushed in.

There was a whoop from the editorial staff.

"Get out!"

"Rescue!" gasped Levison.

Grundy rushed in.

"Hallo, Grundy again!"

"Kick him out!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Grundy whirled into the passage, faster than he had entered the study. Two or three editors pursued him there, with a cricket-bat, a stump, a poker, and a ruler. Grundy fled along the passage, yelling, and the editors returned panting to the office.

"I fancy we've done with him now!" gasped Tom Merry. "It wouldn't be all lavender to be an editor, if all contributors were like that. I've dented my bat."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I've dented Grundy," remarked Blake. "Levison, there's a passage outside. Didn't you see the notice on the door?"

"I hadn't time," explained Levison. "I've brought you a contribution."

"Put it on the table, and bunk."

"But is it going in?"

"That's got to be settled. But what's settled already is, that you're going out. Will you go on your feet or your neck?"

Levison decided to go on his feet.

CHAPTER 3. No Luck.

"D ONE!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bai Jove! We've weally made a wecord with this numbah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with great satisfaction. "We shall be able to get it down to the pwinthah this evenin', deah boys."

The editorial staff were feeling pleased with themselves. Their literary work was done, and it only remained to fill up the vacant spaces in the journal with selections from the outside contributions.

It was decided to examine those valuable contributions over tea. It was already late for tea, and the staff were hungry. The editorial office became a study again, and the juniors crowded round a well-spread table. While they disposed of peached eggs and toast and cake, they looked over the contributions, amid a good deal of laughter. The literary standard of the "Weekly" was high, and most of the articles and stories and poems did not come up to it.

"Our Gallant Trupps, by D'Arcy minor," read out Blake. "Gussy, old man, you shouldn't let your minor do these things."

"Wead it out, deah boy. We are wathah a liteway family, you know, and I have no doubt young Wally has turned out somethin' good."

"Lend me your ears!" said Blake, and he read out:

"Mid mud and blood on Flanders' dreary plain,
Our gallant trupps are fighting the Huns with might
and main.

They heed not Kaiser Bill nor any other German ass,
And don't care tuppence for his poison gas!"

"Mercy!" gasped Lowther.

"Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Enough—enough!" moaned Tom Merry. "Write on that—Declined with thanks. Please don't try again."

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CUR COMPANION

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Every Monday,

"THE MAGNET,"

Every Monday.

"THE BOY'S FRIEND"

3d. COMPLETE LIBRARY.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"

Every Friday.

"CHUCKLES," 1D.

Every Saturday, 2

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Next item—Ode to a Dying Skylark," by Dibbs of the Fourth," said Blake.

"Upon the ground I see thee stretched,

Poor dying lark, no help is nigh!

Alas! alas! alackaday!

A tear of sympathy dims mine eye!"

"Oh, don't!" said Tom Merry. "Declined with thanks! Extra thanks if Dibbs doesn't do it any more."

"Here's Levison's little bit. By Jove, this isn't so bad!" said Blake. "Levison is rather a clever beast, you know."

"Better look at that carefully," said Monty Lowther. "Levison is jolly deep, and there may be more in it than meets the eye. He's played tricks on us before with his contributions."

"Read it out!"

Jack Blake proceeded to read out:

"TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY"—A READER'S TRIBUTE!

"This paper is the pride
Of all St. Jim's.

Many rivals have been tried,

Merry beats them to the wide.

Easily he keeps the field,

Rivals always have to yield.

Readers follow Merry meekly,

Young and old enjoy the "Weekly."

In these pages, ever new,

Sparkle wit and wisdom, too.

Always bright and always merry,

Bright as sparkling cham or sherry,

Under Merry's able lead,

Readers get just what they need.

Best of school mags, far or near,

Long may it flourish here.

In its present palmy state,

Never may its fame abate.

Give a cheer, then, for the "Weekly,"

And its praises ever speak,

So that it still may prosper,

Still delight us every week!"

Tom Merry & Co. listened in astonishment as Blake read out Levison's poetic tribute to the "Weekly." The poetry, perhaps, could not be praised very highly, but the sentiment was certainly excellent. It showed an appreciation on the part of Levison of the Fourth, which the editors had never suspected before.

"What the dickens is he buttering us up for like that?" said Figgins, puzzled.

"Wathah wocky verses," remarked Arthur Augustus; "and there is one line without a rhyme at all. But certainly it is vewy flatterwin'."

"Blessed if I know whether we ought to put it in!" said Tom Merry. "It's awfully kind of Levison to praise us like this, but it will look like blowing our own trumpet to shove it into the paper."

"Well, as he treats us so jolly well, it would be rather rough to leave it out," remarked Blake. "After all, the 'Weekly' is about the best school mag going. It beats the Sixth-Form magazine hollow."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"All that Levison says here is true enough, too," said Manners. "He does lay it on rather thick, but it's true enough. There ain't many school mags like our 'Weekly.' Only Levison never seemed to see it before."

"Howevah, it would be only the wright thing to put it in. After all, it will show some of the weadahs what is thought of the papah. Some of them are wathah ewtical, you know."

"Yes, and 'A Reader's Tribute' sounds well," said Tom Merry. "I suppose it had better go in."

"Hear, hear!"

All the editorial staff agreed upon it. Levison's tribute was duly copied out to fill half a column in the "Weekly."



There was a large card pinned upon the outside of Tom Merry's door which proved to all who were interested that the staff of "Tom Merry's Weekly" were engaged upon the production of a new number of that celebrated journal. (See Chapter I.)

But the schoolboy editors could not help feeling puzzled. Levison had generally regarded the "Weekly" in a sneering sort of way, and made fun of the stories, the articles, and the little jokes. It was quite a right-about-face for the cad of the Fourth to start praising the school paper and its editor in this fulsome manner. Still, as he had come to have a just appreciation of the "Weekly" at last, it was only fair that he should be allowed to say so in its columns.

Short work was made of most of the manuscripts that remained in the heap. The copy was fully made up, and finally wrapped up to be taken to the printer's in Rylcombe. Mr. Tipper, the printer of the local paper, had the task of producing the "Weekly," which was quite a handsome production by the time it was turned out by Mr. Tipper.

"Now, who's going to take it down to the printer's?" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh, the chief editor does that," said Blake.

"This was agreed to by the whole staff."

"But it's still light enough for cricket," said Tom Merry: "and I'm jolly well going down to practice. I think Gussy had better go."

"Sowwy, deah boy; I'm playin' ewicket."

"As sub-editor, Figgins, I think—"

"Good-bye!" yawned Figgins, and he strolled out of the study with Kerr and Wynn.

"Bai Jove, it's time we got down to the ewicket, deah boys!" observed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Pway don't be late with that copy, Tom Mewwy."

Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy followed Figgins & Co.

Tom Merry frowned.

"Look here, what's the good of being a blessed editor if you can't give orders to your blessed staff?" he demanded. "Manners, I think—"

"You think it's time I got on with my films?" remarked Manners. "So do I, old chap. See you later."

Manners sauntered out.

Tom Merry looked at Monty Lowther, and Monty Lowther looked at Tom Merry.

"Tess up for it," suggested Tom.

"My dear chap, I wouldn't think of encroaching on your rights as chief editor," said Lowther affectionately. "I should advise you to go on your bike, and you'll catch Tipper before he closes. Ta-ta!"

And Lowther departed.

"B-r-r-r-r!" said Tom Merry.

He looked out of the window at the distant cricket-field glimmering in the setting sun. Then he looked at the bundle on the table.

The captain of the Shell wanted to go down to the cricket. But his duty as chief editor apparently included

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service as messenger-boy, and the copy had to be taken to the printer's. Tom Merry reflected.

"Dash it all—it's all right if it gets there in the morning! I'll post it anyway!"

And Tom Merry hunted through his study for stamps, and stuck four on the parcel, and left the study with it under his arm. His destination was not Mr. Tipper's shop in Rylcombe, but the letter-box in the school wall. It might lead to the "Weekly" appearing a day later than had been planned, but that could not be helped. Cricket came before school mags., anyway.

Grundy of the Shell looked out of his study as he passed with the copy under his arm. Grundy's eyes gleamed.

He turned back into the study, and met the inquiring glances of Wilkins and Gunn.

"Come on!" he whispered.

"What's the game?"

"The ass is going down to Rylcombe with the copy."

"Well?"

"We're going to collar him on the road, and make him put my story in."

"How on earth will you do that?"

"Easy enough. We'll hold his head in a ditch till he does it."

"Oh, crumbs!"

That extraordinary method of getting one's contributions accepted by an editor seemed to astonish Wilkins and Gunn. But Grundy meant business.

"Come on!" he snapped. "You're wasting time!"

"Oh, all right!" gasped Wilkins.

Grundy's word was law in No. 8 Study. His two loyal followers hurried out after him, and they rushed downstairs to get on the track of Tom Merry. As they came dashing out into the quadrangle they met the captain of the Shell. There was nothing under his arm now.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Grundy.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry in some surprise.

"Ain't you going down to the printer's?"

"No."

"Where's the copy, then?"

"Eh? The copy? I've posted it."

"Oh, my hat!"

"What does it matter?" asked Tom Merry, in wonder.

"Posted it!" mumbled Grundy. "Posted it, by gum!"

Oh, you rotter! Then my contribution—oh, you bouncer!"

"But what——" Tom Merry was beginning, and then it dawned upon him, and he burst into a laugh. "Ha, ha, ha! You cheeky ass! Did you think——"

"I'm going to have it in yet!" roared Grundy. "If you think you can keep the only good story out of the mag., you're mistaken, see?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry walked away to the cricket-ground, still laughing. Wilkins and Gunn were grinning, but they tried to hide their smiles as Grundy glared at them.

"Done!" growled Grundy.

"Can't be helped!" murmured Wilkins. "Wait for the next number, old chap."

"Blow the next number! My story's going into this number!" growled Grundy. "I tell you I'm not standing any rot! Look here, you fellows have been here longer than I have, and I suppose you know about it? Do they have any proofs of that rot before it's printed?"

Wilkins nodded.

"Yes, I believe so."

"Oh!" said Grundy, relieved. "That's where we come in, then. I'll jolly well show them whether my contribution's going to be left out!"

All the editors and contributors of "Tom Merry's Weekly" were keen for the proofs to arrive; but the fellow who was keenest was neither an editor nor a contributor. Grundy of the Shell had deep and dark designs on those proofs. It only remained to be seen whether he could carry them out.

CHAPTER 4.

Levison's Little Joke.

"HA! EAH you are, deah boys!" It was a very large letter for Tom Merry, a couple of days later. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy found it in the rack when the juniors came out of their Form-rooms after lessons.

It was the proof of the latest number of "Tom Merry's Weekly," sent for correction by Mr. Tipper. Tom Merry opened the packet on the table in the hall, and the juniors gathered round to look at their contributions in print. If "Tom Merry's Weekly" had justified its title, and appeared every week, there would not have been so much novelty about that; but the intermittent appearance of the celebrated journal prevented the contributors from growing "blase," as the French say. There was still a pleasant interest in seeing their writings reproduced in print. The work of correcting their proofs was "whacked out" among the staff.

There had been a disposition to include proof-correcting among the duties of the chief editor. But Tom Merry had not performed that task to the general satisfaction. Some of Monty Lowther's finest jokes had suffered from over-correction. In Figgy's serial, the sentence, "the greatest chief of modern times," had inadvertently been corrected into "the greatest thief of modern times." Such little mistakes on the part of an amateur proof-reader could not really be helped, but they caused the editor-in-chief to be relieved of the duty of general proof-reading.

"Bai Jove, this weeds wippily!" said Arthur Augustus, capturing one page of the proof, and glancing over it with great satisfaction.

"My leading article?" asked Tom.

"Wats! No."

"You've got my serial there?" asked Figgins.

"Certainly not, you ass!"

"Oh, my comic column?" said Lowther.

"Wubbish! I am weading my own——"

"Great Scott! The fashion column! Now, I don't want to discourage you, Gussy, but, as a friend, I can't help mentioning that that column is utter rot!"

"I wegard my fashion column as vevy nahly the best thing in the papah, Lowthah. However, I am not wewefwin' to the fashion column now. I am wewefwin' to my poem on Heligoland."

"Oh dear!"

"Just listen to this little bit, deah boys. I weally think it hits the nail right on the head!"

"Heligoland! Beautiful isle of the sea!"

Once the brightest jewel in the Britwish Cwown!

By a foolish Statesman given to Germany,

And England's sons hauled England's standard down!

But hark! I heah the war of Britwish guns!

Wed war is wagin' ovah seas and lands!

Forward, bwave boys! Dwive out the wotien Huns!

Bwing back that island fair to Britwish hands!"

"I wathah think that is what is needed, you know," said Arthur Augustus proudly. "I am thinkin' of sendin' that to the 'Times.' You see, everybody ought to beah in mind that Heligoland is a Britwish island, so that we sha'n't forget to take it back at the end of the wah. I will wead the next verse——"

"Mercy!"

"Help!"

"Weally, you uttah asses——"

"Great Scott!" suddenly ejaculated Talbot of the Shell.

"Hallo! What's the matter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Talbot was reading over Levison's poem, which filled half a column in print. "Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry looked puzzled.

"Oh, that's Levison's," he said. "A tribute from a reader, you know. It's laid on rather thick, but I suppose he means well."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't quite see where the cackle comes in," said Tom, in perplexity. "It isn't much as a poem, but the sentiment's all right. It's perfectly true what Levison says, you know."

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"Is it?" chuckled Talbot. "Have you read all that he says?"

"Yes, of course."

"Then you admit it?"

"Eh, what?"

"That you are a burbling ass," chuckled Talbot.

Tom Merry looked astonished.

"Levison doesn't say that," he said. "His poem is simply praise of the 'Weekly,' rather fulsome, perhaps."

"You haven't seen it all," grinned Talbot. "Perhaps you didn't notice it in handwriting. It's plainer in print. Look at it!"

Tom Merry took the sheet, and read over Levison's poem—that appreciative production beginning, "This paper is the pride," etc.

Tom read the poem through, and then looked at Talbot. "Blessed if I see it. Suppose you explain instead of cackling, old chap. I don't see any harm in this."

"Ever heard of acrostics?" asked Talbot.

"Acrostics?" repeated Tom, with a start.

"Read the initials of the lines downwards—the first letter in every line," said Talbot, laughing.

Tom Merry, his brows contracting, looked at the poem again. He read the first letters of the lines downwards. They ran:

"TOMMERRYISABURBLINGASS."

It was easy enough to separate these letters into words once Tom's attention had been directed to the acrostic.

"TOM MERRY IS A BURBLING ASS."

Tom flushed crimson.

There was a shout of laughter from the rest of the staff, as they all read over Levison's precious acrostic. The poetic flattery of the "Weekly" was explained now. Levison had been liberal with "soft soap" in order to introduce his acrostic unsuspected into the columns of the "Weekly." Once the production had been safely printed, Levison of course intended to draw general attention to it, and Tom Merry knew full well what a yell of laughter would have greeted it, and the fact that the editor-in-chief had "written himself down an ass" in this way.

"The rotter!" exclaimed Tom wrathfully. "I call that a mean trick!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Vewy true, though," chuckled Arthur Augustus. "An editah who is taken in by a twick like that must be a burblin' ass, you know."

"Levison's hit the nail on the head," said Blake heartily. "Are you leaving the poem in, Tommy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry angrily scored out the poem with his blue pencil. But for Talbot's having spotted it, that acrostic would undoubtedly have been printed in the finished number of the "Weekly," and fifty copies would have been spread over St. Jim's—and certainly Tom Merry would never have heard the end of it.

Fortunately, Levison's little joke had not got any further than the proofs, and it was nipped in the bud.

"Much obliged, Talbot!" said Tom. "Blessed if I noticed it, and I ought to have been on my guard, too—Levison has tried to play tricks like that before. It's a rotten trick!"

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

"And we're jolly well going to show Levison that he can't gully the 'Weekly' in this way!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard it as a fearful cheek!"

"Here he comes," grinned Digby.

Levison of the Fourth had just heard of the proofs, and he was coming along to see them. He came up with a smile on his face.

"Let's see the proofs," he remarked. "Hallo! What have you been scoring out my poem for?"

"Because we've found you out, you rotter!" said Tom Merry. "Collar him!"

"Here! Leggo—"

"Three bumps, hard!"

"I—I say, it was only a joke, you know," gasped Levison, struggling in the editorial grasp. "Only an acrostic—"

"Well, this is only a joke, too!"

Bump!

"Yow! Help!"

"Simply humorous, you know, like your acrostic," said Monty Lowther.

Bump!

"Oh, my hat! Leggo!"

"Oh, you can take a joke, as well as make one, can't you?" said Lowther.

Bump!

"Yooooooop!"

Levison rolled on the floor, gasping for breath, and feeling considerably hurt.

"Give him another!" said Blake. "He's so funny, and so fond of jokes."

Levison leaped to his feet and fled. He did not want any more of these little jokes.

CHAPTER 5.

Black Ingratitude!

THERE was silence in Grundy's study. Grundy of the Shell was sprawling in the armchair, with his big hands thrust deep into his pockets, and a wrinkle of deep thought in his brow. Wilkins and Gunn watched him in silence. They did not venture to interrupt the workings of George Alfred's mighty brain.

Grundy was thinking!

It was an unaccustomed exercise for Grundy, and it did not seem to agree with him. Wilkins, who had ventured upon a harmless remark concerning tea-time, had been snapped at quite ferociously, and since then he had held his peace. Wilkins and Gunn waited for the great Grundy to get done with his thinking; but Grundy's thoughts seemed to hold him, and to banish all mere considerations of tea-time. For Grundy was thinking of "Tom Merry's Weekly," and his determination that the great story, "Licking the Germans," should appear in its columns. The proofs were in Tom Merry's study at that moment—but so were the Terrible Three.

How was he to get at the proofs, and compel the editor to introduce his story there, and let it appear in that number? It was a knotty problem. G. A. Grundy never acknowledged defeat. But he had to admit that he had set himself an exceedingly difficult task.

If it had been merely a personal matter, Grundy might have given it up. But he was really public-spirited. He felt that the school magazine ought to have at least one really good thing in it. He felt that the fitness of things required that the one really valuable contribution should not be left out. Then there were the readers to be considered. How pleased they would be to find a really ripping story among so much rot—like a smiling oasis amid the arid desert!

For these public-spirited reasons, more than for merely personal ones, George Alfred Grundy was determined not to be beaten. He knew what he was going to do. But he had to admit that he did not quite see how it was to be done.

His great system of "walloping" fellows who did not agree with him did not seem much use at the present juncture. Even the big-fisted and muscular George Alfred could not wallop a whole staff of editors and sub-editors. Hence the deep think that was keeping G. A. Grundy with wrinkled brows in the armchair, and Wilkins and Gunn waiting dolefully for their tea.

The door opened, and Levison of the Fourth came in. Levison came in limping. He had not yet quite recovered from the somewhat heavy punishment he had received at the hands of the "Weekly" staff.

Grundy did not move or look at him. His mental processes were not to be interrupted by a mere Fourth-Former.

Levison stared at him, and spoke.

"I say, Grundy."

Then Grundy moved. He jerked his finger towards the door.

"Get out!"

"But—"

"I'm thinking."

Levison was inclined to ask "What with?" but he restrained himself. He had not come there to sample Grundy's four-point-seven punch.

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"I can give you a tip, Grundy, old man," said Levison. "It's up against those cheeky rotters, you know."
 "When I want tips from a Fourth-Form fag I won't forget to mention it," said Grundy, with heavy sarcasm.
 "Look here, you want your rot—I mean, your splendid story—to go into the 'Weekly,'" urged Levison.
 "How do you know anything about it?"

Levison grinned.
 "It's a standing joke in the House," he explained.
 "Oh, is it?" growled Grundy. "If you've come here to ask for a thick ear, Levison, you've dropped in at the right place."

"I've come to make a suggestion," said Levison pacifically. "You want that story to go in, don't you?"
 "It's going in," said Grundy positively.
 "Tom Merry won't put it in, you know."

"I shall decline to take any notice of Tom Merry in the matter," said the Shell fellow loftily.

"Have you thought of a dodge of getting it in, then?"
 "Well, I was thinking of catching Tom Merry on the way to the printer's, and making him put it in," said Grundy, thoughtfully. "I could hold his head in a ditch—"

"Then he'd write to the printer, or call again, and make him take it out."

"I suppose he would," admitted Grundy; "that's the difficulty. When a fellow's jealous of a chap who can write, he'd do anything."

"Ahem! Exactly. Well, I know how you can get it in, and those rotters won't know till it's appeared in print," said Levison. "They'll find it in the 'Weekly' when the printer sends it home, that's all."

"Go on," said Grundy graciously.

If Levison had a really valuable suggestion to make, the great Grundy was willing to give him a hearing.
 "I say, let's talk it over while we have tea!" exclaimed Wilkins, as if struck by a sudden bright idea.

"Bother tea!" said Grundy. "For goodness' sake don't keep on interrupting, Wilkins. I never know such a chap as you for talking. Get your tea if you want to, but don't jaw, there's a good fellow."

Wilkins made a grimace. He would have been quite willing to get tea while Grundy was doing his thinking, but it was unfortunately necessary for Grundy to "stand" the tea, Wilkins and Gunn being stony. But it was evidently useless to talk to Grundy just then about standing tea. Grundy's mind was fixed upon matters more important than tea.

"Go it, Levison!" said Grundy. "If you've got a suggestion to make—"

"My idea is to get hold of the proofs after they've left Tom Merry's hands," said Levison. "Then you can put in what you like, you know, and he won't be any the wiser till the paper comes home from the printer's."

Grundy snorted.
 "Can't be did! The beast doesn't take it down to the printer's now; he puts it in the school letter-box for the postman. I'd have nobbled it last time but for that. When it's sent by post I can't get at it. And he's sure to send the proofs back by post, because he knows now that I was arranging to lay for him in the lane and collar the paper."

"All the better," said Levison.
 "I don't see it."
 "Well, I do. Keep an eye on him, and watch him post the letter with the proofs in it. Then I'll get hold of it."

"How on earth can you get hold of a letter when it's been put into the box?" demanded Grundy, in astonishment.

"Letters can be fished out."

"What?"
 "Fished out of the letter-box, you know."

"Why, you silly rotter!" roared Grundy. "Is that your rotten idea? You've come to me to propose to rob a letter-box? My hat!"

Grundy pumped up, and Levison dodged round the table just in time.

"Hold on!" he roared. "Wharrer you at?"

"Lemme get at you! Why, a chap can be sent to

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prison for robbing a letter-box, you silly fathead! I'll jolly well—"

Levison scuttled round the table again. Wilkins and Gunn looked on grinning. Levison's rascally proposition deserved some punishment, and it looked as if he were going to get it.

"Hold on!" shrieked Levison, in great alarm. "I—I really didn't mean that, you know. I—I was only putting a case. I—I—I—"

"You sneaking cad!"
 "It's quite another idea I meant!" gasped Levison.

Grundy paused.
 "Well, what's the other idea, you rat?"

Levison panted for breath. It had been a hot chase round the table for a couple of minutes.

"The—the other idea?" Ahem! Levison racked his brains. As a matter of fact, he had no other idea. He had not supposed for a moment that Grundy would object to his precious scheme of robbing the letter-box.

Levison was not particular himself, and he never gave any other fellow the credit for being particular. When a fellow seemed to be particular, Levison charitably set it down to humbug.

"Well?" roared Grundy.

"You—you see—"

"No, I don't see! You're trying to make up a whopper," said Grundy. "You haven't any other idea, only stealing a letter out of a letter-box. You might be put in prison for it, you young rascal!"

"I—I—"

"And I'll show you what I think of your precious idea," said Grundy. "Gimme that cricket-stump, Gunn!"

"Here you are!" chuckled Gunn.

"Look here—" roared Levison.

He bolted round the table again, with Grundy after him, flourishing the cricket-stump. Wilkins put out a foot, and Levison rolled on the carpet. Grundy's strong grasp was on him the next moment, and Levison was pinned down, face downwards, and the stump rose and fell.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Levison yelled with anguish. Levison never expected gratitude; he did not believe in gratitude; but never had he looked for such black ingratitude as this.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"You-vow-vow!"

"Now, out you go!"

Grundy's heavy boot helped Levison into the passage. The black sheep of the Fourth shook his fist at the burly Shell fellow, and fled as Grundy made a movement with the stump. Grundy went back into the study.

"What a rotter that fellow is!" he remarked. "I think I've given him a lesson. Leasy, I'm hungry!"

"So am I!" said Wilkins, with deep feeling.

"Well, why the dickens don't you get tea?"

"Ahem! There's nothing in the cupboard."

"Why the dickens couldn't you say so before?" said Grundy crossly.

"Why, you wouldn't let me speak a word," said Wilkins indignantly. "You—"

"Oh, don't jaw! You are such a chap for jawing, Wilkins. You'd jaw the hind leg of a mule! You get the kettle on while I do some shopping."

"Right! But I—"

"Now you're starting again. You go on like a gramophone. I'm off."

Grundy went shopping, and Wilkins continued his remarks to Gunn—remarks that were not at all complimentary to George Alfred. But when George Alfred returned laden with tuck for the festive board, Wilkins was all smiles again, and peace and concord reigned in Grundy's study.

Grundy still looked very thoughtful. But perhaps tea, and toast, and shrimps, and bloaters-paete, and jam, and jelly assisted his somewhat slow mental operations. For suddenly he burst into a chuckle.

"I've got it!"

Wilkins gave a nod.

"Yes, pass it along when you've done with it," he said.

"Eh—what?"

"The jam."

"I wasn't talking about jam!" growled Grundy.

"I've got the idea—the giddy wheere. I'm going to dish them."

"Well, pass the jam all the same."

"Hang the jam! Blow the jam! Bother the jam! howled Grundy. "Is this a time to think of jam? Talk about Napoleon fiddling while Rome was burning!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at now?"

"Was it Napoleon? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, Wellington, then," said Grundy, whose historical attainments were not very extensive. "I tell you I've got it. We're going to dish those rotters; you fellows are going to help. It will be necessary to be awfully deep, but you chaps know how deep I am. Now I'll tell you."

And Grundy proceeded to tell them, and Wilkins hung on his words; not so much because he was deeply interested in the great scheme as because Grundy evidently did not intend to pass the jam until he had finished.

CHAPTER 6.

A Great Scheme.

"**T**HAT job's jobbed!" remarked Tom Merry. The Terrible Three had finished at last.

Proofs had been brought in from various quarters, and Tom Merry had put them together, and the three Shell fellows had finished making their own improvements and corrections. "Tom Merry's Weekly" was ready to be sent to the printer's, but it was too late to think of taking it down personally; the gates were already locked. But there was plenty of time to catch the last collection from the box in the school wall.

It had really been hard work; the life of a literary man is not all lavender, as Monty Lowther had remarked. But it was done at last. Tom Merry proceeded to fasten up the bundle of proofs in a sheet of brown-paper, and tie it with string. It was small enough to be slipped into the letter-box, and Tom Merry weighed it carefully in his hand, to guess how many stamps it would require.

There was a tap at the door, and Grundy of the Shell looked in.

His eyes rested on the little brown-paper parcel on the table for a moment. The Terrible Three glared at him. They had had quite enough trouble with that exceedingly determined contributor.

"Look here—" began Tom Merry.

"Lend me a dick, will you?" said Grundy affably.

"Oh, you want a dictionary?"

"Certainly!"

"I thought you wanted a thick ear!" said Tom Merry politely. "Here's the dick."

"Thanks!"

Grundy departed with Tom Merry's Latin dictionary. The Terrible Three sat down to their preparation.

Grundy returned to his study, grinning. He tossed the dictionary on the table.

"What on earth's that for?" asked Wilkins. "I've got a Latin dick here, if you want one."

"I don't want one, fathead!"

"Then what the dickens—"

"That's the scheme."

"Oh, the scheme is to borrow a Latin dictionary!" said Wilkins, mystified. "I don't quite see—"

"You wouldn't!" said Grundy witheringly. "I had to see how they were fixed, so I dropped in to borrow a dick, see now?"

"Oh!"

"They've got the proofs there, wrapped up all ready to post," said Grundy. "Tom Merry had just addressed it to Tiper. They're going to post it. This is where we come in. I've got my copy all ready. It won't take me long to shove it in, when I can get at the proofs. Those three bounders have got to be got away from their study for about ten minutes."

"How?"

"Oh, of course I've got to do all the thinking!" snorted Grundy. "I'm used to that. But I've got it all out and dried. You're going to have a fight with Talbot."

"Wha-a-at!"

"They're awfully chummy with Talbot, and when they

hear he's in a fight they'll rush along at once, won't they?"

"I—I suppose they will!" stammered Wilkins, in dismay. "But—but—"

"Talbot's in the common-room. You pick a row with him, and then Gunn comes running up to tell those chaps. You see, Tom Merry would want to be his second. They'll be off like a shot. They won't stop to think about their silly 'Weekly' when there's a fight on."

"No; but—"

"As soon as they're gone I'll nip into the study and open the packet. I shove in my copy. I'll take out Tom Merry's leading article and Figgins's serial to make room for it, and fasten it up again. When they come back they'll find it just as they left it."

"That's all right; but—"

"Don't you think it would work like a charm?"

"Yes; but—"

"Great Scott, you're as full of 'buts' as a billy-goat!" exclaimed Grundy exasperated. "There's no time to waste; while you're jawing they may go and post the letter."

"I know; but—"

"They're doing their prep now. I think, but they may go and post it to make sure of the collection. Get a move on!"

"But—"

"Don't you know any other word but 'but'!" shrieked Grundy. "What are you wasting time for?"

"I'm jolly well not going to fight Talbot!" snorted Wilkins, getting it out at last. "I haven't any row with Talbot. I like Talbot."

"That's only a detail. You can fight a chap as well as like him, I suppose. I like most of the fellows I've fought with. Besides, you can shake hands with him afterwards, can't you?"

"Yes, but—"

"More blessed 'buts'! Of all the idiots—"

"He'll lick me!" shrieked Wilkins. "He's too tough for me. I'll fight Levison or Mellish if you like."

"That wouldn't do. Tom Merry wouldn't budge an inch if you were fighting Levison. But Talbot's his chum—see?"

"Well, I've got a better idea. You go and fight Talbot, and I'll nip into the study and see about the 'Weekly'."

"I couldn't trust you with my copy; you'd make a bungle of it. Besides, why shouldn't you fight Talbot? Are you afraid of getting hurt?"

"Well, do you think I want to be hurt, you blithering cuckoo?"

"If you're funking—"

"It ain't funking, I suppose, not to want to fight a chap I like, for the special purpose of getting my nose bashed in, you silly ass!"

"It's the only way. But if you funk it, Gunn can take it on."

"Wilkins could do it better than I could," said Gunn anxiously. "Wilkins is a better boxer."

"I ain't!" growled Wilkins.

"Well, you always said you were. You've said so lots of times."

"Well, you never admitted it before."

"I admit it now," said Gunn hastily. "You're better—much better—far and away better."

"Look here—"

"You're wasting time, Wilkins. I should think you might do a little thing like that for a pal," said Grundy.

"I know jolly well that if you don't back me up I'm not going to have you in my study."

"Your study! Why, it was my study before you came to St. Jim's!" yelled Wilkins. "And I jolly well wish you'd stayed at Redclyffe!"

Grundy pushed back his cuffs in a businesslike manner. Wilkins eyed him very uneasily.

"What are you up to?" he demanded.

"I'm going to fight you," said Grundy calmly.

"You—you—you're going to f-f-fight me!" stuttered Wilkins, backing away round the study table.

"Yes. Come on!"

"B-b-but what f-f-for?"

"Because you don't back me up. If you're going to the GEM LIBRARY—No. 350.

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muck up my scheme for dishing those rotters you're going to fight me. Put up your paws!"

"I—I—I say, I'll—I'll fight Talbot if you like!" stammered Wilkins. "I suppose I may as well fight him as you. But I think you're a silly idiot!"

"Well, get a move on, then. He's in the common-room."

"I—I say, suppose we try something else? Suppose we give an alarm of Zeppelins; that'll bring 'em out fast enough."

"It's against the law to spread false alarms of Zeppelins. Besides, I don't approve of telling crams. I'm surprised at you, George Wilkins!"

"Perhaps you wouldn't be so jolly particular if you were going to stand up to Talbot's straight left!" hooted Wilkins. "Look here, how can I march into the common-room and begin fighting with a chap I'm on good terms with? That's not reasonable."

"That's all right. Call him names!"

"Eh?"

"Then he'll fight you fast enough. Tell him he's a slacker."

"But he ain't a slacker. Besides," added Wilkins, "I don't approve of telling crams any more than you do."

"Tell him you don't like the way he does his back hair, then!" howled Grundy. "Tell him any old thing, and hit him in the eye. Then he's bound to fight you."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"I'll come and pick up the pieces, old chap!" said Gunn comfortingly.

"For goodness' sake get a move on!" said Grundy. "Here, I'll come to the common-room with you, and start you fighting. I can see I've got to manage everything. I wonder how this study would get on without me?"

"A jolly good deal better, I think!" growled Wilkins. "Are you coming?"

"Oh, yes, I'm coming!"

Wilkins sulkily followed Grundy from the study, and the sympathetic Gunn brought up the rear. Wilkins was not in the slightest degree enthusiastic, but the determined and heavy-handed George Alfred had his way. George Alfred was generally admired and esteemed by his study-mates, but at that moment Wilkins would not have wept if George Alfred had been bombed by a Zeppelin. While the Terrible Three, in unsuspecting security, were grinding through their preparation in their study, Grundy & Co. proceeded to the common-room.

Talbot of the Shell was there, talking cricket with Kangaroo and Clifton Dane. Grundy marched the reluctant Wilkins up to him.

"Here, Talbot—"

"Hallo!" said Talbot.

"Wilkins has got a bone to pick with you."

Talbot looked at Wilkins in surprise.

"Anything the matter?" he asked, good-naturedly.

"No!" mumbled Wilkins. "I—I mean yee—ow!" he added, as Grundy stamped on his foot.

"Well, what is it?"

"I—I don't know! I—I mean, you're a slacker!"

"What?"

"I—I—I'm going to fight you!" stammered Wilkins.

"What the dickens are you going to fight me for?" exclaimed Talbot, in astonishment.

"Because—because—"

"Hit him in the eye, you idiot!" whispered Grundy fiercely.

He gave the unhappy Wilkins a shove, which sent him staggering fairly upon Talbot. Wilkins, feeling that he was in for it, hit out blindly, and caught Talbot's nose with his knuckles. Talbot uttered a sharp ejaculation: the blow was unconsciously hard, and his nose spurted red. He promptly hit out in return, and Wilkins gave a yell.

"Go it!" roared Grundy.

"Pile in!" encouraged Gunn.

"Hallo! What's the row?" exclaimed Blake.

"Bai-Jove! What's the maffah?"

"Make a ring!" shouted Grundy. "Wilkins is going to have it out with Talbot. Cut off, Gunn!" he added, in a whisper.

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OUR COMPANION "THE BOYS' FRIEND," "THE MAGNET," "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. COMPLETE LIBRARY.

PAPERS: Every Monday, Every Friday.

Gunny cut off. In the midst of a surprised and excited circle of juniors, Wilkins and Talbot were fighting at last.

CHAPTER 7.

Quite a Success.

TOM MERRY jumped as his study door was burst open, and Gunn's excited face looked in.

"You're wanted!" gasped Gunn.

"What on earth's the matter?"

"Zeppelins!" yawned Lowther.

"Talbot's in a fight, and you're to be his second," said Gunn.

"Talbot! Who on earth's Talbot fighting with?" exclaimed Tom Merry, in surprise.

Talbot of the Shell was one of the most peaceable fellows in the School House, as well as one of the most tremendous fighting men.

"Wilkins! I'm backing up Wilkins! You'd better go and back up Talbot! He's getting it awful hot."

Gunn dashed off without another word. The Terrible Three were after him in a twinkling. Preparation was forgotten. Talbot of the Shell was their best chum, and if he was in a fight, naturally, they wanted to be on the spot at once.

Gunn and Tom Merry and Mannors and Lowther vanished downstairs at top speed. They had barely vanished when Grundy came along the passage.

Grundy was grinning.

His little scheme was working like magic—with painful and deplorable results to his unfortunate chum Wilkins; but that could not be helped.

Grundy whipped into the study and closed the door.

To untie the brown-paper parcel and open the proofs was the work of a few seconds.

With a ruthless hand Grundy confiscated Tom Merry's leading article, Monty Lowther's comic column, and the instalment of the "Horrid Hun; or, the Imperial Poisoner," Figgins's dramatic serial.

He crumpled up the sheets, and shoved them hastily into his pocket to be destroyed later.

Then he produced the valuable copy of "Licking the Germans," and introduced it into the vacant place.

With great care he pinned the written sheets among the printed ones.

There was nothing to excite Mr. Tiper's suspicions when he received the paper. The schoolboy editors frequently indulged in second thoughts, which are proverbially the best, and introduced improvements in the proofs, sometimes to the extent of two or three pages. Perhaps Grundy's remarkable orthography might make the printer smile. But when he received the proofs back he would proceed to print the "Weekly" as he received it, there was no doubt about that.

Grundy was really being very deep.

The change in the proofs effected, he retied the packet, taking great care to give it exactly the same appearance as before.

In ten minutes it was done, and the packet, addressed to Mr. Tiper at the office of the "Rylcombe Times," lay on the table, showing no sign whatever that it had been interfered with.

Grundy chuckled, and tiptoed out of the study.

The passage was deserted. All the fellows had rushed downstairs at the news of the fight, and the common-room was crowded.

"Done in the eye!" murmured Grundy. "Now they can post it as soon as they like, the rotters! This will be a real treat for the readers, when they get the 'Weekly.' I dare say Tom Merry will realise that he can't afford to leave out a contributor like me, when he sees the reception my story will get. By Jove! I wonder how old Wilkins is getting on."

Grundy strolled away to the common-room to see how old Wilkins was getting on. To judge by his looks, when Grundy arrived, old Wilkins was getting on badly.

Old Wilkins lay on the floor, and Blake of the Fourth was counting.

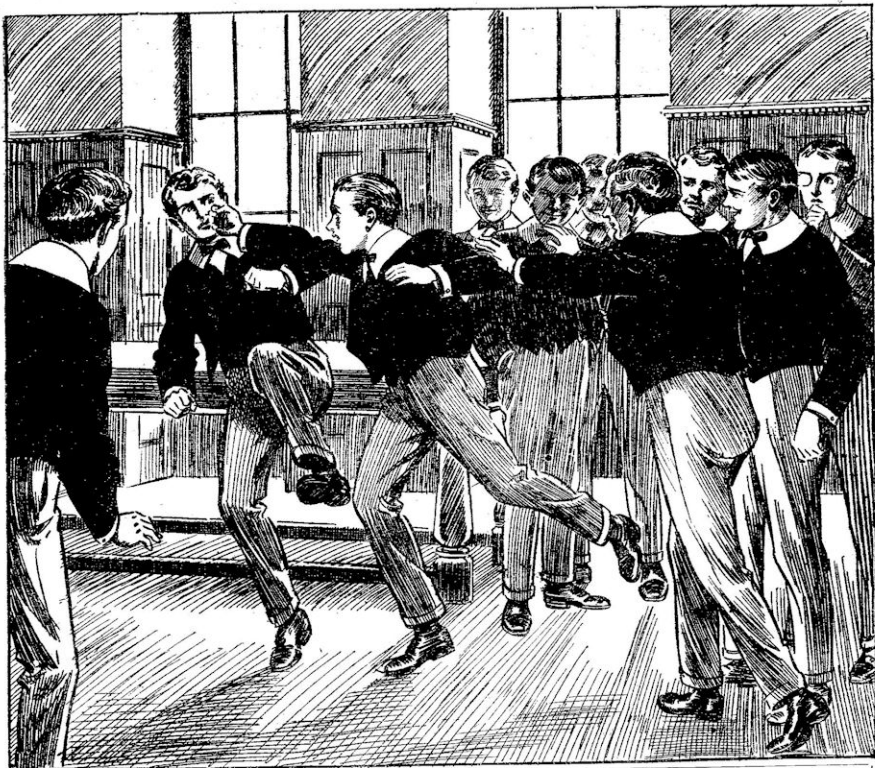
"One, two, three, four, five—"

"Get a move on, Wilkins, old man!" said Grundy.

Wilkins groaned.

"Ow! Yow! I'm done!"

"OHUCKLES," 10,
Every Saturday, 2



"Hit him in the eye, you idiot," whispered Grundy fiercely. He gave the unhappy Wilkins a shove, which sent him staggering fairly upon Talbot. Wilkins, feeling that he was in for it, hit out blindly, and caught Talbot's nose with his knuckles. (See Chapter 6.)

"Oh, you've got another round left in you!" said Grundy encouragingly. "Never say die, you know!" Talbot smiled. His nose was a little swollen, but otherwise he showed few signs of the combat. But Wilkins showed many.

"Six, seven, eight, nine," went on Blake's voice.

"Buck up, Wilkins!"

"Play up, old man!"

"Groooogh!" was Wilkins's only reply.

"OUT!" said Blake.

Gunn picked up his principal. Wilkins was helped to a chair, and he sat and blinked and gasped. He could only blink with one eye. The other was hermetically sealed. With his one available eye, he blinked reproach at Grundy.

"Look at me!" he gasped.

"Well, you do look a picture," said Grundy.

"Yow! You blessed idiot—you fatheaded rotter—ow!"

Talbot quietly put on his jacket. The fight had fortunately passed off without any inquisitive prefect looking into the common-room, or there might have been trouble for all concerned.

"Now what was it all about?" asked Tom Merry.

Talbot shook his head.

"Don't ask me! I haven't the faintest idea."

"But you know what you've been fighting Wilkins for!" exclaimed Manners.

"Oh, yes—because he punched my nose!" said Talbot, laughing. "But I don't know why he did it, unless he's gone off his rocker!"

"What did you fight Talbot for, Wilkins?"

"Yow!"

"What do you mean by it, you fathead?"

"Wow!"

"You jolly well deserved a good licking, you thumping ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly.

"Woooop!"

"Bai Jove, and the silly duffah's got it!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegard you as a wank idiot, Wilkins, deah boy."

"Grooooh!"

Grundy and Gunn helped the unfortunate Wilkins away. They took him to a bath-room and bathed his eyes and his nose for him. Then they helped him to the study, and he collapsed into the armchair, and groaned deeply. Wilkins felt as if he had been fighting a motor-car or a threshing-machine at close quarters.

"Buck up, old chap!" said Grundy comfortingly.

"It's gone off rippingly. I've dishied them a treat!"

Wilkins groaned.

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

"They can't possibly smell a rat, and my ripping story will come out in the 'Weekly,' you know."

Groom!

"It was worth while getting a tap or two on the chivvy, wasn't it?"

"Not on my chivvy," groaned Wilkins. "Oh, my eye! Oh, my nose! If I didn't feel so used up I'd get up and brain you with the poker! Ow! Ow!"

"Some fellows are never satisfied," said Grundy irritably. "Here we've dished those rotters a treat, done them fairly in the eye, and you're grumbling. I'm really surprised at you, Wilkins. I can't see anything to complain about."

Groom! Wilkins could see a lot to complain about, though he had only one eye to see with at present.

Meanwhile, the Terrible Three had gone back to their study to finish their preparation. Tom Merry uttered an exclamation as he caught sight of the packet still lying on the table.

"My hat! I forgot the 'Weekly'!" he exclaimed. "I'll cut off with this at once."

And he cut off with it, and the packet was safely dropped into the letter-box.

CHAPTER 8. A Burnt Offering.

GRUNDY of the Shell waited eagerly for the "Weekly" to make its appearance.

Tom Merry & Co. were all looking forward to seeing that new number, which they had produced with so much trouble and patience. But Grundy of the Shell was looking forward with the keenest anticipation.

The paper was to be delivered from the printer's on Saturday afternoon—fifty copies nicely printed and pinned. "Tom Merry's Weekly" was a real artistic production, and they had reason to be proud of it. Grundy's belief was that they would have much more reason than usual to be proud of that number.

The big parcel from the printer arrived at last, and the juniors gathered in the common-room to open it. Every fellow who had so much as two lines in the "Weekly" was there, and they crowded round as Tom Merry cut the string of the parcel.

The copies of the "Weekly" were handed out on all sides, and fellows opened them eagerly to get at their own valuable lucubrations.

Then there was a sudden wild yell from Monty Lowther. He was the first to make that dreadful discovery. He had opened the number at his page, to gloat once more over his ripping jokes. But alas for his ripping jokes! Long ago those ripping jokes had vanished in smoke in Grundy's study grate. But in the place of them was something that was perhaps quite as funny as Lowther's comicities.

"In the dedly shaid of the night, the vile Jermans kept forward. Depe silence rained on the scen. Suddenly there was the crack of a ryfie. 'Ach!' ejaculated the beastly Jermans captain. 'Turn on the poison gas.'"

"What the howling thunder!" yelled Monty Lowther. "What's this? What's that! What the blue thunder has happened to the paper?"

Tom Merry's voice answered, in infuriated tones: "Where's my leading article? What's this? How did this awful rot get in, in the place of my leading article?"

Tom Merry could scarcely believe his eyes. Instead of that article which had cost him so much thought and ink, this was what met his eye:

"The Brittish troupes eyed forward at topp spede. With gleaming bayonets, they rushed upon the foe. Squeeling like pigs, wich they are, and everybody knows it, the vile Jermans turned and rann."

Meanwhile, Figgins of the Fourth stood thunderstruck. Naturally, he had looked first to see the instalment of his war serial: "The Horrid Hun; or, the Imperial Poisoner." In that instalment Figgins had stated his plain, unvarnished opinion of Kaiser Bill & Co. in the plainest, most unvarnished language. There were also thrilling deeds of daring described, hair's-breadth escapes, and so forth, in the well-known literary style

of Figgins. But the war instalment was vanished as completely as the snow of yester-year.

This is what he read, instead of his own splendid yarn: "Hye in the skis saled the foot moon. Her glorious life was sheed on hill and dail. It shonn on the sloping kampf, and on the vile, dirty forms of beastly Jermans stretched in slumber. In his tent sat the grate War-Lord alone. The Kayser was slepeless. 'Ach!' he muttered, as he clenched his boney hand. 'Defect—always defect, and yet agane defect.'"

Figgins rubbed his eyes and looked again.

This was apparently a war story, but it certainly wasn't his war story. Figgins was not strong on spelling, but he could not have spelt like that to save his life. Spelling like that was a gift of nature that Figgins did not possess.

There was a chuckle from the contributors whose contributions had not been interfered with.

Some of them seemed to regard the matter as funny.

But the outraged editors did not regard it as funny. They were furious.

"It's Grundy!" gasped Tom Merry. "Look at the title—Licking the Jermans, by George Alfred Grundy. How did he shove it in?"

"That villain Tiper must have let him!" howled Lowther.

"Bai Jove! You duffahs must have let him get at the pwoofs," said Arthur Augustus. "Fortunately, my poem on Heligoland is heah all wight. If you fellows would care to heah it, I will—"

"The rotter!"

"The spoofer!"

"The cheicky villain!"

"Where is he? I'm going to scalp him!"

"I'm going to slaughter him!"

Grundy of the Shell came in cheerfully. He wanted to see the "Weekly," naturally—that ripping number which for once had a good story in it.

"Hallo, I see you've got it!" he remarked affably. "Hand me a copy, will you? I dare say you've noticed that there's some good stuff in this number."

"You cheicky rotter—"

"You fathead! You've ruined the whole number! We can't let anybody see this!" roared Tom Merry.

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Grundy warmly. "Now that it's done, it's no good grumbling. I really did this as much for your sakes as anything else. It's time there was something good in the paper."

"Something good! Oh, scissors!"

"Something good! You fendish ass!" shrieked Lowther.

"What have you done with my comic column?"

"Well, something had to go," said Grundy. "I thought I'd take out the rottenest contributions."

There was a chuckle from some quarters, but Monty Lowther did not join in it. The contributors whose work had been untouched felt that they had to admit that Grundy had exercised a certain amount of judgment.

"If any fellow wants Lowther's jokes he can have them," went on Grundy. "I've got a lot of old numbers of 'Chuckles.' You'll find 'em all there."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you rotter!" raged Lowther. "Every blessed one was original. There might be slight resemblances—superficial resemblances!"

"There were!" said Grundy.

"And what about my serial?" shouted Figgins.

"Well, I've put in a better one," said Grundy. "What are you grumbling at? I dare say you fellows feel a bit ratty, but you must admit that I told you I wouldn't stand any rot. Read my story, and judge for yourselves. That's all I ask. Read it, and you'll see how it bucks up the paper to have a good story in it at last."

"Read it!" stuttered Lowther. "I wouldn't be found dead reading it!"

"Well, it's a bit above you, I dare say," remarked Grundy.

"The whole number's ruined!" said Tom Merry. "Get them together—we can't let them be seen. We shall have to burn the lot—"

"Burn them!" ejaculated Grundy.

"Every one!" said Tom Merry. "My hat! If anybody

saw the paper with that silly piffle in it, we should be laughed to death. We'll get back the proofs from Tiper, and reproduce the number. We shall have to pay over again for the printing, but it can't be helped. And we'll jolly well scrag that howling ass for putting us to the trouble."

"Lynch him!" hissed Lowther.

The editors rapidly gathered together all the copies of the "Weekly." They were very anxious that not a single number should remain in existence, to bring ridicule upon the school magazine.

Grundy appeared thunderstruck. Certainly, he had never foreseen anything like that. He could not get his voice for some moments, so intense was his indignation. But he found it at last.

"You fatheads!" he roared. "You can't! You shan't! Do you think I'm going to have my splendid story squashed like this, after all the trouble I've taken. Why, I'll pulverise you—I'll—I'll—yow-ow—leggo—ugh! Oh!"

"Make him do the burning!" said Blake.

"Hear, hear!"

Grundy, struggling and roaring, was dragged to the grate. There was no fire there that warm summer day. But a fire was soon going. Monty Lowther set a match to a copy of the "Weekly," and tossed it into the grate.

"Now keep it going, Grundy."

"I won't!" roared Grundy. "You're not going to burn my story. I think even your rotten jealousy might stop short of that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shove 'em in, Grundy!"

"I won't!"

"Got a pin? Now, then—"

"Yaroooh!" Grundy of the Shell uttered a fendish yell as half an inch of pin ran into him. "Stoppit! Oh, crums!"

"Hold him!"

Grundy needed holding; he was struggling with terrific energy. But a dozen pairs of hands were upon him—his arms, his legs, his ears, his hair, and his nose, were all seized in iron grips. He had no chance. The editors and sub-editors did not handle him gently.

"Now shove that rot in the fire!" rapped out Tom Merry.

"Yow! I won't! Groooh!"

"Give him the pin!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Now, then—"

"Yow! Stoppit! Yooop! I—I—I'll burn 'em if you like!" howled Grundy.

"Go it, then, sharp!"

One hand was released for Grundy to feed the fire. He fed it. In horrified apprehension of another lunge of the pin, he fed the fire with copy after copy of the "Weekly." One after another, fifty copies of that famous journal were consigned to the flames, and Grundy's face was ruddy and smoky, and streaming with perspiration by the time the burnt offering was complete. "Licking the Germans" had vanished as completely as Lowther's jokes, Piggy's serial, and Tom Merry's leading article, now. That splendid war-story was destined never to burst upon an astonished and delighted St. Jim's!

"Now hold him!" said Lowther. "He's contributed to the 'Weekly,' and now we'll contribute the 'Weekly' to him!"

Lowther took up a handful of the burnt ashes of the "Weekly," and lathered Grundy's perspiring face with it. The unfortunate contributor was soon looking like a Christy Minstrel. Lowther rubbed the burnt paper over his face, into his hair, and down his neck. Grundy wriggled feebly, and mumbled. But he could do nothing more. He had to go through it.

Then, with one accord, the editorial staff kicked him out of the common-room. And Grundy had not a wriggle left in him by the time he escaped down the passage.

CHAPTER 9.

A New Idea.

"TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY" came out the following week.

It was a very satisfactory number.

The editorial staff had had a lot of extra work to do, owing to George Alfred Grundy's, but, needless to say, they had taken particular care of the proofs this time, and Grundy had no chance of inserting any part of that telling war-story, "Licking the Germans."

The "Weekly" came out, and was voted a great success by everybody but George Alfred Grundy. Grundy was dissatisfied. But he was not beaten. His study-mates condoned with him. Wilkins had recovered from his disastrous fight with Talbot, and was chummy again—all the more as Grundy had lately had a whacking remittance from his Uncle Grundy.

"It's hard cheese," said Wilkins sympathetically. "Your story would have bucked the paper up no end, of—of—course. But there you are."

"There you are," concurred Gunn.

"It's jealousy," said Grundy. "I've got rather a good opinion of that chap Merry on some points. But there's a lot of jealousy in his nature. You've seen the way he keeps me out of the junior eleven."

"H'm!"

"It's the same with the school paper as with the eleven—he's determined not to be put in the shade by a chap who can do better. I dare say he hardly realises how mean it is," added Grundy generously. "Fellows act like this without thinking, you know. I don't like thinking badly of any chap, and that fellow Merry is decent in many ways—I will say that. But, of course, I'm not going to take any notice of his rot. I'm going into the number next week."

"Next week?" repeated Wilkins.

"Yes, rather."

"But will there be a number next week?"

"I suppose so. It's a weekly, ain't it?"

Wilkins grinned.

"But it only comes out once in a blue moon," he said. "There won't be a number next week or the week after, you bet."

"My hat! Then they've regularly dished me!" ejaculated Grundy.

"Looks like it, old chap."

Bang!

Grundy brought his fist down on the table. It was a little way he had when he was excited. The table danced, and Wilkins and Gunn jumped.

"The rotters! My hat! I never thought of that, you know," said Grundy. "I'd fully made up my mind to wangle the next number somehow. Dished, by gum!"

Tap!

"Oh, come in, fathead!" growled Grundy.

Levison opened the door and looked in. Grundy greeted him with a frown. He did not like Levison, and did not approve of him. Grundy never made any secret of his likes and dislikes. If he did not approve of a fellow, that fellow was never left in any doubt on the subject.

"Well, what do you want?" snapped Grundy. "Have you come to propose another burglary, you worm?"

Levison coughed.

"I've got an idea to tell you, Grundy, old man."

"Go and bury it!"

"They've done you on the 'Weekly,'" said Levison.

"Get out!"

"You'll never have a chance on Tom Merry's paper, you know," urged Levison.

"I know there's a conspiracy to keep me in the shade," snapped Grundy. "But I'm not the kind of fellow to be kept in the shade. I'll jolly well show some of 'em that before long, too!"

"I'll tell you what, Grundy—"

"Oh, rats!"

Grundy's manner was not encouraging. But Levison did not seem to mind. Hard words break no bones, and Levison had an axe to grind.

"The fact is," he pursued, "you ought to be editor, Grundy."

Grundy thawed a little.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 399.

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

ANSWERS

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"A CAPTURED CHUM!"

"Of course I ought," he agreed. "But it's no good telling those chaps that. They know it, for one thing."

"Why not cut them out?"

"Eh?"

"Put 'em right in the shade," said Levison. "Knock their rotten paper sky-high!"

"How?" demanded Grundy.

"Start a rival weekly."

Grundy simply jumped.

With all his ambitious ponderings on the subject, that idea had never occurred to him. As a matter of fact, ideas did not come very easily to George Alfred. His powerful brain worked slowly.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Grundy.

"You see," pursued Levison eagerly, "that would give 'em the kybosh. You'd get a lot of followers among the chaps who can't get into the 'Weekly.'"

"I shouldn't want Tom Merry's leavings," said Grundy, frowning.

"But he leaves out the best writers; you know—ahem!—in your own case."

"Yes, that's true enough."

"You could make it a point, too, that your 'Weekly' comes out weekly, and not once in a blue moon, like 'Tom Merry's Weekly.' You've got lots of tin, and you could afford it. And if you pay all the exes yourself, you'll run the paper exactly how you like, you know."

"By gum!"

"I'll sub-edit for you," said Levison modestly. "Between us we'll knock their rotten weekly right out of the ring."

"Blessed if I ever thought you had so much sense, Levison," said Grundy, with growing enthusiasm. "It's a stunning idea. I wonder I never thought of it before. I generally think of good things. What do you think, Wilkins?"

"Hum!" said Wilkins.

"I happen to have plenty of tin just now, too," said Grundy. "No difficulty on that point."

"Hum!" said Gunn.

As a matter of fact, Wilkins and Gunn had been planning a half-holiday in a motor-car, with a picnic, on the strength of George Alfred's latest remittance.

Levison's suggestion had come inopportunistically, so far as they were concerned.

"Don't you think it's a good idea?" demanded Grundy warmly. "Don't you think I could edit a paper?"

"Ahem! Yes, of course. But—"

"We'll work at it on Wednesday afternoon," said Grundy. "We'll put in the whole half-holiday on it."

"Oh, will we, by Jove?"

"Yes, we will!" roared Grundy.

"What about that little run in the car we were speaking of?" hinted Gunn. "And—and the picnic, you know."

"Blow the car and hang the picnic! We've got business on hand now. I shall want you fellows to contribute. I'll make you sub-editors. I'll put your stories in—see? Of course, I shall have to look over 'em, and see that they're quite up to the mark, and correct the spelling, and all that."

"Oh, my word!"

"It's a go!" said Grundy. "Now, what shall we call it?"

"But what about that picnic—"

"Don't jaw, old chap! I keep on telling you how you jaw. The question is, what are we going to call the new paper?" said Grundy thoughtfully.

"The St. Jim's Times" would sound rather well. Or 'The School Gazette'? No; I've got it—'Grundy's Weekly'! George Alfred grabbed a pen and a sheet of paper, and began to scrawl. "There you are! 'Grundy's Weekly'—Chief editor, George Alfred Grundy; sub-editors, Wilkins and Gunn!"

"And Levison!" put in the owner of that name.

Grundy shook his head.

"Can't be did, Levison! I'm rather particular about the kind of chap I have on my editorial staff; and, to put it candidly, you're not quite up to the mark. You can send in your stuff, if you like, and I'll give you a chance as a contributor. No; on second thoughts I won't. You're not going to play tricks on me with your blessed acrostics, as you do on the rival paper. Sorry, but there's no room for you on 'Grundy's Weekly' at all."

Levison simply glared. As the whole thing was his idea, it was a little hard to be totally excluded from it in this high-handed way.

"Why, you fathead!" he exclaimed. "You'll make a muck of the whole thing, if you don't have at least one chap with some brains to keep you from making a fool of yourself."

"There's the door, Levison."

"Wasn't it my idea from start to finish?" howled Levison.

"You did make the suggestion—the bare suggestion," said Grundy. "Hardly what you could call your idea, I think; a bare suggestion, which I have developed—in fact, I should have thought of it anyway; I may say I did think of it, only I hadn't exactly worked it out."

"You cheeky ass—"

Grundy rose and picked up a cricket-stump. Levison executed a strategic movement to the door.

"You silly ass! You'll only make a giddy ox of yourself as usual!" he howled, as he departed. "I could have made it a success for you. As for you—"

Levison dodged the stump and fled. Grundy slammed the door after him.

"Cheeky young ass!" he said warmly. "As if I'm going to have any Fourth-Form fags on the staff of my 'Weekly'? I suppose the cheeky young bouncer will go about saying that it was his idea. Some of these fags have nerve enough for anything. I'd better put a notice about this on the board. Let the fellows know what to expect, you know, and give those rotters a hint that envy and jealousy don't pay in the long run. What?"

"Oh, yes," gasped Wilkins. "But what about that picnic on Wednesday—"

"Cheese it!"

"But I say—"

"For goodness' sake give a chap a rest, Wilkins! Blessed if you don't talk like a parrot or the Kaiser. How can I draw up this notice if you keep on burbling?" said Grundy irritably.

Wilkins ceased to burble, and Grundy drew up the notice; and an hour later it was pinned on the notice-board in the hall, to astonish all St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 10. A Rival in the Field.

FOR NEXT WEEK:

A CAPTURED CHUM!

Another Splendid, Long,
Complete Story of
Tom Merry & Co.
at St. Jim's.

—By—

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Order in Advance.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

"G WUNDAY again!"
"My hat!"
"What's the new departure?"

Fellows gathered from far and near to read the new notice on the board. George Alfred Grundy had a way of keeping himself in the public eye. It was not uncommon for a notice to appear on the board in his well-known hand and celebrated spelling. The fellows always read Grundy's notices, which were admitted to be as good as anything in "Chuckles."

But the present notice was more startling than any of Grundy's earlier announcements. As a matter of fact, Grundy, who was a new fellow and really a nobody, had no right to put notices on the board at all. Grundy assumed that right, and he had a four-point-seven punch ready for anybody who disputed it. Quite a crowd gathered in the hall to read over and chuckle over "the latest."

And Arthur Augustus, acting on his own suggestion, proceeded at once to Study No. 8 in the Shell passage, to speak to the new editor.

He tapped at the door and opened it, and a scene of busy confusion met his eye. Grundy was seated at the study table, with a pen in his hand, and written sheets covering the table before him. Wilkins and Gunn were also at work, and their wrinkled brows showed that they were in the throes of composition.

Grundy looked up, and pointed with his pen to the door.

"Haven't you seen the card on the door?" he snapped. Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon a card that was pinned to the door. It bore the familiar legend—in unfamiliar orthography:

"NO ADMITTANCE EXCEPT ON BUSINESS."

Grundy was evidently adopting the manners and customs of the editorial staff of the rival weekly.

"Weally, Gwunday, I wufuse to take any notice of that wotten imitation," said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard you as an ass, Gwunday."

"Travel off, please! You ought to know better than to shove yourself into an editorial office in business hours," said Grundy severely.

"I have seen your notice on the board, Gwunday—"

"Oh, I see! You've come to offer contributions?"

"Weally, Gwunday—"

"Contributions may be sent in, and will be examined later, as time can be spared by the staff."

"You uttah ass—"

"But I may as well say out plainly, D'Arcy, that it isn't any use your sending in anything. The motto of 'Grundy's Weekly' is quality. Your stuff is not quite up to the mark."

"Bai Jove!"

"Your fashion article is utter rot, you know. As for your poem on Heligoland, it would make a cat laugh!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"I'm sorry, but it is an editor's duty to be firm," said Grundy. "I have my readers to consider, you know. The fellows will be expecting something good, and so I cannot palm off trash on them. So I shall be obliged to decline your contributions, D'Arcy."

"You uttah ass!" shouted Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "I have not come heah to offah you contibutions for your sillay wag. I have come to wemonstwat with you. I do not approve of this wubbish appeawin' at all."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grundy.

"What are you cackin' at, you duffah?"

"Oh, buzz off! I'm busy."

"I wufuse to buzz off, Gwunday. I have come here to point out to you—"

"Travel!"

"That this wudiculous weekly will not be allowed to appeah," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "We wufuse to have our papah pawodid in this absurd mannah!"

"I know you'll all feel your blessed noses put out of joint," assented Grundy. "I expect jealousy."

"Jealousy! Bai Jove!"

"And envy!"

"Oh, deah!"

"But it won't make any difference. I never stand any rot. Now buzz off, and you can tell the other duffers that they're going to get the kybosh. I fancy there won't be many readers left for 'Tom Merry's Weekly,' when 'Grundy's Weekly' comes into the field. First-class quality is the motto. I'm going to write most of the stuff myself, to keep it right up to the mark. Good-bye!"

"Look heah, Gwunday—"

"Are you going?" roared Grundy.

"I am not going, I—"

Grundy jumped up and grasped the inkpot. Arthur Augustus jumped back into the passage just in time. He peered cautiously round the doorpost.

"Gwunday, you ass— Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus dodged back just in time to escape a stream of ink. He breathed wrath. But ink was too deadly to be faced. Arthur Augustus feared no foe, but

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he feared for his elegant clobber. He retreated along the passage, and Grundy kicked the door shut after him.

"You can see how they're taking it," he chuckled. "Simply green with jealousy already. What will they say when the 'Weekly' actually comes out—what?"

And Grundy settled down to work again on an extra long, opening instalment of "Licking the Germans," which was to make the first number of "Grundy's Weekly" go like hot cakes.

CHAPTER 11.

Something Like a Weekly.

"GRUNDY'S WEEKLY" attracted quite a lot of attention.

On Wednesday afternoon, Grundy was hard at work on it. He was determined that the first number should be completed that afternoon. Most of the fellows looked forward to seeing the first number. They did not take it seriously. But they were sure that it would be funny, and they were prepared to chuckle over Grundy's editorial efforts.

But the feelings of the numerous editors and sub-editors of "Tom Merry's Weekly" were different. They were exasperated.

It was like Grundy's cheek to bring out a rival paper, anyway. It was their idea to run a junior school paper, and Grundy was borrowing that idea in the most bare-faced manner. But that was not all. The editorial juniors were quite satisfied that the famous "Weekly" could beat all rivals, hands down. It was a fact that "Tom Merry's Weekly" was read by the whole school; while the Sixth-Form magazine had hardly any readers outside the Sixth Form. The staid and solemn columns of the Sixth-Form magazine were not exciting, while the junior editors prided themselves on producing really up-to-date journalism. They beat the Sixth-Form paper, and they had no doubt whatever that they could beat any other rivals.

Their objection to "Grundy's Weekly" was chiefly founded upon the fact that it would be an absurdity, and would bring the whole idea of junior school papers into ridicule. As Tom Merry observed, it would be a heap of idiotic bosh and bad spelling from the first page to the last. Grundy was in the Shell, but his spelling would have disgraced a fag in the Second Form. And that spelling was to be placed on permanent record, in printed pages, as the work of a Shell fellow. It was only too clear how the seniors would grin over it. In the eyes of the school, "Tom Merry's Weekly" and "Grundy's Weekly" would be lumped together, and the famous "mag" would share in the ridicule earned by the egregious Grundy.

As Arthur Augustus indignantly observed, it was a "wotten pawdoy," which would be generally considered as a joke up against the genuine "Weekly," and it was up to the editorial staff to "squash" Grundy at once.

But Grundy was not so easily squashed.

The frowning disapproval of the schoolboy editors only spurred him on. He attributed it simply to jealousy; the same kind of personal jealousy which kept him out of the cricket eleven.

On Wednesday afternoon Tom Merry & Co. were playing cricket, and they dismissed Grundy and his weekly from their minds. But George Alfred was very busy that sunny afternoon.

So were Wilkins and Gunn. Having been appointed sub-editors, they had their sub-editorial duties to carry out, and Grundy saw that they did them.

Somewhat depressed, the two sub-editors stayed in the study, or rather the office, that hot and sunny afternoon, thinking sadly of the motor-car trip and the picnic which were destined not to come off.

They did their best, and loyally backed up their study-leader. But Grundy as an editor was hard to please.

He was a very particular editor, especially on the subject of spelling. He found many faults with his staff on that point.

"This means a lot of work for me," he remarked, as he

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read over Wilkins's "Lines to St. Jim's School, seen from Rylcombe Hill."

It is possible that Wilkins had been reading Gray's celebrated "Lines to Eton College," for his poem began:

"Ye distant spires, ye antique towers!"

However, the rest of the poem did not much resemble Gray. For it went on:

"From this high hill on thee I gaze!
Amid these fields all bright with flowers,
I gaze upon those antique towers,
And think of past and bygone days!"

"What's the matter with that?" asked Wilkins, rather warmly.

Wilkins had spent much mental labour on that poem, and he did not think much of his chief editor as a judge of poetry, anyway.

"It's the spelling," explained Grundy. "You spell antique with a 'q'."

"How do you spell it, then?"

"With a 'k,' of course!"

"Why, you ass—here, what are you doing?"

"Correcting the spelling."

"You fathead! Antique isn't spelt with a 'k.'"

"If you know more about spelling than I do, George Wilkins—"

"Well, I do, if you think that antique is spelt with a 'k.'" howled Wilkins. "And what are you doing now?"

"Putting the 'u' in flowers, of course!"

"You—your fathead!"

"That's all right, Wilkins, old man; you leave it to me. Some chaps are born good spellers," said Grundy. "It really isn't a matter of education at all—it's a kind of gift. I don't brag of it."

"You—you don't brag of it?" stuttered Wilkins.

"Not a bit of it. I can spell—it's one of the things I happen to be able to do, that's all. I've noticed that spelling is generally very bad at this school. Figgins spells German with a 'G,' frinstance."

"Well, it is spelt with a 'G,' isn't it?"

"At this school, I dare say it is!" sneered Grundy.

"At Redclyffe I used to spell it with a 'J.'"

"And weren't you licked for it?"

"Don't be funny, Wilkins, old chap! It doesn't suit you. There, that's all right now."

Wilkins gazed upon his poem, corrected by Grundy, with feelings that were too deep for words.

"Ye distant spires, ye anteeek towers,
From this high hill on thee I gayze,
Amid these feedls all bright with flours,
I gayze upon those anteeek towers,
And think of passed and bigone days."

"You're—you're going to shove it in like that?" gasped Wilkins, at last.

"Of course!"

"The printer won't print it."

"I shall send Mr. Tipper a special note that the spelling is not to be altered in any way. Printers are generally very bad spellers. I've noticed a lot of bad spelling in the daily papers. In the 'Daily Mail,' the other day I saw 'bleed' spelt with a double 'e.'"

"Wasn't that right, you chump?"

"Of course it wasn't! B-L-E-E-D—bleed," said Grundy. "I've noticed the same thing even in our school-books. Bad spelling in pretty nearly everything. But a special characteristic of 'Grundy's Weekly' will be its spelling. It will set an example, you know. A really high-class school-paper, particular on points like that, will have an educational value. I shouldn't be surprised if the Head sends for me and specially thanks me for it."

Wilkins could not reply; he was overcome. The chief editor took up Gunn's manuscript and ran his critical eye over it. Gunn's forte was conundrums, and he had compiled a list of such treasures as:

When is a horse not a horse? When it's afield—a field.
Why did the cowslip? Because she saw the bullrush.
Grundy shook his head.

"We'll put this in," he said. "It will make a sort of comic relief. But I shall have to go over it."

Grundy went over it, with the following result:

When is a hoarse not a hoarse? When it's afeeld.
Why did the cowslip? Because she saw the bullrush.
Gunn resigned himself to his fate. It was no use arguing with Grundy. Grundy was impervious to argument.

Grundy, with so many corrections to make, had plenty to do that afternoon. But he worked on with great industry. By tea-time the first number of "Grundy's Weekly" was complete—more than half of it being filled with a whacking instalment of "Licking the Germans." That ripping story was to see the light at last. Grundy's leading article, in which he slated the rival "Weekly" in the most scathing manner, took up several pages, and Grundy's poem, "Redd War!" filled a page. Then there were his lines to the Kaiser, beginning:

"Tiraat! and buttscher, poysoner too!
Gayze on the work thy Huns have dunn!
Beneeth fair Belljum's skye of blew,
Thy victims lye beneeth the sun!
Gayze on that land once fair to rue,
Think of the crimes upon thy stole,
Think of the vengeance that is dew,
When Hamish lejions-backwards rolc."

There was much more in this stirring strain, and the only pity was that it could never reach the eyes of the All-Highest Hun to whom it was addressed. Then there was a short story, by George Alfred Grundy, entitled: "Foreword to Berlin!" Then a patriotic article, by G. A. Grundy, with the title, "Raly to the Kullors!" Then a comic column, by G. A. G., with such gems as:

"What is the difference between Tom Merry's studdy and a hoam for idiots? Nun."

On the final page appeared the effusions of Wilkins and Gunn, with improvements by G. A. Grundy. Grundy was tired when he was finished, as was only natural after so much literary effort; but he was well satisfied with the afternoon's work. Wilkins and Gunn did not seem so satisfied; but there was no satisfying everybody.

After tea Grundy cycled down to the office of the "Rylcombe Times" to deliver the copy to Mr. Tipper in person and give him particular instructions that his printers were not to interfere with the orthography—a very important point. Having paid in advance for the printing of the number—also an important point—Grundy returned to St. Jim's, assured that the proofs would reach him by Saturday. "Grundy's Weekly" was going strong.

CHAPTER 12.

On the Warpath.

"W HAT is sauce for the goose," remarked Monty Lowther, "is also sauce for the giddy gander."

Monty Lowther made that sapient remark in Tom Merry's study on Saturday as the juniors sat at tea. The chums of the School House had been discussing "Grundy's Weekly." They were aware that Grundy's proofs had arrived, and that George Alfred was busy going over them in his study.

In a few days more the great paper would be out.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's opinion was that something ought to be done. Monty Lowther's opinion was that George Alfred Grundy ought to be done. The rest of the junior editors fully agreed. The only question was, what was to be done, and how was George Alfred to be done?

There was the rub.

Blake had suggested a frontal attack upon Grundy's study, and the destruction of "Grundy's Weekly" by sheer force. But that expedient was a desperate resource, only to be adopted in extremity.

Monty Lowther was thinking it out.

Lowther was specially "up against" "Grundy's Weekly." Grundy had cut out his comicities in "Tom Merry's Weekly" to make room for "Licking the Germans." True, Grundy had suffered for his sins, and the comicities had been restored in all their pristine glory. But Lowther could not pardon that affront. The

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 390.

sacreligious hand that had been laid on his comic column was not to be forgiven.

"What is sauce for the goose——" repeated Lowther. "Yaas, we are aware of that," said Arthur Augustus. "Gwunday had the frightful cheek to muck up our numbah! We are fully entitled to muck up his wotten wubbish in return. Besides, it is our duty."

"But how?" said Tom Merry.

"I've been thinking that out," said Lowther. "We are going to give Grundy some of his own back."

"Hear, hear!"

"But he's on his guard," said Manners. "I looked into his study, and he's got a cricket bat beside him on the table. He's quite ready for us to try to rush his proofs."

"And we can't get at them secretly, as he did at ours," said Tom Merry. "He's too jolly careful for that!"

Lowther nodded.

"He won't even post them; he's so jolly careful," said Blake. "He's going to cycle to Rylcombe and deliver 'em to Tiper personally."

"Votten suspicious beast!"

"But that number's not coming out," said Lowther. "It would make us all look duffers, a fatheaded parody of our 'Weekly' like that!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We've got to nip it in the bud."

"We're all agreed on that," said Tom Merry. "But how's it to be done?"

"Have you ever heard of Dick Turpin?"

"Eh?"

"And Jack Sheppard?"

"What the dickens——"

"We are going to understudy them," said Lowther. "We are going to lay a giddy ambush in the lane, and wait for Grundy to come by. When he comes, we collar him and take the blessed 'Weekly' off him, and I suggest that he be made to eat it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then I think he will be fed-up with 'Grundy's Weekly.'"

"No doubt about that," chuckled Tom Merry. "The silly ass was going to play that very same game on me, only I happened to post my copy. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Come on!"

The chums of the School House finished their tea hastily, and put on their straw hats and sauntered out. George Alfred Grundy was still busy correcting his proofs, and there was plenty of time.

Tom Merry & Co. strolled down the lane, and selected a favourable spot for the ambush.

They took cover among the thick trees along the lane, the Terrible Three on one side of the road and Study No. 6 on the other.

Then they watched for Grundy.

But Grundy's proofs were apparently keeping him. Half an hour passed, and several cyclists passed, but not the cyclist the ambushed juniors were waiting for.

"Bai Jove, he doesn't appear to be comin'!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps the wottah has gone anothah way."

"Oh, he'll come!" said Blake.

"Here comes another bike, anyway," remarked Digby, looking out cautiously into the road.

"Grundy, by George!"

"Look out, you fellows!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus excitedly, as George Alfred was spotted, approaching at a good speed on his bike. "Don't show yourselves in a hurry!"

"Shut up, ass! He'll hear you!" growled Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"Shush!"

"I wufuse to shush, Hewwies! You fellows get weady to wush out as soon as I give the signal."

"Bow-wow!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Here he comes! Keep back, Gussy!"

"I am keepin' back, Blake. He cannot see me behind this tree."

"Your topper's showing, fathead!" hissed Blake, jerking back the swell of St. Jim's. "What did you put

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on a topper for, you dummy? Do you think Dick Turpin went out Turpin in a topper?"

"He's slowing down!" growled Herries. "He's seen Gussy's topper, and smelt a rat!"

"Wata!"

Grundy of the Shell had slackened down, and his eyes were fixed upon the point among the trees by the road-side where the chums of Study No. 6 were in cover. It was clear enough that he was upon his guard, and had spotted the ambush.

"Come on!" muttered Blake.

"Pway don't alarm him by showin' yourself too soon, Blake!"

"Ass! He's alarmed already! Follow your leader!"

Blake sprang out into the road and rushed swiftly towards the cyclist. His chums followed him fast, and the Terrible Three leaped out of the trees on the other side of the road.

The cyclist did not stop. He whirled his machine round in the lane. The juniors were not a dozen yards away from him, and they put on a desperate spurt to reach him.

But Grundy had his machine round now, and was driving at the pedals with terrific force.

"Stop, you wottah!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Stop, you beast!"

"After him!"

Tom Merry & Co. ran desperately. Arthur Augustus stumbled on a stone, and went flying. Blake crashed over him as he rolled over, and there was a wild yell from Arthur Augustus and a deadly crunch from his topper. Blake had clumped fairly on top of it.

"Yawwo! Oh, cwumbs!"

"Oh, you fathead!"

Grundy looked back, and waved his hand. He was getting up speed now, and the juniors on foot were hopelessly beaten. Tom Merry slacked down, panting.

"N.G.!" he gasped.

Grundy, chucking, vanished round a corner—to proceed by another and safer route to Mr. Tiper's office in Rylcombe.

The disappointed juniors gathered round Arthur Augustus, who was sitting in the dust, striving to get his breath. He was also regarding his crunched topper with a mournful gaze.

"Got away!" howled Monty Lowther. "You Fourth-Form fatheads, what did you let that silly ass hang out his topper as a warning for?"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Oh, bump him!"

"I wufuse to be bumped! I wegard you—— Yawwoh! You howrid wuffians! Leggo! Yow-ow! Yawwooop!"

The amateur Dick Turpin and Jack Sheppards, whose imitation of those old masters had been such a lamentable failure, tramped away morosely to St. Jim's, leaving Arthur Augustus gasping spasmodically, and struggling with his crunched topper, which Lowther had jammed down over his noble nose before departing.

An hour later Grundy wheeled in his bicycle at the school gates, and grinned cheerfully at the sight of Tom Merry & Co. in the quad. The last attempt to "muck up" "Grundy's Weekly" had failed, and George Alfred felt that he had scored.

The "Weekly" was safe in Mr. Tiper's hands now, and the finished copies were to be delivered at St. Jim's in due course. Everything in the garden, from G. A. Grundy's point of view, was lovely.

But was it? Monty Lowther was thinking again.

CHAPTER 13.

Monty Lowther Does the Trick.

"I SUPPOSE I can use the telephone, Kildare?"

Monty Lowther made that remark to the captain of St. Jim's after lessons on Monday morning. The telephone in the prefects' room was sometimes used by the juniors, but permission had to be obtained. But Kildare of the Sixth was always good natured.

"Something awfully important—what?" he asked, with a smile.

"Well, I want to speak to Mr. Tiper—the chap who prints our paper, you know," explained Lowther.

Kildare nodded.

"Right-ho!"

"Thanks awfully!"

Kildare was just going out, and the prefects' room was deserted. Monty Lowther had chosen his moment carefully. He did not want his little talk with Mr. Tipper to be overheard.

Tom Merry and Manners followed him into the prefects' room, looking somewhat mystified. That Lowther had some scheme on hand they could guess, but they could not guess what it was.

It was a final attempt upon Grundy's egregious "Weekly"—the last throw of the dice, as it were.

Lowther unhooked the receiver, and asked for his number.

"What's the little game?" asked Tom.

"You'll see. Three Rylcombe," said Lowther into the receiver.

Lowther had to wait a few minutes for his number. He had interrupted an important consultation about summer hats at the exchange. However, he was given his number at last.

"Office of the Rylcombe Times?" asked Lowther.

"That Mr. Tipper speaking?"

"Yes."

"How are you getting on with my paper?"

"Eh?"

"This is St. Jim's."

"Oh! Master Grundy?"

"How are you getting on with my weekly, Mr. Tipper?"

Monty Lowther was a truthful youth. Nothing would have induced him to assert that he was Grundy. If Mr. Tipper chose to assume that he was, that was evidently Mr. Tipper's business. True, from the way Lowther worded his remarks, it was hardly possible for Mr. Tipper to assume anything else.

"It will be printed this afternoon, Master Grundy, and delivered on Tuesday, as we have arranged."

"The printing hasn't started yet?"

"Not yet."

"Good?"

"You wish to make some further alterations in the proofs, Master Grundy? That will delay the delivery, of course."

"Supposing the alterations are made at once, you could get on with the printing this afternoon just the same?"

"Yes, if they are made before two o'clock."

"H'm! After lessons wouldn't do?"

"Not if the paper is to be delivered to-morrow morning."

"Well, I'll get a chap to come down for me. It isn't always easy to get away, you know, but I'll send a chap down."

"Very well."

"I'll get Lowther to come," said Monty Lowther cheerfully. "Do you know Lowther—a chap in the shell here?"

"Yes, Master Lowther has been down to see me sometimes about the other school paper."

"Well, I'm sending him. He'll come down on his bike before two o'clock, and put in the alterations I want."

"Very well, Master Grundy. You will not require further proofs to be sent after the alterations are made."

"Oh, no! The fact is, I've changed my mind a good deal about the paper, and I want to bring it out on rather unique lines. But there won't be any need of fresh proofs. Lowther will go over the paper, and cut out all I want left out, and put in what I want put in. Then you can go ahead with the printing."

"Very well."

"Thank you, Mr. Tipper. Good-bye."

Lowther rang off.

"That job's jobbed!" he remarked. "Tipper seemed to think I was Grundy, didn't he? Queer ideas people get into their heads sometimes, don't they?"

"Why, you made him think so," said Manners.

"I'm sure I didn't say so. However, he jumped to that conclusion, for some reason. Dangerous thing to jump to conclusions," said Lowther, with a shake of the head. "Now, when I go down to Tipper's office he will think that I'm sent specially by Grundy, and won't have a suspicion."

"But what—?"

"And he won't think the alterations I am going to make any funnier than Grundy's spelling, most likely."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lowther looked at his watch.

"I'd better get off," he remarked. "I've got a good bit to do, proof-correcting and so on, in Mr. Tipper's office. Ta-ta!"

"But what are you going to do?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Improve 'Grundy's Weekly' for him. You admit that it needs some improvement."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Well, I'm going to improve it. This is really philanthropy on my part. I do these things out of kindness of heart. But I must get off. I shouldn't like old Grundy to be disappointed about getting his paper to-morrow morning."

And Lowther walked away for his bicycle, and was soon speeding down to Rylcombe, with a smiling face.

He returned just in time for afternoon lessons, and he was still smiling when he came into the Form-room.

Apparently the alterations and improvements in "Grundy's Weekly" had been made to the satisfaction of the humorist of the Shell.

George Alfred Grundy remained in blissful ignorance of those alterations and improvements. Once the proofs were safe in Mr. Tipper's office, Grundy had no further fears for his "Weekly." The Machiavellian deepness of Monty Lowther was not suspected by George Alfred, neither had the many uses of that great modern invention, the telephone, dawned upon him.

George Alfred was anticipating the morrow with complete satisfaction.

After morning lessons the first number of "Grundy's Weekly" was to be delivered; fifty nicely-printed copies of it, and then—according to Grundy—"Tom Merry's Weekly" was to get the "kybosh." According to Grundy, the old weekly would be put so much into the shade by the new weekly, that its editors would hardly care to produce it again.

It would be, in fact, totally driven from the field by the rival weekly, and "Grundy's Weekly" would reign in its stead.

Naturally, Grundy was in a mood of satisfaction. When the Shell went up to their dormitory that night Grundy observed that the Terrible Three were smiling, and Grundy snorted.

Like the gentleman in the old comedy, who was sure that certain persons were speaking about him, because they "laughed consensually," Grundy was assured that the smiles of the Terrible Three were on his account.

"You can cackle!" he snapped.

"Thanks!" said Monty Lowther. "We will. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You wait till you see my 'Weekly'!" jeered Grundy. "I fancy you won't have the cheek to publish your rag again after it, though I must say some fellows have nerve enough for anything."

"They have!" chuckled Lowther.

"Oh, rats!"

Grundy grunted and turned in. He could afford to wait till the morrow, when the schoolboy editors would be completely crushed. With "Grundy's Weekly" going like hot cakes, and all the school struggling for copies, and Grundy's literary work praised on all sides, and perhaps attracting a word of commendation from the Head himself—surely, then, the rival editors would have sense enough to hide their diminished heads.

But Grundy was generous. He meant to crush the "Weekly"—that was strictly necessary. But when the "Weekly" had been knocked out of existence, George Alfred intended to take on Tom Merry's staff, and let



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them contribute to the victorious paper. Of course, he would have to go over their contributions, and improve and touch them up here and there, especially in the matter of spelling. But he would give them all a chance; he had generously made up his mind on that.

CHAPTER 14. Out-Grundy'ing Grundy!

THE next day there was a general air of anticipation about quite a number of the juniors of St. Jim's.

Grundy was specially anticipative.

His "Weekly" was coming home that morning, and when lessons—an awful bore, lessons, at such a time—when lessons were over, the great paper would be in his hands, and would be distributed to an admiring school.

Already, in his mind's eye, Grundy saw the rush for the paper, saw fellows craning over one another's shoulders to peruse the precious copies, and in his mind's ear, so to speak, he could hear fellows reading out "Licking the Jermans" to thrilled and awe-stricken groups of other fellows.

Then those "Lines to the Kaiser"—it was quite probable that they would be reproduced in the Press. Some admirer would send them to the "Times," and the "Times" would publish them, with a note: "It is scarcely credible that these telling verses were produced by a junior schoolboy, but such, we are assured, is the case"—or something to that effect.

No wonder Grundy was anticipative, and that he thought morning lessons unusually long; and that he was awarded a hundred lines by Mr. Linton for inattention in class.

What were lines to Grundy at that moment?

Other fellows were also looking forward to the arrival of "Grundy's Weekly." The Terrible Three were unusually smiling expressions that morning. So did Blake & Co., who had apparently been informed of Monty Lowther's visit to Mr. Tiper's office, and the result thereof. So did Figgins & Co. of the New House, who were also in the secret.

The word "Dismiss" was welcome to very many ears that morning. Grundy was in so great a hurry to get out that he narrowly escaped being called back and detained by his Form-master for his unseemly haste.

He spotted Toby, the page, in the hall, and clutched him by the shoulder, with a clutch that made Toby jump.

"Oh, lor, Master Grundy!" ejaculated Toby.

"Has my parcel come from the printer's?"

"Yes, Master Grundy."

"Where is it?"

"On the 'all table, sir."

Grundy rushed to the hall table. There lay a bulky parcel, corded up in thick paper, and addressed to Master G. A. Grundy.

"It's come!" called out Grundy to Wilkins and Gunn. "Here you are! I'll open it in the common-room. Tell all the fellows."

Grundy bore the bulky parcel away to the common-room. He naturally concluded that "all the fellows" would be awfully keen to see the "Weekly." As a matter of fact, they were.

The Terrible Three, and Study No. 6, and Figgins & Co. rushed after Grundy, quite eager to see the great number. Other fellows crowded in after them, grinning. "Grundy's Weekly" was creating quite a furore.

The new editor smiled with satisfaction as the juniors crowded in. They stood in a throng round the table as Grundy cut the cord on the parcel.

"Faith, let's see it!" said Reilly of the Fourth. "Sure, it will be worth seeing."

"It will!" said Monty Lowther solemnly. "You must note, gentlemen, that this is something unique in weeklies. There never has been seen a weekly like this in or out of St. Jim's."

"Nevah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Grundy gave a snort.

"I suppose you think that's funny," he remarked wittingly. "But, as a matter of fact, you're right. The Gem Library No. 390.

GURBANKHANI THE BOYS' FRIEND THE MAGNET, THE BOYS' FRIEND THE PENNY POPULAR, CHUCKLES, 10,
PAPERS: Every Monday, Every Monday, 3d. COMPLETE LIBRARY. Every Friday, Every Saturday, 2

This paper is a bit different from the kind of bosh you've had up to now.

"No doubt about that," said Lowther blandly. "Let's see it, Grundy! You're keeping us on tenterhooks, you know."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Gather round, my infants!" chuckled Kangaroo. "Look out for the surprise of your little lives!"

The big parcel was unfastened at last. Inside reposed a stack of the "Weekly." There was a nice coloured cover—an original idea of Grundy's, and a great improvement on the old kyboshed "Weekly." On the coloured cover appeared, in large letters, the title:

"GRUNDY'S WEEKLY"
EDITED BY GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY.
SUBB-EDITORS, WILKINS AND GUNN.

There was a general smile round the big table. That was very good for a beginning. But there was better to come. Grundy handed out the copies with a generous hand, keeping the last one for himself. The copies were opened, and the St. Jim's fellows read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested the contents.

And a roar of laughter such as had seldom or never been heard within the walls of St. Jim's before, rang through the common-room.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy had not opened his copy yet. He had been too busy serving them out. He paused, and regarded the howling juniors with astonishment.

That irresistible outburst of hilarity took him by surprise. There was nothing to account for it, unless indeed they had all started on his comic column at once.

"Hello! What's the cackle?" he demanded.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Must be something wrong!" murmured Wilkins, opening his copy. "Why, what— Ha, ha, ha! Oh, crumbs! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Wilkins, you ass—"

"Oh, dear! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy frowned and tore open his copy. Then he stood transfixed. He rubbed his eyes and looked again. He could scarcely believe the evidence of his own vision. On the first page should have appeared the title and opening chapter of "Licking the Jermans."

But "Licking the Jermans" was not there!

There was no sign of Grundy's stirring war serial—not a line of it—not a word—not a syllable!

Instead, there was a single paragraph in the centre of the page, surrounded by a wide black margin. And the paragraph ran in the form of an advertisement:

"WANTED.—Lessons in spelling! Any Second Form fella who has a little time to spare is requested to call at No. 8 Study in the Shell passage, and to bring a copy of the first spelling-book with him."

Grundy stood dumbfounded.

Certainly he hadn't put that advertisement on the front page of his own "Weekly." How on earth had it got there? Where was his war serial? Hadn't he placed the proofs safely in the hands of Mr. Tiper, personally, to make sure that no trick was played upon them? Had Mr. Tiper gone suddenly mad, and perpetrated this joke upon him?

Mechanically he turned over the leaf. On the second page appeared another advertisement, having the whole page to itself.

"WANTED.—A second-hand strait-jacket! Anyone having the same to dispose of is requested to call at No. 8 Study, Shell passage.

On the third page appeared:

"ORTHOGRAPHY ON THE G.A.G. SYSTEM.

K-a-t—kat.

D-o-g-g-c—dogge.

K-o-w-c—kove.

B-o-o-l—bool.

S-h-e-a-p—shcap.

L-y-o-u-n—lyonn.

T-y-g-a-r—tygar."

"Wha-a-at does this mean?" gasped Grundy. "I—I—I never wrote anything like this! That man Tiper must be dotty."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This spelling's all wrong, too. Cow's spelt c-o-w-e; not k-o-w-e."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy opened his "Weekly" in the middle, where the leading article was to appear. It was there—but with improvements. Some unknown had been over the spelling, and out-Grundy Grundy, so to speak.

George Alfred's eyes almost started from his head, as he read:

"Thiss knewe paipar iz intennedd two phill a long-phelt wonnt. Itt wille bee edditted inn phurst-klasse stile bye Jorge Alfred Grundeye, whooh wille keepe thee mannagement inn hiss oan handds. Hee wille bee assissitted buy ann aybel staph off subbb-edditorrr. Spelllinge wille bee the stronngge poynt off thiss paipar, inn Jorge Alfreed Grundeye's oan orrrijinal stile."

The spelling was a little more original than Grundy's own, and it made it somewhat difficult to read. Grundy mechanically turned over the leaves, and came to his story "Foreword to Berlin."

The story was there; but the spelling had been out-Grundied. It made George Alfred rub his eyes.

"Underr thee berrnige raze off thee sunne, thee longgg lynes of carkee-kladde troooopes marrched fore-words. Thaye wurre bownde fore Berrrinann 'KKKaiserrr. Aheadd off hiss rejimments marrched Subbb-Liewennante Jackkie Jimmsonne, his I gleeming withe thee lite off battlle. Heee ternedd two thee gallantte boyys inn carkee whoooh folowwedd himme, andde kride: 'Foreword inn the pheel, mye phime phellows!'"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Grundy. "That's my story, but that fat-headed printer has spelt it all wrong!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were nearly weeping.

"Look at this!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Lines to the Kaiser, dear boys! Oh, pway hold me, somebody!" The lines to the Kaiser had been greatly improved.

"TTirrannte aanndd bluttcherre, poyssonnerre two, Gaze onne thee workke thye HHuuns have dunne. BBeneceeth phare BBelljjum's skie off blew, Thye vikktimms lye bbaeethe thee sunne. Gaize onne thee landde wunce phare two vu; Thynke off thee krymes upponne thye zed, Thynke off thee vennneennoe thatt iss dewe, Wenn HHuunnische leeejone bbakwarde rrrle."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang!

Grundy's fist, with the "Weekly" crumpled up in it, smote the table with a terrific concussion.

"This is a rotten jape!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Has it only just dawned on you, deah boy?"

"What a brain!" gurgled Lowther. "He's thought that out without the aid of a net! What a brain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Some of you rotters have got at my 'Weekly,' and mucked it up!" shrieked Grundy furiously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gimme those copies! I can't allow them to get into circulation! Don't take those copies away!" yelled Grundy. "Bring 'em back!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors streamed out of the common-room almost in hysterics, clutching their copies. Nothing would have induced them to part with "Grundy's Weekly." They had expected it to be funny, but nothing like this. And those copies of "Grundy's Weekly" were far above rubies in their eyes.

The hapless editor had thought of burning the whole edition; but Grundy proposed, and the other fellows disposed. Not for love or money would they have parted with those precious copies.

Grundy roared, and yelled, and banged his fist, and threatened wildly, and finally made a frontal attack, endeavouring to reclaim the "Weekly" by main force. Then he was seized and bumped, and left in a breathless state on the floor of the common-room.

In a quarter of an hour the "Weekly" was in circulation all over St. Jim's, and all the school was chuckling hysterically over it.

And afterwards, though Grundy begged almost with tears in his eyes for those copies, he could not regain possession of a single one. Monty Lowther announced his intention of leaving his copy as an heirloom in his family. Other fellows sent them home to their people. Some of them put them safely by to read again and again, to cheer them up when they were in low spirits. So long as Grundy remained at St. Jim's he was likely to be haunted by his weekly.

"Tom Merry's Weekly" went on flourishing—intermittently. But the first number of "Grundy's Weekly" was also the last. Indeed, after that day, in order to throw George Alfred Grundy into a state of homicidal fury, it was only necessary to whisper in his ear the title of his famous paper "Grundy's Weekly."

THE END.

NEXT WEDNESDAY.

"A CAPTURED CHUM!"

A Magnificent Long, Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's,

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

And a Thrilling Long Instalment of

"THE CITY OF FLAME!"

ORDER YOUR COPY IN ADVANCE — PRICE ONE PENNY.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY

"A CAPTURED CHUM!"

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 390.
A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of
TOM MERRY & CO. BY MARTIN CLIFFORD
PUBLISHED BY THE GEM LIBRARY

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.



FALSE PRETENCES.

Jack was the cause of much trouble to his parents. At school he was always at the foot of the class.

One day, however, he came flying home in boisterous spirits.

"Dad—mum, I have got a higher place in the class!" he cried.

His father gave him a shilling, and his mother gave him a sixpence.

"Now, Jack," said his father, "how did you gain promotion to a higher place?"

"Well, it's like this, dad," said the young hopeful. "My desk is being mended!"—Sent in by J. Garrard, Stamshaw, Portsmouth.

PROOF POSITIVE.

A tradesman had received a notice informing him that he was to attend court on a certain date to serve on the jury. Wishing to escape this odious task, the tradesman informed the judge that his hearing was very bad indeed.

"What proof have you brought to testify to the truth of your statement?" demanded the judge in a loud voice.

The tradesman had brought no evidence with him in support of his assertions; but just then an organ commenced to play in the street outside.

"Well, your honour, can you hear that organ playing?" he asked.

"Yes!" replied the judge sternly.
"Well, I can't!" said the tradesman triumphantly.—Sent in by Miss N. Lee, Liverpool.

REALISM.

First Pavement Artist: "Do you know, I painted a sixpence on the ground the other day, and a beggar nearly broke his fingers trying to pick it up?"

Second ditto: "That's nothing to what I did! I painted a leg of mutton on a stone, and it was so real-like that a hungry dog ate half the stone before he found out his mistake."—Sent in by Miss Lily Grace, Wolverton, Bucks.

A DRAMA OF THE TIMES.

'Twas night. The stars were shrouded in a veil of mist; a clouded canopy overhung the city; vivid lightning flashed and shook its fiery darts upon the earth; the deep-toned thunder rolled along the vaulted sky; the elements were in wild commotion; the storm-spirit howled in the air; the hailstones fell like leaden bullets; torrents leaped from housetops; the wind whistled.

The murderer sprang from his sleepless couch with vengeance on his brow, murder in his heart, and the fell instrument of destruction in his hand. The storm and winds increased; the thunder growled with deeper energy; the confusion of the hour was congenial to the soul of the man and the stormy passions which raised in his breast.

He clenched his weapon with a sterner grasp. A demoniacal smile gathered on his lips. He raised his weapon and pounced, with a yell of triumph, upon his hapless victim, and thus ruthlessly snatched a fly.—Sent in by I. H. Strachan, Moor Oaks, Sheffield.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 590.

OUR COMPANION "THE BOYS' FRIEND," "THE MAGNET," "THE BOYS' FRIEND," "THE PENNY POPULAR," "CHUCKLES," 1D.
PUBLISHED WITHIN Every Monday, Every Monday, 3d. COMPLETE LIBRARY. Every Friday, Every Saturday, 2

EARLY SYMPATHY.

"Sorry to 'ear about that 'ere fire you 'ad at your shop last Wednesday, Ikey!" murmured a little Jew to a fellow-Israelite standing on the doorstep of an East End shop.

"'Eush!" said the other, in a low voice, as he took a furtive glance around to make sure no one was within earshot. "It vos next Wednesday!"—Sent in by J. Murphy, Govanhill, Glasgow.

MISINFORMED.

Thomas jun.: "Father, it says here, 'The beautiful flowers grew on either bank.' What does 'either' mean?"

Thomas sen.: "It means both. Don't worry, my child!"
Two hours later Thomas sen. meets his son, who is crying bitterly.

"Why, what's the matter, my child?"
Thomas jun.: "Boo-oo-oo! There were two apples on the table, and mother said I could have either; but when I took both she spanked me!"—Sent in by J. Crane, Jesmond, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

WHAT, INDEED?

A mysterious building had been erected on the outskirts of a small town. It was shrouded in mystery. All that was known of it was that it was a chemical laboratory.

An old farmer drove past the place after work had been started there, and, seeing a man in the doorway, shouted to him:

"What be ye doing in this place?"
"We are searching for a universal solvent—something that will dissolve all things," said the chemist.

"What good will that be?" asked the farmer.
"Imagine, sir! It will dissolve all things! If we want a solution of iron, glass, gold, or anything, all we have to do is to drop it into the chemical we are about to discover!"

"Fine," said the farmer—"fine! But what be ye going to keep it in?"—Sent in by E. H. Fortune, Commercial Road, E.

A DOUBTFUL COMPLIMENT.

A lady temperance lecturer recently burst into the office of the editor of a local newspaper, and, with an angry frown, thrust a marked copy of the latest issue of his paper before him.

"I am told you wrote this notice of my lecture on 'The Demon Drink'!" she remarked sternly.

"I did, madam," was the calm reply.

"Then perhaps you'll be good enough to explain what you mean by stating that the lecturer was full of her subject!" angrily exclaimed the lady.—Sent in by D. Salmona, Leytonstone, E.

GRATITUDE.

First 'Seaside Visitor: "Are you the gentleman who jumped into the sea yesterday and saved my little son?"

Second 'Seaside Visitor (proudly): "Yes, sir, I am."

First 'Seaside Visitor (sleepily): "Then what on earth did you do with his cap?"—Sent in by Miss A. Babbington, Northampton.

As the "GEM" Storyette Competition has proved so popular, it has been decided to run this novel feature in conjunction with our new Companion Paper,

THE BOYS' FRIEND, 1d.,

Published every Monday,

in order to give more of our readers a chance of winning one of our useful Money Prizes.

If you know a really funny joke, or a short, interesting paragraph, send it along (on a post-card) before you forget it, and address it to: The Editor, THE BOYS' FRIEND and GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, E.C.

Look out for YOUR Prize Storyette in next week's GEM or BOYS' FRIEND.

THE CITY OF FLAME

By ALEC G. PEARSON.

A Great New Story of Thrilling Adventure.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Hal Mackenzie, Jim Holdsworth, and Bob Sigsbee, while cruising in a yacht, the *Isis*, in the Red Sea, discover information relating to a mysterious City of Flame, and form themselves into an expedition for discovering it.

After many exciting adventures, they at last reach the land of Shoa, and, after crossing a great desert, reach the Temple of the Sun. There they meet Patrick O'Hara, a tall, red-headed Irishman, who is being kept prisoner by the natives, and regarded as a saint. The comrades then come into collision with Argolis, the chief priest, who wishes their deaths.

A few days later the temple is visited by Queen Clytemna of Shoa, with an enormous retinue. She takes the three adventurers and the Irishman under her protection, and in due course they return with the queen's retinue to the City of Flame, and are lodged in her palace.

The priests, under Argolis, as well as other powerful enemies, are still working against the comrades, and one night they find that their rifles have mysteriously vanished.

Queen Clytemna informs the comrades of vast treasure-trove, and asserts that the treasure is rightfully hers, but the priests have conspired to keep it from her.

The comrades decide to find the treasure, and, after many thrilling adventures, succeed in their purpose.

On the return journey, in an encounter with the priests, they recover their rifles.

Reaching the palace of Queen Clytemna, they ask to be shown into her presence.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Slave of the Ring.

The officer moved off reluctantly to carry the message to the queen, and, although there was nothing openly hostile in his manner, it yet seemed to the adventurers that he was by no means inclined to welcome their reappearance.

It may perhaps have been that Hal's rather peremptory message gave him annoyance, for officers of the Royal Guard were apt to consider themselves very superior persons, in which those of Shoa did not differ greatly from similarly-placed officials in European countries.

But if the captain of the guard was annoyed, so was Hal, and with much more reason. He and his comrades had gone through innumerable perils in Clytemna's service, and only an hour before had been fighting for their lives; and now, when at least some welcome should have been extended to them, they were stopped at the palace gates, as though they were suspicious characters.

The soldiers of the guard appeared to be indifferent. That which they were ordered to do they did, and at present their duty was to keep the gates closed against the "white strangers."

"I don't altogether like the look of things," said Hal. "Clytemna couldn't have given any order that we were to be detained here, so it seems to me that officer was taking too much on himself; and there seems to be no sort of enthu-

siasm for their queen among these chaps." With a jerk of his hand he indicated the double line of guards. "I don't mean now, because there's no special reason to 'enthusiasm' at the moment, but I noticed it when we were in the palace before."

"No kind of beans in 'em," commented Sigsbee. "Sort of don't care who bosses the show, so long as they get their pay regular Saturday nights, and don't have to work too hard for it. If I was fixin' up a revolution in this city, and had a hundred cowboys back of me, I'd reckon to clean up the whole caboodle between sunrise and sunset."

Jim Holdsworth grinned his appreciation. "They'd make things lively in this gloomy old city," he said. "But, for the matter of that, so would a few score British tars. Fact is, the people want something to cheer 'em up. Now, a good cinema show—Hullo! Here's the officer of the guard coming back again, and another fellow with him!"

The "other fellow" was also a guardsman, for he wore the striking uniform of the corps—the belted scarlet tunic, the silver helmet, and, being an officer, a silver-hilted sword.

He was a fine, stalwart, good-looking man, with a very much pleasanter cast of features than the majority of his countrymen. There was none of that sullen, savage expression which marred the faces of the others.

"I've seen him before," ejaculated O'Hara. "'Tis Nestor, one of the captains, an' a thrue man!"

"It's a comfort to meet a Shoaan with a fairly cheerful face," said Jim.

The gates were now opened, and Nestor stepped forward, raising his hand in salute.

"The queen sends greetings," he said, "and regrets that you have been kept waiting outside the gates." Here he glanced significantly at the officer who was responsible for keeping them there. "I am to lead you to her presence at once."

"No doubt she has been expecting us for some days past," said Hal.

"That is so," admitted Nestor. "But you are carrying heavy packages, as though you were slaves," he added. "I will call servants to take them from you."

"Not on your life," muttered Sigsbee. "We hang on to these now until we hand them over to the queen."

For the packages that Nestor referred to were the bags of treasure. It was evident that he had no idea what they contained, for he seemed surprised that the queen's guests should persist in carrying the said packages.

However, he said nothing further on the subject, but led the way across the courtyard to the palace, the quartette following him two and two, as they had marched through the streets.

They were conducted to a private apartment of Clytemna's, where she was awaiting them alone. As they entered and saluted her, she rose from a couch, and came towards them with hands outstretched.

"My friends!" she exclaimed. "I was beginning to fear that I should never see you again—that by some act of treachery or by accident you had lost your lives, for you have been long away. It is twenty-one days since you quitted the palace."

"For the great adventure," said Hal. "Well, we've come through it safely, but we've looked death in the face more times than I want to think of. And we've been the victims of treachery, too. But it's a long story, queen, and you'd perhaps sooner hear it some other time."

As a matter of fact, Hal was not at all anxious to tell the queen the whole story.

THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 390.

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of a young man's adventures in the MARTIN GIBSON.

the story of their adventures then, for he and his comrades were in need of a "wash and brush up," as Jim put it, after which they'd be quite ready for supper.

"We've not been unsuccessful," he continued, as he deposited his bag of jewels on a low table of carved ebony, "though we've left behind ten times as much as we've brought away."

O'Hara, Jim, and Sigsbee also placed their loads of treasure on the table. Clytemna opened one, and glanced at the contents, for she had to give way to her natural woman's curiosity. Her queenly coldness and dignity was laid aside, for there were no Court officials before whom it was necessary to play a part. Nestor was a soldier, not a courtier.

Her dark eyes sparkled, and they surely rivalled the jewels in brightness.

"I will have supper served in this room," she said, "and it will be ready by the time you have removed the traces of"—she smiled slightly—"your journey." But what sort of bracelet is that you wear round your wrist, Megara?"

She referred to the shackle and chain which were still fastened to Pat O'Hara's wrist. He had twisted the chain round and round, and tied it up with a piece of cord.

"It's a bracelet I'm most tired of wearing, your Maj—I mane, madam," he replied. "An if I could get a hold of a bit of wire I'd be glad to take it off!"

Clytemna spoke a few words to Nestor, and they all, with the exception of the queen, quitted the apartment. The Shoans were workers in metals, so it was an easy matter to procure a file, and the Irishman was relieved of his uncomfortable "bracelet," much to his satisfaction.

"As an ornament," he said, "it ain't great shakes, but I'll kape it just to remind me the way I was chained up loike a wild beast for fifteen days!"

"Well, for my part," said Jim, "I'd rather forget that time!"

"Afterwards I'll forget it," replied O'Hara. "But now I want to kape fresh in me mind how much I owe to the chief priest. I'm hopin' to pay my debt."

When they returned to the queen's apartment they found an excellent supper laid out, to which they did full justice. There were no attendants, but Nestor was present, for he was clearly one of her most trusted officers.

Clytemna was radiant, and seemed quite another woman. The old hard, cold look had gone from her eyes, and there was laughter on her lips. She appeared to be quite happy, and certainly she looked very beautiful.

When supper was finished Hal gave her a full account of the adventures to which she listened with deep interest, and some astonishment, used as she was to strange happenings in that city of mystery.

Once, indeed, the hard look came back to her eyes, and that was when Hal detailed the treacherous part played by the high priest.

"He will learn that you have reached the palace," she said, "and that after this it won't be safe for him to show himself here again. When next we see him it will be as an open enemy, leading those men—fools, I should name them—who are already ripe for revolt!"

"I've been mixed up in some revolutions away in South America," put in Sigsbee, "and I know how the game's worked. But there's always two sides. You'll surely be able to muster enough true men to Nestor, and asked him how many men there were he could rely on.

"Perhaps a hundred," was the reply, "for even in the palace there are traitors!"

"That galoot that stopped us at the main gate is one of them!" snapped Sigsbee. "I'll lay to that. Now, you got a grip on the traitors inside the palace, and if you can muster a hundred real fighting men, there ain't no call to throw up the sponge. Though I allow the chief priest may have raked together a couple of thousand. Then there'll be a good few of the people taking no hand in the business at first—kind of sittin' on the fence until they know which side's coming out on top. Then they'll join the winnin' team. They're not much account, but you might rouse up a few of them to join in with the queen."

"Why not make a proclamation," suggested Hal, "stating that rebels are plotting against you, and calling upon all true subjects to rally round you?"

"You don't know the men of Sioa," replied Clytemna. "They are always plotting, and now they conspire against me. It is not unexpected. Still, they shall have that one chance, though I care little whether or not they accept it. I tire of ruling over such people. But so long as I am in this city, I will be queen!"

Her eyes flashed, and the colour mounted to her cheeks. Then she smiled, and, with a movement of her hands, seemed to brush the subject aside.

"Many things will happen in the next few days," she continued, "which even that clever, but evil priest does not see."

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 380.

OUR COMPANION "THE BOYS' FRIEND," "THE MAGNET," "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3D. COMPLETE LIBRARY.

PAPER Every Monday Every Monday Every Friday Every Saturday, 2

suspect. And of you, my friends, I have one more favour to ask—another danger for you to face on my behalf."

"Name it!" exclaimed Hal. "We are ready—"

"To-morrow," interrupted Clytemna, "one whole day, with nothing to do, and nothing to think of, will be good for you."

Then they spent an hour examining the gold and jewels which the "four" had brought from the treasure-chamber. Clytemna was a good judge of the value of precious stones, and she told them their worth in ounces of gold, for money was no longer coined in Sioa.

Hal made a rapid calculation, and exclaimed:

"Why, that must be fully two million pounds in English money! Two millions! Great Scott!"

"Great Rottschild!" I should say!" laughed Jim. "It's a bit of all right; but we mustn't forget we're still in the City of Flame!"

"Kind of place it's easier to get into than get out of, I guess," Sigsbee commented.

It was past midnight when the pleasant party broke up—and there was O'Hara's word for it that it was the best evening he had spent in Sioa—and the quartette made their way to the room which had been assigned to them.

Nestor walked with them, for the many corridors of the ancient palace were rather intricate. Suddenly Jim uttered an exclamation.

"What's the row?" asked Hal.

"Did you see that fellow," said Jim, "in the passage to the right?"

"I didn't see anybody," replied Hal.

Nor had any of the others seen anybody.

"But I saw him plainly," Jim persisted, "by the light of that hanging lamp. When he spotted us, he vanished like magic."

"Can you describe him?" asked Nestor.

"Well, most of him," replied Jim. "Tall, I think, but as he was stooping almost double I wouldn't be certain of that; a dirty, yellow-coloured pair not brown like the Shoans, and an ugly twist to his mouth."

"Ah! You could not see, perhaps, if he wore a large ring on a finger of his left hand?"

"Yes, I noticed it because of the size of the red stone set in it. He raised his hand as though to hide his face, and the ray of light from the swinging-lamp caused the red stone to gleam like fire."

"Like blood!" said Nestor, whose hands were clenched, and on whose face had come suddenly an expression that was closely bordering on fear. "It is certain you have seen this man, or you could not have described him. But in the palace! He is here for an evil purpose, for naught but evil has he ever done in all his life. Yet how did he gain an entrance?"

"There's a traitor at the gate!" snapped Sigsbee. "But who is this cuss you're talking about, anyway?"

"He is known as the Slave of the Ring," was the reply, "and is a servant of the high priests. Of all the evil men in this city he is the worst."

"He must be middlin' bad," declared Sigsbee.

"He must be secured," exclaimed Nestor, "for it may be that the life of the queen—"

"Then we've got to hustle!" interrupted Sigsbee.

Another Villain Less.

In the search which followed through the maze-like corridors of the palace, Jim had got separated from his companions, a fact which only bothered him because he was unarmed. Sigsbee had gone for the weapons, and Jim was under the impression that the American was following him, which proved, however, not to be the case. As it would be waste of time to try and find Sigsbee, Jim kept on in the direction which he believed the fellow known as the Slave of the Ring had taken.

"It reminds me of those magician Johnnies in Aladdin," thought Jim. "One was the Slave of the Lamp, and the other to save the King. Well, we've been through some Arabian Nights adventures since we set foot in this blessed city, and this is another of 'em. I wonder how it's all going to end?"

That was a question which would have taken a magician to answer.

Nestor had hurried off to warn the queen, though if she had left the room where they had supper, he seemed to think he would have some difficulty in finding her.

"She seldom retires early," he explained. "But often she wanders about the palace at night, like one who needs but little sleep, or who cannot rest!"

Probably about half an hour had passed since the search for



Wresting the short sword from his victim's grasp, Jim turned to face his other assailant. "Now," he exclaimed, "we shall be on more equal terms!" (See page 26.)

the malignant Slave of the Ring had begun, by which time Jim had completely lost his bearings. Some of the passages were in darkness, and some were dimly lighted, but they all seemed bewilderingly alike.

"Now, where the blazes am I?" he muttered. "Seems to me that—"

Whatever it seemed to him he never told himself, for at that moment he heard a sound which held his instant attention. It was a faint, shuffling sound of stealthy footsteps, followed by a low whispering. Jim flattened himself against the wall, and remained perfectly motionless.

Presently he saw two men cross the end of the corridor, and disappear in another passage. One of them he recognised as the Slave of the Ring. Noiselessly he crept forward, turned round the corner at the end, and then came to a sudden stop.

The passage into which he was looking led to one of the apartments of the palace, for about twenty paces in front of him there was an open door. A light streamed through it, and he could hear someone moving in the room beyond.

Perhaps it was the queen!

But he could not now hear the two miscreants who were bent on some evil errand, nor at first could he see them, though presently he caught sight of them again, lying flat on the ground.

Jim deemed it advisable to imitate their position, for, if he remained standing, they might catch sight of him at any

moment. And it was not yet time to act. He wanted, first, to find out exactly what their game was.

If Clytemna was in that room in front of them, there could be no doubt of their intentions. They meant to kill her. Both were armed with the short, straight swords—the blades about fifteen inches in length—which were peculiar to the country. Jim reflected that he must, by hook or by crook, secure one of those weapons, otherwise he would stand but the smallest chance if it came to a struggle.

He wished that his comrades were within hail, and he also wished that he knew who was in that room. It might not, after all, be the queen.

The two men were slowly creeping forward towards the open door, now and again pausing and flattening themselves out like huge, loathsome reptiles basking on a rock. Jim crept forward, too, though in a different fashion, gaining on them every step. They were now close up to the door, and once again they flattened themselves out. In the room the rustle of a woman's garments could be distinctly heard. If it was the queen, she had no attendants with her, and as the door was open, it was clear that the inmate of the room was coming out again. That was what the pair of would-be assassins were waiting for.

They could see the woman's shadow now. She was coming towards the door! The Slave of the Ring raised his hand, and the steel blade of the short sword gleamed in the light. It was at that precise moment Jim leaped.

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He landed square on the fellow, his knees in the small of his back, and his hands between his shoulders.

The Slave of the Ring gave a curious sort of gasping cry, and his fellow-conspirator turned to see what was the matter.

Jim's hands slipped up to the man's neck, and he bumped his face on the stone-paved floor several times hard. Then he wrestled the short sword from his grasp.

"Now," exclaimed Jim, who felt chirpy and very pleased with himself, "we shall be on more equal terms!"

But he was not going to have things all his own way. The second man had to be reckoned with, and he was both strong and active. Jim was as hard as steel, but he had to contend with two ruffians who had never fought fair in their lives, but were well accustomed to take every foul advantage of an adversary. One of them, it is true, was dazed with the bumping his head had received, but he clawed, bit, and tore like a wild beast.

For several minutes there was a furious melee, in which all three combatants were hopelessly mixed. Whenever Jim got the chance he made jabs with the short sword, but half the time it was a sort of nightmare wrestling match, and he couldn't use the weapon.

Then, as suddenly as it had commenced, the fight ended. Jim was standing alone and unhurt. He stared about him dazedly.

Far away from him the Slave of the Ring was lying on the floor in a curiously twisted position. He was dead. Near him was a broken sword. It belonged to the other man, who had disappeared. He had bolted when he realised that he would have to continue the fight alone with only a broken weapon. But the point of the sword was not on the ground. Jim looked again, and saw an inch of the jagged edge protruding from the body of the Slave of the Ring. In the melee he had been killed, no doubt by accident, by his own accomplice.

"Again I have to thank you for rendering me a service. But you are alone. Where are your friends?"

Jim looked up and saw Clytemna standing in the doorway, like a beautiful picture in a frame.

"I don't know," replied Jim.

And then he gave an account of all that had happened, so far as he had taken any personal part in the affair.

He had barely concluded when his comrades and Nestor arrived on the scene.

"The Slave of the Ring! Dead!" exclaimed Nestor.

"Another villain less in the world," said Clytemna. "Even in my own palace my life is attempted—or it would have been but for the bravery of your young comrade" (she used the English word)—"by rogues in the pay of my enemies."

"You call this yellow-faced cuss the Slave of the Ring," said Sigsbee to Nestor. "What's his real name? He's got one, I suppose."

Nestor shrugged his shoulders.

"It may be," he said indifferently; "but I have never heard it. He is dead. What matters his name now?"

Dead men were not reckoned of much consequence in the City of Flame.

"It is enough," exclaimed Clytemna. "that there can surely be only one other man left who is more evil than he was. And that is the one who was his master."

"Argolis, the high priest."

"None other."

There was a pause. Everything seemed to have taken place with such tragic suddenness that the group had hardly yet properly got the hang of things, to use Sigsbee's expression.

Clytemna beckoned them into the room. It was a spacious apartment, with the dressed skins of animals upon the floor, and a few of the massive articles of furniture of the usual quaint type placed here and there with mathematical precision. Clytemna crossed the floor to a window.

"Come and look out over the city," she said, "and tell me if you notice any change—not in the city itself, but beyond."

There was, indeed, a marked change, and what they noticed first was that the city seemed to be almost in darkness. The reason of this was not far to seek, for the giant flames which formed a fiery semicircle beyond the city walls had died down until the highest of them was little above the height of a tall man, while many of the jets had vanished altogether.

"What's wrong with the gas?" exclaimed Hal.

The familiar sound of that question, which householders of all civilised towns lighted by gas had some time or other impatiently asked of the world at large, made Jim laugh.

"Turned off at the main," he said.

But in case Clytemna might regard joking just then as untimely, he hastened to add seriously:

"The supply of natural gas seems to be giving out. If it falls entirely—"

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Clytemna interrupted him with a motion of her hand which seemed to brush aside these surmises. Then she said to Nestor:

"You were born in the city, and have lived in it nearly all your life. Is there any time that you remember when the flames were so low?"

"There is no time, O queen," replied Nestor. "But when—"

He checked himself, as though he had been about to say more than he ought to without permission.

Clytemna smiled and nodded her head.

"I can recall what you have in your mind, Nestor," she said, "and I know what you were about to say. It was that when your father's father was a boy there were no flames encircling our city. It was like many other great cities whose days of glory and pride have passed."

"It is as you say, O queen," replied Nestor. "In those days the fire vapour was not burning. It was looked upon as a scourge of the gods, because of the evil which men had done, when first the great flames leaped up."

"And now the end is near," said Clytemna. "The city is doomed. When the flames die out altogether it will be utterly destroyed. That much I know, and I alone. Not even the high priest has that knowledge, clever as he is in many mysteries. How soon? I cannot tell exactly, for there are some things which are hidden from me; but in a few days at most. But until the end comes I shall be queen. After that—well, there may be no after. Are you willing, my friends, to stand by me to the last?"

"We are willing, and ready, whatever the end may be!" cried Hal, with enthusiasm.

His comrades echoed this sentiment, and Pat O'Hara, exclaimed:

"May the last fight be a great war."

"It will be that," Clytemna assured him.

The Eastern Gate.

The adventurers had one long day of complete rest, which they were very much in need of; but at sunset Clytemna sent for them again, to give them instructions for the final service they were to render her.

The final service before the great fight.

The interview took place in a room at the east wing of the palace, and from a window Clytemna pointed out the great gate set in the city wall. It was immensely strong—the most massive of all the gates of the city.

"It is the eastern gate," she explained, "and it is always kept closed. During the reign of five queens that has been the order. It is a law that it is never to be opened. Why such a law was made does not matter now, but even my guards would not obey me if I ordered them to open that gate. Yet when we quit the city—or those of us who live to do so—we must go out by that gate. It will be the only way. You will learn the reason when the time comes."

"Then it'll have to be opened," said Hal.

"It must be," replied Clytemna, "and that is the task which I am asking you to perform. And it will not be done by the drawing of bolts or the turning of a lock, for there are no bolts and no locks. Moreover, it must be opened in such a way that no man can close it again."

"Then it must be destroyed."

"Yes, it must be destroyed."

"I reckon it'd take half a hundredweight of dynamite to do that," declared Sigsbee. "And we ain't got so much as a stick of the stuff, nor any other kind of explosive."

"I have provided the means," said Clytemna.

From a camphor-wood box she lifted out a cylinder of a semi-transparent metal, about two feet in length and twelve inches in circumference. When she held it up to the light they saw that it was full of a liquid of some description. They surmised it was an explosive.

"This will destroy the gate," she said, "if you will follow my directions. What the liquid is I cannot tell you. It is a secret which has passed away, and is lost to the world—perhaps for the best."

"What are we to do with the cylinder?" asked Hal.

Clytemna replaced it in the camphor-wood box, which was half-full of some stuff that looked like scarlet wool.

"You must take the box with you, just as it is," she explained, "and find a place close against the gate where you can secrete it. There are no guards on the gate, but there may be some of the priests' men on the watch. Yet they must not see what you do, even though you have to kill them to make sure. You understand?"

Hal nodded, and Clytemna continued.

"You will then set light to the wool in the box—it is wool

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specially prepared—and close the lid. After that there is no more for you to do but hasten back to the palace. On your lives do not remain near the gate. You will have time to get back before the liquid becomes heated."

"We'll sure be spry on the return journey," murmured Sigsbee.

"When shall we start, Clytemna?" asked Hal.

As Nestor wasn't present, they dropped all ceremony, addressing the queen by name, as she had asked them to do.

"I leave that to your judgment," was the reply, "but it must be during the hours of darkness. Now I must leave you, for I have much to do, and many preparations to make before the morning."

After a brief consultation among themselves they decided that it would be better to wait for a couple of hours, by which time most of the people of the city would have retired to rest, or at all events into their houses. For the Shoans as a rule went to bed early, and rose early, about the only things they did worthy of imitation.

There was a strange, brooding silence over the city when they slipped out of a side entrance of the palace, which seemed to strike a chill through them. It was ominous. There was no moon, and the night was dark. Here and there a star showed between the scurrying clouds.

Hal carried the box, walking between O'Hara and Sigsbee. Jim was a few paces behind, keeping a sharp look-out to see they weren't followed. In this order they reached the great gate without having met a living soul.

Clytemna had already told them there was no guard at the gate, because it was never opened—indeed, could not be opened by ordinary means—so they thought nothing of the silent and deserted appearance of the spot. It was not a place where idlers would be likely to congregate. But they spoke in whispers, as men do when they are engaged upon some desperate enterprise where secrecy is necessary.

"Seems to me," observed Sigsbee, "that the best place to fix that box is where the wall buttresses out by the right-hand post of the gate. Unless some galoot comes smellin' round looking for something he fancies he's lost, it won't be seen. We can cover it up with loose stones after we've started the heating apparatus. Then any cuss who gets too curious is likely to bust up with the rest of the show."

"It'll have to be a powerful explosive to blow this gate down," said Jim, surveying the massive structure. "I suppose Clytemna knows pretty well what the stuff in that cylinder will do?"

"You may bet on that," replied Hal. He cast a swift glance around. "No one in sight. We can get to work."

He took a step forward, and the movement surely saved his life. For at the very instant he moved, a short throwing spear whizzed over his left shoulder, grazing his cheek and striking the gate, and fell with a clatter to the ground.

It was a startling proof of the hardness of the wood of the gate that even the sharp point of the spear made no impression on it.

With various exclamations of anger and surprise, they all turned round and stared in the direction whence the spear had come. No one was visible. It was as though the weapon had come hurtling through space, meteor-like, of its own volition.

"Be the mortal!" growled O'Hara. "Will spears be flyin' at us out av nowhere?"

"They haven't got enough magic for that, even in Shoa," snapped Hal. "Someone threw it, and the thrower can't be more than fifty yards away."

"But there's no place where a cat could hide in that direction," said Jim. "Let alone a man."

"Seems the paving-stones are alive in this part of the city," exclaimed Sigsbee. "I saw one move just over

yonder. Jim, you stick by the cap'n, as he's in charge of the machinery. Pat, you come along of me."

He ran back about thirty paces, with the Irishman close at his heels. Then they both began tugging at the edge of an oblong slab of stone. It came up, and they flung it aside. There was a space beneath. O'Hara let out a sort of war-whoop, and then they both jumped down into the hole and disappeared.

"They've found something interesting," said Jim, with a cheerful smile. "Fity we're out of the hunt."

Five minutes passed, and then Sigsbee and O'Hara re-appeared. They carefully replaced the slab of stone.

"What's down there?" asked Hal.

"A hole," replied O'Hara, "big enough to hold twelve men wid a stack av spears. Ye'll see now where that spalpeen was hidin' who threw that spear what would've hit ye if it hadn't missed ye."

"Yes, I see all that," returned Hal. "How many men did you find down there?"

"Three," said O'Hara. "I wouldn't be after sayin' they're all alive now, not being sure. But they're all hurt so bad they'll not be able to enjoy the fireworks display we're givin', all free, gratis, an' for nothing."

"We've shut 'em up in a box of their own choosin', and they can stop there till their friends come to look for them," added Sigsbee. "It's middlin' like a tomb. Bah! We've no call to bother ourselves with such vermin. Let's get to work now with this mining racket."

They fixed the box in position, and then with flint and steel Hal set fire to the prepared wood in which the cylinder was bedded. It glowed like a whole bundle of fuses rolled into one. Hal shut down the lid and straightened himself up.

"Now we get back," he said quietly.

"Best hurry," ejaculated Sigsbee. "That blame thing looks as if it'd get hot mighty quick."

They started back at a trot in case Clytemna had made a miscalculation in the time it took the liquid in the cylinder to become heated. For the inside of the box must have been like a small furnace when the lid was shut.

As he reached the side entrance of the palace a terrific explosion shook the very ground on which they stood, like an earthquake. A great sheet of flame leaped skyward, and in the glare they saw the massive gate fly into a thousand fragments, while the masonry of the wall on each side fell in crumbling heaps.

"My sainted aunt!" exclaimed Jim. "That was a bust up, if you like."

"That liquid's 'all in' for an explosive," said Sigsbee. "By ginger, that gate's spread around some! If the guy what invented that stuff was alive now, and set up in business, he'd rake in a fortune. The Shoa Explosive Company, Limited, sounds all right."

"I'm afraid the noise has woke up most of the people in the city," said Hal, with a dry laugh.

"Begorra, 'twas enough to wake the dead!" exclaimed O'Hara.

Nestor joined them while they were still talking.

"So the gate is destroyed?" he said. "After this, the last great fight. It will be a signal. Listen! Already our foes are gathering."

From the city a murmur, like the rumbling of thunder in the distance, reached their ears. Gradually it increased in volume until it became a long, drawn-out, and threatening roar.

To arms, comrades!" shouted Hal.

They gave a cheer and dashed up the stairs to take their part in the defence of the palace—and the queen.

(The thrilling conclusion of this splendid serial story will be published Monday. To avoid disappointment, order your copy early.)

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For Next Wednesday—

"A CAPTURED CHUM!"

By Martin Clifford.

Our next grand, long, complete story of St. Jim's chronicles the revival of the feud between the New House juniors and Knox the prefect. Kerr, the cute and canny Scots junior, gets wind of the fact that Knox is expecting a visitor, and accordingly proceeds to carry out one of the impersonations for which he is famous. But the step proves fatal, for whilst on the school premises disguised as Knox's friend, he is accused of theft, and falls into the hands of that untiring minion of the law, P.C. Crump. It is for Figgins & Co. to extricate their unfortunate schoolfellow from his terrible predicament, and exciting times ensue as a result of their efforts to restore

"A CAPTURED CHUM!"**ENGLAND WINS THE DAY!**

Great International Match Result.

I must apologise profusely to my chums for deferring the result of our recent international contest. The fact is, it has taken the officials of my publishing office longer than I expected to arrive at the correct figures. However, better late than never, so here they are:

1. ENGLAND.—An advance of 21,257 copies on "Tom Merry for England." (In Lancashire alone the circulation underwent an increase of over 6,000 copies.)
2. SCOTLAND.—An advance of 15,201 copies on "A Son of Scotland."
3. IRELAND.—An advance of 9,613 copies on "Kildare for St. Jim."
4. WALES.—An advance of 8,466 copies on "A Hero of Wales."

As my readers will see at a glance, it was not a case of "England first—the rest nowhere." Every country concerned put up a surprisingly good show, and I am almost at a loss as to how to thank my many chums for the fine proof of loyalty and devotion which they have given to the good old "Gem" Library.

A SPLENDID ALL-SPORTS STORY.

Many of my reader chums have recently written to me suggesting that St. Jim's and its rival schools should all combine in a gigantic sports' carnival; and as I am always only too pleased to carry out the wishes of my faithful friends all the world over, I have arranged with Mr. Frank Richards, the famous "Magnet" author, to produce a story dealing exclusively with sport. It is entitled,

"SPORTSMEN ALL!"

and appears in "The Magnet" Library now on sale. Four great public schools—St. Jim's, Greyfriars, Highcliffe, and Rookwood—compete together for a magnificent trophy presented by Lord Eastwood. There are races of all sorts and kinds, a splendid shooting contest, and a swimming championship, to say nothing of a thrilling boatrace; while Tom Merry, the skipper of the Shell, meets Bob Cherry, of Greyfriars, in fistic encounter.

Such a combination of stirring events cannot fail to delight the hearts of all lovers of school stories; and if you would like to see how St. Jim's fares in the great tournament, go at once to your newsagent, and ask for

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,

Now on sale,

which chronicles the rival encounters between Tom Merry & Co., Harry Wharton & Co., Frank Courtenay & Co., and Jim Silver & Co., who are splendid fellows, true Britishers, and

"SPORTSMEN ALL!"**REPLIES IN BRIEF.**

A. Basil (Reading).—Many thanks for pointing out error.

L. Thomson (Victoria).—You are not old enough yet to worry about your future. Continue to do your level best at school, and give the matter serious consideration when you are about fourteen.

Edgar O'Brien (Dublin).—The predominant religion at Greyfriars and St. Jim's is Church of England. Don't worry about your inches. Nature will fix things up for you. Story-ettes should in all cases be sent in on postcards. I'm growing just a little tired of repeating this last sentence. Why not glance at the rules of the competition before sending in your joke?

K. K. (Glasgow).—Very many thanks for suggestion. I will adopt it.

A. C. (Malda Vally).—You will fill out as you grow older. At present do not worry about your dimensions.

M. Barson (Oxford).—Many thanks to you for your letter and loyalty.

E. Watts (Barking).—Apply at any of the schools where motor-driving is taught.

"Zenith" (Reading).—I can give you no information concerning Levison's future. Candidly, I don't think he will ever reform into a decent character. I am sorry I cannot tell you the publishers of the book you mention.

George H. Haslam (Bolton).—Most of Talbot's pocket-money is obtained by winning cash prizes in exams.

Victor Jordan (Putney).—Try the London Scottish, or any cavalry regiment. Full particulars will be given at any recruiting office. The loyal tone of your letter impressed me very much. I wish you every success.

H. E. (Luton).—Glad "The Gem" meets your requirements in every way.

"A Naval Reader" (H.M.S. Impregnable).—I am, of course, very pleased to know that you and your mess-mates think such a lot of "The Gem." Good luck to you all!

"Union Jack" (Essex) writes: "My uncle, who is fighting in the trenches, receives all my 'Gems,' 'Magnets,' and 'The Boys' Realm,' and the men are so disappointed if they are delayed. D'Arcy is their great favourite, and every night they exclaim, 'Good-night, dear fellows!' My uncle says that 'The Gem' makes you forget there are bullets whizzing around." Thank you, "Union Jack!" Your letter adds one more tribute to the many I have lately been receiving in praise of the prince of boys' papers.

Eira Mills (Lester).—You want the names of a few boys' weeklies besides the companion papers? Here they are: "The Boys' Realm," "The Union Jack," "The Marvel," and "Pluck." These journals are all reliable, but I should have thought "The Gem," etc., would have kept you fully occupied. Blake and Talbot are each fifteen years of age.

"Satisfied" (Bardney).—Many thanks for your loyal letter. Greyfriars enjoys a slightly better sports record than St. Jim's. Kildare is seventeen years of age.

"In Every Way a Friend" (Melbourne).—Harry Noble is a native of New South Wales. The finest athlete among the St. Jim's juniors is Tom Merry.

A. D. (Leeds).—"The Gem" story, entitled "The Toll-tale," was published on April 4th, 1903. The best batsman in the junior eleven at St. Jim's is Tom Merry, though Talbot and Blake take some beating.

YOUR EDITOR.



READ
"TURNING THE TABLES!"



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