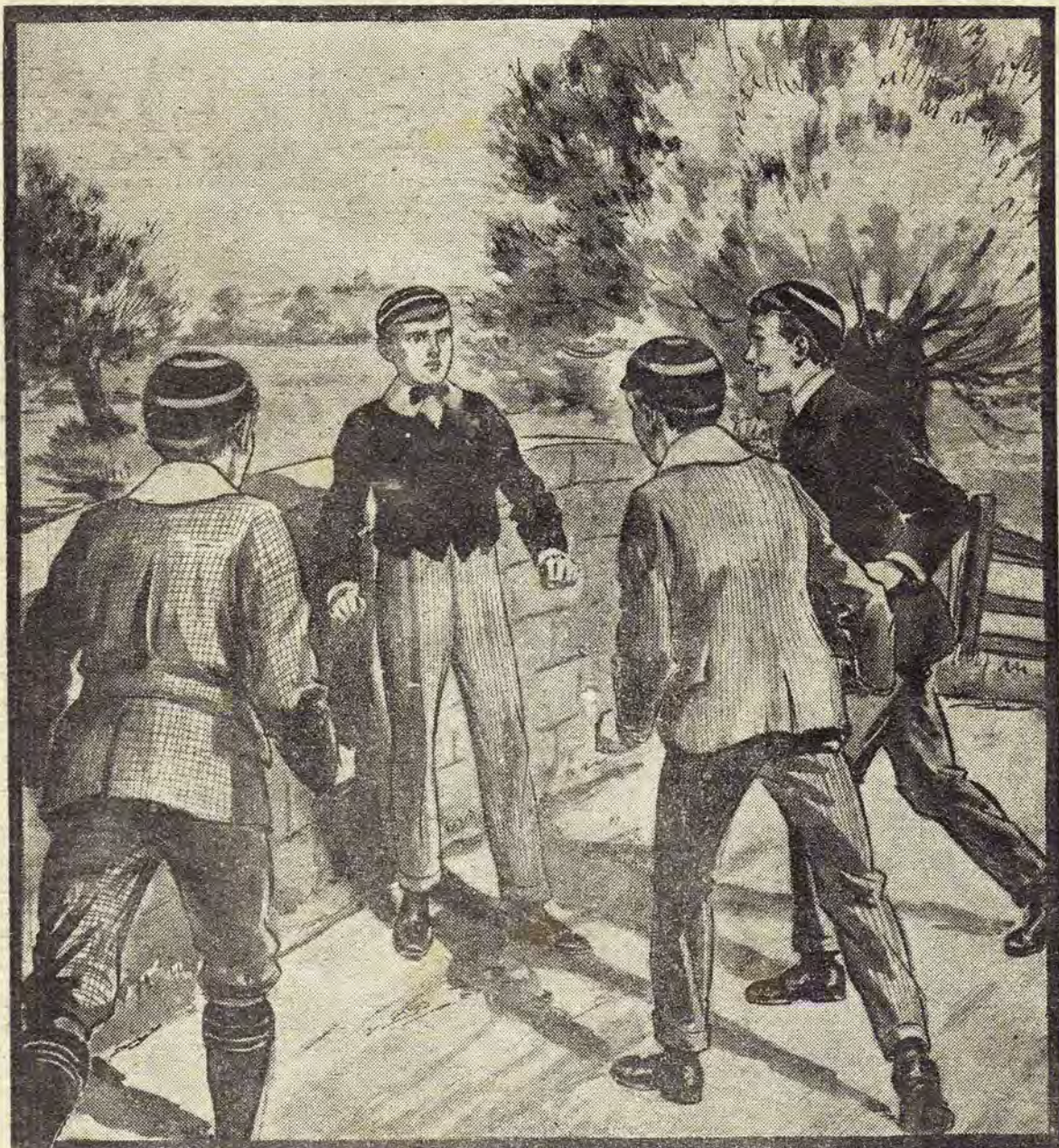


GRUNDY THE VENTRILOQUIST!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete Tale of School Life at St. Jim's.



TOM MERRY IS CORNERED BY THE GRAMMARIANS!

(A Startling Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale in this issue.)



THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to -
EDITOR "THE GEM" LIBRARY.
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OUR · · THREE · · COMPANION · · PAPERS!
"THE MAGNET" THE "PENNY" CHUCKLES.
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EVERY MONDAY - EVERY FRIDAY - EVERY SATURDAY.

For Next Wednesday:

"IN SPITE OF ALL!"

By Martin Clifford.

In the grand, long, complete story which appears next week Manners minor plays a very prominent part, and that will be good news to the many who were loud in their praises of the two former yarns in which that self-willed youngster figured—"Manners Minor," and "The Right Stuff." In this latest story Harry Manners' young brother gets into bad company. He is taken up by Cutts of the Fifth, and is in danger of being turned into a thorough-paced little black-guard. The intervention of his brother, backed up by Tom Merry and Monty Lowther, is apparently in vain, though they resort to very drastic measures indeed in dealing with Cutts & Co. These drastic measures infuriate Cutts to such an extent that he plans a base trick to get even with Harry Manners, whom he considers at the bottom of the affair. Now, Manners major has vowed that he will let his brother go his own wilful way in future; but he cannot keep his vow when he gets wind of Cutts' scheme, for Cutts is striking at him through the youngster. So Manners major risks expulsion for himself to save Reggie, and the story tells in dramatic fashion how, with loyal aid from his chums, but chiefly through his own self-sacrifice and pluck, the elder brother rescues the younger.

"IN SPITE OF ALL!"

TO MY CORRESPONDENTS.

I am glad to see that most of my correspondents have taken notice of what has been said in previous chats about giving their names and addresses, so that they can be answered by post. I do all that I can to ensure that each letter received is replied to; but I cannot accomplish impossibilities, and when a reader asks me to let him have a reply in the next number he is asking me to do that, for the simple reason that the next number is already in print before his letter is received. No one need feel the least fear in giving his name and address; it is not to make these public that I want them, but merely to let him have a reply as early as possible. Just now I have practically no room at all for "Replies in Brief," though whole pages of these are awaiting the chance of insertion. If any reader who has written during the last two or three months—or even farther back—and has not had an answer will repeat his queries, I shall be pleased to do my best to deal with them. There are very few editors indeed who make a practice of replying to every letter received; but I have made a point of this for a long time past, and with the co-operation of my readers I hope to continue doing so.

KEEPING THE FLAG FLYING.

It would be very remiss of me to go on week by week without thanking my vast army of readers, one and all, for their grand and sustained efforts to keep the good old "Gem" Library at the top of the tree so far as boys' papers are concerned.

Many school-story papers have been compelled to cease publication owing to the recent restrictions on paper; but, thanks to the loyal and whole-hearted measure of support accorded to the "Gem" Library by its keen and enthusiastic readers, we are still able to weather the storm, despite the machinations of Kaiser Bill and his cold-blooded parasites.

I have it on the authority of numerous soldier-readers in the trenches that the "Gem" is one of the finest tonics in the world for depression. May it ever continue thus; and when the war is over, and Wilhelm the Wicked grovels for the mercy he will never get, may Tom Merry & Co. still be all the rage, and may the circulation of this journal rise

to such giddy heights as to ensure it a permanent and lasting place in the affections of the boys and girls of victorious Britain!

NOTICES.

Corporal A. Wallington, 3692, 3/5 Essex Regiment, Halton Camp East, Tring, would like to correspond with a keen reader of the "Gem," aged about nineteen.

Hyman Crossman, of Strensall, near York, wants to hear from his old chum, George Beswick.

Sapper W. Chiswell, 4th Co., R.E., Moorish Castle, Gibraltar, would be glad to have back numbers of the Companion Papers.

Pioneer B. Harbour, 129165, F Co., 33 Section, 2nd Batt., Special Brigade, R.E., B.E.F., France, asks for copies of any of the Companion Papers regularly each week.

Leslie V. Lean, 79, Lansdowne Road, Notting Hill, W., wishes to obtain certain old numbers of the "Gem" and "Magnet," and would be glad to hear from any reader who is willing to sell them cheaply.

Private F. Fiveash, of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, wishes to thank the many readers who responded to his appeal for back numbers.

B. Brownson, care of Messrs. J. Planta & Co., 15, Cross Street, Manchester, would like to join a "Gem" or "Magnet" League, in the Cheetham district preferably.

Gunner C. Barnes, 85777, Guards Div., D.A.C. Headquarters, B.E.F., France, would be glad of letters from "Gem" readers.

Private W. J. Dean, 9 Platoon, C Co., 2nd City of London Regt. (R.F.), B.E.F., France, would like to correspond with a reader about seventeen or eighteen.

William Wallie, 771, P Mess, R.N. Barracks, Shotley, Harwich, would be glad to correspond with "Gem" readers.

Victor Wightman, 15, Duchess Street, Belgrave, Leicester, would like to join a "Gem" League in his neighbourhood.

F. G. Chamberlin, Officers' Steward III., Warrant-Officers' Mess, H.M.S. Revenge, care of G.P.O., London, would be glad to correspond with a reader of seventeen or eighteen, and also asks for back numbers.

J. Peole, 108, Great Western Street, Moss Side, Manchester, wants to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League for boys and girls in his neighbourhood.

A. Browne, 132, Plashet Grove, East Ham, is starting an amateur magazine, and would be glad to hear from any reader having a small hand-press or a duplicating machine who would co-operate with him in its production.

E. Moller, Craigvar, Fir Avenue, Sea Point, Cape Province, South Africa, appeals to readers in his country to send him back numbers of the Companion Papers and other suitable literature for soldiers.

W. F. Spencer, 66, Boundary Road, St. John's Wood, N.W., would be grateful if some reader could let him have copies of the "Gem" stories, entitled "Figgins' Fig-Pudding," and "Figgins' Folly."

T. Riley, 245, North Road, Preston, Lancs, wishes to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League, open to readers anywhere in the United Kingdom, and would be glad to hear from all interested.

G. Stone, 30, Aspland Grove, Amhurst Road, Hackney, N., wants to buy back numbers of the "Gem" and "Magnet," any up to the end of Vol. 6, and is willing to pay one-penny each for them.

Yours Editor

PUBLISHED IN TOWN
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WEDNESDAY MORNING

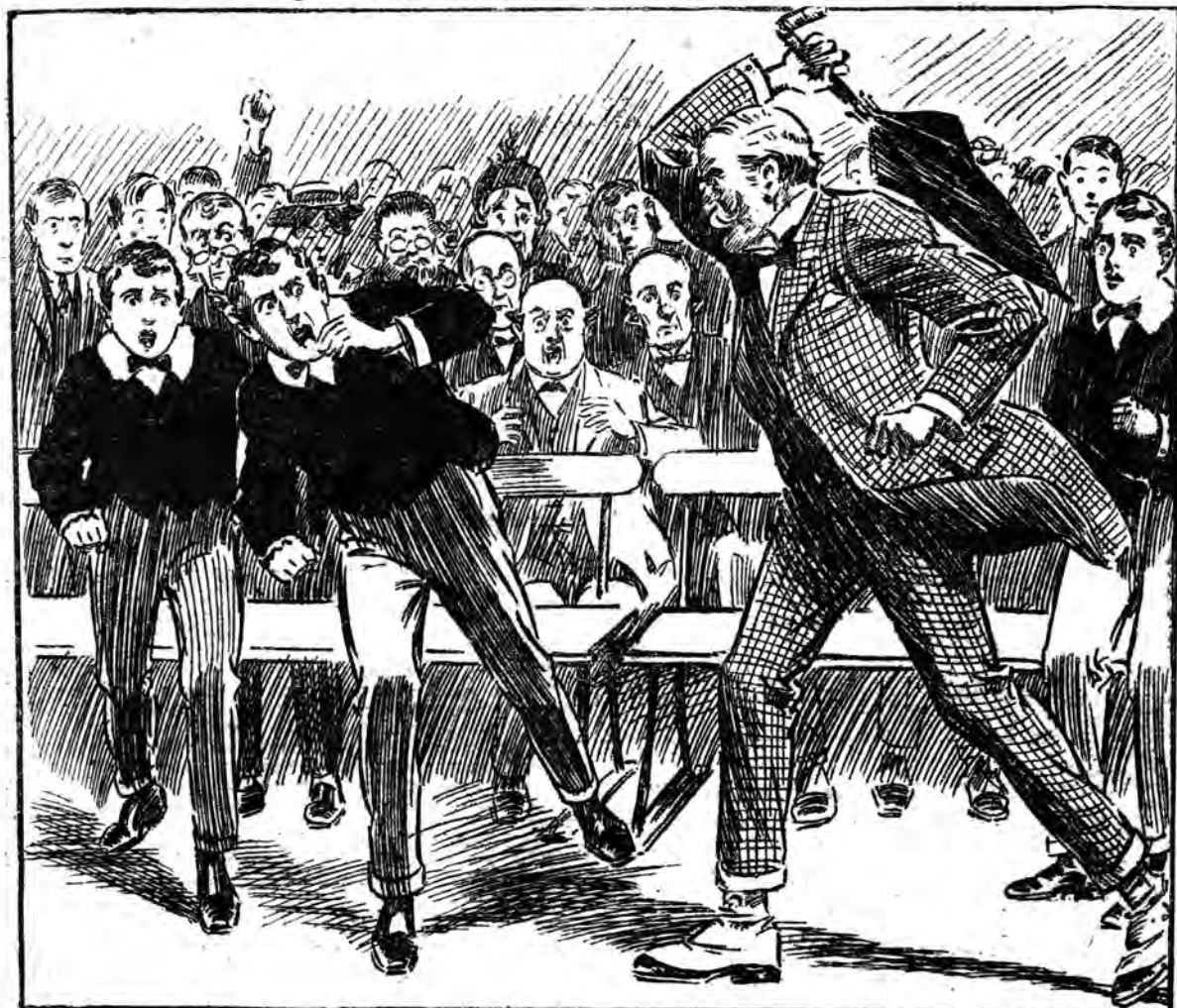


COMPLETE STORIES
FOR ALL, AND EVERY
STORY A GEM!

GRUNDY THE VENTRILOQUIST!

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

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



The umbrella cracked across Grundy's back and he gave a yell of pain. However, the next moment he hit out, and caught the Major on the point of the chin. There was a crash as the Major went down among the seats, sprawling. (See Chapter 2.)

CHAPTER 1. A Sudden Alarm!

GWEAT SCOTT! Help!"

"What's the row?"

"Help, deah boys! It's Gwunday! Gwunday's in a fit!"

D'Arcy of the Fourth stood at the door of the common-room, in the School House at St. Jim's, and shouted in alarm.

It was a fine afternoon in early summer, and most of the fellows were out of doors, lessons for the day being over.

Next Wednesday.

"IN SPITE OF ALL!" AND "INTO THE UNKNOWN!"

No. 431. (New Series.) Vol. 10.

Grundy of the Shell had had the common-room to himself till D'Arcy came in.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came sauntering in elegantly, thinking of nothing in particular. But he gave a sudden jump, and uttered a startled yell, at the sight of George Alfred Grundy.

Grundy was undoubtedly startling to look at.

He was standing before the glass, with his mouth open, his features twisted almost out of recognition, his complexion purple.

He seemed to be striving to utter some sound, but no sound would come from his straining throat.

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No wonder D'Arcy of the Fourth was alarmed. No wonder he stood rooted in the doorway of the common-room, and shouted for help.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were in the passage, and they came racing along at once.

"What on earth—"

"Poor old Gwunday! Look at him!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Great pip!"

"Grundy!"

"Pway help him somehow, deah boys!" said D'Arcy helplessly. "What do you do to a fellah in a fit?"

A low moan came from Grundy.

"Woohh!"

It seemed to be a moan charged with anguish. Grundy's face was quite purple as he uttered it.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Poor old Grundy! Yell for some water!"

He dashed towards Grundy.

"Watah!" shouted Arthur Augustus frantically. "Watah, deah boys! Watah!"

"Hallo!" yelled Blake, from the staircase. "What do you want, Gussy?"

"Watah! Watah!"

"Use some of that you've got on your brain, old chap!"

"You uttah ass, Blake!"

Tom Merry reached Grundy of the Shell. Tom sometimes had his rubs with George Alfred Grundy. But all that was forgotten now. Grundy might be every conceivable kind of an ass, and as obstinate as a mule. But he evidently needed looking after now, and Tom Merry was prepared to look after him.

He threw his arms protectively round Grundy's broad shoulders.

"Lean on me, old chap!"

"Woo-hoo-wooh!" moaned Grundy.

"Watah! Watah!"

"What the dickens—"

"Watah! Watah! Gwunday's in a fearful fit! Watah!"

Lowther was rushing away for water. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy seemed to think it sufficient to shout for water, without making any movement to obtain any.

"Poor old Gwunday! Keep his head up, Tom Mewwy, or—or put it down! I forget whethah you have to put the head up or down when a fellah's in a fit."

"Try a little of each," suggested Blake, from the passage.

"Weally, Blake, you are a heartless beast! Poor old Gwunday is moanin' in fearful agony."

Wilkins and Gunn came running in. They were Grundy's chums and study-mates, and though the great Grundy sometimes exasperated them, they really had a regard for George Alfred. They were not surprised to hear that he was in a fit. Nothing Grundy did would have surprised them.

They found Grundy wriggling in the protecting arms of Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell.

"Woo-hoo!" said Grundy. "Gerraway!"

"He's getting better!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "He can speak!"

"Leggo!"

"Poor old Grundy!" said Wilkins. "Lean on me!"

"Gerraway!" shrieked Grundy.

"Look here, ain't you in a fit?" exclaimed Wilkins, rather indignantly. "We've come to help you."

"Look at his face!" gasped Gunn. "Awful!"

Lowther rushed in with a jug of water.

"Here you are!"

Swoosh!

The contents of the jug were shot into George Alfred Grundy's purple, heated face.

Grundy staggered back with a choking yell.

"Gerroooh!"

"That's bettah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "That will help him to wecovah. Bwing some more watah, somebody! Watah, watah, watah!"

"Gerrooooooh!"

"Poor chap!" said Wilkins. "People always make those queer noises in a fit, I believe. Fancy old Grundy starting fits!"

"He's always starting something," said Gunn, with a shake of the head. "You never know what Grundy's going to do next!"

"Watah! Watah!"

"Yurrirgggggggh!"

"Put him on the sofa," said Tom. "Lend a hand, you chaps! He's jolly heavy! He seems to be getting better."

Grundy was gouging water out of his eyes, and spluttering wildly. Tom Merry and Wilkins and Gunn seized him, to lay him gently on the sofa.

"Leggo!" raved Grundy. "Yah! Oh! Groogh! Pll smash you! Yooogh!"

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"Hysteries!" said Lowther. "Poor old Grundy! Hold him tight!"

"Hystewics, bai Jove! Watah! Watah!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Wilkins, as Grundy hit out, and Wilkins went rolling along the floor. "Yow-ow-ow! You ungrateful beast— Yow-ow!"

Biff! Tom Merry caught Grundy's left with his chin, and sat down with a bump.

Gunn jumped away in alarm. He did not want to make a third in that game.

Grundy gouged the water from his eyes, and glared furiously at the juniors. He did not seem to be in a fit now. But he was evidently in a fearful rage.

"You burbling idiots!" he roared. "Wharrer you at? Lemme alone! My hat, I'll pulverise you! What silly idiot chucked that water at me?"

"Well, I like that!" said Lowther warmly. "If you must have your beastly fits in the common-room, you might be decently grateful to fellows who help you out of them!"

"You silly jabberwock—"

"Watah! Watah!"

"Here's some water!" exclaimed Blake, rushing in with a jug. "Where is he?"

"Keep off!" roared Grundy ferociously. "You chuck that water at me, and I'll brain you with a chair!"

"But you want it—"

"I don't want it, you dummy!"

"Look here, if you're in a fit, you must want it."

"I'm not in a fit, you crass idiot!"

"Weally, Gwunday, you know perfectly well that you are in a fit!" said Arthur Augustus. "You alarmed me fearfully with your howwible expvression. I wecommend you to give him the watah, Blake."

"Perhaps he's had enough," grinned Blake. "He looks rather wet. Of course, if you've recovered, Grundy, I don't want to waste water in war-time. If the war lasts another eighty-five years, the result may depend on the last jug of water."

"You silly ass!" hooted Grundy, mopping his face with his handkerchief. "You set of burbling idiots! Yah!"

"I wegard you as an ungwateful beast, Gwunday, and the next time you have a fit, I shall wefuse to take the slightest notice of you!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Undah the cires, I shall see you well on the floor in fearful agony without takin' the slightest notice!"

"I tell you I wasn't in a fit!" shrieked Grundy.

"Wats!"

"It's all right, old chap," said Gunn comfortingly.

"There's nothing to be ashamed of in having fits; fellows can't help them. If you're subject to fits, it can't be helped."

"If you say I'm subject to fits, I'll—I'll—"

"Well, ain't you?"

"No, you silly chump!" roared Grundy. "I'm not!"

"Then what were you making horrible faces for, and moaning like a dying pig?" demanded Lowther. "What were you looking like a boiled cod for?"

"Yaaa, watah! If you haven't had a fit, what were you lookin' like a wotten boiled cod for, Gwunday?"

"Your burbling assa! I was practising!" hooted Grundy.

"Practising having fits!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in amazement.

"Bai Jove! What a peculiah taste!"

"No, you chumps! No, you joasers! No, you dummies! You crass asses, no! I was practising throwing my voice."

"Wha-a-at!"

"I'm a ventriloquist!"

"A which?"

"Ventriloquist!" shouted Grundy. "Now do you understand, you howling fatheads? I was just getting into the way of it, and throwing my voice a treat when you came and interrupted me like a lot of silly owls! Why, what are you cackling at, you dummies?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling duffers—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of merriment in the common-room. Grundy having fits was weird enough, but Grundy the ventriloquist was weirder still. Tom Merry & Co. simply yelled, while George Alfred Grundy mopped the water out of his neck and glared at them in surprise and wrath.

CHAPTER 2.

Grundy's Latest.

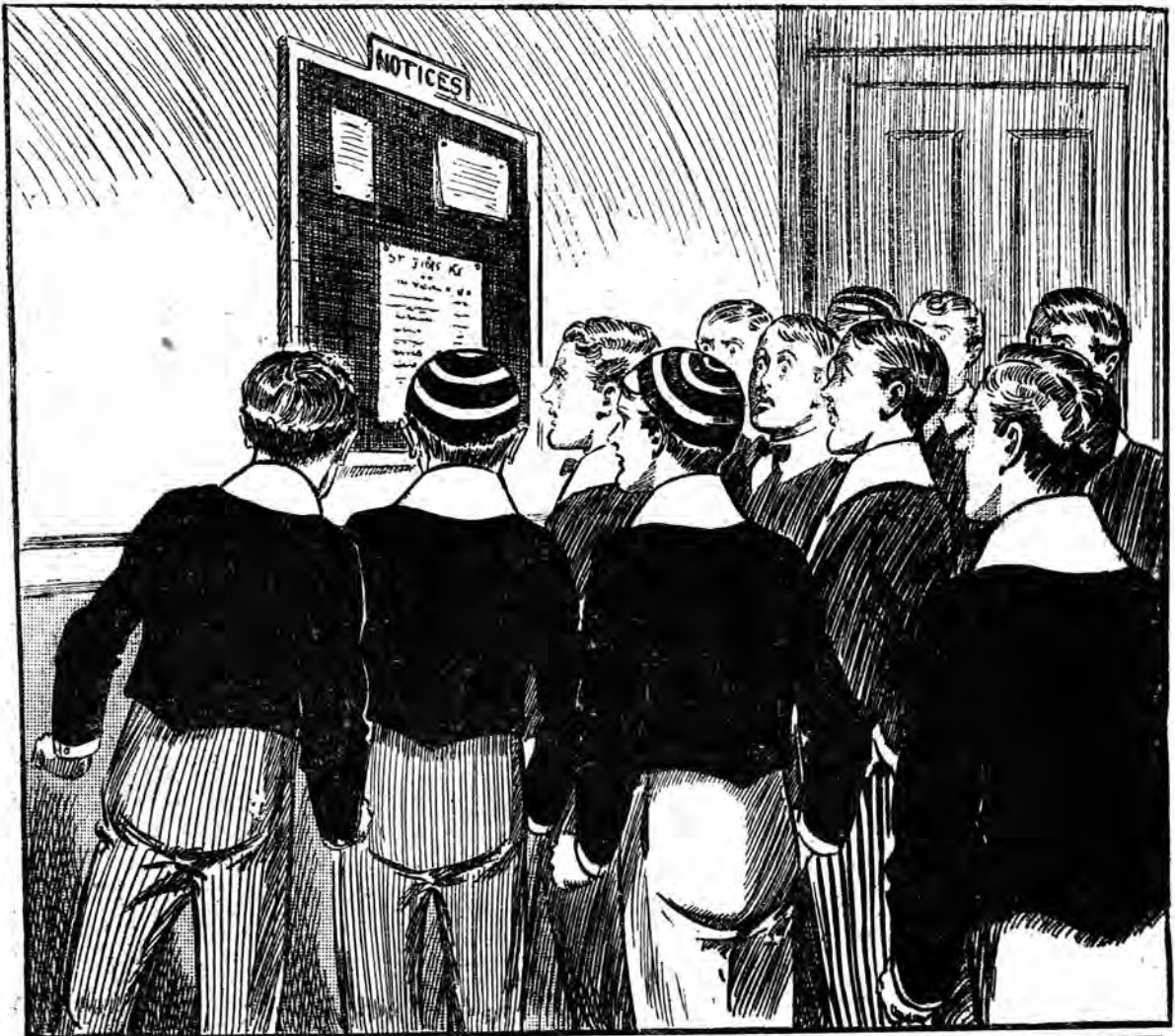
"G WUNDAY the ventriloquist! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Grundy!"

"Same old howling ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly chumps!" exclaimed the exasperated Grundy. "Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! I



On the board was a notice in Tom Merry's hand—a list of the cricket eleven for the Greyfriars' match, and in the list appeared the name of George Alfred Grundy. The juniors were astonished. (See Chapter 11.)

happen to have a gift for ventriloquism, and I'm going to develop it by practice, that's all. It just happens to be one of my gifts."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dear!" said Tom Merry, wiping his eyes. "You'll be the death of us yet, Grundy. Why were you born such a funny merchant?"

Grundy snorted.

"I suppose I can expect jealousy and detraction in everything, the same as in the footer and cricket," he said. "You jolly well won't be able to stop me with your cackling—I know that. When a chap's got a great gift, it's his duty to develop it and make the most of it. That's what I'm going to do. Later, I shall get up ventriloquial entertainments for the wounded soldiers. I think they deserve it."

"Why, what have they done?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall require some practice first, however. If you'd leave off cackling like a set of fools, I'd show you the progress I've made."

"Weally, Gwunday, you are an ass! I have twied ventriloquism myself," said Arthur Augustus. "I have failed to become a ventriloquist. How do you suppose that you are goin' to succeed, then?"

"Well, I'm not a silly ass!" said Grundy.

"Bai Jove!"

"Besides, I've got the gift," said Grundy. "It isn't only practice that's required, it's a gift. I've got a book on the subject, and I'm studying it. Finding that I've got the gift, it's simply a question of developing it. If you duffers will shut up cackling a minute, I'll show you what I can do."

"Silence for George Alfred!" said Lowther, holding up his hand. "Let's see Grundy throw his voice. Throw it out of the doorway, Grundy."

"I can do that."

"And throw yourself after it."

"You silly ass—"

"Hold on!" said Kangaroo, of the Shell. "You say you can throw your voice out into the passage, Grundy?"

"Certainly I can!"

"Suppose somebody shut the door on it?"

"Eh?"

"How would you get it back again?"

"Look here, don't be a funny idiot!" roared Grundy. "Shut up and give a chap a chance. Now, I'm just going to begin."

The grinning juniors were silent, and George Alfred proceeded to throw his voice in ventriloquial style.

His first proceeding was to open his mouth and squeeze his throat, and then to twist up his rugged features in a most alarming manner.

If the St. Jim's fellows had not known that George Alfred was merely going to throw his voice, they would certainly have thought that he was going to have a fit.

From Grundy's squeezed throat came a low moaning voice:

"Are you there?"

"Yaas, we're heah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy glared at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Don't interrupt, you ass!"

"But you addressed a question to us, Gwunday!"

"That was my voice outside the door."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 431.

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

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"IN SPITE OF ALL!"

"Gwreat Scott!"

"Was your voice outside the door that time?" asked Blake.

"Of course it was! I threw it."

"Then why did it sound as if it came from your mouth as usual?"

"It didn't!" roared Grundy.

"Oh, I see! I thought it did!"

"Something wrong with your ears, perhaps. I should advise you to consult a doctor!" snorted Grundy. "Now listen again, and don't interrupt."

Grundy's face reassumed its alarming expression.

"Pway excuse me, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus anxiously, "but aren't you afwaid you may burst somethin' or othah?"

Grundy's face unbent for a moment while he glared at the anxious and considerate swell of St. Jim's.

"Will you shut up?" he yelled.

"Yaas, certainly; but aren't you afwaid, weally, that you may burst your cwop or somethin'?"

Snort!

Disdaining any other reply to Gussy's anxious question, Grundy twisted up face and throat once more, and threw his voice. As he declared that he was throwing it, it must be supposed that he did throw it; but undoubtedly the impression of the auditors was that the voice proceeded from George Alfred's own throat, and not from outside the door at all. But perhaps Grundy knew best.

"Are you there?"

Grundy's face unbent.

"Yes, I'm here," he said, in his natural voice. "What do you want?"

Evidently it was a ventriloquial dialogue between Grundy and an imaginary person in the passage.

He squeezed up again and moaned out in a voice which he fondly imagined to be ventriloquial:

"I want to come in!"

"There!" said Grundy triumphantly. "What do you think of that?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked puzzled.

"May I ask one question, Gwunday?" he asked.

"Yes, if you like."

"What did you mean by sayin' you wanted to come in, when you are in already?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fathead! That was supposed to come from outside—that was the ventriloquial voice, thrown into the passage."

"Bai Jove!"

"Didn't it seem to you fellows to come from the passage?" demanded Grundy wrathfully.

"No, jolly fear!" chuckled Lowther. "It seemed to come from your own gullet!"

"Better have your ears seen to," said Grundy disdainfully. "They're long enough, but they don't seem to hear very well."

"Why, you cheeky ass—"

"Didn't you think that voice came from outside, Wilkins?"

"Ha, ha!" yelled Wilkins. "Not quite!"

"Didn't you, Gunn?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"I wegard you as an ass, Gwunday!"

"My impression is," said Lowther seriously, "that Grundy is really having fits all the time, and not ventriloquising at all, and I think he'd better have the rest of the water over him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

George Alfred Grundy bestowed a glare upon the doubting Thomases, who preferred to believe their own ears rather than Grundy's assurances, and strode from the room.

He left the juniors howling with laughter. Grundy had surprised his schoolfellows by starting as a hypnotist once upon a time. But Grundy as a ventriloquist, as Lowther remarked, fairly took the bun. The great man of the Shell strode away angrily to his study, leaving the juniors howling over Grundy's latest.

CHAPTER 3. Wonderful.

WILKINS and Gunn came into Grundy's study, later on, in a rather hesitating manner. They had been as much tickled as anybody else over Grundy's latest. They remembered rather late that Grundy did not like being laughed at. He had a habit of taking himself quite seriously. And as tea in the study that evening depended upon Grundy, Wilkins and Gunn felt that they had laughed not wisely but too well.

A certain amount of "soft sawder" would be required to placate the great Grundy.

They expected to find him surly, and in that expectation

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they were not disappointed. Grundy was making weird faces and uneasy noises before the glass when they came in. Knowing now that it was only ventriloquism they were not alarmed. But when he looked at them he was frowning ominously.

"What do you want?" asked Grundy unpleasantly.

"Tea, you know," said Wilkins, with a feeble smile.

"Past tea-time, you know," remarked Gunn.

Grundy pointed to the door.

"Get out!" he said briefly.

"Wha-a-at!"

"I don't want cackling poultry in my study," said Grundy.

"I'm fed up with you! Travel!"

"Look here, I suppose this is our study as much as yours?" said Gunn warmly.

"I'm willing to settle that point with you, if you like," said Grundy, pushing back his cuffs.

"Now, look here, old chap—"

"Don't call me old chap!"

"Ahem! You see—"

"Yes, I see a pair of cackling idiots!" said Grundy. "Some fellows are backed up by their pals when they're doing a really clever and entertaining thing. I must say I never thought you fellows would join in the detraction and jealousy that seems to dog my footsteps everywhere. I had a good bit of it when I was at Redelyffe, but I find it's worse at St. Jim's. I suppose a chap who's a bit out of the common must expect it."

"Ahem! Yes," agreed Wilkins. "The—the fact is, Grundy, you are a bit out of the common, you know. It's safe to say that there isn't another chap at St. Jim's quite like you."

Wilkins felt that it was quite safe to say that. It was undoubtedly the bare truth. Whether it was to be taken in a complimentary sense was another matter.

"Well, I'm glad you can see that, at all events," said Grundy. "But I must say I'm disappointed in you. I looked on you as pals. I was quite willing to let you share in the credit I brought on this study. I was going to give you some special little entertainments with my ventriloquial gifts."

Grundy spoke in a tone more of sorrow than of anger.

"That's jolly good of you," said Gunn. "Suppose—suppose you give us a bit of it—after tea."

"Thanks, I don't want any more cackling."

"Well, we were really cackling at Tom Merry," said Wilkins, closing one eye at Gunn. "You can't help cackling at that chap. The—the fact is, Grundy, we—we want to hear you throw your voice. You see, you took us rather by surprise at first. Now we've got used to the idea, we—we think it's a good wheeze for you to take up ventrography—I mean, ventrology—"

"You mean ventriloquism, I suppose?"

"Yes, that's it. Look here, you show me how you do it while Gunn goes down to the tuckshop."

"I don't mind," said Grundy, unbending considerably.

"I've got a lot of ideas on this subject, you know, when I've had a little more practice. I'm going to make the umpire say 'Out!' when Tom Merry's at the wicket. That'll make him skip!"

"Oh, my hat! I—I mean, yes, what a ripping wheeze! Of—of course, you'll throw your voice into the umpire's mouth, I suppose?"

"That's it. Then I'm going to attend the No-Conscription meeting at Wayland—you know the Anti-War party have a meeting at the town-hall. I'm going to throw my voice on the platform, and make 'em say all sorts of things, and muck up the meeting."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wilkins and Gunn.

They were really tickled, not so much at the scheme as at Grundy's idea that he could do it. If the amateur ventriloquist started throwing his voice in Wayland Town Hall the result was certain to be funny, anyway.

Grundy himself grinned, well pleased with this tribute from his chums.

"Well, you cut off, Gunn, and get in some tuck," he said. "Change that ten-bob note, will you? Don't get any Norwegian sardines, or Yankee potted things, as you did before. We've got to support home industries in war-time. It's sickening to see people buying neutral trash at a time like this."

"Right you are," said Gunn.

Gunn departed with the note, in a state of great satisfaction. He was very willing to do the shopping while Wilkins had the ventriloquism inflicted upon him.

"Now, just you listen to me," said Grundy. "I'm going to make my voice come from under the table."

"Go it," said Wilkins resignedly.

Grundy went it.

"Gr-r-r-r-r!"

"Good!" said Wilkins enthusiastically. "That sounded exactly like a voice under the table."

"You ass, that was the growling of a dog under the table!"

"I—I mean—that's what I mean."

"Now, listen to this—chap calling for help in the chimney," said Grundy.

"Elp!"

"Ripping!"

"You see, you can't pronounce h's with the ventriloquial voice," Grundy explained. "You have to drop the h's. Would you have taken that for a chap stuck in the chimney and calling for help, Wilkins?"

Wilkins nodded. He had read somewhere that it was the best policy to humour lunatics.

"Now I'm going to throw my voice out of the window."

"I hope to goodness it'll stay there!" murmured Wilkins.

"Eh? What did you say?"

"I said, it's wonderful, old chap. What surprises me is that you can do these things so rippingly after so little practice."

"Some fellows have the gift," said Grundy modestly.

"That's how it is. I don't brag of it. It's just a gift."

"I—I see."

"Elp me in!" said the ventriloquial voice, which Grundy fondly imagined appeared to proceed from the open window.

Wilkins rushed to the window.

"Ha, ha!" roared Grundy. "There's nobody there, Wilkins. That was me."

"You!" exclaimed Wilkins, apparently in great astonishment.

"Ha, ha! Yes. I told you I was going to do it."

"So you did; but, really—"

"Ha, ha!"

"Was it really you, Grundy, honest Injun?" asked Wilkins, with owl-like solemnity.

"Honour bright!"

"Well, that beats it!" said Wilkins.

"I'm getting on," said Grundy. "I take back some of the things I've said to you, Wilkins. You're a jolly sensible chap!"

Wilkins suppressed a gurgle.

"It's really agreeable for a fellow like-me, with brains, to have a really intelligent chap for a study-mate," said Grundy. "Hallo! Here's Gunn! I wish you'd been a minute earlier, Gunny. I made Wilkins believe there was a chap trying to get in at the window."

"Did you?" gasped Gunn.

"It was marvellous," said Wilkins. "You'd never have thought Grundy could do it, would you, Gunny?"

"Never!" said Gunn.

"It only shows what a chap can do when he's got the gift," said Grundy. "I shall astonish some of 'em before long, I can tell you!"

"You will," said Wilkins, "especially at the town-hall meeting. I say, that ham looks prime, and those tarts ripping!"

Grundy & Co. sat down to tea with much satisfaction. It was quite a gorgeous spread, and well worth the trouble of pulling Grundy's egregious leg. But when tea was over, and Grundy was prepared to begin again, Wilkins and Gunn suddenly remembered an appointment over in the New House, and rushed away in great haste. The St. Jim's ventriloquist had the pleasure of "throwing his voice" about for his own sole edification after tea.

CHAPTER 4.

Not Quite a Success!

TOM MERRY & Co. were on Little Side, after school the following day, when Grundy of the Shell came down, with Wilkins and Gunn.

Wilkins and Gunn were smiling, but Grundy was looking very serious.

Tom Merry was looking on at the practice with a keen eye. The Greyfriars eleven was shortly coming over to St. Jim's again, and Tom Merry was keeping his men well up to practice. The matches with Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, were always among the hardest of the season, and the St. Jim's junior cricketers needed to be at the top of their form for it.

The captain of the Shell had no eyes for Grundy, but Grundy had eyes for him. He exchanged a wink with Wilkins and Gunn.

"I'm just going to begin," he whispered.

"Ahem! Do you think you've had quite practice enough?" murmured Gunn.

"Oh, quite!" said Grundy.

He tapped Tom Merry on the shoulder.

"Don't bother!" said Tom, without turning his head.

"I want to speak to you, Merry!"

"I'm busy, fathead!"

"Well, it won't wait. It's about the Greyfriars match next Wednesday."

Tom Merry did not answer. His eyes were upon Jack Blake, who was facing the bowling of Fatty Wynn of the New House. He had no time to waste upon Grundy.

But George Alfred was not to be denied. He tapped Tom on the arm again.

"About the Greyfriars match," he repeated.

"Oh, rats!"

"Are you going to give me a chance in the team?"

"Fathead!"

"Yes or no!" howled Grundy.

"No, ass!"

Tom Merry moved further away. Grundy looked darkly at his two chums.

"He's asking for it, isn't he?" he said.

Wilkins nodded.

"I'm going to imitate his voice," said Grundy. "Ventriloquists have to do that, you know. Imitating his voice, I'm going to throw my voice, so that it will seem to come from him—see?"

"I—I see!" gasped Wilkins.

"It's really quite simple!" said Grundy.

"Is—is it?"

"Oh, quite! Just you watch me."

"We're watching," said Gunn.

"I'm just going to begin."

Grundy cleared his throat with a little preparatory cough. Then he began.

Jack Blake had just driven the leather away, and Figgins, in the field, made a jump at it, and nearly caught it. But it went to grass.

"How's that?" grinned Julian of the Fourth.

"Out!"

The juniors jumped.

Grundy of the Shell was under the weird impression that he uttered that word in Tom Merry's voice, and made it appear to proceed from Tom Merry's mouth.

But to every other fellow there, it was quite plain that the word came in Grundy's voice from Grundy's lips. The juniors stared at Grundy.

"Out?" repeated Digby.

"Out, you ass!"

"What do you mean, Grundy? Figgie missed the catch!"

"He's dotty!"

"My hat! What an umpire he'd make!"

"Ha, ha!"

Grundy snorted. Evidently he had missed it that time, and the St. Jim's fellows did not even know that he was ventriloquising. Wilkins and Gunn nearly doubled up.

"Well, you are an ass, Grundy!" said Tom Merry, in wonder. "Don't you know more about cricket than that?"

"Oh, rats!" growled Grundy.

Figgins tossed the ball in to Fatty Wynn, and the Welsh junior bowled again to Blake. This time the middle stump went flying, and the Falstaff of the New House chirruped:

"How's that?"

"Not out!"

Again Grundy fondly imagined that he was imitating Tom Merry's clear, pleasant voice, and causing the statement to proceed from the captain of the Shell. Again he was, so to speak, off the wicket.

"Not out this time!" chuckled Julian. "Oh, Grundy!"

"Out!" said Tom.

"Run away and read 'Cricket for Beginners,' Grundy!" said Herries.

Grundy glared.

"Didn't you recognise Tom Merry's voice?" he exclaimed.

"My voice!" exclaimed Tom.

"Bai Jove! Is Gwunday off his wockah?"

"He's ventriloquising!" gasped Wilkins, unable to keep the thrilling secret any longer. "He's—ha, ha!—ventriloquising!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Ventriloquising! Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass, Gwunday—"

"Ventriloquising!" shrieked Monty Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter, as Grundy's deep design dawned upon the juniors. George Alfred glared at them furiously.

"You cackling asses!" he began. "I'm not quite in practice yet, perhaps—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But you just wait a bit—till I've had a bit more practice—"

"You're not going to have any practice here!" grinned Tom Merry. "The cricket-field isn't the place for a silly ass to play the giddy ox. Somebody take a bat and drive him off!"

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"Look here—"

"Off you go!"

"I tell you—yarooh!—keep that bat away!" roared Grundy. "Don't poke me with that stump, Kerruish. I'll—gerraway, Julian! I—I—Yuh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy fairly fled.

There was no more ventriloquism on the cricket-field that day. Grundy spent the next hour or two rubbing the places where the bats and stumps had lunged at him, and he had no time even to throw his voice.

CHAPTER 5.

An Unfortunate Jape.

"GRAMMARIAN bounders!" murmured Tom Merry. The captain of the Shell was on Rylcombe Bridge, coming home from Wayland, on the following day, when he spotted three youths in Grammar School caps, coming towards him from the direction of Rylcombe.

Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, and Wootton major quickened their steps as they sighted him.

The heroes of the Grammar School were always ready for mischief. And as it happened, Gordon Gay & Co. had a defeat to wipe out.

Gordon Gay & Co. were quite pleased to discover Tom Merry "on his own" in a lonely spot.

They came up with smiling faces.

"Nice afternoon, Tommy!" said Gay urbanely.

"Admiring the view?" asked Monk.

Tom nodded.

"Yes, until you spoil it by bringing your face along," he replied.

"Cheeky!" said Wootton major.

"Not in a hurry, are you?" asked Gordon Gay, smiling.

"Yes, in rather a hurry!" said Tom, laughing. "None of your little jokes, you fatheads!"

"Can't you stop a minute with your old pals?" urged Gordon Gay. "We only want to turn your jacket inside out, and chalk your chivy, and tie your hands together, and a few little things like that!"

And the Grammarians chuckled.

Tom Merry drew back to the stone parapet of the bridge and put his back to it, so that he could not be taken from behind.

"Cheese it!" he said tersely. "I shall hit out."

"Going to thrash us all round?" grinned Monk.

"Well, I'll try!" said Tom.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three Grammarians advanced to the attack. They were perfectly good-humoured, but their intentions were a little too humorous for the captain of the Shell. Tom Merry did not intend to walk home to St. Jim's with his face chalked and hands tied if he could help it.

"Mind, I shall hit!" said Tom warningly.

The Grammarians only laughed, and rushed on to the attack.

Tom Merry kept his word. He hit out, and Frank Monk dropped on the bridge with a roar. Then he was struggling in the grasp of Gordon Gay and Wootton major.

"Yow-ow!" roared Monk. "Why, I'll smash the silly ass! Look at my nose! Yoop!"

Tom Merry struggled hard.

He made a great effort to throw off Gordon Gay and Wootton, and he succeeded, the two Grammarians staggering back, panting.

Tom Merry staggered back himself, spent by the effort.

"Collar him!" roared Gay.

"Collar the bounder!" gasped Monk. "I'll give him squashing a fellow's nose."

The Grammarians rushed on Tom Merry again.

Tom dodged them, and ran along the bridge. The three Grammarians rushed on his track.

Beside the bridge a steep bank, clothed in thickets, sloped down to the glimmering waters of the Ryll.

Tom Merry plunged down the bank to escape the pursuers.

The Grammarians halted abruptly.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Gordon Gay. "That bank's jolly dangerous."

"Come on!" shouted Monk. "If that St. Jim's bounder can do it, we can."

"Hold on, I tell you, fathead!"

Gordon Gay dragged him back.

"It's too dangerous! That silly ass will tumble into the water!"

"Serve him right!" growled Monk, feeling his nose tenderly.

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Tom Merry was plunging down the steep bank.

He caught at the bushes to stop his wild career, but they gave in his grasp, and he went plunging down, almost headlong.

He had taken that plunge down the bank to escape the Grammarian practical jokers, without stopping to think.

But as he went stumbling and tumbling down, he realised that he had escaped out of the frying-pan into the fire.

He strove to stop himself, but he could not.

Down he went, tearing through the bushes, his hands scratched and his clothes torn, to the steep edge by the water.

Splash!

"My hat! He's in!" shouted Gordon Gay.

"Great Scott!"

The Grammarians ran on the bridge again, looking down with anxious eyes. The jape had had a serious ending.

They knew that Tom Merry was a first-class swimmer; but the stream under the bridge was deep and swift.

The captain of the Shell was breathless and spent from his struggle and the rapid tumble down the bank.

The three Grammarians caught a glimpse of him, struggling in the water, as he was swept away under the bridge by the strong current.

Gordon Gay rushed across the bridge, his eyes on the river on the lower side.

Tom had already been swept through, and was whirling down the stream, swimming, but battling with small success, with the current.

Gay's face was pale as death.

"He'll be drowned!" he gasped.

"Cut along the bank!" panted Wootton major.

The three Grammarians dashed off the bridge, and scrambled down the bank on the lower side, where the water's edge was less steep.

But Tom Merry had been whirled far by the time they reached the water.

They scrambled along the bank, in wild anxiety for the junior of St. Jim's.

But they knew that they could not reach him.

Tom was fighting hard with the current.

But the grip of the rapid stream was upon him, the roar of water was in his ears, and his strength was almost spent. As he fought for his life in the rushing water, it was borne in upon his mind that he was fighting in vain.

CHAPTER 6.

Grundy to the Rescue.

WILKINS came into Grundy's study in the Shell passage.

George Alfred Grundy was standing before the glass, making weird contortions with his face, and emitting extraordinary sounds from his throat.

The ventriloquist of St. Jim's was at work again.

Wilkins grunted.

He was growing fed-up with Grundy's ventriloquism, in the study at all events. He indignantly compared the study to a monkey-cage at the Zoo, since Grundy had taken up the ventriloquial art.

"For goodness' sake chuck it, Grundy!" said Wilkins peevishly. "It makes my flesh creep to hear you making that awful row. Sounds like a man being hanged, by gum!"

Grundy gave him a withering glare.

"I'm throwing my voice, you ass!" he said.

"I wish you'd throw it away, and have done with it!" grumbled Wilkins. "The study ain't fit to live in since you started that rot."

Grundy pushed back his cuffs.

"That what?" he asked.

"Ahem! I mean, that ventriloquism."

"You're a silly ass, Wilkins!"

There was a peculiar sound from the passage.

"Groogh! Ho-hoo-groogh! Wee-weeep! Woop!"

Wilkins grinned, and Grundy looked out of the study wrathfully. Wally and Joe Frayne of the Third were in the passage, squeezing out those extraordinary sounds. The fags were evidently imitating Grundy's ventriloquial efforts.

Grundy made a rush at them, and the heroes of the Third melted away down the passage, yelling with laughter.

The St. Jim's ventriloquist, with a frowning brow, took his cap and left the School House.

A prophet, as was said of old, has no honour in his own country, and it seemed to be the same with an amateur ventriloquist. Grundy the voice-thriller was certainly not honoured or admired in the School House of St. Jim's. The



Grundy was gouging water out of his eyes, and spluttering wildly. Tom Merry and Wilkins and Gunn seized him, to lay him gently on the sofa. "Leggo!" raved Grundy. "Yah! Oh! Groogh! I'll smash you! Yooogh!" (See Chapter I.)

whole House persisted in taking his ventriloquism as a joke.

Grundy strode out of the gates, and followed the path by the river.

Practice in the House had become very disagreeable to him—what with the impatience of his study-mates, the laughter of his Form-fellows, and the impertinent imitations of the fags.

In a secluded spot by the river, Grundy set up a pocket-mirror on a tree-trunk, and started practice.

His face assumed all sorts of weird contortions, and he emitted sounds that would certainly have caused alarm if there had been any pedestrians on the lonely path.

He paused at last, gasping.

"I'm getting on!" he murmured. "I'm sure my voice seemed to come from across the river that time. I fancy I'm a pretty good ventriloquist already, and I shall be all right in time for the No-Conscription meeting. I'll make 'em sit up!"

And Grundy began again.

"Elp!"

Exigencies of voice-throwing compelled Grundy to drop the aspirate. He was "throwing his voice" across the river—to his own satisfaction. He was convinced that that cry came from the river, and not from his own direction, and he cried again.

"Help!"

Grundy jumped.

Certainly that cry came from the river; there was no mistake about that. Grundy glowed with satisfaction.

"My hat! Even Wilkins would have to own up to that!" he murmured. "Why—what— My hat!"

"Help!"

It was the cry for help again, and Grundy had not ventriloquised.

It dawned upon Grundy that the cry really came from the river, and he turned his head and swept the shining Ryll with his eyes.

The next instant he forgot all about ventriloquism.

"My hat! Tom Merry!" he gasped.

He stared blankly at the struggling junior.

Tom Merry, still struggling feebly, was being whirled along by the current towards the spot where Grundy stood.

The struggling junior had caught a glimpse of Grundy on the bank, and shouted to him.

Grundy was not a quick-witted youth. But as Tom came whirling on, Grundy woke to action.

The great man of the Shell was not a good swimmer. But he firmly believed that he was. And he certainly had heaps of pluck.

He tore off his jacket and plunged in.

Tom Merry had been striving to reach the bank, and catch hold of the rushes, but the current had baffled him. But he was only a dozen feet out, and Grundy, with a rapid plunge, reached him and grasped him.

"Hold on to me!" spluttered Grundy.

He plunged shoreward, holding on to Tom Merry.

Fortunately, he got his grasp upon the drooping branch of a willow, and held on to it, supporting Tom with the other hand on his collar, and keeping his head above water. Tom Merry panted for breath.

"I've got you!" said Grundy. "My hat! Blessed if I know how we're going to get out of this, though!"

There was a shout along the bank.

Gordon Gay and Monk and Wootton came racing breathlessly along.

"Hold on!" yelled Monk.

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"Stick to him!" panted Gordon Gay.
 "I'm sticking!" called back Grundy.
 "We'll help you in a minute."
 Gordon Gay clambered into the willow, and reached down from the branches and relieved Grundy of his burden. Wootton and Monk received Tom Merry from his hands, and drew him safely on the bank.

"Now lend me a hand!" gasped Grundy. "Blessed if I can get out!"

"Right you are!"

Gay grasped the Shell fellow, and with his aid Grundy clambered into the willow.

In a few minutes more both were safe on the bank.

Tom Merry sat upon the bank in a pool of water, deadly white, but already recovering.

"Grundy!" he gasped. "You—you saved my life, I believe!"

"Oh, you'd have got out!" said Grundy. "I've jolly well spoiled my bags; I know that!"

Tom Merry grinned.

"I—I say, Merry, we're sorry," said Gordon Gay penitently. "We couldn't guess you'd be such a silly ass as to tumble down the bank!"

"All serene!" said Tom. "All's well that ends well. It might have been jolly serious for me if Grundy hadn't been here, though!"

"By Jove, it would!"

"You'd better take a run, or you'll catch cold, both of you," said Monk.

Tom Merry rose, with Gay's assistance. His strength was returning.

"All serene!" he said. "I can manage now. Come on, Grundy; you'd better come and get your bags changed."

And the two Shell fellows started for St. Jim's at a good pace. Gordon Gay & Co. took their way to the Grammar School, in a chastened mood, and greatly relieved at the happy ending of what might have been a serious accident.

Tom looked rather curiously at Grundy several times as they tramped on towards St. Jim's.

Whether Grundy had actually saved his life he did not know, but certainly it was very probable.

"I say, Grundy, old chap," he said, as they reached the school gates, "I'm awfully obliged to you!"

"What rot!" said Grundy. "I suppose I couldn't let you drown. It was rather rotten having my practice interrupted like that, I must say, though."

"Your—your what?"

"My ventriloquial practice."

"Oh!" said Tom. "Is that what you were doing?"

"Yes. I find it goes better in the open air; and it's better away from a lot of chipping idiots, too!"

"I won't chip you any more about it," said Tom.

"Oh, I don't mind! A fellow with a real gift can afford to laugh at the criticism of silly asses!" said Grundy.

"Ahem! It was ripping of you to come in for me," said Tom. "We might both have been drowned."

Grundy shook his head.

"Oh, no; not likely!"

"It was a dangerous place for a poor swimmer to go in," said Tom.

"Yes; you ought to have been more careful!"

"I was speaking of you!"

"I'm not a poor swimmer!" said Grundy. "I'm about the best swimmer at St. Jim's, if you come to that! I wasn't in any danger—a splendid swimmer like me!"

"Oh!"

"Look here, Tom Merry, if you're going to run down my swimming the same as you do my cricket—"

"No fear!" said Tom. "I don't run down your cricket, old chap. But facts are facts, you know."

"And silly asses are silly asses!" growled Grundy.

"So they are!" said Tom. "Look here, Grundy, I'm much obliged to you, and if I could do anything for what you've done for me, you've only got to say the word."

"Oh, all serene!" said Grundy.

And they went into the School House, and hurried to the Shell dormitory, and lost no time in changing their clothes.

CHAPTER 7. Grundy's Duty.

"GRUNDY, old man—"
 Wilkins and Gunn burst into the study, where George Alfred Grundy had sat down to do his prep, in a state of great excitement.

Grundy stared at them.

"Hallo! What's the row?" he asked.

"We've just heard about it!" gasped Wilkins. "Grundy, old son, it was ripping of you!"

"Splendid!" exclaimed Gunn.

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George Alfred looked puzzled.

"What the dickens are you jabbering about?" he asked.

"I mean, what happened this afternoon—"

"On the river, you know. It was splendid!"

"Why, you didn't hear me!" said Grundy. "You weren't there."

"Hear you?" repeated Wilkins.

"Yes. If you'd heard me, you might say it was ripping, and no mistake!" said Grundy. "I've fairly got on to it at last. I made my voice appear to come right across the river."

Wilkins and Gunn blinked at him. They were alluding to Grundy's heroic rescue, not to the ventriloquial practice. But Grundy's great mind was running upon the more important matter of the two.

"I—I was speaking of your fishing Tom Merry out of the river," said Wilkins at last.

Grundy snorted.

"Oh, that! That's nothing—for a splendid swimmer like me!"

"A-a-a splendid swimmer like—like you!" stuttered Wilkins. "Why, you can't swim six strokes!"

"You cheeky ass!" roared Grundy. "If you've come here to talk rot—"

"Nunno! I—I say, Grundy, it was no end plucky what you did!"

"Well, I am plucky, ain't I?" said Grundy. "Nothing surprising in that! The trouble was that it interrupted my ventriloquial practice, when I was getting on so rippingly!"

"Tom Merry's saying very nice things about you, old chap," said Gunn.

"Well, I suppose it was rather lucky for him I'm such a splendid swimmer!" said Grundy. "I suppose he admits that much now? I wish he had sense enough to see that I'm as good at cricket as I am at swimming!"

"Well, so you are, anyway," said Wilkins, closing one eye at Gunn.

Wilkins was about right on that point.

"The fact is," said Grundy, "I've been thinking. Although I've discovered that I have a great and rare gift as a ventriloquist, I don't think I ought to let cricket slide simply for that. There's the school to be thought of, too—the cricket record, you know. On the whole, I ought to play in the Greyfriars match, if it can be worked."

"If!" said Gunn.

"You see, I think it can," said Grundy, resting his chin on his hand, and looking at his chums. "This is how it is. Tom Merry was glad to be fished out of the river, of course. Well, he said he'd do anything for me in return that he could. That was only right. Naturally, I shouldn't think of holding him to that to gain any advantage for myself. That would be mean. But for the sake of the school, I think I ought to do it."

"Eh?"

"The Greyfriars team are a dangerous lot, and I've got very strong doubts whether our eleven is quite up to their form. If I play in the team, you see, that sets it all right. We shall lick them. The question is, shall I play? Should I be justified in holding Tom Merry to his promise, for the sake of the school?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"That's what I've been thinking out," said Grundy. "Of course, Tom Merry wasn't thinking anything about the cricket when he made that promise. It will surprise him when I ask for a place in the junior team."

"I—I think I'd be generous, and—and not hold him to it," stammered Wilkins. "That would be more—more like you, Grundy."

Grundy nodded.

"Quite so, so far as I'm concerned personally. If it were only a question of myself personally, I shouldn't think of

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anything of this kind. I'm not the sort of chap that shoves himself forward, I hope."

"Oh!" gasped Wilkins.

"But it's a question of strengthening the team, so as to beat Greyfriars. Tom Merry can't see my quality as a cricketer, owing to his ignorance of the game! But he'll be glad when he sees the result of my playings. So if I can make him play me, it will be really doing him a favour, and he'll be glad afterwards. It's like appealing from Philip drunk to Philip sober, you know!"

"Oh, dear!" murmured Gunn.

"You see, those Greyfriars chaps are hot stuff," said Grundy. "They used to play Redclyffe when I was at Redclyffe, and I know their form. Without me, I don't think St. Jim's has much chance. However, I shall think it over, and do what I consider my duty."

Grundy turned to his prep again, leaving his chums speechless.

Tom Merry, in his gratitude for Grundy's service, had spoken rather hastily—certainly never dreaming of the construction George Alfred might place upon his words.

It looked as if the captain of the Shell had laid a rod in pickle for his own back.

Wilkins and Gunn could guess what the result would be if Tom were induced to play George Alfred Grundy in the Greyfriars match on Wednesday. So could everybody, excepting George Alfred himself.

Grundy left off his prep a good many times, apparently in deep thought, and his study-mates could guess the subject of his cogitations.

He was considering in what direction his duty lay.

At supper that evening he announced his determination.

"I've made up my mind," said Grundy confidentially.

"I'm going to play for St. Jim's. It's my duty, and I'm going to do it."

"But—but will Tom Merry agree?" murmured Wilkins.

"Oh, he must, after what he said!"

"But—but he'll think it rather—rather mean."

"Perhaps so, till I've helped to beat Greyfriars. Then he'll recognise that I was really doing him a good turn," explained Grundy.

"Oh!" said Wilkins.

"However, I sha'n't mention it to him yet," said Grundy.

"He would want me to practise on Saturday afternoon. You see, I don't need a lot of practice like the other chaps. And I've got an engagement for Saturday. I'm going to muck up the Anti-Conscription meeting with my ventriloquism."

"Oh!" gasped Wilkins.

He said no more. George Alfred Grundy was not to be argued with.

CHAPTER 8.

Grundy on the Warpath.

"B AI Jove! I'm goin'!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark on Saturday afternoon.

"Same here!" said Julian.

"And here!" remarked Lowther. "It will be as good as a cinema, or better."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The news of Grundy's intended raid on the No-Conscriptionists had spread.

Grundy approved of conscription, and, as Monty Lowther remarked, if a mighty brain like Grundy's approved of it, there was nothing more to be said on the subject.

Therefore it was sheer cheek for the No-Conscription party to hold a meeting in the Wayland Town Hall to advocate the abolition of what George Alfred Grundy approved of.

Grundy, when he first heard of that meeting, had suggested a raid and a general ragging of the objectors, offering himself to take on the leadership.

Somehow or other the juniors did not seem to be pining for George Alfred's leadership, and his offer was declined without thanks. Monty Lowther gently suggested to him that it would be judicious to mind his own business, but Grundy merely snorted at that advice.

As a raid was not feasible, Grundy had fallen back upon his marvellous gifts as a ventriloquist for "mucking up" the meeting which certain persons had the audacity to hold against his approval.

And quite an army of School House fellows determined to follow Grundy to the Town Hall, and see him ejected "on his neck," that being the general anticipation.

But here Tom Merry put his foot down.

With the Greyfriars match coming off on the following Wednesday, cricket was the order of the day.

The members of the school eleven were required to stick to the nets.

Figgins and Fatty Wynn and Koumi Rao and Redfern, of the New House, were in the junior team, and they turned up to practice, and Tom Merry & Co. joined them. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy expostulated with the captain of the Shell.

"Gwunday is weally too good to miss, you know, Tom Mewwy," he urged.

Tom nodded.

"Quite so, and so is the cricket."

"Yaas, but I am in great form, and I fully intend to score a century next Wednesday against Gwefriahs, you know."

"You won't score at all if you don't play, and you won't play if you don't stick to practice!" said Tom tersely.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Get into your flannels, ass! Never mind Grundy!"

And Arthur Augustus had reluctantly to relinquish the pleasure of seeing George Alfred depart from the Town Hall in Wayland on his neck.

But a good crowd of fellows followed George Alfred when he started on his expedition.

Wilkins and Gunn, of course, went with their great leader. They were prepared, in a friendly way, to bring home what was left of Grundy after his performances at the Town Hall.

Julian and Clive, Kerruish and Reilly, Hammond and Herries, and several more fellows marched after Grundy, who gave them a condescending smile as he noted them on his track. It was not at all surprising to Grundy that the fellows were interested in his proceedings. His impression was that they were coming to see the way he was going to dish the No-Conscriptionists. He did not guess what they were really going out to see.

There was a crowd outside the Town Hall when the St. Jim's party arrived on the scene in the old High Street of Wayland.

When the doors were opened Grundy & Co. filed in with the rest, and Grundy's broad shoulders secured him a front place.

The hall was pretty well filled.

Some had come to cheer, and some had come to "boo," and there was a party of determined-looking old gentlemen—over military age—who were there to "heckle" the speakers to any extent.

Grundy dropped into a seat beside a stout, white-moustached old gentleman, whom he recognised as Major Popham, a retired officer of the Bunglewallah Fusiliers. Grundy saluted the old gentleman respectfully. Major Popham's ideas were exactly like his own. Unfortunately, the major recognised Grundy as an impertinent person, who had knocked his hat off with a snowball in the winter, and the major bestowed a glare upon Grundy in reply to his respectful salutation. So, in spite of the identity of their views, there was no sympathy between these two determined opponents of the meeting.

"Awful rot this meeting, sir!" said Grundy, in reckless disregard of the major's glare.

The veteran of the Bunglewallah Fusiliers grunted.

"Ought to be stopped, sir!" said Grundy.

"Don't address me, boy!"

"Eh?"

"Impertinent young jackanapes!" said the major.

"Well, my hat!"

"Shurrup!" murmured Wilkins. "It's the old Johnny we snowballed. Don't you remember?"

Grundy frowned.

"Look here, sir," he said, "I'm against this meeting!"

"Hold your tongue!" snapped the major.

"Ain't you against it?" demanded Grundy.

The major snorted and turned his head away.

"Don't be so jolly crusty," said Grundy, unheeding.

"We're here to muck up this giddy meeting and stop their jaw. I suppose you've come for the same reason, sir, so we can pull together."

"If you address me again, boy, I shall box your ears!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Grundy did not address the major after that.

"Hallo, they're beginning!" said Wilkins.

The platform had filled.

There were several ladies and some men with long hair, and a very special speaker imported from London.

The speaker advanced across the platform, and was greeted with cheers from one part of the audience, and "boos" and hisses from the rest.

However, he started on his speech.

Major Popham punctuated it with snorts of disgust. Mr. Rabbit, the speaker, had his eye on the major, and when he had made a reference to Indian veterans who wished to treat their own countrymen like sepoy there was some laughter, and the major turned a fiery red.

Mr. Rabbit went on to state his views that the way to beat Prussianism was not by introducing Prussianism in its worst form into this country, to which the audience replied "Hear!" or "Booh!" or "Rats!" as the spirit moved them.

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Kerruish, who was seated in the next row behind Grundy, nudged the great man of the Shell in the back.

"We're waiting," he whispered. "When is the ventriloquism going to begin?"

"Go on, Grundy!"

Grundy cleared his throat with a little cough.

"I—I say—" murmured Wilkins.

"I'm just going to begin," said Grundy.

"Hah! you better—"

"Don't interrupt me, Wilkins!"

Wilkins gave it up.

Grundy coughed again. He was feeling a little nervous in the crowded hall, in spite of his confidence in his powers as a ventriloquist. But Grundy was not the fellow to back down.

Mr. Rabbit was growing eloquent.

"If freedom is banished from Britain," he said, "where will it take refuge? If the only country in which the flag of freedom has floated hauls down that flag, where shall Freedom hide her head? The horror of militarism has settled upon us like a blight. Where—oh, where shall freedom find a refuge, banished from the last free country in the world? Echo answers where! I have said, and I repeat, where—oh, where shall liberty find a refuge, when military rule has crushed England to the dust? I say, and I repeat—"

"Bow-wow!"

Grundy was throwing his voice.

Grundy fondly imagined that he was imitating exactly the voice of the eloquent Mr. Rabbit, and that he was "throwing" that ejaculation fairly into Mr. Rabbit's mouth.

Now, if Mr. Rabbit had really been made to wind up his speech with "bow-wow!" the effect would certainly have been comical.

Grundy paused for the roar of laughter.

But it did not come.

Several eyes turned on Grundy, that was all. Mr. Rabbit went on with undiminished eloquence, apparently having an inexhaustible supply of breath and telling phrases, and quite unconscious of the ventriloquial effort of George Alfred.

Grundy looked puzzled.

"Did you hear that?" he murmured to Wilkins.

Wilkins nodded.

"I made it come fairly out of that idiot's mouth, didn't I?"

"Oh!"

"Didn't I?" demanded Grundy fiercely.

"Oh, yes!" said Wilkins. "Any old thing! I shouldn't try again, though!"

"Rot! I'm going on," said Grundy. "I'm going to make a dog bark right under his feet, and make him jump!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Go it!" grinned Kerruish.

Grundy cleared his throat, and the St. Jim's juniors waited joyfully for the dog to bark; while Mr. Rabbit, like the little brook, went on for ever.

CHAPTER 9.

A "Muck-Up."

"G-R-R-R-R-R-R!"

It was really a good imitation of the growl of a savage dog. Grundy had practised it with success.

But Mr. Rabbit did not jump.

Excepting to Grundy's own ears, that growl did not seem to proceed from anywhere near the speaker on the platform.

It seemed to proceed, in fact, from the spot whence it did proceed—that is, from where George Alfred Grundy was seated.

The old gentleman beside him gave a sudden jump, and drew in his long, thin legs nervously.

He glared at Grundy.

"You young scamp, have you brought a dog in here?" he snapped.

"I!" ejaculated Grundy.

"Yes, you impertinent young jackanapes!"

"That—that dog growled on the platform," said Grundy, taken aback.

"Nonsense!"

"Where are your ears, sir?" said Grundy warmly, fully convinced that he had made the growl proceed from the platform, in his great confidence in his ventriloquial powers. "Are you deaf?"

The major snorted, and grasped his umbrella, as if inclined to lay it about the Shell fellow.

He refrained, however, and turned his head away, and contented himself with interrupting Mr. Rabbit's eloquence with successive snorts.

"Better chuck it," murmured Wilkins.

"Don't be an ass, Wilkins! I'm just going to begin!"

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"Oh, dear!"

"Gerr-r-r-r—h-h-h-r-r-r!"

It was a terrific growl this time, and as it came right from the major's elbow, it was not surprising that it made the old Bunglewallah Fusilier jump.

He fairly spun round on Grundy.

"How dare you bring a savage dog here?" he exclaimed. "Take the animal away immediately! I will not be bitten by a savage dog! Take that animal out of the hall instantly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy grinned.

The major's wrath was a tribute to Grundy's powers as an imitator, if not to his powers as a voice-thrower.

"Do you hear me?" roared the major. "Do you want me to chastise you, you impertinent young vagabond?"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Grundy warmly. "I ain't a blessed Sepoy in your regiment, sir, and you can't bully me!"

"Hear, hear!" chuckled the delighted juniors.

It struck them as funny for Grundy, who had come to "muck up" the anti-militarist meeting, to start by getting into a row with a grim old militarist.

"What—what!" stuttered the major, purple with wrath.

"You're jolly well not going to rag me!" said Grundy. "Who are you, anyway? Keep all that for the poor beggars who have to stand it!"

Thwack!

The major at that moment would probably have given a great deal to have had George Alfred Grundy in his regiment.

But as Grundy wasn't in his regiment, and could not be put into "elink," or given a double fatigue duty, or confined to barracks, or subjected to any of the delightful amenities of military life, the major had recourse to his umbrella.

The umbrella whirled in the air, and came down across Grundy's broad shoulders with a sounding whack.

Grundy gave a roar of pain and wrath.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors. "Go it, whiskers!"

"Go it, Grundy!"

George Alfred Grundy jumped up in a fury.

"You silly old ass!" he roared. "If you weren't old enough to be my great-grandfather, I'd mop up the floor with you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Thwack! Whack! Whack!

The major was not satisfied yet. There were yells in the crowded hall.

"Sit down!"

"Silence!"

"Turn him out!"

"Yah!"

"Sit on that old josses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack!

Grundy, with all his proper respect for age, could not be expected to stand that.

There was a good deal of strength in the right arm of the old Bunglewallah Fusilier, and the umbrella cracked across Grundy's back. Grundy bit out with one of his celebrated drives from the right, and caught the major on the point of the chin.

There was a crash as the major went down among the seats, sprawling.

"Hooray!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Grundy!"

"Order!"

"Sit down!"

The major was up in a moment. He was purple and gasping. He fairly hurled himself on Grundy.

"Gerroff!" roared Grundy. "I don't want to mop you up, you old fool! Gerroff my neck, you old duffer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the major did not "gerroff."

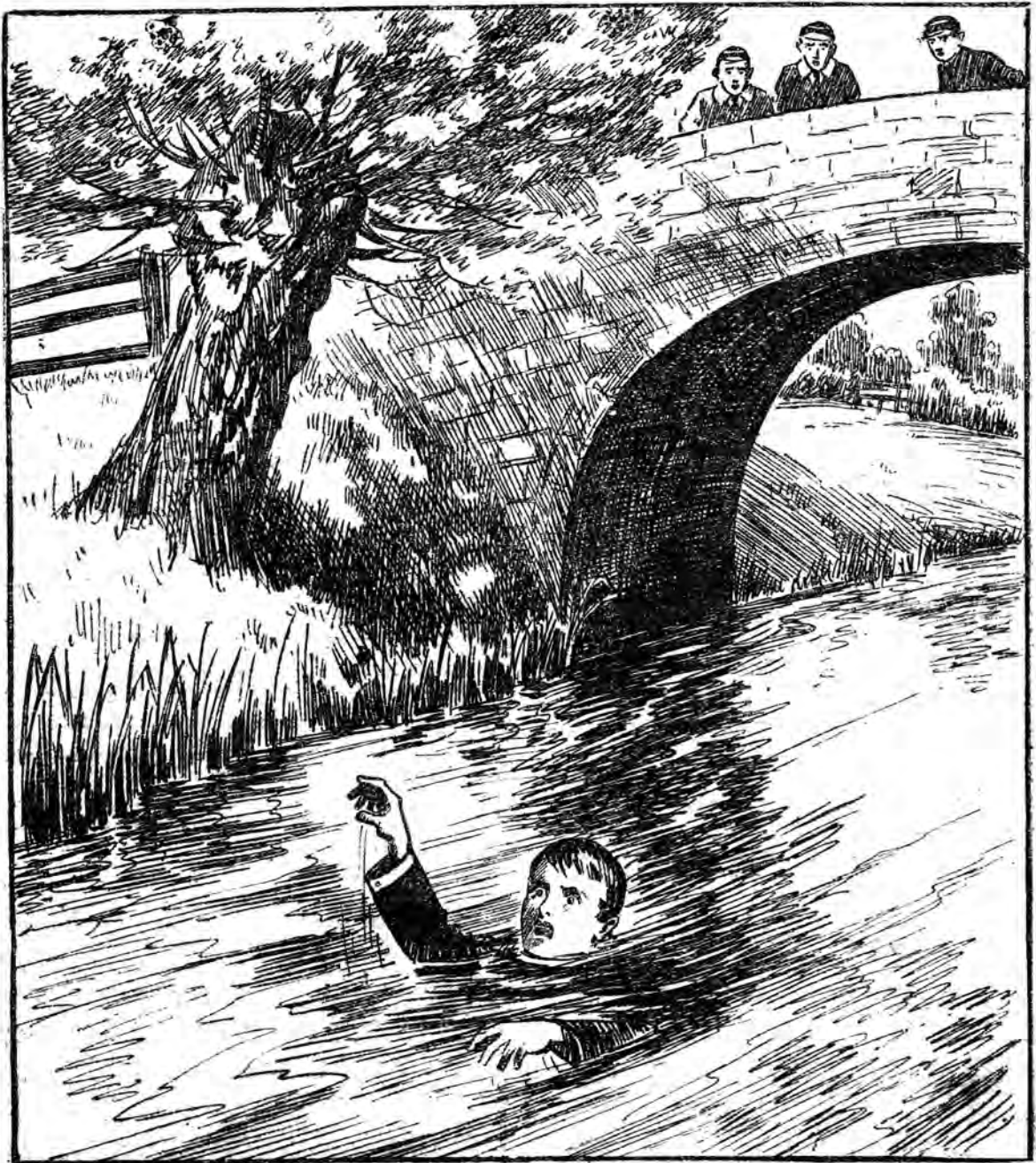
Grundy had to fight; there was no help for it. Several stewards were rushing towards the spot. Mr. Rabbit's eloquence had ceased at last; there was a wild uproar in the hall, and voices could not be heard.

Half a dozen pairs of hands were laid upon both Grundy and the major, and they were rushed and bundled away towards the nearest door.

The major's top-hat disappeared under trampling feet, as he was whirled away. He went out of the doorway flying.

Grundy followed him, with his collar gone, and his jacket split up the back, and his trousers rampled up round his knees.

The major sat on the pavement, and Grundy of the Shell sprawled over his long legs.



The Grammarians ran on the bridge again, looking down with anxious eyes. Tom Merry had already been swept through, and was whirling down the stream. "He'll be drowned!" gasped Gay, his face as pale as death. (See Chapter 5.)

"Groogh!" gasped the major. "By gad!"

"Oh, crumbs!" spluttered Grundy. "Yaroooh!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The St. Jim's juniors had followed them out, yelling with laughter. Wilkins and Gunn dragged Grundy to his feet.

"Cut before he starts again!" gurgled Gunn.

Grundy gasped.

"The—the silly old ass! Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at, you duffers! That old fool has mucked up the whole show!"

"Let me get at him!" gasped the major, scrambling up, and rushing at Grundy.

Reilly put out his foot in time, and the fiery old gentleman rolled on the pavement again.

Then Grundy was rushed away by his comrades. It was a little too dangerous to remain at close quarters with the major. Grundy's enterprise was at an end. The No-Conscription meeting proceeded without any further ventriloquial efforts by the St. Jim's ventriloquist.

CHAPTER 10.

Held to His Word!

HALLO! Come in!"

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were in their study at tea, when Grundy of the Shell looked in.

Tom's manner was unusually cordial as he asked the great Grundy into the study. He had not forgotten the incident of the river.

Manners and Lowther put on their politest smiles. They had made up their minds to be very nice to Grundy as long as they could stand him.

Grundy nodded affably.

"Had a good afternoon?" queried Lowther. The Terrible Three had already heard all about Grundy's success at the No-Conscription meeting, but they nobly forbore to smile now.

"No, rotten!" said Grundy, frowning. "A silly old ass mucked it all up. The old duffer was on my side, really, only he was a fearful ass. But never mind that. I've dropped in to speak about what you said to me the other day, Merry."

"Go ahead! Take a seat, and have tea!"

"Thanks, I've had my tea! By the way, how are you making up the cricket eleven for the Greyfriars match?"

Tom groaned inwardly.

"Well, it's made up, old fellow," he said. "There's Talbot and Kangaroo and myself and Blake and D'Arcy and Reilly and Figgins and Paddy Wynn, Kouni Rao, and Redfern and Lawrence."

"Not a bad team," said Grundy.

"No; quite good, I think."

"Might find a better man than D'Arcy, though."

"Ahem! Gussy doesn't think so."

"Gussy doesn't know much about cricket."

"Ahem!"

"Now, you remember what you said to me the other day?" said Grundy.

The captain of the Shell nodded.

"You'd do anything you could for me, if I asked you, you know."

"Yes, and I meant it."

"You mean it now?"

"Certainly!" said Tom, in wonder.

"Well, I'm going to ask you something."

"Go ahead!"

"Play me in the Greyfriars match!"

"Wha-a-at!"

Tom Merry's jaw dropped.

"That's what I want," said Grundy. "Mind, I'm not taking advantage of your promise to shove myself forward. Don't think that for a moment. But I'm convinced that you need me in the team to beat Greyfriars."

"But—but—"

"You don't agree with me there?"

"No fear!"

"It's a difference of opinion, you see," said Grundy calmly.

"You'll think a bit differently after the match."

"My hat!" murmured Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry looked the picture of dismay.

"I—I wasn't referring to the cricket, you know, when I spoke to you the other day, Grundy," he stammered.

"I know you weren't."

"Then—then you see—"

"But you said you'd do anything I asked you to do for me, and what I ask you to do is to put me in the Greyfriars match."

"I—I can't!"

"I shouldn't have thought you were a fellow to back out of a promise, Tom Merry," said Grundy.

Tom crimsoned.

"I'm not. But—but I can't do this. I'll do anything else—anything I can. But I can't let you chuck away the biggest match of the season!"

Grundy laughed.

"That's only your ignorance," he explained. "I'm the best junior cricketer at St. Jim's—in fact, equal to most of the seniors."

"Oh, crumbs!" said Manners.

"You can't see it," said Grundy. "But that's only your ignorance of the game. You watch me play against Greyfriars, and you'll alter your tune."

"Look here, I can't put you in!" said Tom desperately. "The cricket committee would have something to say about it."

"I suppose you're not the kind of captain to be overruled by the committee?" said Grundy disdainfully.

"Well, no, but—but—"

"Well, put me in!"

"The fellows would scalp me!"

"Not when we win the match," said Grundy.

"But—but we couldn't win it with you playing for St. Jim's!"

Grundy frowned.

"I've already explained that that's only your ignorance of the game," he said. "Do let that drop!"

"Ye gods!" murmured Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry sat silent for some moments. He felt that he was cornered. He had made a hasty promise to Grundy in the fullness of his heart. Grundy was not the kind of fellow to take a mean advantage of it. It was his firm conviction that he was a splendid cricketer, and could not be left out without disaster, which made him determined to hold Tom to his word. But that only made matters all the worse. Under the circumstances, with that weird belief firmly fixed in Grundy's obstinate head, argument was wasted upon him.

Tom Merry looked helplessly at his chums. Manners and Lowther looked at him. They were as nonplussed as their leader.

"Oh, don't look down in the mouth about it!" said Grundy encouragingly. "It will be all right. You can rely on me for that!"

"Oh, you silly ass!" groaned the captain of the Shell.

"Eh?"

"Look here, I can't play you! Go and ventriloquise!" said Tom. "That's really more your mark, Grundy."

Grundy snorted.

"If you choose to break your word, I can't hold you to it, of course!" he said. "I despise you, that's all! Good-evening!"

Grundy turned to the door.

"Hold on!" said Tom.

"Well?"

"Look here, you know I wasn't referring to cricket matters when I spoke, and you oughtn't to make a claim like this!" said Tom savagely. "Blessed if I don't wish you'd left me to take my chance in the river!"

"You needn't say any more!" said Grundy loftily. "I release you from your promise, as you don't choose to keep it. I shall have my own opinion of you, though."

"That's not good enough!" said Tom Merry. "If you hold

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me to my word, I keep it. If you insist on a place in the eleven, I've got to give it you!"

"That's all right, then. I play on Wednesday?"

"If you insist—yes!"

"Well, I insist, of course, for the sake of the school—not for any personal reasons, of course!" said Grundy.

"Then you'll play. Buzz off now, for goodness' sake; your face worries me!" growled Tom Merry.

Grundy laughed, and quitted the study in high good humour. Tom Merry gazed dolefully at his chums.

"What will the fellows say?" he said.

"They'll say you're a silly ass," said Monty Lowther; "and so you jolly well are, I must say!"

"I had to keep my word, hadn't I?"

"Well, yes; but you shouldn't have given it in the first place."

"He fished me out of the river," said Tom.

"Oh, bother him!" said Manners. "This means that the Greyfriars match is a goner! I was going to take a set of photographs of the winning team. They'll be the photographs of Harry Wharton & Co. now. Br-r-r-r!"

"Can't be helped," said Tom heavily. "After all, we may manage to pull the game out of the fire, even with a passenger like Grundy to carry."

"Not likely!"

"We'll do our best," said Tom.

But the captain of the Shell was not feeling very hopeful. And he was feeling decidedly uneasy—and with reason—as to what the rest of the team would say—especially the player who would be left out to make room for Grundy. It was not a happy evening for Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 11.

Arthur Augustus Rises to the Occasion.

"POTTAY!"

"Off his rocker!"

"Silly ass!"

"Awful duffer!"

Those comments, and many more of the same sort, were passed by a crowd of juniors gathered before the notice-board in the hall in the School House.

The juniors were astounded.

On the board was a notice in Tom Merry's hand.

It was a list of the cricket eleven for the Greyfriars match on Wednesday. And in the list appeared the name of George Alfred Grundy.

As there were already eleven names in the list, the addition made a total of twelve, who certainly could not all play in the great match. Evidently one of the earlier members would have to be left out, and equally evident, the junior captain had not yet decided which.

"Gwunday, bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, his eyeglass dropping from his eye in his astonishment. "Gwunday! That ass! That fearful duffah!"

"It must be a joke," said Blake.

"And a jolly bad joke!" remarked Digby.

"Somebody's written the name in, from a misguided sense of humour," said Julian, with a shake of the head.

"No; it's Tom Merry's list."

"Well, it beats the band," said Figgins of the Fourth.

"Grundy in the team—which means a cricketer left out to make room for him. If it's a New House chap left out, there's going to be wigs on the green, I can tell you!"

"Weally, Figgins, if a chap is left out at all, it's bound to be a New House chap. Tom Mewwy would hardly leave out a good man."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you monocled ass!" ejaculated Figgins wrathfully.

"I wefuse to be called a monocled ass, Figgins—"

"Well, he can't be leaving me out," remarked Fatty Wynn. "You School House bounders can't bowl. And it can't be Figg— the best bat in the team. Or Reddy, or Lawrence, or Koumi Rao. Quite impossible!"

"Gussy, most likely," said Kerr.

"Wats! I should uttably wefuse to be left out."

"But what's the howling ass putting Grundy in at all for?" exclaimed Redfern.

"Goodness knows!"

"Time a New House chap became cricket captain, I think," said Figgins, with a sniff.

"Well, that's rot," remarked Talbot of the Shell. "But this is a surprise, and no mistake."

"I shall speak to Tom Mewwy vewy sewiously about this," said Arthur Augustus. "I weally considah that the cwicket club is called upon to pwotest."

"The chap who's left out will protest, you can bet your Sunday socks on that!" said Kangaroo, with great emphasis.

"Yes, rather!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went in search of Tom Merry, with the idea of remonstrating with him very seriously. He

found the captain of the Shell in the quadrangle. It was after lessons on Monday, and the Terrible Three were strolling under the elms, but Tom Merry did not look very cheerful.

"Tom Mewwy, deah boy—"

"It's going to begin now," groaned Tom Merry. "Well, what is it, Gussy?"

"You're puttin' that fwightful ass Gwunday into the team on Wednesday!"

"Yes."

"You know he can't play cwicket."

"Yes."

"And you'll have to make woom for him by leavin' out a fellah who can play cwicket."

"Yes."

"As a membah of the club, I have a wight to an explanation," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

Tom Merry explained, and the swell of St. Jim's listened in astonishment. His noble brow cleared considerably.

"A vewy unfortunate posish," he remarked. "It is vewy wotten of Gwunday to pin you down like that, deah boy!"

"He doesn't mean it to be rotten," said Tom, with a sigh. "The silly ass thinks he is going to save the match, and he's doing this for the sake of the school."

"Bai Jove!"

"So there's no help for it," said Tom. "I hope we shall win all the same. But if the chaps ask me to resign, I shall do it. They've a right to ask that. But if I captain the team, I must play Grundy."

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"It would be wuff to make you wesign, deah boy, and, besides, we wequiah your services in the match," he said. "But the twouble is, a chap will have to stand out to make woom for that cwass ass. Whom are you goin' to ask?"

Tom Merry coughed.

"Well, as a matter of fact, Gussy, I'm going to ask you."

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Me!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, old chap."

"I pwesume you are jokin', Tom Mewwy," said the swell of St. Jim's frigidly.

"I'm quite serious."

"I wefuse to wegard such a vewy widiculous pwoposition as sewious at all. You had bettah guess again, Tom Mewwy," said D'Arcy loftily.

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Wats! I twust you do not mean to imply, Tom Mewwy, that my services as a cwicketah are the least valuable in the team," said D'Arcy warmly.

"Not at all. I'm asking you because—because—"

"Well, because what?"

"Because I can depend on you to play the game, and back me up in keeping my word to that ass Grundy. You're the only chap who's too polished to make a rotten fuss about it," explained Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus was touched upon his weakest spot. In spite of himself, his aristocratic brow relaxed.

"Bai Jove! If you put it like that, Tom Mewwy—"

"I do put it like that, old fellow."

"Undah the cires, then, I will wescue you fwom your difficult posish by wesignin' my place in the eleven," said D'Arcy gracefully.

"Thanks!" said Tom Merry, really gratefully. "I've no right to ask a chap to step out to make room for Grundy. I've simply landed myself with that fatehead, through—well, through being rather an ass myself. But I can't break my word to the howling idiot, can I?"

"Certainly not, deah boy! Wely on me."

It cost the Honourable Arthur Augustus an effort, but he was equal to it. That difficulty was settled. Arthur Augustus, with his own hand, crossed out his own name in the cricket list, leaving eleven. The force of polished politeness could no further go.

The rest of the team were relieved from fears for themselves. But they were still of opinion that Tom Merry was fully qualified for a front seat in a lunatic asylum. But Arthur Augustus proceeded to explain why Tom Merry had done that most remarkable thing: and the remarks that were made in consequence about Grundy would have made that cheerful young gentleman's hair curl, if he had not been so eminently satisfied with himself.

A crowd of fellows rushed off to Grundy's study to tell him what they thought of him. They found Grundy with his mouth wide open, emitting horrid and terrifying moans and squeaks. Kangaroo caught him by the shoulder and shook him, and Grundy's squeaks changed to a roar.

"Yow-ow! You ass! Leggo! You've spoiled it!"

"Eh? Spoiled what?" ejaculated the Cornstalk.

"I was just throwing my voice under the table," howled Grundy.

"Oh, you ass!"
 "You silly chump!"
 "Look here, Grundy," exclaimed Talbot, "you can't play in the Greyfriars match. It's jolly mean to nail Tom Merry down to that, just because you fished him out of the river."

Grundy snorted.
 "Suppose another fellow did a thing like that?" exclaimed Gore of the Shell. "What would you say if I did it, Grundy?"

"I should say you were a mean cad to do it," said Grundy, "and so you would be."

"Then what do you think about yourself?" demanded Gore.

"That's different. I can play cricket."

"Can't I?" yelled Gore.

Grundy shook his head.

"Why, you—you—" spluttered Gore, almost speechless with indignation. "Why, your cricket would make a tabby-cat laugh!"

"Nuff said!" said Grundy. "I'm doing this for the sake of the school. I'm going to see that match won."

"Won! With you in the team!"

"Yes—because I shall be in the team!"

"Oh, it's no good talking to him!" said Clifton Dane.

"Bump him!"

"Look here, hands off! Leggo—"

"He's chucked his voice under the table!" said Kangaroo.

"Now chuck him after it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroooh!"

George Alfred Grundy was bumped on the carpet, and then a dozen boots drove him under the table. The indignant juniors left him there. They streamed out of the study, and Grundy crawled out, feeling very dilapidated and dusty, and breathless with wrath and indignation. Wilkins and Gunn looked in, and stared at the sight of Grundy sitting on the hearthrug, pumping in breath.

Grundy blinked at them.

"Grooogh!" said Grundy. "Oh! Ow! It's simply sickening—this disgusting jealousy of a chap's form at cricket. But I'll show 'em! Let 'em wait till Wednesday, and then they'll see some cricket!"

"You—you're really going to play?" asked Wilkins.

"Of course I am, fathead!"

"I say, it would be rather generous to let Tom Merry off!" suggested Gunn.

"I can't afford to throw away a school match to please a silly ass like Tom Merry!"

"Oh!" said Wilkins and Gunn, quite overcome.

"It's up to me to win that match," said Grundy. "When I knock up a century or so, they'll come round, I suppose!"

"When!" murmured Wilkins.

"And when they see me perform the hat trick, they'll be jolly glad they've got me in the team!"

"They will—when!" agreed Wilkins.

And Grundy dusted himself down, and proceeded to squeak and groan ventriloquially till he drove his study-mates, stopping their ears, from the study.

CHAPTER 12.

Greyfriars v. St. Jim's.

WEDNESDAY came round, a bright and cheerful summer's day, ideal weather for cricket. George Alfred Grundy was in great spirits. In his keenness about the Greyfriars match, he even forgot his wonderful powers as a ventriloquist, and ceased throwing his voice about in his usual reckless way.

St. Jim's juniors were looking forward to the match in a very doubtful frame of mind.

It was too bad that the biggest match of the season should be "mucked up" in this way, by the biggest duffer at St. Jim's "wedging" himself into the eleven. But the Saints agreed that Tom Merry had no choice but to keep his promise to Grundy, since Grundy held him to it.

The team—excepting for Grundy—was in great form, and the cricketers still hoped to pull off the match, in spite of Grundy's valuable assistance.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked a little glum that sunny morning.

The Greyfriars match was a whole-day affair, and the members of the eleven were granted freedom from lessons that day, while the other fellows went into the Form-rooms as usual for the morning grind. A whole holiday instead of a half was, of course, a great catch; and for that reason, if no other, fellows would have been glad to squeeze into the eleven. Arthur Augustus had given up the extra holiday, and the chance of distinguishing himself in a big match—which was all the harder, as Cousin Ethel was coming down

in the afternoon to see the later play. In fact, there was to be a large gathering of relations of the players, and Arthur Augustus was missing a great chance of the limelight. But Tom Merry had told him that he depended upon his polished manners, as indeed he did, and the swell of St. Jim's was not found wanting. He nobly controlled his feelings.

After breakfast, however, he felt that it would do no harm to speak just one word to Grundy. It was barely possible that even Grundy might realise, by this time, exactly how egregious an ass he was. Arthur Augustus came up to him with his politest smile.

"Wippin' day for cwicket, Gwunday!" he remarked.

"Topping!" said Grundy affably. "Ripping to get off lessons, too! Of course, that isn't why I got into the team. I simply want to make sure of a win for St. Jim's!"

"Exactly!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I—I suppose you haven't changed your mind, Gwunday, deah boy?"

Grundy stared at him.

"Changed my mind?" he repeated. "No jolly fear! You see, this will be a good thing for the school all round. After the way I shall show up in this match, Tom Merry's bound to play me in other matches. That means a splendid record for St. Jim's for the whole of the cricket season!"

"Ahem! I—I was thinkin', considewin' what a wippin' ventriloquist you are, Gwunday, you might think of goin' ovah to Wayland this aftahnoon, and entahtainin' the wounded soldiers."

Grundy sniffed.

"I've offered to do that, and my services have been declined," he said. "You know what the authorities are! No brains! They actually don't want me!"

"They don't know what an entahtainin' chap you are, Gwunday. Suppose you go and see them about it again this aftahnoon. I should be quite willin' to wesume my place in the eleven."

Grundy grinned.

"I dare say you would!" he agreed. "But I'm not going to let this match be lost for the school. You see, you can't play cricket—not what I call play it, you know."

And Grundy walked away, leaving the swell of St. Jim's speechless.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy at last. "Bai Jove! Of all the feashful dangewous maniacs—"

Words failed Arthur Augustus.

When the bell rang for morning lessons, Arthur Augustus took his way to the Form-room with slow and sad steps, with the rest of the Fourth, excepting those who were in Tom Merry's team. The swell of St. Jim's really began to wonder whether, after all, the polished manners of the caste of Vere de Vere were quite worth the price to be paid for keeping them up. He shook his head sadly as he went into the Form-room to grind Latin instead of making runs. Tom Merry tapped him on the shoulder as he went in, and D'Arcy gave the captain of the Shell a lugubrious smile.

"Cheer-ho!" said Tom. "You're a brick, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"Yaas, I suppose so!" he assented. "For goodness' sake don't put that uttah ass on to bowl, Tom Mewwy! I am beginnin' to feah that I was wathah an ass to stand out of the eleven aftah all. Pewwaps, on second thoughts, Blake might pwefer to do so in my place."

"Mighty big perhaps!" remarked Jack Blake.

"Or pewwaps, Kangawoooh, you might like—"

"Bow-wow!" said Kangaroo.

"Or you, Talbot—"

"I don't think!" smiled Talbot.

"Weally, you know—"

Mr. Lathom came along the passage, and Arthur Augustus had to go into the Form-room. But he shook his head very seriously. He was not at all satisfied as to what would happen to the game in his absence.

Tom Merry & Co. proceeded to Little Side, to wait there for the arrival of the Greyfriars team. Grundy was walking as if on air, and his face was beaming with confidence and good-humour. The other fellows forbore to chip him. It couldn't be helped now; and, as Figgins remarked, it was only carrying a passenger in the team, though, indeed, a heavy passenger. So they had to make the best of it.

Grundy tapped Tom Merry heartily on the back.

"Buck up!" he said. "I'll tell you what, Merry. This match will be over pretty early—"

"It won't!" said Tom. "One wicket going for a duck's-egg won't shorten it so very much!"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Grundy. "I'm alluding to my bowling. The Greyfriars fellows won't keep up their sticks very long, I can tell you, when I get fairly going. Now, my idea is this. As the match will be over pretty early, under the circumstances, it would be a good idea to entertain the Greyfriars fellows after the game to pass the

time. It will be a consolation to them for being licked, too! Suppose I give a ventriloquial entertainment in the common-room—what?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"As a punishment to them for licking us?" asked Figgins.

"You silly ass!" roared Grundy.

"Hallo! Here comes Greyfriars!"

The brake from the station had arrived. Harry Wharton & Co. of the Greyfriars Remove, came on the ground, bright and cheerful.

Tom Merry greeted the Greyfriars cricketers cordially.

The stumps were already pitched, and the rival cricketers lost no time in getting to work. Harry Wharton and Tom Merry tossed for choice of innings, and the Greyfriars skipper won the toss.

"We bat!" he said.

Tom Merry nodded. Grundy touched him on the shoulder.

"I suppose you'll give me the first over?" he whispered.

"Oh, rats!" said Tom.

"Well, where am I going to field, then?"

"Anywhere you like!" growled the captain of the Shell. And Grundy snorted.

CHAPTER 13.

The Great Match.

TOM MERRY led his merry men into the field. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry of Greyfriars opened the innings for the visitors. Grundy went into the long field, with a look of disgust. Apparently his programme of terrific bowling was not to come off.

Fatty Wynn and Blake and Figgins shared the bowling among them, and they were all good, especially the plump Welsh junior, who was at the top of his form.

But the Greyfriars batting was first-class, and they met the bowling, good as it was, very well, and gave the field few chances.

Wickets went down, and runs went up, but the runs went up much faster than the wickets went down. Wharton scored 35 before he fell, and Bob Cherry was good for 20, and Vernon-Smith took 15. Field bagged 25, and Brown 20.

Eight down for 120 when lunch-time drew near. Hurree Singh had made a duck's egg to Fatty Wynn's bowling, and his dusky face looked dolorous as he went off, and Koumi Rao gave him a look of sympathy. But that was the only duck's egg in the innings.

Grundy approached Tom Merry as the field crossed over.

"What about me?" he asked.

Tom Merry made a gesture of impatience.

Grundy was being played, and that was all he had bargained for; he was fielding rottenly, and he had his innings to come. He had no right to claim to bowl.

The St. Jim's side needed their best bowling now; but Tom felt that he had to give Grundy a chance. His hasty promise must be redeemed.

"Give Grundy the ball, Blake!" said Tom shortly.

"That fathead?" said Blake.

"Yes, for an over."

"Oh, my hat!"

Grundy took the ball and glanced towards the pavilion, where many spectators were looking on. He went on to bowl against Frank Nugent of Greyfriars.

He bowled, and Nugent grinned. He could see that Grundy was no bowler. Nugent let himself go at the ball, and it flew through the air, and Tom Merry made a jump at it in vain. Away it went to the boundary. Todd, at the other end of the pitch, started to run, but Nugent waved him back.

"Nothing to run for, Toddy!"

Todd grinned and dropped back.

The ball came in, the batsmen resting idly at the wickets, and scoring the boundary.

Grundy sent the ball down again. Smack! Away went the whizzing leather, and again the batsmen grinned and rested where they were.

Tom Merry exchanged a look with Blake.

"This is a giddy frost!" he murmured. "Grundy's bowling like a kid in the First Form!"

Grundy went for the wicket, and each time he went for the wicket, Nugent went for the boundary. The Greyfriars batsmen, grouped before the pavilion, grinned as he hit away the soft stuff time after time.

"What the dickens have they put that ass on to bowl for?"

Bob Cherry murmured to Wharton in wonder.

Wharton shook his head.

"Blessed if I can guess! They've got good bowlers. Must be a joke."

"It's a joke that'll cost them something, then," said Bob. Grundy's over cost the St. Jim's side exactly 24 runs. Even Grundy looked rather red at the end of it. He had distin-

guished himself in a way, but he could not swank very much over the result.

"Satisfied?" snapped Tom Merry, as the field crossed once more.

"Oh, rats!" said Grundy. "I'll do better than that in the next over!"

Tom Merry gave an angry laugh.

"You utter idiot! There's not going to be any next over for you! Do you think we can afford to make Greyfriars a present of twenty-four runs at a time?"

"Look here—"

"Oh, shut up! You've probably lost us the match already. I think you might be satisfied with that!"

A hundred and sixty was the total of the Greyfriars first innings—a result that made them feel very cheerful, for St. Jim's would find it very hard to beat.

The cricketers adjourned for lunch at that point.

Morning school was over now, and the St. Jim's fellows came out in a crowd. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy inquired anxiously as to the score. And he looked serious when he heard it.

The cricketers lunched in the dining-hall of the School House. After lunch they went down to the field again. Now the ground was surrounded by a big crowd of the St. Jim's fellows to watch the play, and visitors were arriving in great numbers. Tom Merry's old governess, Miss Fawcett, had come to see her dear boy distinguish himself, and Arthur Augustus' Cousin Ethel came with her. Sisters and cousins and aunts galore made the old pavilion bright with colour.

The St. Jim's innings was exciting. The Greyfriars bowlers, especially Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, were hot stuff, and the field were alert and watchful. Tom Merry was bowled by Hurree Singh after taking 15 runs, Blake was caught out by Bob Cherry for 5, and Kangaroo was caught after a score of 12. Then Grundy came in. It had been Tom's intention to leave Grundy till last, but Tom felt that he could not refuse, and Grundy was put fifth on the list. He came in with a swagger, intending to show St. Jim's and Greyfriars just what he could do at the wickets.

He did show them, and it did not take long!

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sent down a ball that knocked his middle stump out, before Grundy knew that it was there.

"How's that, my esteemed umpire?" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Out!"

"Yah! What price ducks' eggs!" shouted Wally D'Arcy of the Third.

"Booh! Go home!"

Grundy of the Shell walked out with a crimson face.

Koumi Rao was next man in. The Jam lived through the rest of the over; but a little later he had bad luck, being caught by Frank Nugent with only 4 runs to his credit.

The Jam's dusky face was gloomy as he joined Figgins at the pavilion.

"This is rotten, oh, my friend!" he said.

"Pretty rotten!" agreed Figgins.

"I feel small and diminished!" said Koumi Rao. "I was sure that I should play a good game for the school. I have played a rotten game. I am sorry!"

"You'll do better next time!" said Figgins comfortingly. "It can't be helped."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "But weally, it does look wotten for us. I was afraid of what would happen if I stood out of the eleven. It's wathah howwid!"

The luck of St. Jim's was certainly out in that innings. The score was a bare 80.

With so much leeway to make up, the Saints had a big fight before them if they were to get anything like equal.

Greyfriars batted again, and it was impressed upon Fatty Wynn that he had to perform the hat-trick immediately and on the spot, under threats of being lynched after the match if he didn't. Whether it was the danger of being lynched or not, Fatty Wynn certainly showed up at his best, and he did give his expectant chums the hat-trick in the first over. The faces of the Saints brightened up very considerably. This was a good beginning.

Grundy did not bowl any more; he was restricted to mufing catches in the field. Greyfriars were all down at last for 90, making 250 for the two innings.

Tea was the next item on the programme. Harry Wharton & Co. looked very cheerful over tea. They regarded the match as already as good as won. St. Jim's wanted 171 to win, and it did not look as if they would get them.

But Tom Merry & Co. were prepared to fight to the last. Tom Merry opened the innings, after tea with Talbot. Even Talbot, mighty hitter as he was, had not done very well in the first innings, Hurree Singh's bowling being too much for him.

"For goodness' sake pile in this time, Talbot!" said Tom, almost beseechingly. "If we're licked, don't let us be licked to the wide!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 431.

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

Talbot smiled.

"They've got a good bowler in that dark chap," he said. "But I think I've taken his measure now. We'll see!"

They did see. Talbot received the first over from Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, and it gave him 6. Then Field bowled to Tom Merry, and the score jumped to 14. The St. Jim's crowd gave a cheer.

Matters were looking up at last. Talbot was at his best, and the score mounted fast. Tom Merry fell to Field's bowling at last, and Kangaroo went in. The Cornstalk did useful work before he was caught out by Harry Wharton.

Then came Grundy, and a duck's egg. Grundy had succeeded in securing his "pair of spectacles" for the match, and a yell of laughter greeted him as he went off, with a crimson and angry face.

Whether Grundy still regarded himself as a first-class cricketer was a question; but there was no doubt that St. Jim's had suffered severely from including him in the team. "Bai Jove, Gwunday!" remarked Arthur Augustus, as he came off. "I always knew you were an uttably wotten playah, deah boy, but I weally never considahed you were so uttably wotten as this!"

Grundy snorted, and stamped away. Certainly there was little room for "swank" over his performance in the Greyfriars match.

CHAPTER 14.

Trying It on Mr. Linton.

BUT if the great George Alfred Grundy had suffered a temporary eclipse on the cricket-field, that hero had still left to him the consolation that in his ventriloquial powers he possessed an unfailing opportunity of distinction.

He found Wilkins and Gunn near the pavilion, and commanded them at once.

"Come on, you two, and I'll show you something!" he growled.

"My hat! I hope it will be something better than you showed us out there just now!" said Wilkins.

Grundy scowled at Wilkins.

"That sort of thing might happen to anybody," he said darkly. "Ranji himself has been known to get out for a duck before now. As a matter of fact, I wasn't really ready."

"That's where Ranjitsinhji scores over Grundy," said Gunn. "He is ready when he's taken guard. And he knows what a bat's for!"

"Do you mean to say that I don't know what a bat's for, you ass?" snapped the great George Alfred.

"Nun-no! At least—Oh, yes, of course you do, old chap. Only—"

"Only what?" demanded Grundy, stopping short, and giving Gunn the stoniest of stony glares.

"Oh, nothing! Don't be so jolly ready to take offence, Grundy."

"Rats! There never was a more reasonable chap than I am. Wilkins knows that, don't you, Wilky?"

Wilkins muttered something that might have been assent—or might not.

"What are you going to show us?" asked Gunn.

"Well, it struck me that this was a first-class chance to display my ventriloquial powers. There's lots of people round the ground, and—"

"Good egg, old chap! Try it on some of the fags!" said Gunn cheerfully. "Then it won't matter if it turns out a giddy frost."

"Frost be jolly well hanged!" snorted Grundy, in wrath. "A fellow with ventriloquial powers like mine—powers that I might say amount practically to genius—"

"Ought to go and boil 'em!" whispered Gunn to Wilkins.

"What's that you say, ass?"

"Oh, nun-nun-nothing, Grundy! Only that you are no end clever at the game, and all that, of course; but don't you think you had better leave it till after the match?"

"Not at all! I consider this a particularly good opportunity of proving what I can do, and I don't intend to let it slip," said Grundy, in his loftiest style. "I shall throw my voice near a master or a prefect, and—"

"Here, I say, though!" gasped Gunn in alarm. "We're missing all the fun. The match has got to a jolly interesting stage, with old Talbot going so strong. Chuck the idea for a little while, old chap! Let's go back to the pavilion, and—"

"Yes, let's!" chimed in Wilkins. "There's a time for everything, as Solomon or some other sharp johnnie said, and—and—well, you know, this really ain't the time."

Wilkins finished rather weakly, for the eagle eye of George Alfred Grundy was upon him, and under that eagle eye Wilkins quailed.

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It was not that Wilkins or Gunn feared Grundy, though he could have licked either. But Grundy's almost unlimited supplies of pocket-money made the study which the three shared, metaphorically speaking, a land flowing with milk and honey—and, still metaphorically speaking, Wilkins and Gunn were keen on milk and honey.

"There's old Linton!" said Grundy, nodding towards where the master of the Shell stood in conversation with a middle-aged lady of severe and forbidding aspect.

"Yes," answered Gunn. "Who's the old dragon with him?"

"Dunno! How should I?" growled Grundy. "What's the odds, anyway? I'm going to throw my voice so that—"

"I say—don't! Drop it, Grundy! Don't be such—"

"What's your objection to it, you idiot?"

"It—it can't be done, you know! You'll make a frightful mess of it—"

"And—and a lady, too!" said Wilkins. "Oh, crumbs! You can't do that, Grundy!"

"Oh, can't I? You'll see!"

Gunn and Wilkins looked wildly round. But before they had a chance to escape Grundy had started.

"Bow-wow-wow!"

To Grundy it really seemed that the sound was as the sound of a dog barking close to Mr. Linton's legs. But to his two comrades it did not sound like a dog at all, and it quite plainly came from Grundy.

Mr. Linton wheeled round, his face full of wrath. His eyes fell upon Grundy at once.

Grundy could not understand why. Wilkins and Gunn could. The weird contortions of Grundy's face were quite sufficient to give him away.

"Boy!" roared Mr. Linton.

Grundy was just going to throw his voice again. But he stopped short. His jaw fell, and his eyes goggled.

"D-d-d-do you mean me, sir?" he asked almost reproachfully.

The severe lady was glaring at him in no half-hearted way. "Grundy," said Mr. Linton severely, "you will come to my room this evening!"

"Bub-bub-but I don't understand, sir!" gasped Grundy, to whom it seemed an absolute impossibility that the Form-master should have tumbled at once to the fact that he was responsible for that weird noise.

"Shurrup!" muttered Wilkins. "You'll only make it worse for yourself, you silly ass!"

"Better clear!" said Gunn, grinning. "You've got your dose—at least, you're booked for it. No good trying to argue with Linton."

But George Alfred stuck to his guns. Whatever qualities Grundy might lack, obstinacy was certainly not one of them.

"I—I really don't understand, sir! What have I done?"

"Another word, Grundy, and—"

"But, sir—"

"It is my firm belief that the boy is insane!" said the lady, looking at Grundy, with a mixture of pity and contempt which that hero found very galling indeed.

Grundy was too gallant to be rude to a lady, and he felt that he could not answer this charge without being rude.

So he ignored the charge altogether, and tackled Mr. Linton again. Grundy could not believe that the master had seen through the wheeze at once. It seemed incredible, for he knew quite well that he had thrown his voice in a manner which would have done credit to the most expert ventriloquist—or, at least, he thought he knew it, and that came to the same thing where Grundy was concerned.

Just at this moment Herries came up, with his bulldog at his heels.

Grundy saw his chance and seized it, after the manner of the truly great men of all ages.

"Wasn't it a dog's bark you heard, sir?" he asked.

It was an evasion, certainly, but it did not strike Grundy as being a lie. For it had been a dog's bark—at least, Grundy had intended it to sound as such, and the infallibility of George Alfred Grundy was such, in his own eyes, that his intention practically made it a dog's bark.

"The boy is untruthful, not insane," said the lady.

Grundy wondered how anyone could be so perverse and difficult to convince.

But again he disregarded her. "There's a dog here, sir," he said, indicating Towser.

"Here, I say!" expostulated Herries angrily. "You're not going to put your rotten ventriloquist japes on to Towser, you know, Grundy! That's a bit too thick for anything!"

Next moment Herries was sorry he had spoken, for he saw that, without meaning to do so, he had given Grundy away.

Mr. Linton looked more stern than ever, and the expression on the face of his lady friend fairly made Grundy wilt.

TUCK HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1P

"I—I—I—er—didn't say it was Towser!" said Grundy weakly.

"It couldn't have been, because he never barks at anyone," retorted Herries. "Towser's got manners."

"Bub—bub—but I—I thought—er— Didn't you hear a dog bark, Gunn?"

"Oh, don't drag me into it!" groaned Gunn, sotto voce. But Gunn was loyal through thick and thin. Aloud he said: "I—I did hear something a—er—a bit like a dog, sir. But I don't think it was Towser!" he hastened to add, meeting the fixed glare of Herries.

"This boy is as depraved and untruthful as the other," said the stern-faced lady; and poor Gunn groaned.

But Mr. Linton, who better understood the code of school-boy honour, seemed disposed to regard Gunn's attempt to back up his chum as a venial offence.

"It was not in the very least like a dog," he said, with conviction. "Is it possible, you absurd boy, that you look upon yourself as a master of the difficult art of ventriloquism—an art which I am given to understand can only be acquired by those exceptionally gifted, and even in such cases requires far more application than, within my knowledge, you have ever bestowed upon either your books or your games?"

Grundy was wounded in his tenderest spot.

He drew himself up haughtily.

"I am exceptionally gifted, sir!" he said. "Ask Wilkins—"

"No, don't, please!" murmured Wilkins. "Keep me out of it, old man! I ain't on in this act."

"Ask Gunn—"

Gunn only groaned.

"Ask Herries—ask anybody!"

"The boy is mentally deranged, I am sure of it!" said the severe lady.

"Do not be alarmed, my dear madam—"

"Alarmed? Stuff and nonsense! Do you suppose for one moment that I should feel afraid of a little boy, Mr. Linton! I have a very great mind to administer a sound castigation. "Wonder what spot?" grinned Herries. But Herries took to him upon the spot!"

care that the lady did not hear him.

"Really, madam," said Grundy feebly, "I—I'm surprised that—"

"You would be a good deal more surprised if I had to deal with you!" rapped out the lady. "Did your mother never realise that you needed spanking?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Excuse me, Mrs. Partlett," said Mr. Linton politely, when the laughter had died down. "This lad is not really vicious or depraved, he is only incurably silly and self-conceited."

This was worse than ever! The unfortunate Grundy groaned aloud. Why, did not everybody know that if he had a failing—which was extremely doubtful—that failing was excess of modesty?

"Do you admit, Grundy, that you were impudent enough to attempt the practice of your supposed ventriloquial powers upon me—me, and that at a time when I had a lady with me?"

"They're not supposed, sir," faltered Grundy. "I am a ventriloquist—really, I am!"

"I should require much better evidence than I have had before I believed that," replied Mr. Linton drily.

"I—I've proved it over and over again!" said Grundy desperately. "Ask Gunn, ask Wilkins—"

He looked round for his loyal henchmen. But they were no longer visible. They might have melted into thin air for all Grundy could see of them.

As they explained later, they did not see what good they could do him by staying.

"But don't ask me!" grinned Herries.

"Do you admit it?" snapped Mr. Linton.

"Whether he admits it or not is of no importance," said Mrs. Partlett, with cutting scorn. "The fact is obvious. But it is my fixed belief that the boy's mind is affected."

That was really more than Grundy could stand.

"I'm not!" he howled. "I'm no more mad than you are! I—"

"Silence, Grundy!" snapped Mr. Linton.

"Well, sir, she'd no right to accuse me of being potty!"

"Silence, Grundy!"

Kildare came up.

He seemed to take in the situation at a glance.

"What's the trouble, sir?" he asked. "Can I be of any assistance?"

Mrs. Partlett did not regard the skipper of St. Jim's at all favourably, although he had bowed quite gracefully to her as he spoke to Mr. Linton.

The Form-master, on the other hand, seemed greatly relieved by his appearance.

"Thank you, Kildare," he said. "I purpose attending to Grundy later in the day. For the present, I should be grateful if you would remove him to another part of the field, and it would be as well if you could manage to impress upon him that his conduct has been not only foolish but ungentlemanly in the extreme."

The great heart of George Alfred Grundy swelled within him, until it was nigh to bursting. For one moment a dreadful doubt as to whether he was always and infallibly right assailed his mind. In the next it had vanished.

Perish such doubts! When had he ever been wrong?

He walked away with the hand of Eric Kildare heavy on his shoulder.

"Now, Grundy," said the captain firmly but not unkindly, "what have you been up to this time, you utter young idiot? Do you know who that lady is?"

"I don't!" answered Grundy sulkily. "And I don't want to know! She's about the worst old dragon I ever struck!"

"Oh, I dare say you'll cotton to her more when she's Mrs. Linton!" said Kildare airily.

"Great Scott! Oh, I say, that can't be right, Kildare! Old Linton would never be such an utter ass!"

Kildare laughed.

"Who knows?" he said. "However, there's one chance for you—she may have a husband alive, for all I know."

Grundy breathed a great sigh of relief. Then, questioned by Kildare, he confessed his crime, though he evidently still failed to understand how Mr. Linton had been able to spot the criminal at once.

"I ought to see you safely off the field," said Kildare. "But as you're playing—though how Merry was ever such an ass as to give you a place, licks me—I suppose I must let you stay. No more of your so-called ventriloquism till after the match, mind that! If you had any sense you'd drop it altogether. But you haven't any, so I suppose it's no use telling you that!"

Feeling much smaller than usual Grundy returned to the pavilion. It seemed to him as though hours had passed, and he was quite surprised to find Talbot still in.

CHAPTER 15.

A Close Finish.

"TALBOT'S stickin' it out," remarked Arthur Augustus, as the Shell fellow drove the ball away to the boundary. "I couldn't do better than that myself! How many is that for, Talbot?"

"Forty-six."

"Bai Jove! That's wippin'! If I had played, I was goin' to take a century, you know. Pewwaps Talbot will get near it."

"It's more likely, anyway!" grinned Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Bravo, Talbot! Hurray!"

Talbot's score was jumping up. The other batsmen came and went, but Talbot seemed immovable—except when he was running, and then he was like lightning. It looked as if Talbot would be "not out," and his century seemed quite likely. The score was a hundred and ten when the word was given for last man in. Koumi Rao was last on the list this time.

"Beaten!" growled Tom Merry, as the Jam of Bundelpore went in to the wickets. "But Talbot is well set, and perhaps the licking won't be too awful."

"Don't be too sure we're going to be licked," said Figgins sagely. "The Jam will back up Talbot. He had bad luck last time. The game isn't lost till it's won!"

Talbot had the bowling, and that over gave him sixteen. Then Koumi Rao ran a single, and the bowling fell to the Shell fellow again.

The faces of Tom Merry & Co. brightened once more. Talbot was well set; and if the Jam was only able to keep up his end, it was barely possible that Talbot of the Shell would pull the game out of the fire.

Ten more for the over. The score stood at 137. And Talbot wanted two more to make his century. But the bowling came to Koumi Rao now, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had the ball. And, in spite of the good feeling between the two Indian juniors, Hurree Singh was naturally doing his very best to get his esteemed friend Koumi Rao out.

But the Jam, manfully controlling his desire to shine, played a very cautious game. He stopped two balls, and took a single for the third. The St. Jim's fellows cheered him loudly, and their cheers rose to a roar as Talbot hit away the next ball for two, and completed his century.

The Greyfriars fellows were working hard now. St. Jim's required thirty more to tie, and it looked as if they might get them. Talbot was impregnable, but Koumi Rao was an unknown quantity. But the Jam was doing remarkably

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well. When he had the bowling, he was cautious, and took no risks, and passed it on to Talbot whenever he could. And when Talbot had the bowling, he hit out in great style.

There was intense excitement round the ground now. The possibility of winning the match, after all, was exciting; and every hit was greeted with loud cheers, and a ripple of hand-clapping.

"Hundred and sixty-six!" gasped Blake, at last. "Looks like a chance for little us—what? Go it, Talbot!"

Click! Away went the ball, and the batsmen were running. Once—twice—thrice—and yet again! The ball was coming in, direct for the bat-man's wicket, and the onlookers held their breath. Talbot was racing home. He felt, rather than saw, the leather coming in. He made a wild spurt, and plunged home, his bat clumped in the crease, and the next second there was the crash of a falling wicket!

"How's that?"

But the umpire shook his head.

"Not out."

"Hurray! Hip-pip-hurray! Well run, Talbot!"

Jack Blake seized hold of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and walked him round in the exuberance of his delight.

"It's a tie—tie—tie!" chortled Blake.

"Bai Jove! Leggo, you ass!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The next over was greeted with breathless excitement. One run wanted to win; and Hurree Singh, the demon bowler, was bowling to Koumi Rao. Would the Jam be found wanting at the finish?

Every eye was on the Jam.

Grundy sniffed.

"If only I were at the wicket now!" he said to the juniors near him in front of the pavilion.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon Grundy.

"You uttah ass!" he breathed.

"That nigger will be knocked out by the other blessed nigger!" growled Grundy. "I lost my wicket by a fluke—a sheer fluke. Flukes will happen!"

"When you're batting!" remarked Blake.

"It would have been all right, though, if I had been given some more bowling," said Grundy. "If this match is lost, I suppose even Tom Merry will admit that it was his own fault. I was willing to bowl any number of overs."

"Bai Jove!"

"Look!" gasped Blake.

The ball had whizzed down from the hand of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh of Greyfriars.

Click!

The leather sped on its way; the batsmen were crossing the pitch like lightning. The St. Jim's crowd scarcely breathed.

Whizz!

The leather came in from Bob Cherry, not to the wicket-keeper, but straight at the wicket, true as a die.

Crash!

But the bat was in the crease.

"Too late!"

"Not out!"

"Hurray!"

"Hip-pip-hurray!"

There was a terrific roar from St. Jim's. The match had been won, the game pulled out of the fire. St. Jim's, carrying a passenger, had beaten Greyfriars! Fellows tossed up their caps, not caring where they came down, or whether they came down at all. The green field was black with the crowd now; the game was over, and St. Jim's had won!

Tom Merry clapped Wharton on the shoulder.

"A close thing!" he said.

"But a miss is as good as a mile," said Wharton, rather ruefully. "Anyway, it was a ripping game!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And St. Jim's had won," remarked Grundy. "I think you'll remember, Tom Merry, that I told you St. Jim's would win if you played me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 16.

A Last Attempt.

THERE was no time for Grundy to give a ventriloquial entertainment before the Greyfriars brake rolled away—even if the fellows had been willing. Grundy had not shone in the cricket-match; even Grundy had to admit that, though he attributed it wholly to the fact that he had not been given enough bowling. Had he been allowed plenty of overs, it would not have been such a close finish—Grundy was assured of that. But the Saints only chuckled when he told them so. The match had been won, in spite of Grundy, and they could afford to forgive the egregious George Alfred now.

Tom Merry & Co. bade a hearty good-bye to the Greyfriars visitors, as they mounted into their brake. Grundy was in the crowd, and he gave a little cough, and Wilkins caught hold of him. He knew what that little cough meant.

"Chuck it, you ass!" whispered Wilkins.

Grundy shook his off.

"You idiot! I'm just going to begin!"

"Look here!"

"Dry up!"

Grundy coughed again. Then a choking voice, which Grundy fondly imagined to proceed from under the brake, said:

"Elp!"

Every eye turned on Grundy.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, are you ill?" asked Bob Cherry.

Tom Merry stared at Grundy for a moment, and then he understood.

"Help Grundy in, you chaps!" he said. "He's taken queer!"

"I say—" began Grundy.

But he had no time to say anything. Figgins and Blake and Talbot and D'Arcy and two or three more fellows collared him, and rushed him across the quadrangle.

The Greyfriars brake rolled away for the station.

Tom Merry & Co. came in. They found Grundy sitting on the steps of the School House, gasping for breath, and telling his willing helpers what he thought of them.

"Feel better?" asked Tom.

"Bettah, deah boy?"

"I'm not ill!" roared Grundy. "You silly asses—"

"But you cried for help!" said Monty Lowther.

"I didn't, you ass! That was a ventriloquial voice from under the brake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, I'm fed up with this!" howled Grundy.

"First running down a fellow's cricket, and not giving him a proper chance in a match, and then running down his wonderful gift of ventriloquism—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm disgusted with you—simply disgusted—"

"As the young lady says in the novel, 'your feelings are reciprocated,'" said Lowther. "We're disgusted, too. When we're disgusted, we bump a chap. Go it!"

"Yah! Oh! Stoppit! Yoop!"

The merry juniors passed into the house, leaving a breathless figure sitting in the dusky quad. It was Grundy the Ventriloquist!

THE END.

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"INTO THE UNKNOWN!"

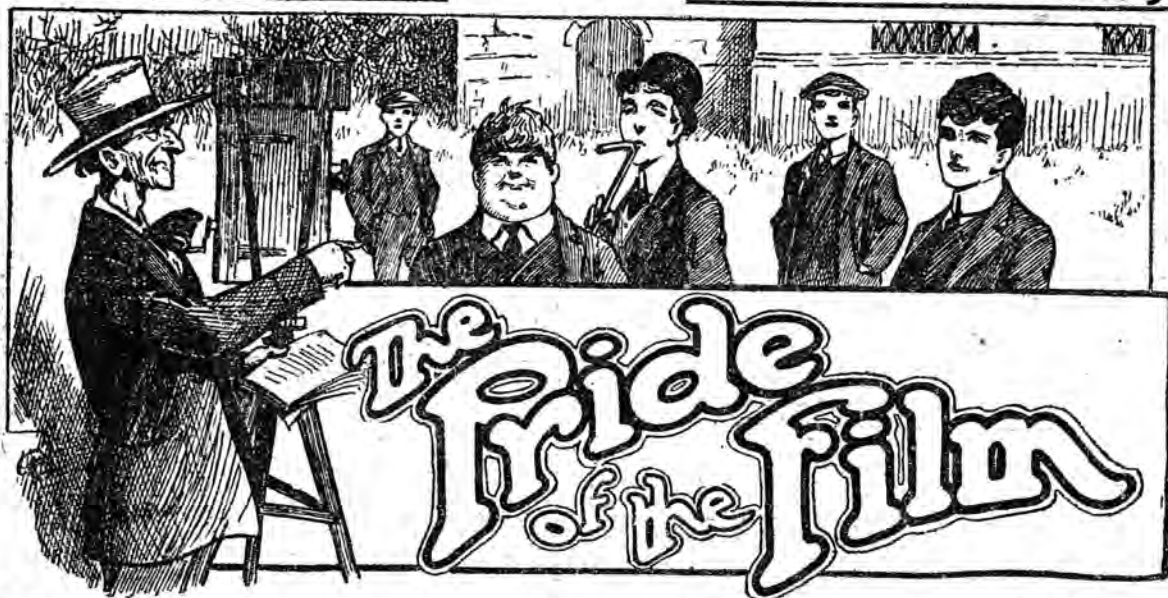
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The Final Instalment.**Our Grand Serial Story.**

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The First Instalments:

REGGIE WHITE, an orphan, is befriended by Mr. ANTHONY DELL, a millionaire film-producer, and given a position as actor in his company. Mr. STARTLEFIELD, a neighbour of Mr. Dell's, whose real name is Rankin, introduces to Reggie a boy who professes to be his son, and the boy proves to be Hubert Nixon, an unscrupulous youth whom Reggie has met before.

Johnson Sprague, a gardener employed by Startlefield, is killed by an explosion, and the fact that he was wearing an old suit of his master's at the time leads people to suppose that the dead man is Startlefield.

Being suspicious of foul play, Startlefield disappears, and the verdict at the inquest is "Accidentally killed."

Silas Shock, Mr. Dell's operator, being also suspicious of Hubert Nixon's honesty, takes records of the conversations between Hubert and his friends.

These are reproduced in Mr. Startlefield's and Hubert's presence, and they prove that Hubert is an impostor, and Reggie White is really Startlefield's son.

Harvey Weir, a detective, informs Mr. Startlefield that he had already formed conclusions of a similar character to the facts disclosed.

"How?" asked Startlefield.

(Now read the conclusion of the story.)

The Hand of Justice.

"This way," said the detective. "By getting Hubert accepted as your son and heir, the property would become his in case of your death. Then your decease was the next thing to arrange. It didn't seem to me that so much trouble would be taken to get your real son to inherit his father's property unless the conspirators had a hold over him. It is too easy for a badly brought up youth to throw over his old chums, and start new ones of his own, when he comes into an ample fortune. Consequently, I argued, that the conspirators had a hold over Hubert, and what hold could be better than that he should be the son of one of them?"

"I felt certain that Hubert was not your son, and I started inquiries. I had a great advantage here, because other people had recently been inquiring, and it wasn't long before I found that money had been paid to secure some evidence which wasn't strictly true. It is a queer thing, though, how two people can play at that game. The man who will take five pounds to tell a lie, is generally quite willing to take ten pounds to speak the truth."

It is quite unnecessary here to detail the manner in which the detective had secured his results. After all, his work had been amazingly simple. He had seen the evidences that "proved" Hubert to be Mr. Startlefield's son, and, with a detective's instinct, had spotted the weak parts in them.

The relations between Reggie and his newly-found father were strained and difficult at first, as was only what might be expected. Reggie's first knowledge of Mr. Startlefield had not been entirely favourable. In fact, he had found him carrying out a scheme of revenge against the son of his old partner.

True, all this had been explained and justified. But then there was Startlefield's admission that his own wife—Reggie's mother—had left him, presumably for some reason not very commendable in her husband's character.

"My boy," said Startlefield, realising what was in Reggie's mind. "I am not going to attempt to justify myself there or anywhere. I believe now that much of my old life was lived in a wrong way. But you must remember that I had suffered bitterly because I had trusted people who deceived me. I was not cut out to stand injustice, and I used to feel revengeful and speak in rage. My anger and bitterness were the whole cause of my separation from your mother."

"She was a saintly woman," he said at another time; "a woman who would not and could not agree with the anger that mastered me. She told me that it was Heaven-sent duty for men and women to bear their wrongs without feeling revengeful."

He went on to speak of what Reggie's mother had been, of how pure were her ideals, and how lofty was her nature, till the boy felt that he had been robbed of a lofty and inspiring experience in not having known her.

"Your mother," went on Startlefield, "was a forgiving woman, too. It is the comfort of my life now to remember her by her kindness of heart, especially when I remember that her last words to me were words of love and reconciliation. When I left her just a few moments before the accident that swept her into the river, she had promised me to take up life anew with me, and I don't think we would ever have parted again."

He seemed to be overcome at the recollection, and to find it hard to speak. But after a moment or two he went on:

"It always puzzled me why I took to you so much, Reggie. I can see now that you are like her—remarkably like her. Not so much in feature, perhaps, as in expression and manner."

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY!

"IN SPITE OF ALL!"

"When that boy Hubert was palmed off on me as my son, and I really did believe that he was my son, the most bitter feeling I had was that he wasn't more like you. I haven't been always quite as good a man as your mother and her family would have wished. But I have too much understanding of what goodness is, to be pleased at feeling that my son was a thoroughgoing cad and sneak."

Reggie remembered now the pained look on Mr. Startlefield's face when all the revelations of the phonograph were rolling out with mechanical deadliness. He remembered how this strong man went white as a sheet whenever Hubert's name was mentioned, and whenever that young rogue's insinuating tones were heard in the conversation.

It was surprising, however, how speedily the gulf between father and son was bridged when once these two began to understand each other. Probably also what made this fact easier was the thought of the ordeal through which they would both need to pass at the trial of the conspirators.

Mr. Startlefield dreaded the publicity of a law-court. Yet his evidence was essential. There were several facts in his past career which he had explained to his son, which he would not desire to have raked out into the light of a public court, and there was always a fear that these would be inquired into.

But when the actual trial took place, all these fears proved groundless.

It is true that the defending counsel made a great point of the fact that Startlefield had kept out of the way after the crime. But his answer that he had seen the crime committed, and felt himself in a better position to run down the perpetrator by keeping in the background, was accepted by the judge.

"It was unwise, perhaps," said that worthy, "but it wasn't criminal. And the witness had a good deal at stake."

He was referring in this sentence to the fact that if Startlefield really had been killed, the heir of his property would have been one of the crime syndicate. Naturally, a man escaping such a violent end might be justified in resorting to extreme actions to test the honest intentions of his heir.

It is not necessary to deal with the trial in detail, as all other evidence sank to nothing in comparison with Silas Shock's phonograph.

To hear the prisoners condemning themselves by their own words was an experience that the Old Bailey had never had before in such a dramatic form. The records were put on during Silas Shock's evidence, and his story supplementing them was listened to with breathless interest.

Walkingdean was not permitted to turn King's evidence, it being clear that he was unnecessary in such a position, and his actions being too deeply intertwined with those of the chief conspirators. But Hubert Nixon's youth, and the supposition that he had acted under his father's influence, did a great deal to help him.

The capital sentence was passed on Nixon, and duly carried out. By some mysterious eleventh-hour decision of the Home Office, Stancombe's similar punishment was changed to penal servitude for life. Walkingdean escaped, with a twenty years' term, and Hubert Nixon with "confinement during his Majesty's pleasure."

It was a relief to leave the sordid and depressing atmosphere of the court when the trial was over, and try to forget so much that was painful.

Among the first to congratulate Reggie on the turn that events had taken were Mrs. Horace Dell and Dolly. A quite strong friendship sprang up between Mr. Startlefield and Mrs. Dell, which that lady did not hesitate to pursue with vigour.

"I envy you, Mr. Startlefield," she said on one occasion. "Any man ought to be proud to have a nice boy like Reggie as a son. He is the best lad I ever met, and I feel if ever I had a boy I would want that boy like him. I promised to be a sort of a mother to him once, and, as you are his father, you mustn't be surprised if you see a good deal of me!"

Which abrupt manner rather bewildered Mr. Startlefield.

"Oh, don't be timid!" said Mrs. Dell, understanding him. "I am not husband-hunting. You have plenty of money, and so have I. You are an eligible widower, and I am an eligible widow. But I'm not going to marry you or anyone else. I had a good husband in Tony Dell's brother—a far finer man than Tony ever was or will be—and I'm quite content to be his widow. You and I would quarrel as husband and wife. But my girl and your boy are great chums, and I don't see why we shouldn't be the same!"

And, curiously enough, great chums they became. Mrs. Dell, much to Tony Dell's horror, took a house on the London Road quite near, and she and Dolly made fairly free use of Mr. Startlefield's powerful motor-car, insisting by way of return in taking him about at times in a new four-seater that Mrs. Dell purchased.

Mrs. Dell never lost the chance during these rides of trying to get Startlefield to go into partnership with her brother-in-law. It never seemed to occur to her that Tony Dell had any say in this arrangement.

"If you joined him," she would explain, "I feel sure he would use my stories and plots. He has only attempted one of them, and that one he bungled!"

But Startlefield and Dell never became partners, though they remained warm friends and neighbours.

Ideas about Reggie's future were frequently discussed. There was some talk of the University and a profession. It was here that Mrs. Dell's sound advice carried weight.

"Why bury the boy?" she asked. "He's a success, isn't he? He is almost as famous as a Cabinet Minister. Let him keep to it!"

"But—" began Startlefield.

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Dell. "He found his place before he found you. Besides"—here she became quite triumphant in tone—"he lives so handy for his work!"

So Reggie, without any "side" or nonsense, went on as if nothing had happened, meeting his old fellow-artists, and helping to add success to success.

Samson Skewes also continued as a plot-writer, but moved a little later to America, where he is now making himself a great name.

Silas Shock is still with Mr. Dell, a trusted and important employee. He is very proud of his watch, for it is a gold watch, and was presented to him by Mr. Startlefield. It bears an inscription that makes him blush every time he reads it.

The old friendship between Reggie and Dolly still continues. Indeed, the two are like brother and sister, and no one takes a keener delight or interest in Reggie's fame than does Dolly.

It was Dolly who gave him the name by which all the people at Dell's—and, indeed, through the cinema world—got to speak of him at last, and Dolly is proud to think of him, not only as a sort of brother, but as "The Pride of the Film."

THE END.

(Do not miss the opening instalment of "Into the Unknown"—our grand new serial story, which starts next Wednesday. Order your copy of the GEM in advance.)

A Message from a famous Author.



Richmansworth
Herts

"There is only one story in the world, and it is this—once upon a time lived a man, and a woman loved him."

So wrote a famous story-teller. And he was right. Of every human story love must be the foundation and the theme. It is the greatest and the grandest theme of all. In my latest serial for "ANSWERS" I have tried to tell a love story, the story of an outcast woman's love for the daughter she is powerless to help in a supreme crisis of the young girl's life.

"GREAT POSSESSIONS" I have called this story. I hope you will like it. I think you will.

Mark Twain

"Great Possessions"

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ANSWERS - 1^D.

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Miss ELLALINE TERRISS says: "I consider the cream very excellent."

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A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.



Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

CAUGHT AT LAST.

He crouched beneath a friendly bush,
His weapon lying near.
He gazed with set and eager eyes
Along the pathway clear.

He muttered, "Half a dozen times
At her I've tried a shot,
But every time she was alarmed,
So I succeeded not.

"But very soon, beyond all doubt,
She'll come along this way;
From here I'll get a lovely shot—
I shall not miss to-day!"

His hapless victim came at last—
A maiden sweet and fair—
Unconscious of the stealthy foe
That lurked so near her there.

Still on she came, and gaily sang,
Her heart with joy elate.
Could nothing warn her even now
Of her impending fate?

Alas! no angel intervened,
And soon the deed was done.
He raised his snapshot camera—
At last success was won!

—Sent in by S. Peckham, Paddington, W.

INDISPENSABLE.

A railway-worker appeared at a local tribunal and claimed total exemption.

The Mayor: "Is your work of such an highly important nature that you cannot be spared?"

The Applicant: "Yes, sir."

The Mayor: "Perhaps you will be so good as to explain the exact nature of the work you do?"

Applicant: "Well, sir, you know that there man who taps them there wheels on all the trains at the terminus? He's very deaf, and I have to listen for him."—Sent in by James McClew, Warrington.

HERLOCK SHOLMES' RIVAL.

"I notice that you have a new kitchen-maid," said Mrs. Cleeck.

"I have," assented Mrs. Jenkins. "But how did you come to make such an accurate deduction?"

"Quite simple, my dear. I have been comparing the thumb-prints on the plates."—Sent in by T. E. Lewis, Burton, Pembs.

FALSE GENEROSITY.

His wife's pet dog mysteriously disappeared. Her hubby had no love for it, yet he offered a reward of £25 for its recovery.

"I thought," said his friend, on hearing this, "that you hated the dog like poison?"

"I did."

"Then why do you offer such a big reward for its return?"

"I like to please my wife."

"Well, that's all right. But twenty-five pounds is pretty sure to bring the dog back."

"I think not," said the other, with a knowing wink. "Unless, of course, somebody saw me bury it in the arden."

—Sent in by P. D. Dickie, Dennistown, Glasgow.

A DAYLIGHT ROBBERY.

He was old, grey, unkempt, unshaven, and tottering. His clothes were mere rags. His toes protruded from his shoes, although there was snow on the ground.

He crawled up to an old well-kerb by an ancient home-stead, and clung there exhausted.

Suddenly a man in furs dashed angrily forward.

"Hey, gimme them rings!" he shouted.

The old man removed three diamond rings from his fingers and gave them to the brute.

"All right; now go on," said the man in furs to somebody turning a handle.

Then, turning to the poor old man, he remarked:

"How d'you suppose them rings would look on the screen, you idiot? You're supposed to be absolutely broke!"—Sent in by W. O'Shanassy, Melbourne, Australia.

OUGH!

The farmer guides the plough—
I really don't how hough.

The ground is very rough;

The farmer's voice is grough.

He swears, and starts to cough,

To lunch he then goes ough.

His wife is making dough—

Forgets the meat, and sough

He finds the steak too tough,

And tries his wife to cough.

She, hearing him hicough,

As she is washing ough,

Laughs loud at him, although

It makes his anger grough.

He thinks he's borne enough,

And goes out in a hough.

He tries to find a bough

To hang himself on nough.

He fails, and throws himself into the lough.

And his body's brought home at five o'clock.

—Sent in by H. Knight, Wood Green, N.

ALL MOONSHINE.

Story-telling was in progress down in the village club, and the next in turn was a railway plate-layer.

"It was such another night as this," he began—"bright and clear, with a touch of frost. I was going down the line, when I saw before me, lying right across the rails, a great beam. For a moment my heart stood still. Then a distant rumbling warned me that the midnight mail was approaching. With a great effort I flung myself between the obstruction

and the line, and the train passed unharmed."

There was a thoughtful silence after the plate-layer had finished speaking. Then somebody asked:

"If you didn't move the beam, how did the train get over it?"

"Yes," interposed another. "And if you flung yourself between the obstruction and the express, how is it you were not killed?"

"Both questions are easily answered," said the plate-layer, sidling towards the door. "The obstruction was a moon-beam, and I jumped forward so that my shadow took its place. Then—"

The story-teller slipped outside just in time.—Sent in by W. Bryant, St. Helens, Lancs.

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.

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