

A DRAWN GAME!

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

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A DRAWN GAME.

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

By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD.**

CHAPTER 1.

Racke Bucks.

"THERE you are, Wally, my son!" Frank Levison—Levison minor of the Third Form—looked proudly at the notice which he had just affixed to the board.

It was not usual for the fags of the Third to post notices. In fact, it would in an ordinary way have been considered cheek.

But Levison minor had authority for what he was doing—the authority of Tom Merry, junior skipper of St. Jim's. And that was quite good enough.

The notice was written out in Frank's own very readable round hand, and neatly ruled. Levison minor, besides being one of the three umpires for the Shell versus Fourth contest, was acting as secretary to the committee. In his charge was the book in which the result of each contest was set down, and thereafter duly initialled by Tom Merry and Jack Blake, for their respective Forms, as passed and agreed correct.

This was the latest list, and it was quite a long one. It read thus:

SHELL VERSUS FOURTH COMPETITION.

	Points.	Sh. 4th
1. Hundred Yards (A)—Figgins, 1; Merry, 2; Blake, 3 ...	4	9
2. Racke v. Mellish—Racke won	1	0
3. Form score	0	20
4. Long jump—Merry, 1; Roy-lance, 2; Figgins, 3	7	6
5. Mile (A)—Levison, 1; Talbot, 2; Kerr, 3	4	9
6. Hundred Yards (B)—Roy-lance, 1; Manners, 2; Wil-kins, 3	4	5
7. Boxing—Skimpole beat Trimble	2	0
8. Boxing—Skimpole beat Mellish	2	0
9. Boxing—Grundy v. The Fourth	27	13
10. Mile (B)—Lowther, 1; Clive, 2; Julian, 3	5	4
11. Boxing—Grundy v. The Fourth	18	18
12. Footer—first eleven match—drawn—3-3	10	10
13. Boxing—Skimpole beat Chowle	2	0
Totals to date	86	99

"It don't look half bad, Franky," said Wally D'Arcy, whose praise ought to have been valued by any of his followers, for he was not given to lavishness with it.

"Looks jolly well, if you ask me," replied Frank.

"I didn't ask you, kid. I know what you'd say about it."

"The Fourth are ahead, Wally, and I fancy they're going to stay there."

Frank was naturally a warm partisan

of the Fourth, as his major belonged to that Form.

Wally leaned towards the Shell, although he also had a major in the Fourth. As he had pointed out, with perhaps excessive candour, in the hearing of his major, the name of D'Arcy was not likely to figure on the list in this competition, so that if he backed the Fourth he would have to play second fiddle to Levison minor, who had a brother able to win events. That, Wally considered, would have been a bad thing for the discipline of the Third.

In point of fact, Wally's major, the Hon. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, was not at all unlikely to score points for his side sooner or later, for he was far from being a duffer. But Wally always talked as though he held Arthur Augustus very cheaply. It was only when anyone else did too much talking in the same strain that Wally revealed the fact that he did think something of "that ass Gus," after all!

"Rot!" said Wally. "It was that dormitory jape put them ahead, and I'll bet Tom Merry thinks out something better than that before he's much older. That scored twenty, and the Shell are only thirteen points behind."

"They've had nine from Grundy and six from Skimmy that nobody could have expected they'd get," replied Frank.

"And one out of Racke—that was the real miracle," grinned Wally.

"What's that about me?" demanded an unpleasant voice from behind them.

The two fags faced round. A moment before they had been alone. But three Shell fellows had come up noiselessly behind them—Racke, Crooke, and Scrope.

"Hallo, food-hogs!" said Wally cheerily. "How's the grub supply going? I was just saying that the Shell might think themselves jolly lucky to have you score a point for them, Racke—that's all."

Racke glared, and breathed hard.

He was up against the competition because of one particular feature of it. It had been agreed that either Form should forfeit ten points for each member of it who did not take part in at least one event. And as it was certain that a few would not take part willingly, it had been agreed that methods of strategy might be employed in their cases.

Racke and Mellish had not known that they were running a race which would count in the series of contests. All that they had known was that Towser, Herries' bull-dog, was after them. That fact had been enough to make both do their best; and Racke's best had turned out to be a little ahead of Mellish's.

No one had taken any notice of Racke's refusal to recognise the impromptu event as ranking, except that his rage at it had made the whole business more pleasing. Even the Fourth were willing to lose a point on it, together with all hope of scoring the ten points that would have come to them had Racke managed to keep out of the competition to the end, for the sake of

the score over the most unpopular fellow in the two Forms.

"Cheeky young cads!" said Scrope. "Knock their heads together, Racke, old man!"

"Knock 'em yourself, Scropey!" said Wally. "It's more than you dare try on."

Scrope bit his lip. Wally's taunt happened to have a solid basis of truth.

"When are you going to fight Skimmy, Scropey?" asked Levison minor. "I heard a chap in the Shell say that he wished you were in the Fourth. Then Skimmy could score another two points for the Shell. He'll lick you, you know!"

"I must say those rotters have a nerve," remarked Crooke. "Two points each for Skimmy's boxing performance—they call it boxing, you know. And only one point for your event, Racke!"

He gave a sidelong look at Racke as he spoke.

Crooke liked to rub this in. He himself had not yet been wangled into an event, and he had more than once been heard to boast that the Shell would lose ten points on him, anyway.

"I don't care whether it's one point or a hundred points!" said Racke furiously. "I've told Merry and the rest of 'em that I'm not goin' to have it, and I won't have it! That list is comin' down!"

"Some day," said Levison minor, grinning. "I shall be putting a new one up in a week or so, I dare say. Can't keep it quite up to date, of course; but it mustn't get too far behind."

"It's comin' down now!" hooted Racke.

"Who's going to take it down?" asked Wally.

"I am, you cheeky young cad!" "Bet you you're not, you cheeky old cad!"

"Oh, go for them, Racke!" adjured Scrope.

Racke tried to snatch down the list. Wally was carrying a football pump. He rapped Racke's knuckles sharply with it.

"Ow!" howled Racke. "You'll catch it for that, you young rotter!"

"Give him a jolly good hidin', old sport!" said Crooke encouragingly.

But it was not merely a case of giving Wally a good hiding. Even that might have been rather a handful in the way of jobs for Racke.

It was a great deal more than that. To attack Wally meant having both the fags to face, and Levison minor, though small, was not to be despised.

Racke would not have hesitated if he could have counted on his two companions.

But he could not, and he knew it. Away from the school, with no rescue at hand for the fags, Crooke and Scrope might have been on. But it was a different matter here, where at any moment a master, a prefect, or a few fellows from any of the Forms—it really made very little difference which—might happen along.

"Get away from in front of that board!" ordered Racke. "I don't want to be obliged to thrash you; but I told Merry what would happen if he put my name on that list again, an' I'm goin' to have it down!"

"Take it down, then," retorted Frank Levison, smiling cheerfully.

"That's it. Take it down, Racke!" chimed in Wally.

"Hold them while I do it, you fellows!" hissed Racke.

Crooke and Scrope did not take enough time for consideration, or they would have seen that holding Wally and Frank came to pretty much the same thing as attempting to give them a licking. They were not likely to submit tamely to being held.

Scrope, who seized Wally—though only because Crooke had got in before him with Frank—found at once that he had caught a Tartar.

Wally got a foot behind one of Scrope's, and pushed hard.

A stronger and heavier fellow might not have minded Wally's pushing much. But Scrope was a weed.

"Yooop!" he howled, as he went over backwards, with Wally on top of him.

"Come out of it!" commanded Crooke, tugging at Frank's collar.

"Shan't!" yelled Frank.

But he had to. Crooke was stronger than Scrope.

The way was left clear for Racke. He grabbed again at the offending notice, and this time he got it.

"Hallo! What's all this?" asked the voice of Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 2.

Racke Caves In.

"THAT'S what it is!" answered Racke, glaring defiance.

As he spoke he tore the notice across.

"And that!" he said.

He tore it across again.

"Going in for a paper-chase, Racke?" asked Monty Lowther blandly. He and Manners had come along with Tom.

"Rather a good idea," Manners chuckled. "Of course, Crooke and Scrope would run, and we could make it a Form event. They could go hares."

"Tortoises, do you mean?" asked Lowther.

"We're not giving the Fourth points, thanks," Tom said.

As he spoke he helped Wally to his feet. Scrope had released Frank.

Racke went on tearing up the list.

"I've a good mind to fling it in your face, Merry!" he hooted.

"Do!" said Tom. "Just to oblige me, Racke. Do!"

But Racke did not.

"Anything wrong?" inquired Jack Blake of the Fourth, coming up with Herries, Digby, and Arthur Augustus.

"Only Racke preparing for a paper-chase, and Scrope bullying Gussy's minor," grinned Lowther.

"Weally, Scrope—"

"Looked to me as if Wally was bullying Scrope when we came up," Tom said.

"It sounds wathah impwob," said Gussy doubtfully.

"I was on top, any road," Wally said. "You dry up, Gus! I can take care of myself, you know."

Blake was looking hard at the fragments of paper in Racke's hand.

"Is that our competition list the rotter has torn up?" he growled.

"I fancy so. Shocking thing to do in times when paper's so scarce and dear that my comic column has been cut down in the 'Weekly,'" Lowther said, shaking his head.

"I don't mind a scrap about that," admitted Blake frankly. "It's one good thing the war's done, anyway. But if

Racke's torn up that list he'll have to write it out again, that's all!"

"I fancy I can see myself doin' it!" jeered Racke.

"We're going to see you do it," answered Blake. "What do you say, you chaps?"

"Good egg!" said Tom.

"Bad egg!" said Lowther.

Blake stared at him.

"Don't you agree?" he rapped out.

"Of course I do, dear boy!"

"Then why—"

"It was simply a critical comment upon Racke. Perhaps I should have said, 'Bad eggs!' It was certainly wrong to leave out Crooke and Scrope. But I humbly beg their illustrious pardons for the accidental oversight."

"Brrr!" growled Crooke.

Scrope merely looked rather sorry for himself. He was.

"Bring them along. They were all in it," said Tom.

"If this is an escort to the place of execution, I should like to join it," said Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth, who had just come upon the scene, with his chums Sidney Clive and Ernest Levison.

Clive and Levison grinned. It was not difficult for them to guess what had happened.

"Not exactly that," said Tom. "If Racke does what he's told, there won't be any execution."

"I'm not goin' to do it, confound you, an' you can't force me!" snarled Racke.

"We'll see," said Tom.

"They all ought to be in it," Digby said. "Make 'em all copy out the list, and we'll post up the one that ain't as badly written as the rest."

"Ripping good idea! And we'll make a Form competition event of it while we are about it," said Manners.

"Nothing doing!" replied Blake decidedly. "We're on to you fellows and your wangling now. You'd like to get Crooke and Scrope in that way, I guess. But as there isn't a Fourth-Former in it you couldn't do it, even if we agreed—and we shouldn't."

"Are you three coming, or must we frogs-march you there?" asked Tom.

"Oh, see here, Racke, you'd better cave in!" Crooke said. "I don't see why we should be dragged into the rotten bizney. Our names weren't on their silly list, and we didn't touch it."

"No, we didn't," said Scrope. "It's nothing to do with us, you fellows."

"Oh, isn't it?" demanded Wally.

"Who tried to hold me?"

"Yes; and who shifted me away so that Racke could get at the board?" chimed in Frank.

"Guilty!" said Lowther solemnly.

"On your feet or—"

Racke tried a bolt before Tom could finish the query.

But Digby and Blake collared him, and the burly Herries grabbed Scrope's collar with one hand and Crooke's with the other.

"All right! We'll go quietly," said Crooke.

"I don't mind writin' out the rotten list, if it comes to that," Scrope said.

"The what?" snapped Herries, shaking him.

"That's right, Herries! It wasn't a rotten list. It was a jolly good one. It took me an hour to do," said Frank Levison indignantly.

"And the capital letters were all in red ink—most lovely!" added Wally.

"The what?" repeated Herries, giving Scrope another shake.

"The list, I said," whined Scrope.

"That's better! Shall I make him say the beautiful list, kids?"

"No need," answered Frank. "I shouldn't value Scrope's opinion."

"Way for the procession!" shouted Cardew.

"Shurrup, ass!" growled Levison major. "Rows in this part of the House aren't exactly popular."

But no one in authority was near enough to hear, as it chanced; and the procession started.

Cardew strutted in front, pretending to beat an imaginary drum.

Racke came next, or rather, the somewhat complicated figure formed by Racke in process of being frogs-marched by Tom Merry, Blake, Digby, and Clive, came next.

Levison and Arthur Augustus followed, arm-in-arm, with Lowther and Manners behind them.

Then came Crooke and Scrope, still grasped by Herries; and the two fags brought up the rear, grinning with delight.

Up the broad stairs they went in this order. Racke writhed and groaned; but neither his writhing nor his groaning had any effect.

He was deposited on the floor in the study which he and Crooke shared, and sat there gasping with rage.

"Don't look so surprised, Racke!" said Lowther consolingly. "It's not your first experience of the frogs-march, and it isn't at all likely to be your last."

"You can't force me to write anything!" said Racke sullenly.

"We'll see," replied Tom.

"Give them pen-and-ink and a sheet of ekker paper each," said Blake.

Scrope sat down to the table at once. Crooke hesitated a moment, and then followed suit.

Racke sat where he was, looking defiant.

"Bump him!" Tom ordered.

Bump, bump, bump!

"Are you going to do as you're told, like a nice, good little Racke, or are you not?" asked Lowther.

"I'm not!" gasped Racke.

"Any soot up the chimney, Dig?" inquired Blake.

"Oh, lots!" replied Digby. "Shall Gustavus get down a bushel or so?"

"Weally, Dig—"

"I'm not goin' to be sooted!" howled Racke.

"We shall be just as well sooted without your being so, if you will only do as you're told," said Lowther.

Nobody laughed. Nobody seemed to be aware that Lowther had been funny. It pained Lowther.

"Haven't you fellows any sense of humour?" he asked.

"Oh, yes! We think Racke's no end funny!" said Herries.

Racke scowled at Herries.

Young Moneybags had plenty of obstinacy; but he saw now that if he did not mean to have his face smeared and his clothes soiled with soot he would have to cave in. There was no doubt as to the determination of the enemy.

"I'll write out the wretched thing," he said sullenly. "But I don't see that it's a square deal. Are kids in the Third allowed to post notices on the board?"

"Did you tear it down because Levison minor posted it?" asked Tom.

"If I said 'Yes'—"

"We shouldn't believe you," Levison of the Fourth chipped in. "You told Tom Merry that you would tear it down every time he put it up. That's good enough for us. Besides, my minor holds an official position in connection with the competition, and so does young D'Arcy. We naturally back them up."

"Give me a copy of the dashed piffle!" said Racke impatiently.

"Got your book here, Frank?" Tom Merry inquired.

Frank Levison shook his head.

"But I can dictate it," he said. "I remember every word of it."
 "Dictation class!" said Monty Lowther. "Now then, you three! Pens ready! Don't make blots. The prize for the neatest copy is a bumping for the two who don't do it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Shell versus Fourth Competition!" Frank began to dictate, grinning.

"Oughtn't that to be Fourth versus Shell?" asked Cardew.

"Not likely! We're the senior Form," said Tom quickly.

"Oh, as long as you base it on such a mere accident as that, I don't mind. They never say 'Players versus Gentlemen,' y'know!"

"I'm not goin' to be dictated to by that kid! Give me a copy of the dashed thing!" snarled Racke.

"Surely you have already submitted to dictation to such an extent that a little more doesn't make much odds?" said Lowther blandly.

"Red ink for that, Crooke!" said Wally. "We can't have you careless boudners spoiling ever so many sheets of paper at a time like this."

"Shut up!" growled Crooke.
 He and Scrope were already at work. But Racke sat with his pen in his hand, an ugly frown on his brow, and the paper before him quite blank.

Then he flung the pen down.
 "I won't do it!" he snapped.

"Put his head up the chimney!" suggested Clive.

Racke took up the pen again.
 "Red ink, mind!" said Wally.
 "Franky did a beautiful notice. Yours won't come up to that by long chalks. But we're going to have it as neat as you can make it."

Racke scrawled the headline in red ink. Crooke and Scrope had already obeyed. They had sense enough to see that it really was not of much importance what ink they used.

"You must rule columns for the points at the right-hand side now," Frank instructed the three.

"In red; looks better!" said Wally.
 Sulkily the three obeyed.

"Now, 'One'—that's a figure—may as well be in red," Frank went on—"hundred yards"; the 'H' and 'Y' are capitals—in red, too; a capital 'A' in brackets—the brackets are red and the 'A' black—"

"Oh, hang it all, you fellows," groaned Crooke, "how's a chap to attend to all that rot?"

"I'm afraid you're rather slow and stupid, Crooke!" said Frank. "I did it, and it wasn't really hard, though, of course, you must be a bit careful."

Frank and Wally were enjoying themselves hugely, though not more than their seniors—all excepting the hapless three—were.

But Racke flung his pen down again when it came to the second event.

"There, now, you've made a big blot on the paper!" said Frank.

"And said a very naughty word!" added Lowther. "Fie, for shame!"

Racke used another strong word in emphasising his refusal to write down the fact that he had beaten Mellish in a sprint, and scored a point for his Form by doing so.

"It's the dashed limit!" he snarled. "You rotters pretend to pride yourselves on always givin' fair play, an' that sort of thing. What kind of fair play do you call this? I never ran any race in your beastly wash-out of a competition. I wouldn't touch it with a barge-pole! An' you go and shove it down for all the school to see, with a single measly point to it!"

"Well, it wasn't worth more, you

know, Racke," said Wally seriously. "I stuck out against any more being given. You run like an old hen, you know!"

Racke fairly foamed at the mouth.

"Up the chimney with his napper!" said Dig.

"You won't—you can't—you daren't do it! Yoooop! Stoppit! Yaroooh! Owwww!"

But they would, and they could, and they dared, and they did!

Aubrey Racke was not going to be allowed to defy them all.

There was no fire in the grate. A dozen hands seized Racke, and, in spite of his plunging feet, he found his head thrust up the chimney.

"Lemme down! I—I'll do it!" he gasped.

They let him down. He wrote the obnoxious line, smearing the paper with soot. Then Lowther said:

"My old pal, Shakespeare, somewhere remarks that 'the quality of mercy is not strained.' Shall we let him off the rest? I think Bill would like us to!"

"Bill who?" asked Herries, staring.

"Bill Shakespeare, of course!"

"You silly ass!"

"I think you are wight, Lowthah, although I fail uttably to see that Shakespah has anythin' whatevah to do with the case."

"No. He's like 'The flowers that bloom in the spring, tra, la la!'"

"Who is, and why?" snapped Blake.

"Shakespeare, because 'he has nothing to do with the case.'"

"Yes, I think it will do," said Tom.

"Pity not to put Crooke and Scrope up the chimney, too!" remarked Wally, with evident sincere regret.

"All right, you young beast!" muttered Crooke.

"May I point out that we have still no list for the board?" said Cardew.

"Oh, I'll do another!" Frank said.

"These fellows all write so badly. I never saw such scrawls. Lucky for them they haven't Selby to deal with!"

The Shell, Fourth, and Third fellows departed. Scrope slunk out, and Crooke was left to listen to the lamentations of Racke.

CHAPTER 3.

The Shell Defectives.

"TOMMY," said Lowther, "I've been thinking!"

"Go hon!"

"Now, don't be a silly, cheap ass! I've been thinking about this detective bizney. It's up to us to get something done pretty quickly, or the Fourth will score again."

"I see!" said Tom. "You want Manners and Talbot and me to wire in harder, as you've tried and failed?"

"Harder? Failed?" snorted Lowther.

"Does anything hurt you?" asked Manners sympathetically.

"Hurt?"

"It's one of old Ovidius Naso's metamorphoses," said Tom. "Monty's being changed into an echo, that's all."

"Oh, you chaps are potty—clean, stark potty! Wire in harder!" says Tommy. Harder! What have you done, any of you? 'Failed!' he says, too! Have I failed, I'd like to know?"

"Well, you went to pump Baggy, and the only result was that Baggy was sick again," answered Tom.

"But it wasn't Monty who made him so," Manners said. "I don't mean to make out that he couldn't have done; his jokes are enough to turn any chap's—er—internal arrangements up. Still, it was Mulvaney minor, with his cod-liver-oil jape, who did it."

"Mulvaney minor and his cod-liver-oil!" snorted Lowther. "Just the sort of jape your low minds are capable of appreciating! But never mind that. I don't

suppose either of you will ever come to understand what real humour is."

"Your brand, you mean?" asked Manners.

"Yes, of course!"

"We don't want to, do we, Tommy?"

"Rather not! But, talking about failure, old son, we didn't really expect you'd get much out of Baggy. He had already rendered up what was in him."

"If that's a specimen of your humour, Tom, I should like to be excused from any more of it!"

"It ain't humour at all, old scout; it's plain statement of fact. So is what I'm going to say, which is that you went down to Rylcombe to find out things, and all you found out was what Levison and Cardew chose to tell you—which was probably what they wanted you to believe."

"I found out the name of the boulder Racke was talking to, anyway. And something more about him, too. That's what I've been thinking about. He puzzled me a good deal at first; but now I think I've placed him. He looks respectable enough for anything; but he raised his hat to that cad Racke and called him 'sir.' What does that point to?"

"Why, that he knows Racke's got plenty of cash, and wants to get hold of it," said Manners.

"Nothing in that to show that he isn't respectable," Tom added. "Don't you know that about eighty per cent. of the most respectable people put in all their time, except an hour or so on Sunday mornings, trying to get hold of other people's cash?"

"My hat, are you turning cynical, Tommy? I'm not going to argue with you about that. I quite agree with you. But this merchant isn't a merchant—"

"That's about as clear as mud," said Manners, grinning.

"I mean he isn't a tradesman. He's about the last sort of man I should call a man, and yet one of a class to whom the noun is always applied."

"Is that a conundrum, Manners, or is he going the way we always feared he would go?"

"Ass! I mean he's a manservant. Speaking generally, with plenty of exceptions, of course, I don't think highly of manservants. Most footmen, and so on, are mere swank on the part of their employers; they don't serve any useful purpose. Look at Racke, frinstance! What is it but swank, and dashed silly swank, that he should have a man?"

"Who says he has?" inquired Tom.

"Come to that, he's often said so," answered Manners. "But that's at home."

"Racke's man isn't at home now," Lowther said. "This Berry merchant is Racke's man."

Monty was quite pleased at having deduced this. He might have felt less elated about it had he known that Cardew had anticipated him, and that not only Cardew and Levison, but several more of the Fourth also, knew more about the mysterious Mr. Berry than he did.

"Blessed if I don't believe you may be right, old scout!" said Tom.

"May be? I am right!" snorted Monty Lowther.

"But what's he want with a man at Rylcombe?" said Manners. "If he could have had him at St. Jim's he'd have had him long ago, of course; just for swank, you know. Hanged if I can see what good the fellow can be to him at Rylcombe, though!"

"You're slow, old chap—terribly slow," said Lowther, shaking his head.

"Who do you think is getting in these big spreads that Racke treats his gang of rotters to, so that they shall back him up in crabbing the competition? He can't do it himself, that's a dead cert! If

he'd tried it on he'd have been bowled out before now. The local tradesmen would know that it wouldn't pay them to supply him, whatever price he might offer.

"There's something in that," Tom said.

There came a tap at the door.

"Come in!" yelled Manners.

It was Talbot who appeared.

"Luck to find you all at home," he said. "I want a yarn with you."

"If you'd found one of us out, you'd most likely have found us all out," Tom replied.

"Whereas not we, but quite another person, needs finding out just now," Lowther added.

"Racke, you mean?" said Talbot. "Well, I've been making a few inquiries, based on what you told me, Lowther, and I think I've discovered a thing or two that may help."

"Oh, good egg!" Manners said. "Now that you've started in, Talbot, we may really begin to find out something!"

Lowther gave his chum a withering glance that somehow failed to wither.

"Racke's getting big supplies of grub from somewhere," Talbot went on, taking a seat upon the table. "It's a risky game, not only for him and the other greedy bounders who are sharing it, but for everyone who is in it. He can't get it from the big stores or from home, as he might have done a few months ago. Everything that matters much is rationed now, and people who are doing a honest business know they can't afford to let any one person have whacks even of the things that are not on the list."

Tom nodded.

"Tinned stuff might almost as well be rationed," he said. "It's one box of sardines at a time now, and be jolly well thankful you can get that! If they get much dearer we sha'n't be able to afford more than a smell of them once a week or so."

"That will come cheap," said Lowther. "Because the more you can't eat them the more you can smell them. Ha, ha, ha!"

No one else laughed. Perhaps the rest regarded the subject as too grave for joking.

"But still, there are ways," Talbot said. "Plenty of rotters in this country are ready to trade with the enemy if they get half a chance. Some of them have been caught at it."

"Bowled out, and have had to give bail," Lowther murmured.

But no one heeded Lowther.

"The same sort would supply anyone like Racke, ready and willing to pay through the nose, with anything he wanted," Talbot continued. "But it would be too big a risk for him to deal with them direct. So he has brought in an agent—this man Berry, his valet, or whatever he may call him, at home. Valet's rather an old-fashioned word, and Racke's nothing if not up-to-date. He would call the fellow 'his man.' He sticks him down in that villa of old Pepper's, and Berry pretends to be a very scientific johnny."

"Go on! It sounds likely enough so far," said Tom.

"But it don't explain the whacks of grub," objected Manners.

"I think it does," Talbot replied. "Scientific people need lots of books and instruments, and things, and no one would be surprised at their getting plenty of parcels by rail. Boxes labelled 'Instruments—with care,' perhaps with the name of some well-known firm on the label, to look perfectly genuine, you know. Easy enough to forge such things. Well, I've found out that Berry's getting that sort of parcel."

"How did you find it out?" asked Manners.



Frank in the Pantry!

(See Chapter 8.)

"Nothing easier. Went to the station to inquire about a parcel of my own—which I wasn't expecting—that ought to have come by goods train, and kept my eyes peeled while I was in the goods shed. I shouldn't be keen on that sort of thing if I had any doubt about the justice of the cause. But I haven't any doubt at all that we are justified in anything necessary to bowl out Racke and stop this wretched food-hogging!"

"There you are, you fellows!" said Lowther, in triumph. "When I told you what I thought, you didn't think much of it; but when Talbot, acting on my information, gets on the track, you reckon he's no end smart, and sit listening to him with your silly mouths wide open, like fishes out of water!"

"You frabious ass!" said Tom. "Talbot's really found out something. You hadn't know-how enough even to think of going to the station!"

"I was going there to-morrow."

"And by to-morrow the stuff would have been cleared out, and you'd have seen nothing!" Manners retorted.

"Trust you to be a day after the fair! The Fourth will make rings round us if we don't get more of a move on than you've done yet!"

"Well, what have you done, anyway? And what's Tommy done? Answer me that, if you can!"

It was not quite an easy question to answer, for, in point of fact, Tom Merry and Manners had not made a start yet—a fact which they were not likely to admit. But they were saved from the necessity of argument by another tap at the door.

"Come in, ass!" howled Manners.

CHAPTER 4. Grundy's Claim.

"I MUST say you're not very polite, Manners!" said the great George Alfred Grundy, in solemn reproof. "But eminently descriptive!" put in Lowther.

Grundy ignored Lowther. He could

never understand much more than half of what Lowther said; and most of what he understood he did not like.

"Nobody means anything by calling anyone an ass," said Manners. "It fits, or it doesn't fit. If it doesn't fit, the chap doesn't mind; and if it does, he hasn't any right to make a fuss about it! Can't see that you've any right, Grundy!"

"I'm not going to talk to you!" said George Alfred, with dignity. "I came here to talk to Tom Merry. Talbot I don't mind—he's a reasonable chap, as a rule. But the sooner you two skip it the better! You have such extremely puerile minds, you know!"

Manners and Lowther—for once in agreement—glared at Grundy. It was rather too steep to be talked to in that strain by the biggest duffer in the Shell.

"Well, say on, Grundy!" said Tom.

"Look here, Merry, you can't deny that I've been showing up no end well in the competition!" said Grundy.

"I don't deny it. Nine points are a very acceptable addition to our score, and it would be looking pretty poor without them."

"Nine!" snorted Grundy. "There are thirty more to come to-night! That makes thirty-nine altogether. That's more than any other chap in the Form is likely to add to the total."

It was a rather staggering claim. True, Grundy had won fifteen and lost only six of his boxing bouts with members of the Fourth thus far. By the somewhat peculiar arrangement agreed upon—but though it might be queer it was fair enough, for Grundy was manifestly overweight for most of the Fourth—his Form scored only three points for each victory, while the Fourth took six whenever the referee gave a verdict for his opponent.

Thus far he had gone under—on points—to Figgins, Roylance, Redfern, Blake, Levison, and Koumi Rao. There had been nothing very classy to beat in his last batch of victims—Owen, Reilly, THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 530.

Macdonald, Smith minor, Robinson minor, and Mulvaney minor, though the first three were very fair boxers. He still had ten bouts to come; and he counted upon thirty points from the ten.

"Well, I admit that there isn't another of us—unless it's Kangaroo—who could have taken on the Fourth in this wholesale way," said Tom.

He did not add, as he might have done, that if he himself, or Talbot, or Kangaroo, who could all lick Grundy—though none of them easily—had issued the challenge, only the pick of the Fourth would have accepted it. Grundy owed most of his success to the fact that he was taken for a bigger duffer than he was. He was no duffer at boxing, though he was not quite the great man he fancied himself.

"It's no good telling me Noble could have done it," said Grundy. "I happen to know better."

"Righto! I won't tell you so, then," said Tom. "But it's no good telling me that you can count on wiping the floor with all you have left to meet, when they include chaps like Kerr and Clive and Cardew and Dick Brooke and Lawrence and Lumley-Lumley."

"They're all below your weight; but any one of them might get the verdict against you," said Talbot.

"All six of them might," added Manners.

"Probably will," said Lowther. "Say they do. We're nine points up on Grundy now. He wins the other four bouts, and that makes twenty-one. He loses the six—thirty-six! Thirty-six from twenty-one won't go—can't be did! Twenty-one from thirty-six equals fifteen—for the Fourth. And then Talbot will wish he hadn't advised our weak-minded old Tommy to let Grundy have his way."

"Rot!" roared Grundy. "I never heard such rot as you talk, Lowther—never in all my life! I sha'n't lose any of them, you'll see!"

"You can't lose all six, anyway," Talbot said; "unless you go right off form. But I can't see you winning them all. We can afford to have you lose four, and still be points to the good."

"But I can't afford to lose four!" snorted Grundy. "Don't talk such piffle! Think of my reputation!"

"Don't ask us, Grundy. It won't bear thinking about!" said Lowther solemnly.

"Oh, dry up! But I haven't come to talk about the boxing, Merry. I only mentioned it because I think you ought to listen to me on another matter after I've added thirty-nine points to the Form score!"

"Only too pleased to!" replied Tom.

"Well, then—"

"I said when—"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass! The thing's as good as done!"

"Can't quite see it that way, Grundy."

"Well, I'm not responsible for your crass stupidity, you know."

"I suppose not. Not even for your own. That's why we go easy with you. You can't help it, and it's hardly fair to blame you for it."

Grundy snorted. It always puzzled him why anyone should talk to him in this strain. He knew what an absolutely reasonable fellow he was, and it surprised him that others should not see it.

"See here, Merry, are you going to play me in the re-play at footer?"

"Can't be did, old scout!"

"But I don't see how the Fourth could object."

"They wouldn't," answered Tom, grinning. "But the Shell would!"

"What the thump do you mean, you silly ass?"

"Just what I say. I'm not out for

popularity exactly; but I couldn't stand the whack of unpopularity I should get if I even suggested giving you a place."

"It's about what I expected of you, Merry!"

"Better to be a prophet than to be nothing!" murmured Lowther.

"Well, we'll leave that!" Grundy said loftily. "You'll be sorry when you're licked that you've left out the best player in the Form, that's all!"

"I shall weep lots—bucketsful!" replied Tom cheerily.

"I can't understand you at all. Here you go and give places to Gunn and Wilkins. I don't say they are duffers. I've taught them quite a lot about the game. But neither of them is a patch on me, and they both know it!"

"They never told me so," said Tom.

"Did they ever tell Grundy so?" asked Lowther blandly.

"I'm not talking to you, Lowther! After that slight upon me, Tom Merry, I'm not sure that I should be justified in accepting a place in the First Eleven, even if you offered it to me!"

"I don't think you would, Grundy," said Talbot smiling. "Nothing like maintaining your dignity, old fellow!"

"But I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll captain the Second Eleven for you!"

Four blank faces met Grundy's gaze. But he was not daunted.

"I know they're a job lot," he went on cheerfully. "That's where my knowledge of the game comes in. I'll coach them. I'll make a team of them. In fact, I shouldn't wonder if, after a week of my coaching, they come on to such an extent that you'll see the force of letting them take over the re-play, and watching them wipe the floor with Blake, Figgins & Co.!"

"I shouldn't wonder, either," said Lowther. "Wonder ain't the word, is it, Manners?"

"Can't be did, Grundy," said Tom. "Glyn is skipping the second."

"Poof! Glyn's very well in his place, but what reasonable chap would think of comparing his form at footer with mine?"

"None!" replied Lowther heartily. "There simply isn't any possible comparison!"

"You see, Glyn can play a bit, Grundy," added Manners, to make his chum's meaning quite clear.

Monty's sarcasms were apt to be too subtle for the literal-minded George Alfred.

"Glyn! I grant you he's pretty good at inventions, though I have no doubt I could wipe his eye at that game if it appealed to me. It doesn't happen to—that's all. But what use is a chap with his head full of volts and amperes, and all that sort of rot in the footer-field? None at all!"

"Still, having been given the job, he may not quite see handing it over to you, Grundy," remarked Talbot.

"I think he will—I'm jolly sure he will when I put it to him! I take it you consent, Merry? Not that it really matters to you."

"I think it does a bit," said Tom modestly. "I'm supposed to be in charge of the footer, you know."

"For the present, yes. I want a chance to show that there is a better man for the job, and I think it's only fair play that you should give me one."

"I'm quite willing to do that."

"Then you consent?" said Grundy eagerly.

"I certainly don't! But give us any sort of proof that you can play footer and you shall have chances enough. You're left out now because you simply can't play, and won't learn!"

"And yet, by a curious paradox, is

fully qualified to be left outside!" said Lowther thoughtfully.

"That one's got whiskers!" remarked Manners.

"Well, I'll see Glyn about it," said Grundy.

"Oh, bump him!" hooted Manners.

"Can't do that," Talbot said. "He has to score for the Shell this evening, you know, Manners. We can't go bumping the scorer of points innumerable."

"I don't claim that. Thirty-nine is all that I claim for the boxing contests," Grundy said, with charming modesty. "That means full points for to-night, of course. But I quite expect to get them."

"If you do—"

Tom Merry pulled himself up. It was not in the least likely that Grundy would win all ten bouts. But Tom had learned the lesson that it is a mistake to open one's mouth too widely; and it was through Grundy, in part, that he had learned it. He had not forgotten yet the day when Trimble had kept goal, and Grundy had played centre-half against the New House.

"If I do you mean that you'll give Glyn the kick-out and appoint me skipper of the second team?"

"No. But if you do I'll ask Glyn to give you a place in it," Tom said.

"My hat! As if there could be any doubt about that—if I chose to accept it, which I certainly shouldn't! Come now, Merry, that's not good enough!"

"It's all I'll promise. Now don't tell me you won't play up to-night unless —"

"I wasn't going to. I trust I'm not that sort of fellow. Whatever undeserved slights are put upon me I shall always do my best for my side."

With that Grundy went—quite a dignified exit for Grundy. What he had said was true. There was a good sportsmanship under all his swank and folly. He might be an ass, but he could not be a traitor.

"Crumbs, Tommy, you've let yourself in for something there; if he should happen to fluke everything to-night!" said Manners.

"He won't. And if he did it would be thirty points to us. Besides, there's no hope for our second. Even putting Grundy among 'em wouldn't spoil their play. There's none to spoil!"

"Better not let Glyn hear you say that, Tom," said Talbot. "We don't want him discouraged when he's working like a Trojan. And I'm not sure you're right, either. I saw Lucas and Gibbons and French bucking up jolly well to-day, and that's something to be going on with."

CHAPTER 5.

In the Ring Again.

KILDARE was not refereeing the contests that evening, having business of more importance elsewhere. But Darrel took his place, and there was quite a crowd of seniors in attendance.

Grundy put that down to the attraction his bouts offered, of course; but in fact there was metal more attractive that night. Three of the Shell were to do battle with three of the Fourth—picked men, these, the best the two Forms could furnish.

There was no possible doubt as to the Shell trio. Tom Merry, Harry Noble, and Talbot were admittedly the best of the Form.

But, after Blake and Figgy had been unanimously elected, there had been a good deal of debate as to who the third on the other side should be.

The New House contingent favoured Redfern. The School House crowd wanted Roylance, Levison, or Clive,

except for Arthur Augustus, who wanted himself. But Gussy found no supporters.

But Clive still had Grundy to face, and by beating Grundy on points he could score six for his side. He could only make seven by defeating Noble; and, as he admitted, he thought he had a better chance with Grundy.

Levison would not have been in the running a few months earlier. It spoke volumes for the way he had come on that there should be quite a number of fellows who thought him possibly better than Roylance, even after the New Zealander had proven himself a big handful for Tom Merry.

Levison's new popularity had not the effect that anyone who had known him of old might have thought. It did not go to his head. No one could have been more modest about it. That he appreciated it was plain. The old sarcastic, half-bitter speeches that had so often come from him, even after he had changed his habits, were seldom heard now. It was almost as though he were younger as well as fitter.

It was he who settled the matter in the event.

"Tain't a bit of use arguing," he said. "Roylance can lick me. He couldn't do it easily, but he could do it. He'd get hurt doing it, but he would hurt me more. If we are to settle it by meeting one another, you'd better settle beforehand who is to be understudy for the victor, for he won't be in any condition to take on Noble, I warn you. But the thing's settled. Whoever says me, I say Roylance; and there ain't a pig in all Sussex who can be more obstinate than I am when I choose!"

So Roylance was to face the Australian junior—Colonial against Colonial. Figgins and Talbot had been drawn together, and Blake was to meet Tom Merry.

Before any of the three events were brought off, however, Grundy was allowed to make a start on his anticipated career of conquest all along the line. And the first name out of the hat was that of Sidney Clive.

There was very little doubt that Clive was the pick of those left. Kerr might be as clever, but he could not hit as hard. Dick Brooke might hit as hard, but he was not as clever.

Grundy went off with a rush. He fought Clive all over the ring. He seemed to forget entirely that he had more work to do when the South African was disposed of. But Grundy had any amount of strength; in that respect, at least, he was ahead of any other fellow in the two Forms.

Clive did not get rattled. He kept his head, but he could not keep it out of the reach of Grundy's long arms. The first round was Grundy's beyond all question; and Clive did no more than hold his own in the second.

All depended upon the third. But Grundy kept up his hot attack, and seemed more active than he had ever been before.

Clive fought pluckily to the end; but weight of metal told, and the verdict was Grundy's.

It was a blow to the Fourth. They had counted on six points from Clive. But though the disappointment was greater for him than for anyone else he took it like the fine fellow he was.

"Never mind!" he said. "This shows that I couldn't have beaten Kangaroo. Now a better man will have a chance."

Bates gave Grundy no trouble at all. The first round disposed of Bates' pretensions.

Then Cardew's name was called, and Ralph Reckness Cardew came jauntily up.

Cardew was not usually taken at all seriously, perhaps because he did not take

himself so. But Clive and Levison knew, if no one else did, that he was a very clever boxer, and a hard nut to crack if he chose to exert himself. He would choose to-night, they were sure. Apart from any question of points, nothing would please him better than to take down Grundy's number.

The smile on his face irritated the big Shell fellow—as it is quite possible Cardew intended it should. Cardew annoyed Grundy almost as much as Monty Lowther did. They both talked over his head, and they both treated him as though there could be no doubt in anyone's mind as to his being an absolute ass.

"You'll be grinning on the other side of your face soon!" said Grundy confidently.

"Think so, dear boy?" returned Cardew, as Levison fastened his gloves for him.

"I know it!"

"An' what you don't know isn't knowledge, is it, Grundy? Well, we shall see what we shall see!"

And something was seen that few had anticipated seeing.

If Grundy had kept cool all might have been well for him.

He went at Cardew much as he had gone at Clive. But whereas he had kept on hitting Clive, and hitting him hard, it was different with Cardew.

Somehow, Grundy could not get home on him. The mocking smile that never left Cardew's face angered Grundy so much that it seemed to make his hardest punches go wide.

Of course, it was not entirely that. Perhaps it was not chiefly that. Many of those who looked on were amazed to find that Cardew had so much cleverness. He ducked and dodged and side-stepped. He caused the burly Shell fellow to waste his blows on air. And every now and then he got in quite a good punch on his own account.

"Oh, jolly well played!" said Levison, who seconded him, at the end of the first round, the honours of which had certainly not gone to Grundy. "You're going to redeem the reputation of No. 9."

"Do you think it needs it, dear boy?"

"Well, no, come to that. Clive showed up all right; but we expected more of him."

"He lacked finesse, my son. That's what does the trick with bulls like dear old Grundy. I showed him the red rag before we started in, an' after that he charged blindly."

"Don't count on his going on doing that, though," said Levison soberly.

It was as well that Cardew took that warning, for Wilkins had said a word or two to Grundy. It was not often Grundy paid heed to anyone; but he seemed to have listened to Wilkins then.

He was cooler in the next round, but in deadly earnest. Cardew had a hot time.

But Cardew kept cool, in spite of that hot time. He took punishment as though he liked it. He took it almost all through the round, and yet at the end was capable of getting in one on Grundy's chin that very nearly lifted the big fellow off his feet.

Had it not been for that the round would have been Grundy's beyond all dispute. As it was, Cardew took some of the honours; and it was plain to all but Grundy that he must be given the decision, unless he went all to pieces in the final round.

There was no sign of that, however. He kept up his end in real style, and Darrel had not a moment's hesitation in naming him the winner.

Grundy scowled as the slim, dandified Fourth-Former stepped down.

But how the Fourth roared! Languid, drawling Ralph Cardew had far more in him than most of them had dreamed.

And no one's congratulations were heartier than Sidney Clive's.

"Haden't we better take one of the other bouts now, Grundy?" asked Darrel.

"I don't see it," growled Grundy.

"But you must be a bit baked."

"I'm not. I want to go on!"

Grundy ignored the glances cast at him by Tom and Talbot, and the mutterings of Lowther and Kangaroo and Gore. Grundy wanted to go on. What did it matter what anyone else wanted?

As for letting the Form down, Grundy was quite unable to see that it was possible for him to do that by going on. Thus far he had not scored a point for the Shell that evening, Cardew's six balancing the three each earned from Bates and Clive.

Darrel dipped into the hat again. There were not many names left.

"Kerr!" he called.

The Fourth cheered hopefully.

Kerr looked a very little chap to be standing up to Grundy. But he was just the fellow to give Grundy no end of trouble.

And he did.

Elusive as quicksilver, he kept the Shell warrior on the run. He was even more difficult to hit than Cardew had been.

Grundy actually began to puff, though he was as hard as nails.

Kerr never hurt him. His blows were mere taps. But they outnumbered those which Grundy got home on him; and this held good all through the three rounds. Allowing for the fact that one punch of Grundy's really amounted to more than half a dozen of Kerr's taps, yet Kerr was ahead, for he took very few of the punches, and points are not given for mere making of holes in the atmosphere.

Grundy's face was positively tragic when Darrel gave the bout to Kerr. He did not contest the decision, of course; but he looked as though for him the sun had set for ever, and no to-morrow would ever dawn.

He was still resolute to go on, however, and even those who grumbled admired his pluck.

The next bout was an easy one. Clarke, of the New House, was no match for Grundy, even in skill. Lawrence gave more trouble; but he did not pull off his bout, being counted out from a knockdown blow in the third round.

Once again Grundy and his opponents generally stood level on points for the evening; and now, at last, Grundy consented to take a breathing spell.

CHAPTER 6.

The End of Grundy's Campaign.

"TALBOT versus Figgins," said Darrel.

Both Forms cheered their champions. The rugged face of George Figgins, and the handsome countenance of Reginald Talbot, were alike very serious as they walked into the ring.

Tom Merry and Kerr were the seconds. Seven rounds was the maximum allowed. If both were still going at the end of that time there would be a decision on points. But seven rounds gives a fair chance of a knock-out blow.

Luck did not favour the Shell. Up to the end of the fifth round Talbot had had all the better of the exchanges. More than once Figg had been very hard pressed, and when he went down with a thump in the fourth round few expected to see him get up in time.

But he got up somehow, and hung on to the end of the round, and maintained the defensive through the next. And in the sixth he attacked again, got in under Talbot's guard, and sent one home to the mark.

Pluck and resolution and skill will carry far, but they will not avail the fellow who has gone down with a punch right on the solar plexus. Talbot was counted out before he knew what had happened to him.

It was hard lines, and even while the Fourth yelled in triumph many of them felt sorry for Talbot.

But he refused to be sorry for himself. He knew how to take defeat as a good sportsman should take it; and honest Piggy flushed with pleasure at his congratulations, and returned very warmly the grip of the hand Talbot gave him.

"Merry versus Blake."

"I say, you know—"

"Oh, dry up, Grundy! You can't be in the middle of the stage all the giddy time!" snapped Manners.

Tom and Blake smiled into one another's eyes as their gloves met before they started. This was a very different meeting from one that both remembered well.

They went at it hard and fast, though with the best of good-humour. In an ordinary way Blake was not quite Tom's match, but the difference was not so great as to leave him no chance.

He had a trifle the best of it at the outset, and the Fourth hoped. For they knew Blake for a stayer. When did Yorkshire lack grit and the power to stick it?

But Tom Merry was a stayer, too, and bit by bit he began to get the upper hand. Blake punched hard still, and guarded well; but Tom's punches were getting home oftener.

In the sixth round Blake crashed down. He was up before three had been counted; but the wind had been knocked out of him, and Tom might have tumbled him over again had he chosen to go all out at him.

Tom did not. That knockdown blow would give him the victory on points, unless Blake could serve out the same sauce to him in the last round. And, fighting coolly and warily, he took good care Blake should not.

Some of those who looked on called it a tame finish. But no one who knew the game well grumbled.

"Ready again, Grundy," asked Darrel, "or—"

"Of course I'm ready!" snapped Grundy.

He had four opponents to meet now, and no one of the four a duffer. Jones minor had no chance. Hammond might possibly play the same game as Kerr and Cardew had done, but it was too much to hope that he should play it with like success, perhaps. But Lumley-Lumley, at his best, and if he kept cool, might prove a hard nut to crack. And Dick Brooke, the day-boy, was the pick of the four.

Brooke did not usually stay at the school after afternoon classes, unless for cricket or some special reason. He had waited patiently through two of Grundy's evenings for his name to be called. Now at last it came.

"Go it, Brooke!"

"Play up, Dick!"

Brooke smiled genially. Grundy smiled, too. He rather liked Dick Brooke. Grundy approved of fellows who had no false pride about working with their hands.

It might have been better for Dick if Grundy had not liked him, or if the three still left had taken their turns before he took his.

"Silly ass, Brooke!" whispered Cardew to Levison. "That ain't the way to smile at all. He ought to have come to me to show him how to smile at old Grundy so that the old chump would feel mad!"

In spite of the mistaken smile, Brooke seemed to have the better of it at first. He showed very clever footwork, and there was no lack of vim in his punches. But Grundy, though feeling like a giant refreshed, threw nothing away by going all out at the beginning; and in the third round, when a win on points looked likely for the Fourth-Former, one of Grundy's hefty left-handers got through his guard, and he tumbled over and was counted out.

There was still a chance for the Fourth—still a risk that the Shell might lose the nine points won by Grundy in his first flight, and more with them. But the chance and the risk were alike small. If Grundy could beat two of the three left he would have registered a dozen points in all for his side. If he beat all three he would have made twenty-one, for in that case there would be nine points to add and nothing to deduct.

"Lumley-Lumley!"

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had been going very quietly for some terms past. He had taken to study and to a good deal of reading apart from study; and no one had seen much of him except his study-mate Wyatt. But he had put in a fair amount of glove-practice, and he looked fit enough.

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Grundy was inclined to hold him cheaply at the outset. But he soon discovered that that would not do. By the end of the first round he knew that he had caught a Tartar.

In the next round he showed to far more advantage, but had not much the better of it. Lumley-Lumley stood up to him well, took punishment without wincing, and meted it out to Grundy in return.

Then came the stunning surprise. Scarcely had the third round begun when the Fourth-Former landed a heavy blow on Grundy's jaw, and the Shell fellow collapsed.

"He wasn't knocked down—he fell over his own silly feet!" said Lowther.

However that might be, Grundy was down, and he groaned as he lay there. He tried to get up, putting his left hand to the ground; or, rather, trying to lever himself up on it, for he had fallen with it underneath him.

He groaned again, and sank back with beads of perspiration on his brow—not the sweat of heat, but the cold sweat of acute pain. It had hurt Grundy horribly when he had tried to lift himself.

Darrel was counting:

"Six—seven—"

"Oh, buck up, Grundy!" yelled Kangaroo.

"He's hurt!" said Talbot.

"Of course!" said Lowther. "Lumley hurt him!"

But that was not quite what Talbot had meant.

"Out!" said Darrel; and the Fourth roared.

Wilkins helped his chum up.

"I've hurt my left hand," said Grundy, white with pain now. "I'm not sure that I haven't broken the middle finger."

"You can't go on, you know, old man! I say, Darrel—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Grundy fiercely. "If you say a word to anyone I'll slay you! And, what's more, I'll never speak to you again as long as you live!"

Wilkins shut up at that awful double threat. But he did not like it.

Jones minor had expected to last about half a round. He could hardly credit his luck when he lasted into the third without really getting anything that hurt him.

But Grundy had to do almost everything with his right hand. To hit with his left was out of the question, even for his stoic pluck.

No one but Wilkins could understand it at all. Grundy seemed to have gone all to pieces; and the Fourth actually began to cherish hopes that Jones minor would overcome him.

That was not to be. Jones minor got his quietus in the third round. Even in a bout on points a knock-out blow counts for more than anything else can do; and Grundy managed to administer such a blow to Jones with his undamaged right.

"Now you've got to stop!" said Wilkins, in real distress. He could see that his chum felt very queer.

"Rats!" said Grundy. "There's only young Hammond to come. If I can't polish off that little cock-sparrow one-handed I'll never put on gloves again!"

"Hammond's pretty smart. I've had 'em on with him, and I know," Wilkins said dubiously.

"Do you mean to compare yourself with me, George Wilkins?"

There was no more for Wilkins to say after that.

Perhaps before his bout with Hammond had ended Grundy began to wish that he had stopped. But, if he did, he never admitted it.

He did not chase Hammond round the ring—he could not. If he had tried the result might have been different. As it was, Hammond, who possessed any amount of pluck, had to stand up to him and fight it out at close quarters. As Hammond said afterwards, "you couldn't expect any ref to give you points for dodging a chap who wouldn't dodge after you."

Throughout Grundy used his left for guard, and punched with his right. Once or twice Hammond saw him wince when he intercepted a blow; but the little Cockney had no notion what was really the matter, or he would have refused to go on.

"Time!" called Darrel; and the third round was over.

Wilkins ran forward, and was just in time to catch Grundy as he fell.

"It's Grundy's bout, though not by a lot," said Darrel. "Why, what's the matter?"

The great George Alfred had fainted, that was what was the matter.

Fellows crowded round. But Talbot thrust them back.

"Give him air!" he said. "He's been overdoing it. Even old Grundy has his limits, though I never saw another chap so greedy for fighting."

"He said he thought he'd broken one of his fingers," said Wilkins.

"And you let him go on? Oh, you idiot!" snapped Tom.

"We might have dropped a dozen points," remarked Gore, who was thinking more of the competition than of Grundy. No one would have accused George Gore of being specially soft-hearted at any time.

"Points be hanged!" said Tom. "He oughtn't to have been allowed—"

"How could I help it?" asked Wilkins protestingly. "You all know what old Grundy is. He would go on—there was no stopping him!"

Talbot had gently removed the prostrate hero's left glove.

"The middle finger is broken, I feel pretty sure," he said. "Beats me how he could have done it!"

"It was when Lumley-Lumley tumbled him over," explained Wilkins.

"Oh, I say, I'm awfully sorry!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"No one can blame you," said Blake. "I'm glad—glad that the last two didn't score! I'd rather the Shellfish should have the points than pick them up from a chap in that condition."

Figgins and Kerr and the rest agreed heartily. Everyone felt quite concerned about Grundy.

"Grrr!" said Grundy suddenly. "Who's been slopping water over me? Some silly idiot!"

"You'd fainted," said Darrel.

"What? Oh, tell me another—that one's not nearly good enough! I never did such a thing in my life!"

And nobody could ever persuade him that he had done it then. The very word "faint" from Gunn or Wilkins was enough to upset him for weeks after.

No one even thought of the encounter between Kangaroo and Roylance in the excitement; even they did not remember it until later. But that mattered little. Another time could be found for it.

What did matter was that Grundy's Herculean efforts had resulted in a net gain of twelve points for the Shell.

Who could ever have expected that of Grundy?

CHAPTER 7.

Two at the Hollies.

"THAT'S the shop," said Wally D'Arcy.

It was not, in point of fact, a shop at all. That was only Wally's manner of speaking.

The house towards which he nodded was the Hollies, owned by Mr. Erasmus Zachariah Pepper, and tenanted by Mr. Berry—or Berrymore—who was understood by the Rylcombe folks to be quite an eminent scientist; though in what branch of science he had made his reputation none of them knew, or cared. What Rylcombe did not know about science would have filled several large libraries.

Frank Levison was with Wally; and, for once in a way, no other of the usual band was with them.

The two and Manners minor were on rather strained terms just now. Reggie resented what he called their swank, meaning not so much the airs they put on by reason of their office as umpires in the Shell v. Fourth competition as their having been made umpires.

Reggie could see no good and sufficient reason why he should not also have been an umpire, in which case his swank would certainly have put that of Wally and Frank in the shade. In fact, Frank was not at all swanky, and Wally was not unduly so.

Joe Frayne and the rest were not prepared to go all the way with Reggie; but they had not been so much with the two of late, partly because the two had found each other's company sufficient.

"Rummy about that chap!" said Frank, regarding the house thoughtfully. "I suppose it is right that he's getting in grub for Racke and the rest of those rotters?"

"S'pose so," replied Wally. "The old fogies seem to think so, any road."

By the "old fogies" Wally meant the leading spirits of the Shell and Fourth.

"I bet my brother and the rest of them



A Joint Capture!
(See Chapter 10.)

find out all about it before any of the Shell get on the track," said Frank. "Ernie's jolly sharp!"

"Deep, I should call it!" Wally said.

"Look here, D'Arcy minor, if you're going to say anything against my brother—"

"I'm not, you silly kid! But I wouldn't back that crowd against Tom Merry and Talbot. Lowther's a good deal of an ass; and this sort of thing isn't much in Manners' line, but—"

"Oh, I say, Wally, what a giddy score it would be if we could find out all about it, and cut them all out!"

Frank's eyes sparkled as he spoke. There was an answering gleam in Wally's.

"My hat! That's a notion—for a kid like you, young Levison!" said the leader of the rag tribe. "You won't beat that if you try for a donkey's age! I'm on!"

"I don't quite know how we're to do it, though!" Frank said.

"Leave that to me! I'm the chap to do the thinking. You mustn't wear out your little bit of brain by any more. One idea like that is as much as can be expected of it in a morning!"

Reggie would have answered back hotly. Frank merely grinned.

Wally stood and contemplated the Hollies as though looking at it would solve the problem.

And it seemed to do so. For he turned and said:

"The food-hogging merchant don't seem to be at home, Franky."

"Can't see him. But that don't prove he isn't there," Frank said.

"Are you game to chance it?"

"Chance what, Wally? I guess I'm game for anything that you are!"

"Getting inside and having a look round, of course, kid!"

"But that would be burglary! And in broad daylight, too!"

"That's just why it can't be!" said Wally knowingly.

"Is that a riddle? If it is, I'd rather have an easier one."

"No, fathead! I mean that you can't burglar—"

"Burgle," they call it," put in Frank. "In daylight," finished Wally, unheeding.

"But you can. You've just proposed we should."

"You can't!"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Wally!"

"You're the ass! It isn't burglary in the daytime, that's all!"

"But why?"

"Because the law says it isn't, that's why."

"Well, if it isn't burglary, what is it?"

"Dunno! I don't know everything."

"First time I've ever heard you admit that, Wally!"

"Fathead!"

"Do you mean that if we bowled out the law can't get at us?" asked Frank.

"I wouldn't be sure of that. They always have you some way. What you lose on the swings you make up on the roundabouts."

"It doesn't really matter, then, whether it's burgling or not?"

"No-o-o. At least, it's the same thing with a different name. But we won't get bowled out, my son! Trust your Uncle Walter!"

"Well, if we're going to do it we'd better not waste any time," said Frank.

"Righto! Here goes!"

Wally led the way boldly into the front garden of the house, and, to Frank's surprise, beat a resounding rat-tat-tat on the knocker of the door.

"My hat!" said Frank.

"It's all serene, kid! If he comes, we want to know where Mr. John Smith lives—that's a pretty safe one. If he don't come he ain't at home—see?"

No one came.

"Let's go round to the back," said Wally.

There was no one on the road. The Hollies stood well outside the village.

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"Ought to be able to find a way in here," Wally said. "I say, Franky, I guess you could squeeze in through that pantry-window!"

"Tight fit!" said Frank, looking up.

"And you couldn't, that's a cert!"

"No; but, you could undo the back door for me."

Frank thought it over for a moment. He did not quite like it.

"Right-ho!" he said, having made up his mind. He knew that he could trust Wally not to desert him, whatever chance.

"I'll give you a bunk up," Wally said.

"It is a jolly tight fit, but I'll do it!"

panted Frank, a few seconds later.

The last few words came with a rush, as the speaker went with a rush. Wally, in his zeal, had shoved too lustily, and Frank went through with unexpected quickness.

He did not fall very far, however, meeting the floor and bringing up short. The thwack was plainly audible outside.

Wally's face appeared at the window. Frank was sitting up, looking rather dazed.

"Was it your head, Franky?"

"No, ass! But it hurt. Why did you shove like that?"

"Wanted to get you through, of course, chump!"

"Well, you've got me through, so you ought to be satisfied. There's nothing here."

"They wouldn't keep it in the pantry, duffer!" replied Wally. "Cut round to the door and let me in."

In less than half a minute the two fags stood together inside the house of mystery.

There could be little doubt that Mr. Berry, the scientific gentleman, was away, in the pursuit of science, or of grub, which is more highly valued just now.

"We must scoot round in a hurry. Let's have a look in this room first," Wally said.

The extreme illegality of their proceedings worried neither much. It seemed to them that the food-hogging business justified them. The Shell and Fourth, by the way, had no notion that these two knew anything about the affair. But it is hardly necessary to say that Frank and Wally had not obtained their information in Baggy Trimble's way. Some incautious word dropped by that master of tact and judgment, Arthur Augustus, had put them on the scent.

There was nothing at all suspicious in the first room they inspected. The second gave some colour to the scientific story. There were test-tubes and phials and instruments in it.

But after a glance or two at them the Hon. Walter Adolphus D'Arcy elevated his classic nose.

"Job lot, picked up cheap," he said. "Chap don't use them; you can see that. Most likely don't know how."

"Let's go upstairs," said Frank.

One room upstairs was used as a bedroom. Here again there was nothing at all to arouse suspicion.

In a small room at the back of it was a case which at first sight looked as innocent as anything else about the place.

It was labelled "Instruments—with care," and it had not been opened yet.

Wally looked at it.

"H'm!" he said. "Might be—might not. I wish it was open."

"Wally!"

"Yes, kid!"

"Wonder why he brought it up here? You'd have thought the room downstairs was the place to open it in."

"So it would be if it was really what it makes out to be, Franky," said Wally wisely. "But if it's grub, he might think it safer up here."

"Can't think how he can get grub,

Wally. No one else seems to be able to."

"But he does. The answer's an easy one—money! I say, I can smell ham in here!"

Wally was kneeling down, with his nose close to the case. Frank knelt, too, and sniffed hard.

"Crumbs! So can I!" he said.

"Makes a chap's mouth water. But, of course, ham's off, except in scraps. Got to wait till after the war, when we shall be grown up, and not care much about it."

"I never noticed that grown-up people were off ham," replied Frank. I say, Wally, are we going to open it?"

"It don't seem much good to go away without doing that, now we're here," Wally answered. "And I don't think we need care a rap about Racke or this rotter here. They'll be in a blue funk when they know we know!"

Frank looked round for something wherewith to open the case.

"Nothing here," he said. "But he's bound to have a hammer and chisel somewhere. I'll cut down and look."

He went. Hardly had he reached the foot of the stairs when Wally heard a sound as of the front door's being softly opened.

He ran to the head of the staircase, and even before he reached it he knew that Frank was in the grip of the enemy!

CHAPTER 8.

Lowther to the Rescue.

FRANK had not called out. But he shouted now:

"Cut, Wally!"

It might have been better if Wally had cut. But the D'Arcy pluck and loyalty were in the way. It was not for a D'Arcy to desert a comrade in distress.

Wally rushed to the rescue. Mr. Berry gripped him. The two fags were hefty youngsters for their age; but Mr. Berry was a man, and by no means a weakling.

They were flung bodily into the room which seemed to have been fitted up as a laboratory—or a pretence at a laboratory—and the door was banged to.

The key turned in the lock.

Mr. Berry had not spoken a word. He might have been dumb for all the evidence they had to the contrary.

"Here's a jolly go!" said Wally, sitting up on the floor, and rubbing a bump on his head—a bump of which no phrenologist could have made much.

"Why didn't you bunk?" asked Frank.

"You could have got me out then. As it is, we're both nabbed."

"Couldn't be done," replied Wally.

"Would you have done it yourself, kid?"

"Well, come to that—"

"Of course you wouldn't! Young Reggie wouldn't, even, let alone one of us. Let's have a go at the window!"

But there was no hope of escape by way of the window. It was screwed up.

"That bounder don't seem to be a whale for fresh air," remarked Wally discontentedly.

"I don't believe he ever uses this room at all. The things in it are just to impress the natives," said Frank. "Milkman sees 'em, and the baker-man, and all the people who come to the back door, and, of course, they're jolly sure, then, that this merchant is no end scientific. We know better!"

"But we don't know what matters most," returned Wally. "And that is how to get out of this! Unless we do it in twenty minutes we're going to be late for dinner."

"We sha'n't miss a fat lot, that's one comfort!"

"We sha'n't miss a thundering impot, kid, and that's no comfort at all!"

"Shall we kick at the door?"

"Nunno! Not for another ten minutes or so, anyway. Something may happen if we wait. And this bounder daren't take us to the Head at worst. We know too much!"

"We don't know anything—we only think we do," replied Frank shrewdly. "It depends on his nerve, and what he thinks we've found out."

"Pity we hadn't time to get that packing-case open! It would have shown the rotter!"

Silence fell. Both were thinking hard. But no dodge for getting out was evolved by either, though Wally did have a look at the chimney. That was plainly too narrow, however.

Then suddenly something threw a shadow through the window, and they saw a face pressed against it.

"It's old Lowther!" said Frank, in delight.

"I'd rather it had been Tom Merry!" grunted Wally.

Lowther began making quick signs with his hands.

"What's the silly ass doing?" Wally growled.

"I know! It's a ripping dodge—the deaf-and-dumb alphabet!"

"What's the good? We ain't deaf and dumb!"

"But I learned it when I was a kid, Wally—we used to know a poor chap who couldn't talk—and I can remember it all serene! Here goes!"

Frank's hands began to move quickly—too quickly for Lowther, as he soon made clear.

Then Lowther disappeared.

"What was it all about, kid?" demanded Wally impatiently.

"He said he'd get the bounder to the door, and make him let us out," answered Frank.

"Bet you he won't! Old Tom Merry would have smashed the window in, or something!"

"That wouldn't pay. We've done no damage, as it is. I think Lowther will work it."

They waited. Ten minutes passed. Then the key turned in the lock, and Monty Lowther appeared at the opened door.

"Come along, my children!" he said.

"I have talked the matter over with Mr. Berry, and he has agreed to consider your escapade as the fruit of infantile curiosity. I have assured him that at St. Jim's we do not look upon members of the Third as fully responsible for their actions."

"I say——" began Wally indignantly.

But Frank nudged him to be silent.

Wally looked displeased as he passed out. But the smooth face of Mr. Berry showed no sign at all that he minded.

"Kids," said Lowther, when they were clear of the Hollies, "you mustn't—you really mustn't! Housebreaking at your tender age! Tut, tut!"

"Rats!" said Wally, with a snort.

"It wasn't really housebreaking, Lowther," Frank said.

"Eh! What do you call it, then?"

"Detective work!" growled Wally.

"We wanted to find out whether the yarns about Racke and that bounder at the Hollies were true," added Frank.

"So there are yarns which connect our dear friend Racke with the gentleman at the villa of Erasmus—eh? returned Lowther.

"The Hollies, you mean," Wally said.

"Of course there are! You know jolly well there are, Lowther!"

"The house belongs to old Pepper; that's what Lowther means," Frank said.

"But it's no good you pretending you don't know anything about the yarns, Lowther—not a scrap!"

Lowther saw that it was not, and he did not ask how they had discovered the secret. He knew that it had been by no unfair means.

"Did you find out anything?" he asked.

"Smelt ham," was Wally's brief reply.

"That is hardly evidence."

"Think not? Well, what I say is that we couldn't smell ham if there wasn't any ham there!"

"Nephew Walter, you are a logician! Assuming no defect in the olfactory sense—"

"We've got as much sense as you have, Lowther, any day!"

"He means if we can smell all right," explained Frank, who knew a good many words that were not in Wally's vocabulary, though he might not use them.

"Of course we can!"

"Assuming no such defect in you two," went on Lowther blandly, "ham there must have been. But the possession of ham is not, even in these rationed days, an offence in itself."

"Chap that's got any right to it don't hide it away in a box labelled 'Instruments—with care,'" said Wally.

Lowther's eyes gleamed. So these two had got on to the same thing as Talbot!

"You're not going to talk about this, I suppose?" he said.

"I shall tell my major, of course," said Frank promptly.

"I shan't tell mine!" growled Wally.

"He's such a silly ass! And I suppose you'll tell Tom Merry?"

Lowther wished there had been some way of getting Frank to keep the secret from Ernest Levison. But there was none, he knew. The little chap was too staunch for that.

And, after all, perhaps it would hardly have been fair. But for the uneasy suspicion he had that the Fourth-Form detectives had got ahead of him and his colleagues, Lowther would not have minded.

"Can you run, you kids?" he asked. "We shall be late for dinner if we don't get a move on, you know."

"Can we run?" echoed Wally, in scorn. "We can lick you, any road!"

"Lowther won the mile the other day," Frank reminded him.

"Nothing to beat," said Wally. "Kim on, you cripples!"

CHAPTER 9.

A Surprise for the Fourth!

"AREN'T you playing, Dig?" asked Tom Merry.

It was the afternoon of the second eleven match, and Tom was naturally surprised to see Digby, who had been left out of the Fourth's first eleven, in ordinary clothes. Dig had had a strain, but he was quite fit again now.

"No. Reserve for the replayed first team match, Tommy," said Dig. "Someone might crock up, you know."

"Oh!" said Tom thoughtfully.

"What shall you do if anybody crocks up?" Digby asked.

"Play short, I suppose. We've no reserves," Tom replied.

"Well, Piggy and Blake thought it would be the safest thing to keep me back for the forward line, and Lawrence for the halves. We might play, anyway—not obliged to put the same team in the field, you know."

"Lawrence, too?" said Tom.

It looked as though the Fourth were taking no chances on the replay. And they did not think they were taking any on the match of the afternoon.

"I'd just as soon have played to-day," Dig confessed. "Old Herries is playing, and I rather fancied seeing what I could do at back. But it's no odds. We're

bound to be all over that scratch gang of yours."

Tom did not argue that point. It was very much what he thought.

But Bernard Glyn, who had worked quite hard at licking the Shell second into shape, was not minded to take defeat as inevitable. He looked quite chippy as he led his flock into the field.

"Hallo!" said Talbot. "Grundy's never playing, with his broken finger, surely?"

"Nor without it," answered Tom.

But Grundy evidently thought that he was to play. He came striding up to Glyn.

"See here, Glyn, you've a man too many!" he said sharply.

"You're quite mistaken, Grundy," Glyn replied.

"Are you going to play twelve a side, then?"

"Not at all."

"But there are eleven here besides me."

"That's so. That's the eleven."

"Do you mean to say that I'm left out?" roared Grundy.

"You saw the list on the board, I suppose?"

"I saw a list on the board, certainly. I took no notice of that. I didn't think for a moment that you could be such an absurd ass!"

"I should have been a bit that way if I'd posted a list I didn't mean," replied Bernard Glyn, with unruffled good-humour.

Talbot touched Grundy on the arm.

"It's no go, old man," he said. "How can you play with a finger like that?"

"If I don't mind, I fail to see that it's any business of yours, Talbot," snapped Grundy.

"You'd let your side down, you know," Kangaroo protested.

No one wanted to be rough on Grundy. He had never stood higher in the estimation of his Form than he did just then; but he seemed to be determined to forfeit their good opinion.

"Can't you and Gunn do anything with the old ass, Wilky?" asked Tom Merry.

Wilkins shook his head.

"We've tried," he said. "You know what he is, Merry. He seems to think that his broken finger makes it all the more out of the question that he should be left out."

A dangerous calmness had descended upon the great George Alfred. He looked upon Glyn more in sorrow than in anger.

"I'm sorry, Glyn," he said. "You're a fellow I've always had some respect for until now. But this has done it. You've fairly put the lid on it. Clear off!"

"Wha-a-at!" gasped Bernard Glyn.

"Clear off! I shan't allow you to play. Lucas, I think you had better go in goal. You can't keep goal, I know; but, as I shall be playing back, there won't be much for you to do."

"I say, Grundy—"

"Don't put your spoke in, Merry. I don't want to quarrel with you. But I shan't allow you to butt in. Who's captaining the Fourth?"

"He's potty—right off his onion!" said Clive.

"Yaas, wathah! Gwundy, deah boy—"

"I'm not talking to you, D'Arcy! I'm ready to toss with the other skipper. Where is he?"

"Hidin'," said Cardew gravely. "He has fled from the terror of your appearance, Grundy."

"Take care you don't hurt his damaged finger," said Tom. "He's got to clear out of the road, and nothing but force will make him."

"Half a jiffy!" said Manners. "Tell him you haven't a reserve for the replayed first eleven game, Tommy."

"Then he'll expect—"

"It puts it off, anyway. We can't manhandle him with his giddy finger in that state. In a week it may be so bad that he won't want to play."

"Grundy," said Tom in honeyed accents, "what do you think we are going to do for a reserve for the first if you insist on playing to-day?"

"Eh?" said Grundy, a remarkable change coming over his rugged face.

"The Fourth are holding back Digby and Lawrence. Someone might be crooked on our side. We haven't a man to take his place as it is, for no one who plays to-day will be eligible. Whereas, if you—"

Tom made a diplomatic stop there. He was too honest to go on. The first would rather have taken the field two men short than have played Grundy.

"Oh!" said Grundy. "I hadn't thought of that. A chap can't think of everything. I quite see your point, Merry. But what worries me is that if I don't play this afternoon the Shell is bound to lose the game!"

"It won't cost so much as losing the other game," Lowther said.

"All right. I'm not at all pleased with you, Glyn. I consider you have behaved badly. But I'll overlook it."

"Thanks no end, Grundy!" replied the inventive genius of the Shell, grinning. "Now I feel almost happy. Ready to toss, Julian?"

Glyn won the toss, but there was nothing in it. The day was one of those calm, blue-skied ones that are seldom seen in spring. The breeze would hardly have stirred a leaf.

It was thus that the two teams lined up:

Shell: Goal, Glyn; backs, Lennox and Walkley; halves, Frere, Lucas, and Williamson (New House); forwards, Finn, Gibbons, French (New House), Boulton, and Wade (New House).

Fourth: Goal, Herries; backs, Owen and Pratt (both New House); halves, Clarke (New House), Reilly, and Wyatt; forwards, Hammond, Kerruish, Julian, Cardew, and Lumley-Lumley.

On all known form it looked any odds on the Fourth. There was not a duffer among them. The other side was almost entirely made up of fellows who had their spurs to win in serious footer. Glyn was the only one of them who had ever played for his House.

But the Fourth second eleven had never played together as a team before, and their early efforts were not inspiring.

They had the best of the game; but they threw away chances almost without end. All five of the forwards had made up their minds that Walkley and Lennox were the softest pair of backs they were ever likely to strike, and all five had visions of goals each on his own.

But Walkley and Lennox did not shape at all badly; and Lucas, who had never been considered even a passable footballer, showed surprising form at centre-half. Frere, though lacking pace, tackled well, and Lumley-Lumley found him quite a tough nut to crack.

As for the Shell forwards, for the first half-hour they hardly ever touched the ball.

Yet Glyn had little to do, while Herries had nothing at all. The play was a scramble mainly in midfield, and science was at a discount. Cardew was the cleverest of the five Fourth Form forwards, which perhaps was not saying much; but he was also the most selfish, which was saying quite a lot.

He could not see the use of passing to Julian, and Julian could not see the use

of passing to him. Hammond and Kerruish favoured one another with an occasional pass, but left everyone else in the cold. And Lumley-Lumley was as bad as the rest.

Blake and Figgins yelled good advice. Herries lifted up a stentorian voice from his citadel. Arthur Augustus pranced about behind the ropes. Clive and Levison told each other what they were going to tell Cardew after the match.

The Shell fellows kept silence. Their team was ragged, but that they had expected. It was holding its own, and no goals were being scored, and that was a great deal more than they had dared to hope for.

And suddenly something happened. Buck Finn got away on the left. He made at least twenty yards with the ball, and then gave Gibbons a pass. It might be true that, as Lowther said, he ran like a hen; and the pass was nothing great. But it tricked to the feet of Gibbons, and he, to the astonishment of all, touched the ball past Reilly, and got to it again before Pratt could get at him.

Just in time he turned the leather over to French, who, with Owen on top of him, slung it out to the other wing—a good, strong pass. Wade intercepted it within a yard of the touchline, and ran it right down to the corner-flag. There he twisted round, and, with no one near to hamper him, and kicked as if he were taking a corner.

Right across the goal-mouth the ball sped, and French got his head to it. Herries fisted out coolly, but the long-haired poll of Matthew Lucas sent it in again. Once more it came out, and the chest of Gibbons met it. Owen and Pratt flung themselves at Gibbons together. Gibbons rushed on, flooring Wyatt, who had run round behind the backs.

Boulton and French rushed, too. Owen and Pratt slipped back. Clarke and Reilly joined the mix-up. The ball was lost in the surging crowd. No one seemed to know where it was. But the one thing certain was that it was within five yards of the Fourth goal, and that Herries had no chance of seeing it if it came out.

And it came. Boulton got his foot to it hard, and it sped between the legs of Pratt, who appeared to be attempting the splits, hit the post farthest from Herries, and went into the net.

The Shell roared their joy, and the faces of the Fourth were as the faces of mutes at a funeral.

Cardew and Julian were seen to be speaking together. Then Cardew had a word with Lumley-Lumley, and Julian went over and spoke to his left-wing men.

Therafter the Fourth forwards showed a very remarkable improvement. The selfishness was cut out, and they did some very good passing work.

But the Shell defence held firm. Apart from Glyn there was nothing great about it. Walkley and Lennox and Lucads did their best, and stuck to it, but without Glyn they must have given several goals.

Fatty Wynn, at the top of his form, was not cooler than Glyn. Fatty knew more, and took fewer risks by reason of that. Glyn used his feet where an experienced goalkeeper would have used his fists. But he never once made a mistake—never once miskicked. And at half-time the Shell led by that one goal.

For ten minutes after the restart the Shell forwards showed unexpected vim and enterprise. Boulton made a run on his own, and would have got through but for a dashing bit of play by Herries, who ran out when the backs were beaten and nipped the ball from Boulton's toes.

Finn and Gibbons came into the picture, and two shots—one from French, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 530.

and the other a long, dropping one from Frece at left-half—gave Herries trouble.

But after that the Fourth had nearly all the play. The forward line tried their hardest, and did everything but the one thing most needed.

"That's five shots Glyn's stopped in four minutes!" said Tom Merry. "It's wonderful, but it can't last."

"Not so sure," replied Clifton Dane. "I back Bernard."

"Time's getting on," remarked Kangaroo, grinning with delight. "If he can only hold the fort for another twelve minutes it will be all right."

Five minutes passed, three more shots Glyn dealt with, still no score!

Julian put in what looked like a certain scoring shot. Glyn tipped it outside the post.

Lumley-Lumley took the corner-kick beautifully. The ball fell right in front of goal. Cardew shot hard, but Glyn kicked out. Kerruish shot, but Glyn punched out. Kerruish rushed at goal with the ball at his toes; Glyn met him, and both tumbled. But the ball had gone to Walkley, and he cleared with a long kick.

French, well down the field, got it, and raced away, with only backs and goalie in front of him, and his own comrades far behind.

Owen met French in full career. Owen went down. French jumped over him, and got to the ball just before Pratt. In another second he had passed Pratt, and was rushing down on Herries.

Herries ran out. French had only to keep his head now and he had a fine chance.

Nobody thought he would keep it. But he did. He lifted the ball well over the head of Herries.

It fell within a yard or two of the goal-line, and rolled slowly towards goal. Herries twisted round. French ran on. They were almost neck and neck. But French had the advantage of inches, and French's foot got to the ball. Even as he gave it the tap that carried it over the line, and into the net he went down from the vigorous thrust of Herries shoulder.

"Goal!" roared the Shell.

Goal it was, and before they could line up again Lefevre's whistle went for time, and the scratch Shell Second Eleven had won the match!

CHAPTER 10.

Honours Even!

"YES, it certainly looks a bit healthier for us," said Talbot, in answer to a remark of Tom Merry's, as they two and Lowther made their way towards Rylcombe together.

"Great Scott, I should think so!" Tom replied. "They were leading all along till yesterday. We never once pulled level. Now it's a dead-heat, so far."

"A dead-heat in an unfinished competition is a contradiction in terms, Tommy," said Lowther.

"Oh, don't be so beastly clever! You know all serene what I mean. The scoring is one hundred and twenty-four each, and a little while ago they led us by twenty-seven. Is that good enough, or isn't it?"

"Not quite good enough, I should say," replied Talbot. "Not for the finish. When we get there we want to be one point ahead, if it's only one point."

"We'll do it!" said Tom. "Remember that they had twenty points for that dorn jape. Monty was going—"

"Your pardon, sweet Thomas! Not 'was'—'is'! I fully intend to think out a wheeze which will even up that score."

"Well, you're a long time about it!" Tom said.

"Don't forget that old Grundy has

given us a dozen points and Skimmy six, not to make too much of the one we got out of Racke," remarked Talbot. "In a way, those balance the jape bizney, for no one could have expected them. Hallo, here's Manners!"

"Glad you've come, you chaps!" said Manners breathlessly. "He's gone to Wayland, over the moor. There's something up, I fancy. Racke was there half an hour ago. As he came out I heard him say something about fetching the things this evening. He's been ragging the other rotter. I started off running directly the Berry merchant was clear away, and didn't stop till I heard Talbot speak."

Manners halted for breath. "Haven't seen any of those Fourth Form bounders about, I suppose?" asked Tom eagerly.

"No. But that isn't much to go on. They might have been about all the same. This 'tec bizney is a lovely game for a fellow who likes it, no doubt. Can't say I do. Crouching behind a prickly holly-tree, with no room to move, and getting frozen all through, ain't my line. Not that I'm grumbling."

There was really nothing to grumble about. As far as possible a watch had been kept upon the Hollies since the escapade of Frank and Wally. Something seemed to tell the Shell detectives that important developments would take place before long.

Whether their rivals of the Fourth had also such a presentiment they did not know. But it was not likely that Kerr, Levison, & Co. would be caught napping. Talbot thought. The Terrible Three were rather more inclined to fancy that they might be.

"What we want is evidence," said Tom. "Those two kids got very near it, but not quite there. If we can catch this bounder with contraband—meat or butter in excess of any amount he could possibly be entitled to under the rations, you know—we've got it, and we can deal with Racke."

"But how are we going to catch him?" asked Manners. "Of course I thought at once of going to meet him as he comes back—though he may come back by train. But if we do meet him on the moor he isn't just likely to oblige us by opening any parcels he may be carrying and showing us what's inside, I fancy!"

"No; we'll open them!" Tom said grimly.

"Get him down, and—"

"Why not? We're not going to collar anything—at least, not for ourselves. I don't know that it won't be our duty to confiscate the stuff. Depends upon what it is."

"It's assault," said Talbot. "I don't mean that I mind. I think we're justified right up to the hilt. Racke and those other rotters are letting the school down, and this flunkey chap is as bad as any of them, if not worse."

"It means missing call-over, and getting it in the neck," said Manners. "But I'm on!"

"What do you say, Monty?" Tom asked.

"Nothing. This, Thomas, is the time for deeds!"

They made their way out of Rylcombe and on to Wayland Moor. A full moon was rising, its broad disc creeping up above the eastern horizon. Beneath it the parts over the moor could be traced for some distance, and the four scanned them closely from time to time, intent on spotting their rivals.

But from all they saw they were at liberty to suppose—if it suited them—that Kerr, Levison, Roylance, and Cardew, the four chosen detectives of

the Fourth, where they should have been at this hour—which was at prep.

Half-way across the moor they halted. The return of Mr. Berry on foot was not an absolute certainty. But they thought he would probably walk back, for there might be curious eyes at the railway-stations.

"Good cover here," said Tom. Shall we take it?"

They took it.

Behind a high clump of gorse on the opposite side of the path, and not more than thirty yards away, Kerr whispered in the ear of Cardew:

"Case of great minds thinking alike—eh? They haven't spotted us, and we have spotted them. Do we stay here or move nearer to Wayland?"

"Best stay here," yawned Cardew. "Beastly fog movin' so that a chap can't see you move, y'know!"

"Wonder whether Levison and Roy-lance have got in?" Kerr said.

"If so we score—a heavy score! All four of the Shell sleuth-bounds are here, so that notion evidently hasn't struck them."

Ten minutes passed—twenty minutes—and the six watchers began to fear that, after all, Mr. Berry must have taken a train back.

But now Talbot's keen eyes spotted him—a mere speck in the moonlight as yet. And at the same moment Kerr saw him.

They could not identify him at first, of course; but as he drew nearer, both parties were certain.

The spring was made on both sides at practically the same second. Mr. Berry gave one startled cry as the juniors pounced upon him. Then he went down on his back, the parcels he was carrying flying from his arms.

"This is actionable!" he gasped. "You will hear more of this, I promise you!"

"Racke will hear more of it, too!" grinned Cardew. "I don't somehow fancy you will tell tales about us, with Racke's consent, my man. If you tell, it may mean the sack for us, I'll admit, but it means the sure an' certain sack for you!"

"Leave those parcels alone! There is nothing in them but books!" protested Racke's man.

"I have ever had a taste for literature," smiled Monty Lowther, as he cut a string. "And the bounteous light of fair Luna—"

"Someone else seems to have a taste for butter!" said Tom grimly, as the contents of the innocent-looking parcel were disclosed.

Each of the parcels contained food. It was plain that Mr. Berry had contrived to find local sources of supply for Racke & Co.'s food-hogging propensities.

"You'd better take it quietly," Talbot told the fellow. "Racke will suffer if you open your mouth too wide. We'll

give you a joint receipt for this stuff; and it shall be sent anonymously to the Cottage Hospital."

They left Mr. Berry standing on the moor. From a short distance away he might have been taken for a poet contemplating with rapture the moon. But he did not look like that close at hand!

"Honours easy in this bout, so we can leave it out of the list," said Tom. "But I must say you fellows surprised us. We'd no notion you were at hand."

"We may surprise you more yet!" said Kerr darkly.

"An' it's not so dashed certain that honours will be easy!" added Cardew.

"Where are Levison and Roylance?" asked Manners.

"Ah! Echo answers 'Where?'" returned Cardew.

But, after all, honours were easy, for the two had not been able to get into the Hollies. There were impositions for absence from call-over to be faced; but no one minded much.

As for Racke, he had something worse than a mere imposition to face!

THE END.

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



CADET NOTES.



ON returning from his tour in Wales and Cornwall the Prince of Wales visited Bethnal Green recently, and spent an afternoon among the children of our fighting-men, who were being entertained at a weekly party. The guests were assembled in the Excelsior Hall, and outside a guard of honour was mounted, composed of Boy Scouts and Cadets. The Prince inspected the guard, and was very favourably impressed with the splendid bearing of the boys, to whom he addressed a few words before leaving. It is very gratifying to see that the Prince of Wales is so keenly interested in the work of the Cadet Corps, and is doing his best to support and encourage it.

The efforts that are being made to form a Cadet Battalion in Leeds, to which we referred in a recent note, have now been advanced a stage further by a meeting which was held in the Lord Mayor's room at the Town Hall recently, the Lord Mayor presiding. Brigadier-General Mends, the Secretary of the West Riding Territorial Force Association, who addressed the meeting, pointed out cogently that "the Cadet movement would have a beneficial effect upon the country as a whole, because it would influence the boys at their most impressionable age." It was reported that £500 had already been promised towards the sum of £2,000 asked for to clothe and equip the battalion, and some other promises were made in the meeting. The Leeds Battalion should very soon become a strong and important one, and we hope our readers in that city will rally up and join it.

For the second time in succession the 1st Cadet Battalion of the 7th Sherwood Foresters (Nottingham), have won the Medals and £10 Prize given in connection with the Lucas-Tooth Inter-Battalion County Competition for smartness in drill, shooting, physical drill, and signalling. The medals were presented to the successful members recently by Brigadier-General D. N. Colville, D.S.O. The ceremony took place in the local picture-palace at Nottingham, and the sheriff of the city presided over a very large audience. It was mentioned in the course of the proceedings that the battalion had secured new premises for use as a headquarters and institute, which should encourage new members to join.

Encouraging progress is being made with the movement for establishing Cadet Corps

in the county of Worcester, and at a recent meeting of the county committee, presided over by Lord Deerhurst, it was stated that several new units had been formed, and were going on very successfully. Among other places, Kidderminster, where the corps has already 60 boys in it, and Pershore, where there are now over 100 Cadets, and they are already in uniform, were specially mentioned. There are still a number of other towns in Worcestershire where corps could very well be formed and maintained, and it would help if all our readers residing in these towns would communicate with the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments, Judges' Quadrangle, Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, London, W.C.2, who will do what they can to assist.

The Trowbridge Detachment of the Wiltshire Volunteer Regiment has recently taken up the work of endeavouring to form a Cadet Corps for the town, and we are glad to be able to say that their efforts have met with a very encouraging response. On the first drill night no fewer than thirty lads between the ages of 14 and 17 applied to be enrolled in the corps, and on the next drill night more than 30 others also presented themselves, thus giving the corps over 60 members to start off with. This is excellent, and very encouraging to those who are endeavouring to promote similar movements in other towns. Our readers in Trowbridge should support the efforts being made there to provide a corps for them.

Uckfield Company of the 1st Cadet Battalion of the Home Counties Brigade R.F.A. gave a very enjoyable entertainment in the Town Hall recently with the object of raising funds for purchasing additional equipment for the company. There was a very large attendance, and Captain Andrews, the officer commanding, stated that the company is now 70 members strong, and that the boys were doing well and were very keen, and he had every confidence in them. It is anticipated that about £80 will be realised as a result of the entertainment, which should be of considerable assistance in helping to put the corps on a satisfactory financial footing.

The 7th Battalion of the London Regiment Cadet Corps, which was recently inspected by Brigadier-General Sir William Watts, K.C.B., has arranged for an invalided officer back from the Front to give a course of

instruction to its members in scouting by infantry and cyclists. The course commenced a week or so ago, and is being very much appreciated by the members and others interested. This is a new development that might well be imitated by other corps, as there can be no doubt that the assistance of an officer who has seen service at the Front would have a very stimulating effect upon the lads and their training.

During the past few weeks the Glasgow Boys' Brigade has been affiliated to the Cadet Organisation of the Glasgow Territorial Force Association, and has thus become a recognised unit of the Cadet movement. This does not involve any change in the work of the Brigade nor in the uniform of its members, but it is hoped that it will have a considerable effect in widening the scope of the usefulness of the battalion and increasing its strength. Glasgow readers should note this if they are considering the desirability of joining a corps.

A very successful recruiting rally has recently been carried out by the 6th Gloucestershire Cadets, whose headquarters are in Bristol. A special performance was arranged at the Triangle Picture Hall, Clifton, and was attended by the Lord Mayor and many other influential people, and the film of the Central Association was displayed. A guard of honour of about 150 paraded to receive the visitors, and called forth very high praise from the Lord Mayor and other speakers who took part in the meeting subsequently. We are glad to be able to say that the meeting resulted in the addition of a considerable number of recruits to the corps, but there is still room for more, and if any of our readers in Bristol or its environs would like to join, they could get information about the corps on applying to the Central Association of Volunteer Regiments.

When the Prince of Wales was in South Wales a few weeks ago he paid a visit to Ebbw Vale, where he was received by a guard of honour of the Monmouthshire Cadet Corps. This battalion is a recently formed body, but includes one company which dates back to 1900. The battalion numbers between 400 and 500 and it is hoped to double these figures in a very short time. The Prince inspected the corps, and expressed himself very pleased at their smart appearance.

THE GEM LIBRARY, No. 530.

THE ST. JIM'S GALLERY.

No. 9.—Mr. Railton.

VERY much as Tom Merry may stand for the ideal boy's hero, so may Mr. Railton stand for the ideal public school master.

He is the right sort in every way that matters.

What a boy wants—whether he knows that he wants it or not—in a master is sympathy and justice.

By sympathy I do not mean sentimentality or softness. I mean understanding, the power to imagine oneself in a boy's place, as only the man who has kept in his heart something of the fresh spirit of boyhood can do. That kind of sympathy does not mean excusing flagrant offences because they are a boy's. It means giving due weight to the circumstances in which the offences were committed, taking into consideration the boy's nature, his rearing, his peculiar temptation.

And justice does not mean having a cast-iron code of punishment. What is a trifle to one boy may be very hard to bear for another. One boy may answer to a kindly lecture; another may need a flogging. Some offences call for sternness in any case; others may be treated according to the master's knowledge of the boy's temperament and character. The first sort are those which cannot be passed over lightly, because if they were so passed over discipline would suffer. A master may recognise the fact that a flogging means a hundred times more to one boy than to another, and yet may be obliged to flog them both because of the rest, and the influence upon the rest of any leniency.

Were Mr. Ratcliff and Mr. Selby ever boys? It is not easy to think of them as such. But one can imagine Victor Railton as a Tom Merry, a Harry Noble, or an Eric Kildare.

He is an athlete, though his activities in that direction have been limited of late by the wound which brought him home from the Front. He is a great-hearted gentleman. And he is the good friend of every fellow worthy of his friendship.

Mr. Railton was Head of Clavering when Tom Merry turned up there in his velvet suit with its lace collar. It was to him that Tom made the complaint that the hot-water bottle which he had been used to having in his bed in cold weather was absent. But Mr. Railton could see that there was good manly stuff beneath the seeming soft simplicity of Miss Fawcett's spoiled darling. He has always been fond of Tom Merry, has always believed in him. Kildare and he were in agreement that if the evidence which Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had faked to prove that Tom had taken to ways of dissipation had concerned any other junior, they could not have helped being convinced by it. But it was Tom Merry it concerned, and Housemaster and skipper alike had such faith in him that they still doubted.

When Clavering had to be closed, Dr. Holmes, an old friend of Mr. Railton's, offered its young Head a post at St. Jim's. He brought with him thither many of the boys who had been at Clavering; and it is easy to guess how they stood up for him against anyone at St. Jim's who dared to look upon him as an intruder. But he soon won his way into the heart of every decent fellow at the ancient school. Figgins & Co. are by no means the least fervent of his loyal admirers. They would give much to have a Housemaster like him, instead of the acid, unsympathetic Mr. Ratcliff.

It was not at once that Mr. Railton became Housemaster. The holder of that important office in the School House at the time of the exodus from Clavering was Mr. Kidd. But that gentleman left, and Mr. Railton succeeded him, to begin a rule interrupted only by his absence in the Army.

Very naturally there are few of the stories in which Mr. Railton plays a chief part. But he is so great a favourite with our readers, as well as with the boys of St.

Jim's, that those few stories have been immensely popular. Who that has read them can forget "The St. Jim's Recruit," in which was told how the young master, who knew the real importance of the work he was doing, and had hardly thought enough, busy as he was, of the still more important work that called for all fit men elsewhere, came to see the truth, largely through the boys who thought so much of him, and joined up as a private? He did not ask for a commission; a place in the ranks of the Loamshire Regiment was good enough for him, though he had ruled at St. Jim's. Who can forget "In the King's Khaki," and the



generous aid given by the man who had always gone straight to the man of the evil past—"Professor" John Rivers, Talbot's old associate, and father of sweet Marie Rivers? Who can forget that fine story, "The Housemaster's Homecoming"? It would be easy enough to give to these three specimens of Mr. Martin Clifford's finest work all the space I have left. I am not going to do it, for there are other things to be told, and I can only mention these in passing. A few of my readers seem to think that the main object of these articles is to tell the history of their subjects. That method would, no doubt, appeal more to my younger readers than the one I have adopted. But the very youthful reader who wrote to tell me that he did not approve of the way I was conducting this series, and compared it unfavourably to the Greyfriars' Gallery in the "Magnet," where, so he said, "you got to the boy itself in about the second line," must go on disapproving. These are not mere summaries of bygone stories, and the Greyfriars' Gallery was never intended to be anything of the sort, either. That series and this alike are character sketches, and incidents are recorded in them chiefly for the sake of the light those incidents throw upon character.

The two stories which dealt with Munro, the escaped convict who had sworn vengeance upon Mr. Railton because that gentleman had been instrumental in getting him

convicted and sent to prison, were very good yarns indeed, full of incident and excitement. But here they are of importance chiefly because they show a fine side of Victor Railton's character. He had no rancour against the man, half-crazed by brooding on his vengeance, who came so near to taking his life, and in the upshot he saved Munro from death by drowning. It is likely enough that I may tell a little more of one of these stories over again when I come to deal with Kerr, for "The Housemaster's Peril" helps one to see just what sort of a fellow the cool, courageous, canny Scot is. And in "The Housemaster's Bodyguard" we saw how loyal the juniors were to Mr. Railton, how great was their affection for him; and that helps us to understand him, for a man does not win such love and loyalty without doing something to win them.

It was largely through the Housemaster that Lumley-Lumley ceased to be "the Outsider," and became the thoroughly decent fellow he is now. The Head wanted him given another chance. There is a good deal of likeness between the Head and Mr. Railton—in nothing more than in their sympathy and insight. Mr. Ratcliff or Mr. Selby would have given up the Outsider as hopeless. Dr. Holmes strained patience to its utmost lengths with him, and Mr. Railton, by his notion of bringing the sulky, malicious fellow under the influence of Tom Merry, did even more than the Head for him. Do you remember the tea-party the Housemaster gave, and Lumley-Lumley's arrival at it late and sulky, and how even his sulkiness could not withstand the genial charm of the master?

Talbot owed his introduction to St. Jim's in large measure to Mr. Railton. That was an error, for Talbot came with no good intentions, and Victor Railton must have repented more than once his agreement with the Head's view that it was worth while to give the boy a chance. But it was a mistake with happy consequences. And if the master has wavered at times in his faith in Talbot, who else is there but Tom Merry, whose faith stood firm against all suspicion, against even what seemed certain proof?

Tom himself has had to endure the hard trial of seeing the master's belief in him shattered. But again and again, when things looked black for Tom, through the machinations of his enemies, Mr. Railton spoke up for him; and it was only when there seemed no loophole for doubt that he gave up hope and belief. It was to the Housemaster that Tom owed his chance to come back to St. Jim's as a master—pro tem—of the Third. That was a fine story—"Mr. Merry"—though it does not happen to be one that any of you often refer to, as you do to some others which do not seem to me its superiors.

To some readers, who had watched the hard struggle made by Ernest Levison to live down his past and run straight, it may have seemed that Mr. Railton was too ready to find Levison guilty when Racke & Co. manufactured proof against him, and that it was a trifle rough on the Fourth-Former that Tom Merry's word in his favour should count for far more than anything he himself could say or do. But one must remember that Mr. Railton did not know all that we know. He was not in a position to be sure that Levison's reform was real. The old Levison he knew—cunning, unscrupulous, not to be trusted, though always capable of better things. And Levison had professed reformation before, and had been in earnest sometimes, but not always. I should think Mr. Railton has plenty of faith in him now, for he is not the man to fail in giving credit for an uphill fight.

Grundy and Cardew have been causes of trouble to the Housemaster, and may be so again. Cardew came to St. Jim's swanky, arrogant and slack. He fancied he was going to be allowed to do pretty much as he liked, and from the outset he treated Mr. Railton

in a manner to which that gentleman has never been accustomed. But that did not last long. Cardew was put in his place. Now he thinks as much of the man who put him there as do most, though he might not readily admit it.

And, of course, Grundy is a difficult case. He does not mean to be—bless him! His intentions are of the best. But no master worth his salt would put up with George Alfred's "whopping" theory, and Mr. Railton has had

to take a strong line with him. He put Grundy on his honour not to fight for a given period once, no matter what provocation he had, and the burly Shell fellow had no easy time of it. There was another occasion upon which he put Grundy on his honour, and poor old Grundy had an even worse time of it then, for Baggy Trimble let out what he was keeping secret at Mr. Railton's request, and it took some time to trace the leakage to Baggy, Grundy meanwhile suffer-

ing under the imputation of having gone back on his pledged word.

But that Mr. Railton should put Grundy on his honour tends to show how well he understands him. Racke or Crooke would not be treated in that way. There are things the Housemaster does not know, for few human beings are so simple that they have nothing hidden from the acute observer; but, on the whole, Victor Railton understands his boys wonderfully well.

THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA.

FOR NEW READERS.

The twins are Philip Derwent, of Highlife, and his sister Philippa, of Cliff House. They have a cockatoo, named Cocky, which has been until recently with Flip (Philip) at Highlife, but is now at Cliff House. Flip has made an enemy of Gadsby, who is plotting against him with Vavasour. His best chums, Merton and Tunstall, are away from the school for a time, owing to a serious accident to one of Merton's eyes in a fight with Ponsonby. In their absence Flip gets too friendly with Pon and the rest of the nuts, and, without any real taste for it at the outset, takes to gambling. He goes with the nuts to a gambling den at Courtfield, quarrels with Pon, and is knocked senseless just as the warning "Police!" is heard. Flip comes to himself in a cellar, bound hand and foot. He is let out, however. He makes up his mind that the only thing for him to do is to run away, as returning to Highlife means certain expulsion. Then he meets Peter Hazeldene, who has run away from Greyfriars. He goes to Highlife in the night, and sees the Caterpillar.

The Way the Caterpillar Looked at It.

"HALF a jiffy, De Courcy! There's another chap out there."

"Who? Not a Highlife fellow?"

"No. Hazeldene of Greyfriars. You'll

promise me that it will be all right about him? I know it will, really; but he would expect me to ask you to promise."

The Caterpillar shrugged his shoulders.

"You have my promise, ingenious youth! strange as it may appear to you, I really don't feel much interest in Hazeldene. The small amount of the milk of human kindness with which Nature endowed me has

turned into butter. No, hardly that. I don't deal in butter, an' it wouldn't turn into anythin' in such demand as that is just now, by gad! Anyway, it isn't on tap to any large extent."

"I don't know why you should care what happens to me," said Flip, rather awkwardly.

"I don't know, either. Perhaps I don't care. But I'm interested. It may be on account of Pon, whom I suspect of bein' the villain of the piece. It may be on account of Franky, who has had a liking for you from the first. But I don't know, by gad, but that it may be partly on your own account. Hazeldene has also bolted, I gather?"

"Yes."

"Same bizney?"

"No."

"But Pon's in it, I take it?"

"Well, yes, more or less."

"Then I can find it in me to extend some of my sympathy to Hazeldene—for the precious sake of the dear Pon! That sweet youth ought to end his days on the gallows. But the green bay-tree still flourishes, y'know, Derwent."

"Are you coming? I don't want to press you; but I can't stay talking here," said Flip.

"Oh, I'll come, dear boy! I only hope I shan't frighten Hazeldene right away."

The light was put out, and Flip led the way, the Caterpillar following with foot-steps as light as a cat's.

"Oh, here you are!" said Hazel ill-temperedly, as Flip dropped on the outer side of the wall. "I thought you were never coming. Oh, I say—who's that?"

"It's only De Courcy," answered Flip. "He's come out to have a talk with me. Not safe in there."

"How d'ye do, Hazeldene?" said the Caterpillar, with cool urbanity. "Rather a sudden move, this of yours. Lucky you're takin' it in good company."

"Look here, Derwent, this isn't a trap, is it?" snarled Hazel.

"You silly ass!" began Flip wrathfully.

"My good fellow," the Caterpillar struck in, "why on earth should you think I want to trap you? You're not my friend, an' dash it all, you're not my enemy either! You are one of something like a couple of hundred fellows at Greyfriars who don't concern me in the slightest degree. If the whole two hundred or so did a bolt I might be mildly interested. I don't feel even a tolid interest in the fact that one of them

has done it."

considerate of the feelings of anyone whom he despised.

Flip knew, and he pressed Hazel's arm in the darkness. Hazel growled something inaudible; but he returned the pressure.

"Shall we move a little farther away?" asked the Caterpillar.

"I'll stay here. It's safe enough under the wall, and not so cold," Hazeldene said.

"You fellows don't want me while you're yarning."

"He has glimmerings of sense at times, the sweet Hazel!" said the Caterpillar, when they had left him.

"You were rough on him, De Courcy!"

"Was I, Derwent? I felt inclined to be rough, I'll allow. You say his trouble is not the same as yours; but I fancy it is mixed up with it, an' I'm half-minded to consider Hazeldene as pro-Pon in the very near past, if not now."

"It is mixed up with it; but that's more my fault than Hazel's," replied Flip frankly.

"As for Pon, I rather fancy that Hazel detests him more than you do."

"I doubt it," said the Caterpillar gravely and dryly. And somehow Flip understood as he had never done before how deep Rupert De Courcy's dislike of Ponsonby went.

"I'll tell you the whole yarn" Flip said. "I know you won't try to get Pon and that crew shown up for anything they have done. That isn't your way. I'm doing a bolt because I don't see anything for it but that. It's no use waiting to be kicked out, and being asked a lot of questions that I can't answer."

"You mean that you won't."

"Same thing!"

"Not quite, dear boy! Can't means that you're unable. Won't may only mean that you're a silly ass."

"I'm that all right," Flip admitted dolefully. "Here goes for the whole yarn, then."

"If you tell it as though you were in the witness-box, an' wanted to yield up the whole truth, I shan't interrupt," the Caterpillar said. "But if you tell it as most fellows tell a yarn, I shall be constantly chuckin' in queries. I want to get right on the inside of this bizney."

"I've had some practice at it," Flip said. "And I want to tell you the whole truth, for I'd like you and Courtenay to understand. I don't care so much about the rest, now that Tun and Merton aren't there."

Then he told the story, without repeating himself, and not at undue length, yet with hardly anything that mattered left out.

"Admirable!" said the Caterpillar, when he had finished. "You would make a first-class witness, Derwent! Now will you listen to my advice?"

"Listen—yes," replied Flip. "I can't promise I'll take it."

"I said 'Listen.' Nobody ever takes advice, I believe; it's too cheap. But my advice is that you come back, face the old bird to-morrow mornin', an' spin him the yarn exactly as you have spun it to me. It's true, every word! I can tell that, an' I'm much more suspicious than the old bird. The Voysey-bird has his faults—full of 'em—no end human in that way; but he's not specially suspicious."

"Can't be done," said Flip. "The yarn isn't all mine."

"Is it worth your while to spare the other fellows who come into it?"

"It isn't exactly sparing them. I can't sneak, that's all."

"H'm! You bein' you, I suppose not. An' yet—"

"There's another reason."

"That fellow Hazeldene? Look here, old man, if there can be anythin' dashed sillier than wreckin' yourself for Pon, it is wreckin' yourself for that half-an'-half specimen. Pon, to do him justice, is a positive quantity. Hazeldene could only be defined by saying what he isn't."

"It can't be done, De Courcy! That's my last word. And I believe in my place you'd say the same."

"I'm not sure. I really don't think I should. Franky might—you're more his sort than I am. But, without wantin' to say anythin' too flatterin', old sport, you are the kind of silly ass I can't help likin'."

"Thanks," said Flip, simply and sincerely.

"And I don't want you to go away thinkin' that your case is hopeless. I don't know in the least what can be done; but there are just a few points in your yarn that I know a bit more about than you. For one thing, it wasn't Smithson who talked to the pretty post-girl."

"Sure?"

"Dead sure. Smithson's far too shy. He'd have been blushin' all over ever since. An' he'd certainly have told Franky. It sounds to me like Gaddy. But I'll find out—that an' several other things. I give you my word, though, that I'll take no step in the way of puttin' things right here—or tryin' to—with-

out tellin' you first what I mean to do. I won't say I'll ask leave to do it; but if you feel too strongly about it an' wire me 'No,' I'll hold my hand till I've heard from you."

"How are you going to get at me?"

"We must keep in touch, that's all. I won't bore you with letters, Derwent—I hate writin' 'em."

"So do I," replied Flip. "And I seem to be bookin' myself for a few. But I'll write to you when I get a chance. Look here—tell Courtenay—nobody else. I'd like him to know."

"I shouldn't let on to anyone else in any case. Franky is my only father confessor."

"That's all right, then, and you've bucked me up no end, De Courcy! If you happen to see my sister—"

"My dear chap, that's the sort of thing any fellow of taste would make happen after a suggestion like that!"

"Tell her you haven't given me up as a bad lot. Tell her Courtenay hasn't, either—that is, if he feels the same as you do about it. But don't let her think that anything you can do will bring me back here, for I don't believe it! You've brains—no end of them; but you can't do that, old man!"

"We'll see. Now I'll be toddlin'. No need for me to see Hazeldene again, I suppose? I know another way in—better way—an' it has the advantage of steerin' clear of that wash-out. Good-bye, Derwent!"

"Good-bye, and thanks ever so much. But Hazel isn't—"

"Anythin' in particular? I'm aware of it. That's my chief objection to him, Derwent."

The Caterpillar disappeared into the

gloom with that characteristic speech, and Flip hurried to rejoin Hazel.

"Where's that chap De Courcy?" asked the Greyfriars junior.

"Gone in another way."

"He wasn't very civil to me!"

"Never mind that. He's a queer specimen, in some ways; but he's all right. What's that, Hazel?"

Both stood still for a moment, listening.

A Narrow Squeak.

THERE was the sound of feet on the road, and a voice called:

"Who goes there?"

The two fugitives drew together into a buttressed corner of the wall where the gloom was deepest. Hazel knew that voice, and Flip thought he recognised it.

It was Wingate, skipper of Greyfriars, who had spoken.

"You don't want me, I take it?" spoke Rupert De Courcy coolly.

"Why, it's the Caterpillar!" said another voice—Wharton's.

"They're hunting for me!" whispered Hazel, in such fear that he trembled all over.

"They won't find you," whispered Flip.

"That fellow might give me away!"

"Just about as likely as I should!"

"Well, you might, come to that!"

Flip felt sick. For the moment he was almost inclined to do it.

A call to the little group standing within twenty yards—a grip on Hazel's collar, and the thing was done!

And it would be far better for Hazel, though, of course, the fellow would hate him for ever afterwards.

But again Flip was held fast by his notion of honour. Hazel had trusted him, even though the trust had failed in this critical emergency.

"Keep still!" Flip whispered. "They might pass us within a yard if we do that. We could bolt, but I'm not sure you'd run far—or that I could."

Hazel kept as still as he could. His teeth chattered, and his body shook, but his feet did not move.

Other voices came to them. Greyfriars seemed to have sent out a strongish search party. Gwynne was there, and Vernon-Smith and Bob Cherry spoke. There might be more for all the two could tell. And it was certainly likely enough that other parties had gone in other directions.

Wingate expressed some surprise that De Courcy should be out at that hour. Wingate was not a suspicious fellow; but it was queer. The Caterpillar, quite politely but quite firmly, pointed out that it was no business of Wingate's.

"You haven't seen Hazeldene, I suppose, De Courcy?" said Harry Wharton.

"Not lately, dear boy," answered the Caterpillar.

It was true in the letter. He had not seen Hazel, for it had spoken too dark to see him. He had spoken to him, but he had not seen him.

"The young fool's done a bunk!" growled Wingate. "I suppose that is hardly your game, De Courcy?"

"Your supposition is correct, Wingate. I may add that, if I meditated a bunk I simply shouldn't think of doing it in Hazeldene's company."

"Sneering rotter!" muttered Hazel.

"What does this mean?" demanded a harsh and unpleasant voice.

"By Jupiter, that's Mobby!" said Flip.

"Now the fat's in the fire!" returned Hazel. "Serve the Caterpillar right!"

"He'll come out of it right end up, you bet!" Flip said.

And, indeed, the advent of Mr. Mobbs did not appear to trouble Rupert De Courcy at all.

"You have the pleasure of knowin' these fellows, I think, Mr. Mobbs," he drawled.

"Wingate and Gwynne, of the Greyfriars Sixth, Wharton, Cherry, and Vernon-Smith, of the Remove."

"Thank you for your courtesy in giving me their names, De Courcy," said Mr. Mobbs acidly. "Doctor Locke will doubtless be interested to know that several of his pupils were out at somewhere near midnight!"

"He does know it, though I hardly see how it concerns you, sir!" snapped Wingate.

"Sure, and it's not for pleasure we are after bein' out," added Gwynne. "A junior has run away, and we're looking for him, that's all."

"What? That is a very curious circumstance—very curious indeed. For a junior is also missing from Highcliffe!"

"Who is it, sir?" asked Harry Wharton eagerly.

No one at Greyfriars had yet heard of Flip's trouble.

"That, to retort upon you in the not too polite words of one of your companions, hardly concerns you, Wharton," replied the master.

"Surly beast!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"It's Derwent," said the Caterpillar.

"I did not give you leave to tell that, De Courcy!" snarled Mr. Mobbs.

"I didn't ask you for it," answered the Caterpillar blandly.

"They're hardly likely to have gone off together, are they, Wharton?" asked Wingate.

"Not at all likely, I should say. They weren't particularly friendly."

"I should say that it is extremely likely they are together," put in Mr. Mobbs. "And I cannot help connecting De Courcy's presence here at this late hour with them!"

That suggestion was prompted by the master's resentment of De Courcy's coolness.

Somewhat or other, Mr. Mobbs knew the Caterpillar would have the better of him if an explanation of his breaking of bounds at night was left till the Greyfriars party had gone. He would leave the irate master with the alternative of overlooking his escapade entirely or taking him to Dr. Voysey. Mr. Mobbs knew that the Head would not be pleased if De Courcy were taken before him; and De Courcy knew that also. But there was just a chance that Derwent and Hazeldene were somewhere near, and if so, their capture would annoy the Caterpillar.

"I assure you," said the Caterpillar quietly, "that I wouldn't stir a yard for Hazeldene. As, for Derwent, Mr. Mobbs knows as well as you do that he has been missing since yesterday. I don't know why he should think it likely he is still in the neighbourhood. There isn't any positive proof he possesses, as far as I am aware, that Derwent ever returned from Lantham!"

"I will thank you to say no more, De Courcy!" snapped the master.

"I shouldn't be too thankful if I were you, sir, replied the Caterpillar. "My tongue's an unruly member."

"Do you think that we had better look round for them, you fellows?" asked Wingate.

"Sure, it would be as well," Gwynne answered. "Not that I'm after thinkin' they're anywhere near—or, for that matter, that we need be lookin' for the strayed Highcliffe lamb."

"I should scarcely describe Derwent as a lamb," said Mr. Mobbs sourly.

"And I shouldn't be asking ye for a description of him or anyone," returned Gwynne, who did not like Mr. Mobbs a bit.

Wingate flashed the light of an electric torch upon the nearest section of wall.

"Getting too hot!" whispered Flip. "We shall have to cut and run!"

"We'd better have done it at first," replied Hazel sulkily.

"Come along now! Catch hold of my arm; we don't want to lose one another. As quietly as you can, now!"

They bolted. They had made twenty yards or more along the grassy edge of the road before anyone heard them. Then Hazel's foot struck a stone, and he stumbled.

"Hark forward!" shouted Gwynne.

"There's someone, anyway!"

The light of two electric torches was turned in the direction the fugitives had taken, but failed to reach them.

Behind them came the sound of feet on the road.

"Oh, they'll catch us!" panted Hazel.

"Not they!" replied Flip. "This way! There's a gap in the hedge near here. If we can get through that and lie low, we're safe!"

(To be continued next week.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"THE THREE MINORS!"

By Martin Clifford.

Though this story continues the chronicles of the sports competition between Fourth and Shell, the chief parts in it are played by members of the Third Form.

The three minors are, of course, Wally D'Arcy, Frank Levison, and Reggie Manners. You will read how Reggie gives trouble, and meets one of the other two in a fight. You will also read how Racke was brought to book for the food-hogging business, and what happened when the Shell and Fourth replayed their footer match.

I hope and I believe that the very great majority of you are finding this series to your liking. I know that, while most of you are keen on sport, some few of you do not care much about it. But even these should find plenty to interest them, for the yarns are by no means all sport.

BY SPECIAL REQUEST.

I have had so many requests for a list of the Tom Merry stories in the GEM that I really think I must give it, though I can only give it by short instalments, and though it means that I shall have very little space for anything else in my Chat for some time to come.

I am giving a similar list in the "Magnet."

beginning this week, and I must give GEM readers the same advice that I have given there. It is really of no use your sending me notices of back numbers wanted at present, however much this list may increase your desire to have them. I have enough such notices on hand to last for many weeks, and I shall accept no more until I see my way to the end of these.

Here is the list. It begins earlier than the "Magnet," one, for the old halfpenny series of the GEM ran for 48 numbers before the "Magnet" appeared, and their new series at one penny started again with No. 1. There was no Tom Merry story in No. 1. or in Nos. 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10.

3.—"Tom Merry's Schooldays."

5.—"Troublesome Tom."

7.—"Our Captain."

9.—"Tom Merry on the War-path"

11.—"Tom Merry at St. Jim's."

12.—"The Terrible Three."

13.—"Tom Merry's Mistake."

14.—"The Master's Secret."

15.—"The St. Jim's Curate"

16.—"On the Trail."

17.—"High Jinks at St. Jim's."

18.—"Tom Merry's Washing-Day."

19.—"Honours Divided."

20.—"Tom Merry's Day Out."

21.—"The Triple Alliance."

22.—"The Merry Hobby Club."

23.—"Tom Merry's Ruse."

24.—"Expelled from St. Jim's."

25.—"Tom Merry's Camp."

26.—"The Smart Set at St. Jim's."

27.—"The Return of Monty Lowther."

28.—"Playing the Game."

29.—"Tom Merry in Trouble."

30.—"A Regular Rascal."

31.—"The Nine Detectives."

32.—"Head Cook and Bottle Washer."

33.—"Tom Merry's Weekly."

34.—"By Order!"

35.—"Spooft!"

36.—"D'Arcy's Romance."

37.—"Tom Merry's Christmas."

38.—"A Sneak."

39.—"The Diabolists."

40.—"Stoney Broke!"

41.—"Skimpole's Little Scheme."

42.—"Figgins' Fig-Pudding."

43.—"Tom Merry's Double."

44.—"Tom Merry & Co. in Town."

45.—"Figgins & Co.'s Failure."

46.—"Danger Ahead!"

47.—"Tom Merry's Quest."

48.—"A Curious Competition."

Your Editor