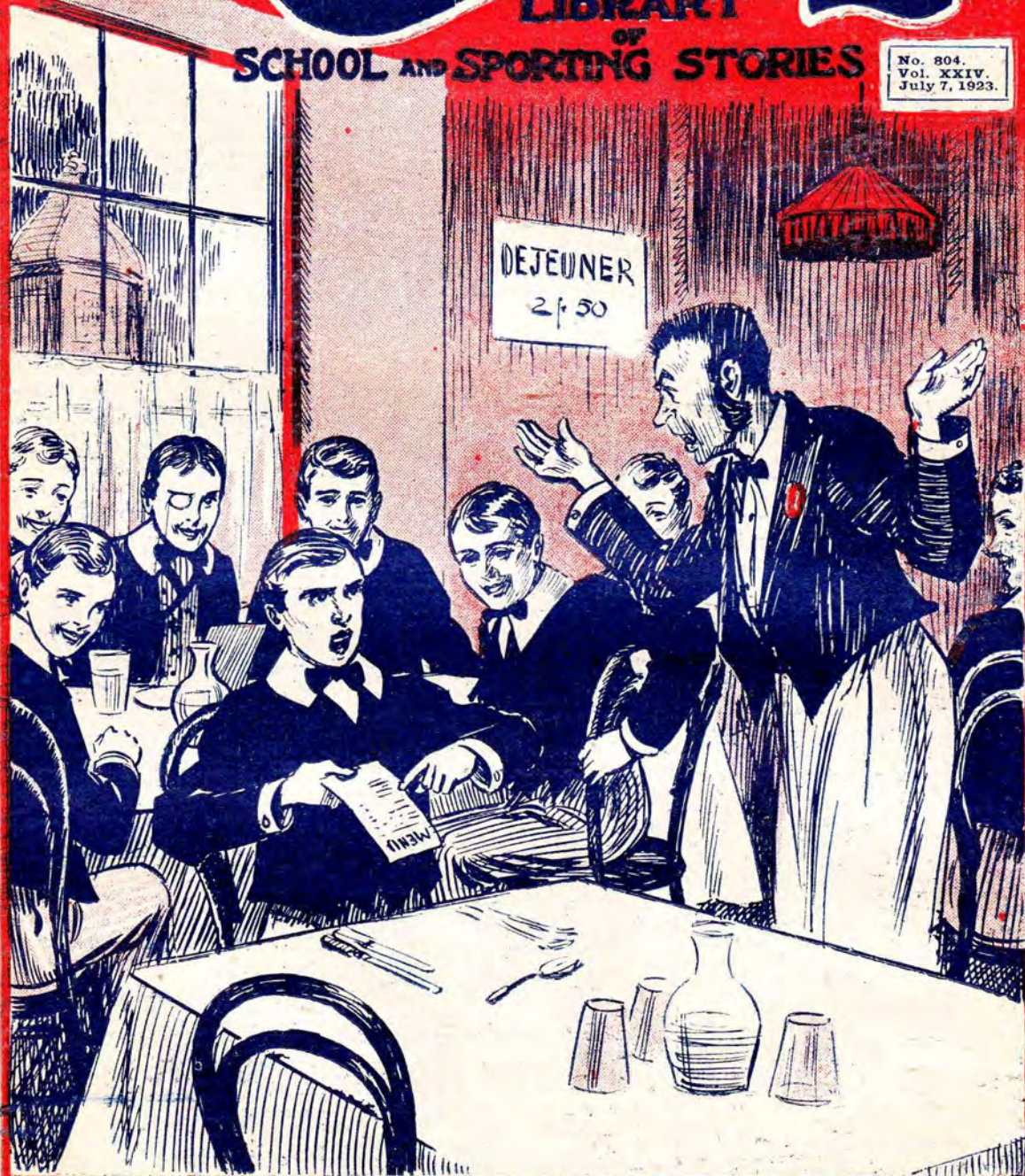


EVERYBODY SAYS WHAT A SPLENDID PAPER THIS IS!

The GEM 2^D

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SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES

No. 804.
Vol. XXIV.
July 7, 1923.



GRUNDY EXASPERATES THE FRENCH WAITER!

(An Amusing Incident in the Screamingly Funny Story of the Famous Tom Merry & Co. at St Jim's, entitled:
"GRUNDY'S GAME!" contained in this issue.)



Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS.

"THE BOYS' FRIEND" Every Monday
 "THE MAGNET" Every Monday
 "THE POPULAR" Every Tuesday
 "CHUCKLES" Every Thursday
 "THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL" Published Yearly

My Dear Chums,—Next week's story of St. Jim's runs up the curtain on a big and appealing drama. It is safe, to say the new story will make a tremendous impression. As we all know, Mr. Martin Clifford is enormously successful at tales of comedy and good-humour, but it is quite an open question whether he is strongest at these, or in such a yarn as he is presenting next Wednesday. He is so good at both that no amount of argument will settle the point. Well, next week's great tale is sure to be liked by everybody. We want to hear of the serious side of life at times, and to read of the important underlying motives which inspire the actions of people. You will get a rare insight into character in the new St. Jim's success. Look out for it!

"RUSHDEN'S FOLLY!" By Martin Clifford.

That is the title, and Mr. Clifford may well feel proud of his latest achievement. There is the throb of actuality in it; you are plunged into a perfect whirl of difficulty. Rushden has not been a fellow of any special mark as yet at St. Jim's, except in so far that any lad at the great school carries with him the prestige of the famous establishment. But circumstances bring him forward into the vivid limelight. Whatever you may think of his action, you will admit he meant to do the right thing. It falls out this way. A near relative, a loved sister, is in trouble, for her husband, who is one of the brave chaps who suffered cruelly in the Great War, and is a victim of shell-shock, is down and out. The fighting days are over. The poor fellow is up against a peek of troubles, some fancied, but for the most part only too real.

RUSHDEN STEPS IN!

It is just at this stage, when things are at their lowest ebb, that Philip Rushden at St. Jim's thinks he must do something to assist his brother-in-law and his sister. What does he do? That you will see. There will be mixed opinions as to his action, but through it all there will be the feeling that he was somewhere on the right lines in a general sense, though his methods were all wrong. I am not going to dip further into Mr. Martin Clifford's entrancing story, which is distinguished by so much sympathy and grit. You all know how it is in a case of this sort. Shocking bad news comes to your knowledge concerning folks you

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value. Your first query is, "Can I help?" That's just the sort of question which helps to carry the world onward. So it is with Rushden. Is there nothing he can do? Cannot he bring off some startling success, and after that say to the victims of bad luck: "Here you are! Here's a small fortune to set things right!" It is a magnificent idea. Monte Cristo never did better. But fortunes are hardly ever to be snapped up in a hurry. Your get-rich-quick individuals are, as a rule, footing it over dangerously fragile ice. I am sure you will think pretty hard over this coming yarn. You will sympathise immensely with Rushden over his dreams—those magnificent aspirations of his to act the part of the great lord in some fairy tale who turns up with plenty of money. But life is no fairy tale. It is a rough-and-ready business. The road is hard and there are steep inclines. Of course, Rushden comes a disconcerting and disillusioning cropper. He goes through an agony of suspense. It did not come off, but what makes all the difference is the fact that he was out to help others. There you have the big thing, which brings some pleasing reflection, and touches up even clumsy mistakes with the fine gold of heroism.

A GREAT GRUNDY ISSUE!

The new issue of the "St. Jim's News" is very special. Nobody will cavil at the coupling of Grundy with greatness. Those people who despise Grundy will say that George Alfred has big feet, but that he is not otherwise noteworthy. And yet there is something great and outstanding (no unkind reference is intended to his understandings)



The Case of the HAUNTED HOUSE

Don't miss this thrilling story of mystery and adventure, which is complete in this week's MAGNET LIBRARY (now on sale). Read how the famous detective, Ferrers Looko, tackles the problem of the ghostly Tudor mansion. Every line of this great yarn will hold you spellbound. Read it TO-DAY!

THE Magnet 2

Every Monday.

in Grundy. He goes straight for what he wants. Often enough Wilkins and Gunn wish it were otherwise. Grundy has been unkindly likened to a bull frisking about a china warehouse; but amidst all this criticism the significant fact gets overlooked that Grundy is true as steel. Anyway, next week's issue of the "St. Jim's News" is a treat not to be missed.

"THE LURE OF LIMEHOUSE!" By Captain Malcolm Arnold.

Tu Sin and Ginger Dan, the ever-popular favourites, figure in a powerful story under the above title. We have heard a good deal about the mysteries of Limehouse, the little-known neighbourhood, with its docks and constantly-changing population. I said little known, and so it is as regards myriads of Londoners who hardly seem aware that part of the big metropolis lies down east, where the ships glide in from the further East—a district where all kinds of strange languages are heard. You will be fascinated by the wonderful scenes presented by Captain Malcolm Arnold in this splendid story. It is a real gripper, full of dramatic sensations, and with a thoroughly mystifying plot. And, as things turn out, Tu Sin is able to show his amazing cleverness to good effect. You will be thrilled by the story of the rescue of a young fellow who had fallen into the clutches of a deadly enemy. Tu Sin does not take much count, if any, of his own safety when there is the call of duty. There is a great deal lying behind his action on this occasion, and you will form a higher opinion than ever of the little Celestial, to say nothing of his plucky compeer, Ginger Dan.

SOMETHING IN THE AIR!

Keep your eye on my Chat—I know you always do, but this time it is more important than ever—for big news. I shall have more to say on the subject soon. It is just like this. I have a splendid treat in store for you, something you have been asking for for some time now.

AN EXTRA LONG STORY OF ST. JIM'S!

That's the ticket! And why not? Wait till August! It stands to reason there should have been this demand for a real twenty-five thousand word long complete of the most read about school in the world. I have been keeping this secret for some weeks, but it is only fair to let you know the facts now. The great August Bank Holiday Number will be a bumper one.

THE TUCK HAMPER.

The merry little storyettes continue to hold their own. It is no exaggeration to say that the Tuck Hamper Competition beats all records for popularity. Send postcards containing the funniest thing you ever heard.

OUR CRICKET COMPETITION.

Next week's problem is marked by the usual attractiveness, and it contains one or two extra striking features, just the kind of thing to please cricket enthusiasts—and others.

Your Editor.



GRUNDY'S GAME!

A Screamingly Funny Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, telling how George Alfred Grundy's bold venture meets with disaster.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

CHAPTER 1. High-Handed!

"GRUNDY!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Grundy, you rotter!"

"Hook it!"

"Grundy, you cad!" roared Aubrey Racke.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther came on the enraged Racke as they strolled along the Shell passage towards their study, No. 10. They halted in sheer astonishment.

Racke of the Shell was fairly raging outside Study No. 3. He was hurling defiance into the study at Grundy. For a weedy slacker like Aubrey Racke to hurl defiance at a hefty fellow like Grundy was simply amazing. It was only being in a terrific "wax" that could have given Racke the nerve to do it.

But Racke's nerve, unusual as it was, had its limits. The study door was half-open, but Racke did not enter. He stood outside and called Grundy names instead.

"Hook it!" came George Alfred Grundy's contemptuous voice from Study No. 3. "If I come out to you, Racke, you'll know it!"

"You cheeky rotter!" yelled Racke. "Give me my paper."

"Rats!"

"Give it me, I tell you!"

"I'll give you something else, if I come out!" said Grundy.

"You meddling cad!"

There was a sound of a chair stirring in the study. Apparently Grundy of the Shell was getting up.

"What's the jolly old trouble?" asked Tom Merry in wonder. "Aren't you waking up the wrong passenger, Racke?"

"Better out before he comes out, after the pretty names you've called him," suggested Manners.

"Otherwise it may be a case of Racke and ruin!" remarked Monty Lowther, with gentle humour.

Racke turned a savage look on the Terrible Three. Monty Lowther's little pun did not, obviously, cheer him up a little bit.

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"I'm looking!" assented Tom.

"You're Form-captain in the Shell—you're bound to stand by me in this!" exclaimed Racke.

"Am I?" said Tom dubiously.

"Oh, I know we're not friends!" sneered Racke. "But it's your business as captain of the Shell to put down bullying. I can't handle Grundy, and I don't pretend I can. But he's not going to rob me."

"Rob you!" ejaculated Tom.

"Yes."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" suggested Tom Merry. "Grundy's every imaginable sort of a duffer, but he wouldn't rob a Hun."

"He's taken a paper belonging to me!" howled Racke.

"Has he?" said Tom, still very dubious. Racke of the Shell bore very little resemblance to the late lamented

George Washington. Not only could he tell a lie, but he frequently did.

"He's got it in his study now!" hissed Racke.

"What sort of a paper?"

"Just a paper—some calculations I was making. Nothing at all to do with Grundy."

"You swotting mathematics!" exclaimed Manners in amazement.

"N-no! It wasn't maths. Just some calculations—and that meddling brute has bagged the paper, and won't give it back to me!"

"Blessed if I can make head or tail of this!" said Tom Merry. "If Grundy's taken a paper of yours, he's got to hand it back, of course."

"Catch me!" said Grundy's voice from the study.

"You rotter!" bawled Racke; and, feeling more secure in the presence of the Terrible Three, he put his head into the study. "You cheeky, bullyin', interferin' rotter, Grundy—Oh!"

Those final epithets had the effect of drawing Grundy from his shell, as it were. George Alfred rushed forth, like a lion from its lair, and hurled himself upon Aubrey Racke.

It was fortunate for the black sheep of the Shell that Tom Merry & Co. were there.

They piled in promptly, grasped Grundy, and hurled him back into his study. Grundy landed on his handsome study carpet—a valuable present from his Uncle Grundy—with a crash.

"Whooooop!"

"Easy does it, old bean!" said Lowther.

"Wow! I'll—"

Racke grinned.

"Give him some more!" he gasped. "I say, you chaps, hold him while I get my paper off him."

Grundy staggered to his feet.

He leaned on the table and gasped. That bump on the carpet had taken a lot of the breath out of Grundy.

"You—you—you—" he gasped. "I—I—I'll—"

"Gently, dear man!" said Tom Merry soothingly. "Let's go into this. Racke says you've got something belonging to him. Have you?"

"Yes."

"Oh, you have!" exclaimed Tom.

"I have!" answered Grundy.

"A paper of some sort."

"That's it."

"Well, give it to him, then!" exclaimed Tom indignantly.

"Rats!"

"Look here, Grundy—"

"You fellows don't understand," said Grundy, "and I've no time to waste explaining. I know what I'm doing. Leave it at that."

Tom Merry smiled. As captain of the Shell and junior captain of St. Jim's, he was not likely to leave it at that. He had a great dislike for Aubrey Racke, who was as shady a black sheep as could be found in any school in the

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three kingdoms. And he rather liked Grundy, in a way, though that high-handed youth was rather difficult to get on with. But if Racke had been ten times worse, and Grundy ten times better, it would have made no difference to Tom's determination to see justice done.

He raised his hand.

"Give Racke his paper, fathead!" he said.

"I won't!"

"I'm afraid you'll have to be made to, then," said Tom.

"Who's going to make me?" demanded Grundy truculently.

"Little me."

"That's enough! Do it!" snapped Grundy.

Tom Merry slipped off his Eton jacket and handed it to Manners. He pushed back his cuffs.

"Come on, Grundy!"

And in a moment more there was a terrific combat raging in Study No. 3 in the Shell.

CHAPTER 2.

Drastic Measures!

"**B**AI JOVE! Fightin'!"

"Who's up?"

"Tom Mewwy and Gwunday!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth, his eyeglass gleaming in at the doorway of Study No. 3.

"Grundy again!" grinned Blake. "Always looking for trouble!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry was a sturdy youth, and he knew more about boxing than Grundy was ever likely to learn in seventy years. But Grundy was a formidable adversary, all the same. He was bigger than Tom, and much heavier, and he had endless pluck and bulldog determination. The fight in Study No. 3 was quite a hefty transaction.

Trump! Trump! Trump!

Punch! Punch! Hammer!

"Oh!"

"Ow!"

There was a rush of fellows from all directions, as the din of the combat was heard far and wide. Blake and D'Arcy, Herries and Digby arrived from Study No. 6 in the Fourth—Levison and Clive and Cardew from Study No. 9. Kangaroo of the Shell came up with a rush, and Talbot and Gore and a dozen more fellows.

They crammed round the doorway of Grundy's study.

Wilkins and Gunn, who were Grundy's study-mates and chums, were drawn to the spot by the uproar. They had a resigned look on their faces as they looked in.

"At it again!" said Wilkins.

"Same old Grundy!" said Gunn.

Crash!

Grundy smote Uncle Grundy's handsome carpet a second time, and sprawled there, gasping. Tom Merry gasped, too, with his hand to his nose—his fingers were crimson. Grundy's terrific drives, on the few occasions when they got home, were extremely hefty.

"Bai Jove! But what's the wow about, you fellows?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the pause that followed while Grundy was trying to recover and carry on.

"Only Grundy Grundyng," explained Monty Lowther. "He's running the School House off his own bat. It's the Head's mistake in not making him a prefect."

"Ow!" gasped Grundy. "Wow!"

"Are you handing over that paper?" asked Tom Merry.

"Wow! No!"

"Hold him, two or three of you, while I get it off him!" exclaimed Racke impatiently. "Look here, you fellows, Grundy's got a paper belonging to me, and he won't hand it over."

"Bai Jove!"

Grundy sat up.

"I jolly well won't!" he spluttered. "I know what I'm about, you shady blackguard! I wouldn't hand it over if the Head told me!"

"It's mine!" roared Racke furiously.

"I know that!"

Grundy staggered to his feet. Tom Merry put up his hands again. Talbot of the Shell pushed in.

"Hold on," he said. "You don't want to crock yourself for the cricket, Tom, by slogging with Grundy. If the matter's like that, it's for the House to deal with Grundy—not you on your own. You've got a paper belonging to Racke, Grundy?"

"Yes, I have!" snorted Grundy.

"And you won't give it up?"

"No, I won't!"

"Bai Jove! The cheeky boundah—"

"Keep back, Tom," said Talbot. "It isn't a fight that's wanted. You ought to have called on us."

"Perhaps I ought," said Tom, with a smile.

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"Give the word, Tommy, and we'll make him shell out Racke's property fast enough," said Kangaroo.

"You jolly well won't!" said Grundy. "I don't specially want to fight Tom Merry, but I'll fight the whole House if necessary. I'm not giving Racke that paper!"

"Collar him!" exclaimed Manners impatiently.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Grundy was well-known to be a high-handed fellow. He valued his own opinion highly, and always acted upon it, regardless of other considerations. But Grundy discovered now that there was a limit. Five or six pairs of hands were laid upon him, and he was bumped into the armchair with a terrific bump.

He struggled furiously, but he struggled in vain.

"Hand over that paper!" said Talbot.

"Rats!"

"Bend him over."

Grundy, resisting desperately, was bent over. Talbot of the Shell picked up a fives bat.

"Now, Grundy—"

"Yaroooh! Leggo!"

"Are you handing over that paper?"

"No!" roared Grundy.

Whack!

"Yoooop! Oooooop!"

"Are you handing it over?"

"Wow! No."

Whack!

"Oh crumbs! Wilkins—Gunn—bear a hand, you dummies!" yelled Grundy, wriggling desperately. "Can't you help a chap? Rescue!"

Wilkins and Gunn grinned. They were not likely to tackle a dozen fellows in support of the high-handed George Alfred.

"Give Racke his paper, you silly owl," said Wilkins.

"What do you want to take his silly papers for?"

"It's stealing," said Racke.

"Well, so it is, if you come to that," said Gunn. "What do you mean by it, Grundy?"

Whack!

"Yooooohooooo! I'll smash you, Talbot! I'll spifficate you, Levison! I'll break you into little bits, Blake!"

"Dear man!" said Blake. "Go it, Talbot! We can keep this up as long as Grundy does."

Whack! Whack!

"Ow! Wow! Wow! You can have the paper, if you like!" wailed Grundy. "Leave off! Leggo! If you choose to back up that cad Racke in his dirty, blackguardly tricks, you can do it! Ow!"

"Bai Jove! What is he burblin' about?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in wonder.

"Goodness knows!" said Wilkins. "Does anybody ever know what Grundy is burbling about? Does Grundy?"

"You're handing it over?" asked Levison.

"Oh, yes! Not to Racke, though! I'll hand it to Tom Merry as captain of the Form."

"You silly ass, what has it got to do with me?" said Tom.

"It's your responsibility if you help Racke in his dirty gambling, that's all!" gasped Grundy.

"Wha-a-a-at?"

Grundy, released by the juniors, groped in his pocket. Racke started forward.

"Give it to me!"

Grundy thrust him aside, and handed a sheet of paper covered with figures to Tom Merry.

"On condition you look at it; and if you choose to give it to Racke it's your responsibility!" he stuttered. "This is how I get supported in looking after the honour of the House, is it?"

And Grundy sat and gasped for breath, while all eyes turned on the captain of the Shell and the mysterious paper in his hand.

CHAPTER 3.

Very Precious!

TOM MERRY stared at the paper. It was an ordinary sheet of impot paper, and it was covered with columns of figures, which certainly did not appertain to any system of arithmetic. What it meant, if it meant anything, was a mystery to Tom Merry. Other fellows looked at the paper as he held it, and they were equally mystified. They simply could not guess why Aubrey Racke attached any value to the paper, and why Grundy had taken the trouble to deprive him of it.

1 1 2 5 7 9 3 5 7 6 8 8 9 9 4 6 7 7 6 2 1 4 5 5 5 3 6 1 1 5.

That was what the paper contained, but it went on in column after column of single figures.

"What utter rot!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

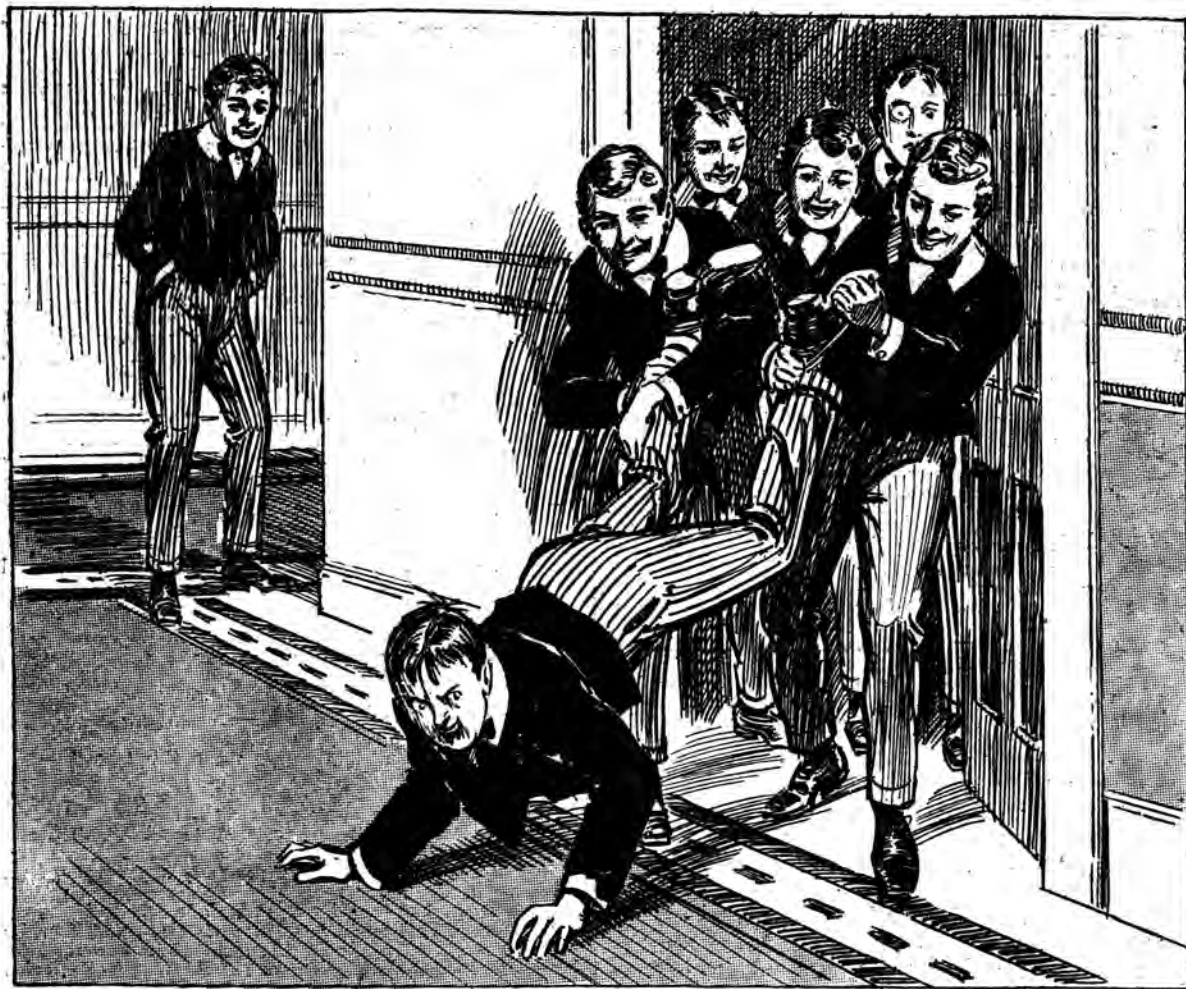
"Yaas, wathah!"

"Is it maths., Manners?"

"Of course it isn't, fathead!"

"What is it, then?"

"Utter rot!"



"Collar him!" cried Tom Merry. "Give him the frog's march as far as the stairs. It's useless talking to him." Racke went swirling out of the study, in the grasp of four or five pairs of hands. "Yaroooh!" he yelled. "Stop it, you rotters!" (See page 6.)

"Give it to me," said Racke. "It's mine. It's just some calculations I was making. It's my business, I suppose."

"I suppose so," said Tom. "But Grundy was saying something about gambling, and the honour of the House."

"Grundy's a fool!"

"Quite so. But we'll hear what Grundy's got to say, if he's got anything to say. You're not trusted, Racke."

"Wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy emphatically.

"Go it, Grundy!" said Wilkins encouragingly. "What is it—some of Racke's wonderful systems for spotting winners?"

"If it's that, it's going into the fire!" said Tom Merry quietly.

"It's mine!" howled Racke.

Tom gave him a quiet look of contempt.

"You can go to the Housemaster about it," he said. "If I'd stopped to think I'd have told you to do that, anyhow. Why didn't you go to the Housemaster if Grundy took your property away?"

"Mr. Railton wouldn't—" began Racke, and stopped.

"Well, what does it mean?" asked Blake. "If Grundy knows, he can tell us; and if it's some of Racke's dirty tricks we'll stop him fast enough."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It's a list of numbers kept at a gaming-table!" snapped Grundy.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Bai Jove!"

"I came on Racke and Crooke mugging over it," said Grundy. "Racke got it from a man who's played at gaming-tables abroad. It's a copy of a list of numbers taken at the tables. Racke said so in my hearing. I decided to take it away from him."

"You thumping idiot!" said Tom Merry, in measured tones. "And why couldn't you tell me that before we started fighting?"

"You didn't ask me."

"You silly owl!"

"Bai Jove! I weally think Gwunday is the biggest idiot at St. Jim's!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Passed unanimously!" said Monty Lowther.

"Give me my paper!" muttered Racke, making a clutch at it. The captain of the Shell pushed him back with his left hand.

"Do you admit what Grundy says?" he asked.

"That's my bizney."

"And mine," said Tom contemptuously. "It was a bit high-handed of Grundy to take this paper away from you, but if he had told me what it was I shouldn't have interfered to get it back for you. You've no right to have such a rotten thing in a decent House. It wasn't Grundy's business to interfere with you, but it is mine. You appealed to me as junior captain. As junior captain I'm taking this paper away from you, as you know jolly well is my duty."

"Look here—"

"I'm not sure that I ought not to report you to the head prefect, too," said Tom angrily. "I won't do that; but you're not touching this paper again. You awful rotter! You know you'd get sacked from the school if the Housemaster knew anything about this."

Aubrey Racke gritted his teeth with rage and disappointment. He had taken that risk in calling Tom Merry into the matter. But it had been his only resource. He could not handle Grundy on his own.

"Will you give me my paper?" he hissed.

Tom Merry crumpled the paper in his hand and threw it into the fire-grate.

"There's your paper," he said. "If Grundy chooses to set a match to it I sha'n't stop him."

"And Racke won't!" chuckled Lowther. "Racke wouldn't be so rough, would you, Racke?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy of the Shell stood up with his back to the fireplace. Obviously Racke had no chance of reaching his precious paper with Grundy standing there. He could have shifted the Sussex Downs as easily as he could have shifted George Alfred Grundy.

The blackguard of the Shell cast a bitter look round him. "Wacke, I regard you as a shady wottah!" said Arthur Augustus. "You are a disgrace to the House."

"Oh, cheese it!" snarled Racke. "Look here, Tom Merry, I—I want that paper! A man let me copy it out of his pocket-book last holidays. I—I can't replace it."

"All the better," said Tom.

"I—I must have it!" gasped Racke. "I tell you I was working out a system on those numbers—"

"You silly owl!"

"We get a whole holiday on Saturday," said Racke, almost feverishly. "It's my only chance for putting it to the test. I've got my ticket for the Channel boat ready. Give me that paper, and—and I'll do anything you like."

Tom Merry looked at him in amazement and disgust. He had thought that he knew Racke pretty well. Certainly he knew enough of him to get him kicked out of St. Jim's a dozen times over, if his knowledge came to the headmaster's ears. But this was a surprise, even in Racke.

"You—you've been planning to get out of bounds, to sneak across the Channel, to gamble in a Continental casino!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"It's the chance of a lifetime!"

"You awful rotter!"

"Bai Jove, Wacke is weally the outside edge!" said Arthur Augustus. "I suggest waggin' Wacke."

"The silly ass couldn't get across the Channel without a passport!" said Herries.

"I—I could!" stammered Racke. "They let week-enders cross without it now. It's all right if I have the paper."

Possibly Racke thought that his appeal might move Tom Merry & Co. It was his last chance, anyhow, for he was well aware that if he left the study without his precious paper he would never see it again. Grundy would take care of that.

"So that's the idea," said Tom Merry. "And suppose you were bowled out, you dingy rotter; you know you'd get sacked."

"I'm chancing that."

"And you don't feel ashamed of yourself?"

"Give me my paper!" muttered Racke, without answering that question.

Tom Merry glanced round.

"It's no good talking to him," he said. "Racke ought to be in a reformatory, not in a school at all. But since he's here we're bound to deal with him. Give him the frog's march as far as the stairs."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You rotters!" roared Racke, as the juniors collared him. "Leggo! I—I—I—I—Ow, ow! Wow! Whooop!"

Racke went whirling out of the study in the grasp of four or five pairs of hands. And his yells rang out loudly as he went down the passage in the frog's march.

"And now for Grundy!" said Tom, rubbing his nose. "Grundy, you silly owl, look at my nose!"

"Let him look at his own!" grinned Lowther. "It's more ornamental than yours."

"If the silly ass had had the sense to explain what he was up to there'd have been no trouble," said Tom.

"I don't condescend to explain," said Grundy loftily.

"Then you'll condescend to take a batting."

"Look here—"

The Terrible Three grasped Grundy, and he had to "bend over" again, roaring and struggling. The five bat came into play, and George Alfred Grundy was given six of the best. Then Tom Merry & Co. walked out of the study, and Tom went to bathe his nose, which needed it badly. George Alfred Grundy was left gasping in the study, feeling too used up even to deal with Racke's precious paper, which still lay in the grate.

CHAPTER 4.

Gussy's Great Wheeze!

"I'VE got an ideah, deah boys."

"Draw it mild," said Blake incredulously.

Herries and Digby shook their heads with an air of great seriousness. Apparently they were not prepared to believe, off-hand, the statement that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had an idea in his noble and aristocratic brain.

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"Pway don't wot, deah boys!" he said. "I have been thinkin' it out, and a weally wippin' ideah flashed into my brain. About Satahday."

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"I suppose we shall be watching the cricket on Saturday," yawned Blake. "The Sixth will expect us all to roll up."

"Bothah the Sixth!"

"Hear, hear!" said Jack Blake heartily. "Far as I'm concerned the Sixth can go and eat coke, and the Fifth can go after them and chop chips. Why should we watch their silly matches? They never watch ours. If you've got something better for Saturday—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Give it a name!" said Blake encouragingly. "I don't suppose it's any good; but give it a name."

"Weally, Blake—"

"It'll be a good match, worth watching," remarked Herries. "St. Jim's First against Greyfriars First. But we don't get a whole holiday every day."

"I refuse to spend a whole holiday watchin' ewicket," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "If we were playin' it would be a different mattah. But Kildare will not put Fourth-Formahs in the first eleven."

"I haven't offered," grinned Dig. "Kildare takes such a whacking size in boots."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That howwid beast Wacke was goin' to cut school bounds, and buzz across the Channel, deah boys."

"He's jolly well stopped now," grinned Herries.

"Yaas. But what about us?"

"Us!" repeated D'Arcy's chums blankly.

Arthur Augustus nodded triumphantly.

"Yaas, wathah! What pwice a wun across the Channel to Fwance for the whole holiday?"

"Great pip!"

"Impossible!"

"Fathead!"

"Easy as fallin' off a form," said Arthur Augustus. "We can get an exeat for the whole day, without mentionin' that we're goin' twavellin' abwoad, of course."

"Yes, better not mention that," chuckled Blake. "Might get a lickin' instead of an exeat."

"I've been lookin' out twains in the time-table."

"You don't understand time-tables, old chap," said Blake, shaking his head. "You've looked out a set of Sunday trains, or Manchester expresses, most likely."

"Wais! We can get off fwom Wayland Junction, and catch the boat at Folkestone easily at midday. For a day twip you don't have to take a passport, if you come back the same day."

"And what time should we get back to school?"

"We might be wathah late. But we can stand lines for the sake of a wun across the Channel. Think how the New House chaps will stare when we tell them, Figgins & Co. wouldn't think of a stunt like that!" said Arthur Augustus confidently.

Blake appeared struck by that argument. He nodded.

"Something in that," he assented. "It would put it over the New House, and no mistake. They can stay here and yell 'Well hit, sic!' while we're parley-vooin' with the jolly old froggies."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You bagged this wheeze from Racke of the Shell," remarked Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies, I did not exactly bag it fwom Wacke. Wacke's wotten wemarks may have put it into my head. But that howwid wottah was goin' ovah to play the wotten blackguard. We're goin' to do nothin' of the sort. We're goin' to have a jolly little twip, you know, and talk Fwench to the natives."

"What have the natives done?" asked Digby.

"Weally, Dig—"

"It's a great idea," said Jack Blake. "Gussy's only for gotten one thing."

"What is that, deah boy?"

"That trips to France cost money," explained Blake.

"That's all wight, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "I have had a handsome tip fwom my patah, and I am standin' the whole thing."

"Gussy, old man, you're not nearly such a silly ass as you look," said Blake affectionately. "This is the second or third time that I've heard you talk sense this term."

"Weally, you ass!"

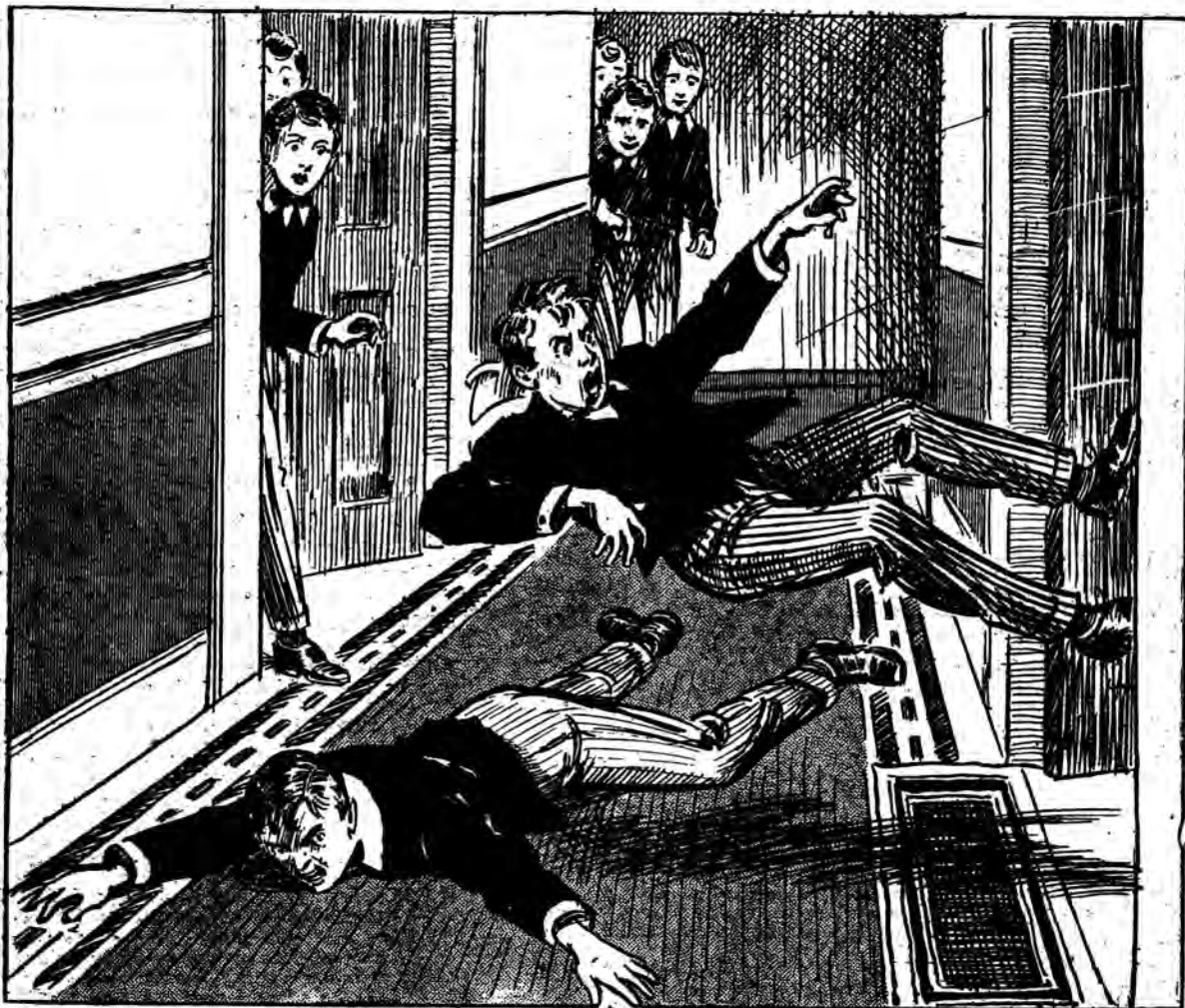
"We'll do it!" said Blake decidedly. "There's no harm in it, as we're such nice, respectable chaps. If Gussy gets reckless, you fellows, we shall have to muzzle him."

"You uttah ass!"

"If there's a row afterwards," continued Blake, "we can stand it. This study has stood rows before."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Only keep it frightfully dark," said Blake warningly. "It's a good stunt, the catch of the season, in fact. But there's no telling how a Housemaster might take it. Housemasters are jolly unreasonable animals sometimes, and they have to be given their head. We couldn't possibly go if



There was a crash and a wild yell in the Shell passage, and fellows looked out of their studies to ascertain the cause of the trouble. George Wilkins had landed in the passage with a bump. Then came a sound of terrific warfare raging in Grundy's study. The door opened again, and there came another crash, and Cuthbert Gunn was strewn alongside Wilkins. (See page 9.)

Railton told us not to. So we've got to take lots of care that he doesn't tell us not to."

"Hear, hear!"

"Might take some other fellows, too," said Dig. "Those Shell chaps, if they would behave themselves."

"Manners talks jolly good French," admitted Blake.

"We shall not need Mannahs to talk French, Blake. I am goin' to be the interpwetah for the partay."

"You're goin' to talk French for us?"

"Yaas!"

"Then we shall want Manners to tell the French chaps what your French means, sha'n't we?"

"You uttah ass!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Let's go along and speak to Tom Merry about it," said Blake, rising. "If they can raise the tin, and behave themselves, we'll take them. Why, it will be no end of a catch."

For once Arthur Augustus' ideas found support in his study. Often and often Study No. 6 ruthlessly disregarded the suggestions made by the Honourable Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But for once he had, so to speak, spotted a winner.

Study No. 6 proceeded to Study No. 10 in the Shell to discuss it with Tom Merry & Co.

Racke was loafing in the Shell passage, scowling, and he scowled still more blackly as the four chums came along. Blake gave him a cheery grin.

"Still going blagging on Saturday, my jolly old black-guard?" he asked.

"Mind your own business!" snapped Racke.

"I twust, Wacke, that you have wopened of that wotten scheme?" said Arthur Augustus mildly.

"You silly idiot!"

"Bai Jove! Pway wait a few minutes, deah boys, while I give Wacke a feahful thwashin'."

"Certainly!" said Blake.

Aubrey Racke, with a savage look, backed into his study and slammed the door. The key turned in the lock.

"Bai Jove! I wegard that wottah as a feahful funk, you know. Wacke, I ordah you to come out and have a feahful thwashin'!"

"You silly owl!"

"I wegard you with contempt, Wacke."

"Fathead!"

"Bai Jove! I—"

"Are we to stay here till prep while Gussy exercises his chin?" asked Herries.

"Weally, Herries!"

"Come on, fathead!"

Study No. 6 went on, and trooped into Tom Merry's study. The Terrible Three were at tea. They were discussing the whole holiday on Saturday and the senior cricket match. But they had something more interesting to discuss when Gussy's great idea was propounded.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "What a wheeze!"

"What do you think of it, deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus proudly.

"Great!" said the Terrible Three with one voice.

And for some time after that seven youthful heads were put together, discussing pros and cons, and ways and means, and all the necessary details for that great day out in a foreign clime. And although there was considerable argument on some points, on one point, at least, all the seven were agreed—that the great scheme had to be kept awfully, fearfully dark. There was no harm in it—it was a great idea, even it had an educational value—nevertheless, it was wise to keep it dark. And dark it was kept.

CHAPTER 5.

Very Busy!

WILKINS and Gunn of the Shell stopped outside Study No. 3 and hesitated dubiously.

It was past tea-time, and they wanted their tea. In Grundy's study—their study—there were ample supplies for tea, Grundy having recently received one of his well-known whacking remittances from his affectionate Uncle Grundy.

On such occasions Wilkins and Gunn rallied round Grundy like true chums. They listened to him at such times, even if he talked cricket or football, with gravity and respect. Fortunately, it was generally easy to pull Grundy's leg. If it hadn't been, life in a study with George Alfred Grundy would have been quite impossible. When Grundy laid down the law on cricket, or football, or rowing, or swimming, or any other subject upon which he was blissfully ignorant, he expected instant agreement. Otherwise, trouble was likely to occur. Wilkins and Gunn really liked old Grundy, in a way; and still more did they like his handsome study spreads. So they generally agreed with Grundy at the time, and smiled afterwards. This was a fairly safe system; yet there were times of doubt.

This was one of the doubtful times.

Grundy had had a batting; and after a batting, it was probable that Grundy would feel sore—in a double sense. Wilkins and Gunn hadn't rushed to the rescue, as, in Grundy's opinion, they ought to have done. So they were rather dubious about their reception in the study.

If Grundy cut up rusty—

They didn't want to punch old Grundy. Still less did they want old Grundy to punch them. It was a time to be wary.

"Seems to be fairly quiet!" murmured Gunn, listening at the door. Grundy might really have been a caged tiger, by the way Gunn spoke.

"Got over it, perhaps?" said Wilkins hopefully.

They looked at one another.

"I know!" murmured Wilkins. "Minute we go in, let's ask him whether Kildare is playing him in the first eleven on Saturday. Mind you don't laugh."

"Good!"

Wilkins, making up his mind to it, opened the study door. It was long past teatime, and Wilkins and Gunn were hungry; they felt that they simply had to take the risk.

Grundy was seated at the study table bending over a sheet of paper. He seemed to be deep in calculations.

Wilkins and Gunn felt relieved. It was something to find him quiet, anyhow.

"Grundy, old man, is Kildare putting you into the first eleven on Saturday?" asked Wilkins, rather hurriedly.

That question ought to have been enough. The discovery that his chums thought that he ought to be in the first eleven should have pleased Grundy; also, the remark should have started him on the subject of Kildare, and the school captain's unexampled stupidity in leaving out of his team the best cricketer ever known at St. Jim's.

But the dodge missed fire.

Grundy did not even answer. He did not look up. He remained deeply immersed in his calculations.

"What about tea?" asked Gunn, coming to the subject that was nearest his heart.

No answer.

"Grundy, old man—"

Without even looking up, Grundy made a gesture with one hand, waving his study-mates away.

"I say, Grundy—"

"Cut!"

"It's teatime, you know."

"Blow tea!"

"But we want tea, old chap—"

"I'm busy. Besides, I've had tea."

"Well, now we want ours," said Wilkins, rather tartly.

"What are you mugging up there, Grundy? Cricket averages?"

"No; shut up!"

"Not swotting?" ejaculated Gunn.

"Ass! Get out!"

"Well, I like that!" said Wilkins warmly. "We want our tea!"

Grundy looked up at last, with an expression of intense exasperation on his rugged face.

"Do you think I want two silly dummies butting in when I'm making some deep calculations?" he demanded. "Shut up! You can get your tea, if you don't talk. If you say another word, I'll jolly well take a cricket-bat to you!"

And Grundy's head sank over his calculations again.

Wilkins—behind Grundy's back—made a sign to Gunn, tapping his forehead, and shrugging his shoulders. Gunn nodded understandingly. Then the two Shell fellows got their tea—taking care not to talk.

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Indeed, it was rather a relief to have tea without Grundy's conversation therewith. Generally, Grundy's spreads had to be paid for by listening to Grundy.

The silence in Study No. 3 was unusual, but it was grateful and comforting.

Wilkins and Gunn had quite a happy tea, as well as a plentiful one, and they wished sincerely that all Grundy's spreads were on the same lines. It would have made life in Study No. 3 easier.

Occasionally, however, they glanced at Grundy; they could not help wondering what was "up."

To their astonishment, they recognised the sheet he was poring over as the sheet of figures that had been taken away from Aubrey Racke. Grundy, apparently, had not burned it after all.

Why he was poring over it was a deep mystery. But they hoped he would continue to do so till they had finished tea and left. There was something specially blessed about silence, when, if broken, it would have been broken by the voice of George Alfred Grundy.

They finished tea.

Then their hopes were dashed to the ground. Grundy finished his calculations at the same time, and looked up. Wilkins and Gunn were already making a strategic movement towards the door when Grundy spoke.

"Don't go, you chaps."

"They're still playing cricket on Big Side," murmured Gunn.

"Let 'em!"

"I—I wanted to see what form old Kildare was in for the Greyfriars match on Saturday," remarked Wilkins.

"Blow Kildare!"

"Hem!"

"I've got it," said Grundy.

"Got it?"

"Yes. I've put a couple of hours into it, and I've got it," said Grundy cheerily. "Hard work, if you like! But a fellow with a mathematical brain can do anything with figures."

"Oh, my hat!" stuttered Wilkins. This was the first he had heard of Grundy's mathematical brain. He had known that Grundy was the finest cricketer, footballer, swimmer, oarsman, and boxer at St. Jim's, because Grundy had told him so—not once, but many times. But this was the first time Grundy had confided to him that he was a great mathematician.

"I've got it," said Grundy. "Now sit down, and I'll tell you about it."

Wilkins and Gunn cast a longing glance at the door. Grundy, after his unusual silence, was evidently going to talk. They felt that it was not fair to raise their hopes in this way, only to dash them to the ground again. But they felt also that they were "for" it. After all, they had enjoyed Grundy's spread; and as it seemed that the usual price had to be paid, they sat down, with an heroic determination to listen to Grundy's conversation as long as they could—until flesh and blood could stand no more, in fact.

CHAPTER 6.

The Limit!

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY smiled genially at his chums across the study table. Obviously, he was in high feather, and pleased with himself. He had, as he declared, "got it." What he had "got" was a mystery to Wilkins and Gunn, but they realised that they were going to get it, too.

"You've seen this paper before," said Grundy, tapping it.

"It's Racke's, isn't it?"

"It was Racke's, before I took it from him. Of course, I couldn't allow that shady blackguard to carry out his scheme. Disgracing the school, and all that."

"Oh, of course!"

"Some fellows might think I was butting into junior captain's job," said Grundy.

"They might!" admitted Wilkins. "I think it very likely myself."

"Don't be an ass, Wilkins!"

"Oh?"

"Considering my position in the House, I'm bound to see that fellows behave themselves," explained Grundy.

He did not explain, further, what there was special about his position in the House. Wilkins did not ask him. It was wiser to give Grundy his head.

"I was going to burn this paper," resumed Grundy.

"Good thing, too!"

"But I've had a top-hole idea since then."

"Have you?" said Wilkins, with a glance at the door. But he knew there was no escape for him yet.

"Yes. Racke was working on this list of numbers, to make out a system for gambling," explained Grundy. "I've a relation who's done the same thing. He was speaking to

me about it when I stayed with him once in the holidays. I told him what I thought of him. I'd do it again, too, only for some reason he hasn't asked me to visit him since."

"Oh!"

"So, you see, I know about it—all about it," continued Grundy. "This game is called 'la boule,' and is played in casinos—dens in Continental towns, you know. There's one at Bordogne. I've been there at week-ends in the holidays and seen the silly trippers crowding over to lose their money at the casino. That was Racke's idea; but, of course, a duffer like Racke couldn't have made out a system to win on the numbers."

"Nobody could," said Gunn.

Grundy smiled.

"That's where you're mistaken, Gunny. I could."

"Oh, my hat! You could?"

"Yes. I've done it."

"Great Christopher Columbus!" ejaculated Wilkins. This, evidently, was what Grundy had "got."

"The idea came into my head when I looked at the paper," said Grundy carelessly. "Of course, a fool like Racke couldn't make anything of it. You fellows couldn't. But it's really only a matter of mathematics—and you know I'm an ox at maths."

Wilkins and Gunn knew that in the mathematical "set" George Alfred Grundy was lower down than Trimble of the Fourth. But they did not say so. If Grundy wanted to believe that he was mathematical he might as well believe that as that he could play cricket.

Grundy was beyond argument, above demonstration. Wilkins and Gunn, as usual, gave him his head.

"I—I see," said Wilkins.

"I've done it," said Grundy with lofty carelessness, "worked it all out, and got the system. I've made up what they call a figure—that's a certain set of numbers. Playing these in rotation, I catch a certain proportion of the winning numbers as they come up. See?"

"No—I mean yes—yes!" said Wilkins hastily.

"I'll explain the whole thing from the very beginning, if you like."

"No—no! I—I understand perfectly!"

"Good! I'm glad you catch on. Now, at this game of la boule they give you seven to one if you win on a number."

"Do they?"

"Yes. And on my figure I win on every third spin at least."

"Oh, do you?"

"Take six spins, then, and I lose at the most four pieces, and win fourteen," said Grundy impressively.

"Oh, good!"

"That's ten to the good on six spins."

"Ah! Just so!"

"On six hundred spins, that's a thousand to the good."

"Bravo!"

"Playing in twenty-franc pieces—what those foreign duffers call louis—I win a thousand louis in one afternoon."

"Fine!"

"So that's that," said Grundy. "I shall want you fellows to come with me on Saturday."

"Eh—where?"

"Boulogne, of course. This game isn't played in England."

Wilkins and Gunn stared at Grundy speechlessly. He had taken that sheet of numbers away from Racke of the Shell on the ground that Aubrey Racke was a dingy blackguard and ought to be stopped—a proceeding that was rather high-handed, perhaps, but otherwise unexceptionable. Now, apparently, Grundy was going to do exactly what he had prevented Racke from doing—and with complete self-satisfaction.

It is said that even the worm will turn. As soon as Wilkins fairly understood he jumped up, with a red face.

"Do you think we're coming with you to gamble in a putrid casino?" he ejaculated. "You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself!"

"Sit down!"

"I tell you we won't come!" roared Wilkins.

"If you talk to me about gambling, George Wilkins, I'll jolly well dust up this study with you!" roared Grundy in great wrath. "Mean to say I'm a sneaking, spoofing, outside, dingy, unclean rotter like Racke?"

"But you said yourself—" babbled Wilkins.

"You said—" started Gunn.

"Shut up!" roared Grundy.

"But you said—"

"If you had the brains of a bunny rabbit you'd understand!" howled Grundy. "Think I'm a gambling cad like Racke? I've thought out this system, and I'm going to bag twenty thousand francs at the casino on Saturday for a special purpose. I've stopped Racke, and punished him. Now I'm going to punish the casino."

"Wha-a-a-a-t?"

"Catch on now? I've got to get twenty thousand francs off them, as a punishment for running that rotten game to welsh trippers," explained Grundy.

"Oh!"

"The money," said Grundy loftily, "I shall donate to a hospital."

"Oh!"

"Do you think I'd keep it?"

"Nunno! I don't think you'll have a chance!" gasped Wilkins. "Nobody ever wins money in those shows."

"Very likely. But with my system—"

"Rot!"

"What!" roared Grundy.

But Wilkins felt that he was bound to have it out now. Giving Grundy his head was all very well, but this matter was rather too serious. The sack from St. Jim's loomed over Grundy's head.

"Rot!" repeated Wilkins. "Your silly system's all rot! You've no head for mathematics. You're the biggest fool in the set."

"Eh?" gasped Grundy. Home truths like this flabbergasted Grundy. He wasn't used to them in Study No. 3.

"It's all rot and bunkum!" said Wilkins. "You'd lose money! Lose all you put on the table! Punish them! You'd get the punishment. And say what you like, it's filthy gambling, and a decent fellow wouldn't do it."

"It isn't gambling when it is a certainty. It's a just punishment. I've explained that."

"Explain your giddy grandmother! You're a born idiot, Grundy, and you want taking care of."

"Just that!" said Gunn. "We sha'n't go, Grundy, and you sha'n't go! Put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

"Why, I—I—I—" gasped the astounded Grundy.

"What would you say to any other fellow who was going to do it?" demanded Wilkins.

"I'd jolly well stop him," said Grundy at once.

"Well, then, you—"

"Circumstances alter cases. I'm quite satisfied that what I'm doing is right, and that I can do it. Isn't that enough for you?"

"No fear! You're not going, if we have to hold you back by your silly ears!" said Wilkins recklessly.

That was too much for George Alfred Grundy. It was mutiny—mutiny in his own study, where it was almost a law of nature that he should be monarch of all he surveyed.

Grundy pushed back his cuffs, and rushed at his rebellious followers. The next moment there was a terrific combat raging in Grundy's study—for the second time that day.

Fellows looked out of other studies, as there was a crash and a wild yell in the Shell passage. George Wilkins had landed there!

There was still a sound of earthquakes in the study. Then there came another crash, and Cuthbert Gunn was strewn alongside Wilkins.

Slam!

The door closed on the two ejected good counsellors. Wilkins and Gunn picked themselves up, blinked at one another, gasped for breath, and drifted haplessly down the passage. In Study No. 3 Grundy of the Shell was left alone in his glory.

CHAPTER 7.

Looking After Grundy!

TOM MERRY & CO. looked particularly cheerful on Saturday morning.

Whole holidays were rare, and the weather had played up remarkably well on this occasion, the day dawning fine and sunny. Seven juniors of the School House at St. Jim's looked forward to that holiday with keen anticipations.

For once, it was acknowledged that the aristocratic brain of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had produced a really good idea.

Most of the St. Jim's fellows were thinking of cricket. The senior Greyfriars match was a big event; it was, indeed, the occasion of the holiday.

But Tom Merry & Co. considered that even that great match could proceed without their assistance. Generally they honoured the more important senior matches by turning up on the field and cheering. But there were, after all, plenty of fellows to cheer Kildare's big hits, and Langton's great catches, and Darrell's bowling. Probably seven voices would not be missed in the chorus.

In all probability, indeed, Kildare and the other mighty men of the Sixth and Fifth would be absolutely indifferent on the subject, and would not even remember the existence of the seven juniors.

In these circumstances, Tom Merry & Co. dismissed the senior cricket match from their minds, and devoted all their attention to their projected run across the Channel.

Trains had been looked out in the time-tables; Manners had taken this task in hand, Manners being good at maths.

Arthur Augustus, indeed, had selected trains; but he kindly gave them up when Manners gently pointed out to him that some of them were Sunday trains, and others ran on Wednesdays only, and so forth. Arthur Augustus really was not skilful in dealing with time-tables.

Seven juniors kept their own counsel with great care. On a whole holiday school bounds were relaxed; but it was extremely doubtful whether they were relaxed to such an extent as to include the coast of France within bounds.

There was no doubt that a run abroad would be a lark, but Housemasters and Form masters did not regard larks with so favourable an eye as the juniors did.

It was necessary to get excused from the afternoon roll-call, and that was not difficult for fellows with good and reliable characters on a whole holiday.

Racke would have found it extremely difficult to get an "excuse"—Racke being looked upon with a rather suspicious eye by the powers. Racke's intention had been to cut and chance it. But Racke's intentions were all changed now. Without his priceless list of numbers, he did not want to risk his cash, and he had quite given up the idea of a run abroad. He did not want to take the risk for nothing.

Racke's belief was that the list of numbers had been destroyed by Grundy; he had not the remotest suspicion of Grundy's wonderful wheeze. So Aubrey Racke planned quite a different excursion for that day, with Crooke, and Mellish, and Chowle, his special cronies—an excursion in which billiards and cigarettes figured prominently.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. made their preparations quietly; and another fellow, unknown to them, made his. That was Grundy.

Grundy was going alone.

Wilkins and Gunn had stated their objections to the amazing scheme, and had been dealt with accordingly. Grundy realised that he couldn't take Wilkins and Gunn with him by the scruff of the neck. So he settled on going alone, with his Uncle Grundy's latest remittance safe in his pocket. He had already decided upon which hospital was to receive the funds, when he came back that evening with twenty thousand francs in his pocket. The Cottage Hospital at Wayland was to benefit. Two birds were going to be killed with one stone; the casino was to be given a painful jolt by such a considerable loss, and a deserving hospital was to benefit. Incidentally, Grundy would prove to his doubting chums what a wonderful mathematical brain he had.

Wilkins and Gunn did not look at it in the same light. They were worried and troubled. They were quite well aware that if Grundy got landed in the casino, he would lose his money there. That did not matter very much; Grundy had plenty of money. But it was a rotten, blackguardly thing to do—though Grundy seemed quite satisfied, on account of his good motives. And there was the danger! It was absolutely certain that any fellow found doing such stunts would be kicked out of the school without ruth or mercy. Grundy was confident in his own strategy. Wilkins and Gunn weren't. They felt that it was extremely probable that Grundy would be bowled out, and sacked. They didn't want Grundy to be sacked. He wasn't a bad chap, in his way, and he couldn't help being born a fool. They would have missed Grundy at St. Jim's, and perhaps still more, they would have missed his munificent spreads.

They talked it over, and Wilkins decided to speak to Tom Merry, as head of the Shell. Restraining Grundy was a task beyond Wilkins' powers, as he well knew. Giving him away to a prefect was, of course, not to be thought of. But to let him rip was impossible. So Wilkins looked for Tom Merry soon after breakfast, with a worn and worried brow. If the captain of the Shell couldn't think of some way of bottling up Grundy, Wilkins felt that the case was hopeless.

While Wilkins was looking for Tom Merry, Grundy of the Shell walked down to the gates, with a straw hat on the back of his head, and a genial smile on his face. Grundy was quite looking forward to bearding the lion in his den. Wilkins spotted him going, and shouted:

"Grundy!"

George Alfred did not even look round. He was done with Wilkins. He walked out of gates.

"Oh, the silly ass!" said Wilkins.

"Here's Merry!" said Gunn.

Seven juniors came along in a body, heading for the gates. They looked very merry and bright.

"Going out, you fellows?" asked Wilkins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I want to speak to you, Merry."

"Trot along, then," said Tom cheerily. "We've got a train to catch."

"You must not wisk losin' the twain, Tom Mewwy," remarked Arthur Augustus. "If we lose the connection we shall not get to—Yawoooh! What are you shovin' your silly elbow into my wibs for, Blake?"

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"Shut up, ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You fellows get ahead!" said Tom Merry hastily.

"Yaas, but don't dwag at my arm, Blake."

Tom Merry dropped behind with Wilkins, as the party walked up the lane. He looked rather curiously at the Shell fellow.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Grundy!" groaned Wilkins.

Tom Merry laughed.

"What's his latest?"

"He's going over to Boulogne to-day."

"What!" yelled Tom Merry.

"It's a fact!" groaned Wilkins. "He's started already. He's got that list of numbers he took from Racke, and he says he's worked out a system, and he's going to break the bank."

"Wha-a-at!"

"Don't misjudge the silly owl," said Wilkins hastily. "He doesn't understand that it's putrid gambling, just like Racke. He says he's going to break the bank to punish them for running the game at all, and hand over the winnings to the Cottage Hospital. Potty, you know."

"The cheeky rotter!" exclaimed Tom Merry wrathfully. "After handling Racke for the same thing—"

"Racke was going to gamble, you know."

"Well, what's Grundy going to do?"

"Yes; but he looks at it differently, somehow. It would make him awfully wild if you called it gambling, when he does it."

"The silly chump!"

"Well, what's to be done?" said Wilkins. "We've had a row with him, but that only makes him more obstinate. You're Form captain. Can you think of anything—without giving him away, of course?"

Tom Merry's jaw set grimly.

"I can, and will," he said. "Leave it to me. I'll take jolly good care that your sportsman doesn't spread himself on the green tables. Leave it to me, Wilkins."

"Jolly glad to!" said Wilkins, in great relief. "He's gone to the station now."

"We're going the same way," said Tom Merry, with a smile.

"It's a shame to muck up your excursion, whatever it is, looking after that born idiot," said Wilkins.

"That's all right. I think we can look after him without mucking up the excursion," said Tom. "Anyhow, we'll look after him."

"Good egg!" said Wilkins. "Ta-ta!"

And he walked back to St. Jim's, feeling very much relieved. Tom Merry hurried on after his comrades.

CHAPTER 8.

Grundy Sticks!

"B AI Jove!"

"The silly ass!"

"The shady rotter!"

"The measly chump!"

Those remarks, and many more of the same kind, were made by the Co. when Tom Merry communicated to them what he had learned from Wilkins of the Shell.

There was deep wrath and indignation in the party of seven.

Any St. Jim's fellow who proposed to act as Grundy proposed to act would have excited their indignation. But Grundy, who had come down so heavily on Racke, who had acted in so exceedingly high-handed a way, in his lofty disgust at Racke's shady delinquency—it really was the limit!

Grundy's motives did not count. It was what Grundy was going to do that mattered—very seriously—though obviously Grundy did not realise that.

"He's going to be stopped!" said Manners decidedly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Jolly well stopped!" said Herries. "He ought to be ashamed of himself."

"He hasn't sense enough," remarked Lowther.

"We've got to stop him," said Tom Merry quietly. "It's the sack for him if he's found out, for one thing. And he's disgracing the school for another, though he hasn't sense enough to see it."

"We shall see him at Wayland Junction," said Blake.

"He must be catching the same train for the Channel boat."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes. Of course, he hasn't the faintest idea that we're going across the Channel for a holiday. It's lucky, as it happens. We'll deal with him at Wayland. If he loses the express he's done."

"And he's going to lose it!" grinned Dig.

"That's it."

The seven St. Jim's juniors arrived at Wayland Junction,



Tom Merry & Co., standing in a group by the rail of the steamer, were discussing Grundy, when the subject of their discussion came up, with a truculent expression on his face. "How the thump did you get here?" demanded Tom Merry. "I jumped in the guard's van," explained Grundy. "Just in time, you know. Catch me being left behind!" (See this page.)

and on the platform they looked for Grundy. His burly figure was conspicuous there.

"You fellows here!" he exclaimed, as he sighted Tom Merry & Co.

"Yaas, wathah!" grinned Arthur Augustus.

"Catching the express?"

"Yaas."

"Well, don't get into my carriage," said Grundy. "Can't be bothered by a parcel of fags!"

"Bai Jove!"

Grundy moved off a little. The express came in, and Grundy was lucky enough to find an empty carriage. He was unlucky enough to be followed into it by seven juniors. Grundy glared at them.

"I told you not to get into my carriage!" he snorted.

"Don't want to travel with us?" asked Blake blandly.

"No."

"That's soon arranged."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, leggo!" roared Grundy, as the juniors collared him. "Wharrer you at? You let go! I'll smash you! You'll make me lose the train! You—you—Yooooooop!"

Grundy was a mighty man of his hands, and he was always prepared for war. But he had very little chance in seven pairs of hands.

Grundy descended on the platform at full length. The engine screamed. Grundy sat up dizzily as the train began to move. Arthur Augustus waved his hand gracefully from the window.

"Good-bye, Gwunday!"

"Grooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. sat down, grinning cheerfully, as the

express rushed out of the station. They had dealt promptly and efficiently with George Alfred Grundy.

It was really a good thing for Grundy. It would save him all the money he had about him and the danger of the sack. But they did not expect Grundy to be grateful.

The chums of St. Jim's were very cheerful on the journey, and they soon forgot all about Grundy.

They were reminded of his existence when, after changing trains, and covering long miles in the express, they arrived at Folkestone.

They took their day tickets, and joined the surging crowd heading for the boat.

As they marched up the gangway Tom Merry caught sight of a bullet head and a very square and burly pair of shoulders in the crowd ahead.

"Grundy!" he ejaculated.

"Bai Jove! Gwunday!"

"Or his ghost!" grinned Monty Lowther.

It was not Grundy's ghost. It was Grundy. He had been left behind at Wayland Junction, but here he was. George Alfred Grundy was a stickler.

There was a big crowd on the Channel boat, and Tom Merry & Co. were unable to get chairs. They stood in a group by the rail, discussing Grundy.

The subject of their discussion came up, with a truculent expression on his rugged face.

"You played a rotten trick on me at Wayland!" he grunted.

"How the thump did you get here?" demanded Tom.

Grundy grinned.

"Did you think you had stopped me?"

"Yes, you ass!"

"I jumped into the guard's van!" explained Grundy. "Just in time, you know. Catch me being left behind."

"Bai Jove!"

"You fellows going over the Channel, too?" asked Grundy curiously.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" grunted Tom Merry. Grundy's face became stern.

"No larks," he said. "If I see you fellows prowling near the casino I warn you that I shall put a stop to it, sharp!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I think you're not that sort," Grundy admitted graciously. "I hope not. But if there's anything of that kind, take my tip—I shall step in and stop you fast enough!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked at Grundy. Considering what that cheerful youth was crossing the Channel for, this really was too thick.

"You—you'll stop us?" gasped Tom, at last. Grundy gave an emphatic nod.

"Certainly! I jolly well won't have you disgracing St. Jim's while I'm around, I can tell you."

"Chuck him overboard, somebody!" said Monty Lowther. "He's too funny to live."

"I wegard him as a cheeky wottah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Gwunday, if you mean to insinuate that I am capable of playin' wotten gamblin' games at a wotten casino, I shall have no wesource but to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"I'm only warning you," said Grundy. "I mean it, though."

"What are you going over for?" roared Herries. Grundy smiled.

"You wouldn't understand," he said. "Besides, I don't take Fourth Form fags into my confidence."

"Weally, Gwunday—"

"We know what you're going for, and that's why we chucked you out of the express at Wayland," said Tom Merry.

"Well, you cheeky, meddling ass!" exclaimed Grundy, in indignant astonishment. "Interfering with me! My hat!"

"And we'd jolly well chuck you out of this boat now if you could swim like anything but a plummet!" growled Blake.

"I suppose we can't throw him ashore now?" asked Manners, looking round.

That was scarcely practicable. Grundy was booked for Boulogne-sur-Mer, but Tom Merry & Co. were quite resolved to keep an eye upon him, and see that he did not carry out his wonderful wheeze. Grundy, strango to relate, seemed to have come to something like the same resolve.

"I shall keep an eye on you when you land," he said.

"Weally, Gwunday—"

"If I see you near the casino look out for squalls!" said the virtuous Grundy, and he walked away.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, with a deep breath. "That chap does weally pwance off with the whole cake, deah boys."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, if Grundy keeps an eye on us, it will make it all the easier for us to keep an eye on him," he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the juniors, dismissing Grundy from their minds for the moment, turned their eyes upon the blue summer sea as the Channel boat moved out from the harbour.

CHAPTER 9.

Tom Merry & Co. In France!

THE white cliffs of Albion sank into the sea behind—the white cliffs of France rose ahead. Tom Merry & Co. had crossed the narrow waters before, more than once, but the scene was full of interest to them. The boat, crowded with merry trippers, drew nearer to Boulogne, and the buildings of that somewhat dingy town rose more clearly into view under the blue sky. Prominent among the rest stood out the white-walled casino—the goal, it is to be feared, of very many of the trippers on the steamer. Within those white walls were the long green tables, and the croupiers with their rakes, and the little ball that spun and spun. In those very moments the monotonous voice of the croupier was droning "Faites vos jeux, messieurs!" and the ball was spinning, and obtuse tourists were losing their money on the green cloth—throwing away hard cash in the foolish hope of getting something for nothing.

Tom Merry looked round for Grundy as the boat drew up to the quay and the crowd started to go ashore, but in the swarm Grundy was not to be seen. And when the juniors found themselves landed in Boulogne, Herries made a remark that found an echo in six breasts.

"I'm hungry."

"Same here!"

"Yaas, wathah."

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"Grundy—" began Tom.

"Oh, let Grundy rip till we've had lunch," said Blake. "Besides, he's pretty certain to be after some lunch, too."

"Yes, that's so."

"I've an ideah, deah boys—"

"Bow-wow!"

"Pway allow a fellow to speak, Blake. There is a westauwant at the casino where you can get vewy good gwub. I wemembah my bwothah Conway tellin' me so. If we go there for lunch we can keep an eye open for Gwunday."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Better keep clear of the place," he said.

"You fellows would be all wight with me to look aftah you, you know."

"Fathead!"

There were plenty of restaurants, without going to the one at the casino. The seven juniors entered one, and a smiling and bowing waiter showed them to a table. They had had a long train journey, and, with the Channel crossing added, they had had time to get very hungry. Lunch—a substantial lunch—was obviously the next item on the programme, and Grundy had to wait.

"Leave this to me, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus as he sat down. "I had bettah ordah the gwub, as I speak Fwench bettah than you chaps. Garsong!"

The garcon was just behind Gussy, but Gussy did not see him, not having eyes in the back of his head.

"Garsong!"

"Yes, sir! Here, sir!" said the garcon.

"Bai Jove, he speaks English!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pwobably only a few words, you know. I had bettah pitch it to him in Fwench. Garsong, nous sommes—nous sommes—I mean, nous avons—that is to say, avez vous—"

"Yes, sir! Lunch for seven, sir," said the garcon cheerily. "Here's the menu, sir."

"Bai Jove, that Fwench chap speaks English vewy well," remarked Arthur Augustus as the waiter buzzed away. "What are you fellows gwinnin' at?"

"Only the French chap is English," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Bai Jove!"

"Hallo, there's somebody we know," grinned Blake, as a burly figure came in and dropped into a chair at the next table.

"Grundy!"

Grundy was thinking of lunch before other proceedings, evidently, as well as Tom Merry & Co. He glanced towards the seven and frowned. A French waiter came to deal with Grundy, and Grundy dealt with him in French—school French, and Grundy's variety of it.

"Garsong!"

"Oui, monsieur."

"Lunch," said Grundy. "I mean, dejeuner. None of your dashed kickshaws—something fit to eat."

"Comment?"

"Non pas kickshaws," explained Grundy in French—Grundy's French. "Kelkerchouse que a chap can manger. Savvy?"

"Comment?" gasped the waiter.

"Oh, these dashed foreigners!" said Grundy. "Fancy a chap not being able to understand his own language! Listen to me! I mean ecoutez, garsong! Je veux avoir. Got that?"

"Monsieur veut avoir!" said the garcon.

"Blessed if I know what that means, the way you say it. Avez vous good decent beef—le boeuf, you know—kelkerchouse decent—je ne puis manger any rotten French muck."

"Comment?"

"What's the word for roast mutton, I wonder," said Grundy. "French beef is no good—only for soling boots. Roast mutton would do. Mutton is mouton." He glanced across at the other table. "You fellows, what do you say for roast mutton?"

"Mouton enrage," said Monty Lowther.

"Good!" Grundy turned to the waiter again. "Donnez moi—"

"Mais oui."

"Give me—I mean, donnez moi un mouton enrage," said Grundy.

The French waiter almost fell down.

He had dealt with many tourists from the tight little island. Often they had asked him for curious things. But this was the first time that he had been asked for a mad sheep.

"Comment?" he said faintly.

"Common!" said Grundy. "Well, if it's common, you ought to have plenty of it. Mouton enrage, savvy?"

"Mon Dieu!"

"He doesn't seem to catch on," said Grundy. "Sure that's the right word, Lowther?"

"It depends on what you want," said Monty Lowther blandly.

"Mouton roti!" suggested the garcon.



Out of the wide gateway went the seven juniors, clinging to Grundy. Admiring exclamations sounded from the spectators. "Never mind!" gasped Tom Merry. "We've got Grundy." (See page 17.)

Grundy shook his head. "No rotten mutton for me," he said. "You French chaps may like it; I don't. Mouton enrage, and be quick—vite—about it! C'chez vous on?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "What are you cheeky cads chortling about?" demanded Grundy. "Buck up, waiter—buckez vous up. I'm hungry—I mean, j'ai femme."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the juniors. Probably Grundy meant fain, but a trifle like that did not worry the great Grundy.

The garcon, naturally, looked round for the femme. Grundy certainly looked very youthful for a married man; but he had stated the fact plainly.

"Mais ou est la femme, monsieur?"

"Eh?"

"La femme," said the perplexed garcon, "pas ici!"

"What?"

"La femme de monsieur—"

"The man's potty, I believe," said Grundy. "He's saying something about a farm, I believe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, do shut up that cackling! Donnez moi du grub. Catch on to that? Anything you like so long as you buck up. Stop wriggling about like a silly frog, and give me something to eat. Kelkerchouse manjay—quick—vite—gettez vous a move on!" howled Grundy.

The garcon got a move on. He hurried away, convinced that monsieur was the maddest of all the mad English people he had ever had to deal with.

Grundy was provided with food, which he eyed rather suspiciously before he started on it. But he started, and found it quite good. A solid lunch calmed Grundy's temper, which was getting irritable. It was enough to irritate a fellow, Grundy considered, to land in a country where the people persisted in babbling French instead of plain English!

Tom Merry & Co. finished their lunch before Grundy, and left the restaurant. They strolled around, waiting for Grundy to emerge. When that enterprising youth came out he gave them a stare and a frown, and stalked away.

Seven juniors walked after him.

Tom Merry & Co. had started out that day for a trip to France to see the sights. It looked now as if the principal thing they were going to see was George Alfred Grundy—an uninteresting sight that they could have beheld any day at St. Jim's. But it could not be helped. Like the men of the celebrated Pinafore, "It was their duty, and they did."

CHAPTER 10.

Going for Grundy!

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY looked about him as he stalked up the street. He was not, for the moment, heading for the casino. He disappeared into a shop at last, the windows of which displayed models with wonderful heads of hair. He kept his friends waiting about ten minutes, and when he came out they hardly knew him. There was a black moustache on Grundy's upper lip now, and Tom Merry & Co. jumped at the sight of it.

"Bai Jove! The uttah ass is disguisin' himself!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry chuckled.

"Grundy's quite 'deep," he said. "Probably they wouldn't let a kid of his age go into the gaming-rooms, so he's made himself look older with that stuck on."

"That means business!" grinned Blake. "Grundy's off to break the bank at last."

"Come on!"

Without looking to right or left, now, Grundy strode away, heading directly for the casino, with the St. Jim's crowd following on. Matters, evidently, were approaching a climax now.

The gates of the casino gardens stood wide open. Within was a little kiosk where the entrance tickets were taken. Beyond, the wide path ran up to the great white building.

Quite a number of people were taking tickets, and Grundy had to join the end of the queue.

(Continued on page 17.)

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SOMETHING ABSOLUTELY NEW IN DETECTIVE YARNS!



THE KIDNAPPED HEIR!

BY EDMUND BURTON.

Another of the Amazing Exploits of
ANTHONY SHARPE—Investigator.

CHAPTER 1.

What Happened at Southbeach!

THE name of Sir Julian Holdbrook, Bart, was so well known over practically five continents that it was, naturally, familiar to Anthony Sharpe when he saw it printed upon the visiting-card which Tim O'Carroll had just handed to him.

For Sir Julian had been one of the most famous travellers and big-game hunters of his time, immensely wealthy, and popular in the extreme with everyone who was lucky enough to know him.

But now he was getting on in years, and had, more or less, retired from globe-trotting, preferring instead to take his ease at his seaside residence on the South Coast, while his principal hobby seemed to be sending large cheques to deserving charities.

Many a long subscription-list had Sharpe noticed in the Press which included Sir Julian's name against a substantial amount. If wealthy, he was certainly no miser, and several institutions which had been in low water owed their rescue to Holdbrook's open-handed generosity.

"Show Sir Julian in at once, Tim," Sharpe said, laying the visiting-card on the writing-table.

O'Carroll withdrew, to presently return, followed by a grey-haired, handsome man, whose shoulders were slightly stooped, and whose eyes, although keen as an eagle's, held an indescribably anxious look in them at that moment.

"Good-morning, sir!" Anthony Sharpe bowed. "You wish to consult me, I presume? Pray be seated!"

Holdbrook nodded as the famous investigator waved his hand towards an easy chair near the open window.

Summer had come in with a rush, and the comfortable sitting-room at Allington Mansions was a blaze of sunshine.

"Yes, Mr. Sharpe," Sir Julian replied, seating himself, "I wish to consult you on a very vital matter. I have heard of your wonderful skill, and— But I'd best come to the point. My only son, Victor, had disappeared—been kidnapped, plainly with the object of demanding ransom!"

Sharpe's eyebrows went up in mild surprise.

"Why do you say that, sir?" he asked. "We are living in England—not in Spain nor Corsica, where brigands abound. You surely must have some very strong reason for making such a statement?"

Sir Julian produced his pocket-book, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 804.

and drew therefrom a slip of paper, which he handed to the detective.

"That is my reason," he said. Sharpe bent forward, instantly giving a violent start which he found impossible to suppress; and no wonder, for this is what he read:

"If you wish to see your son again you will be well advised to meet our representative at the White Rock, on the beach below your house, at midnight on to-morrow, the 25th inst, and bring with you the sum of ten thousand pounds in cash. It should be added that any attempt to molest our agent, or the employment of trickery in any form, will result in your boy's death. Therefore, be warned.—X."

"X!" muttered Sharpe. "The Mysterious 'X' in a new role—"

"What did you say, sir?" asked Sir Julian, not quite catching the words.

The investigator looked up.

"I know who sent you this ultimatum," he replied, his eyes gleaming. "The criminal who penned it is an old acquaintance of mine. In fact, he is an individual whom I have sworn to smash sooner or later, though up to now, I regret to say, he has got the better of me. The Mysterious 'X' is one of the cleverest rogues who ever pestered Society."

Holdbrook nodded gloomily, as though this piece of information did not help to strengthen his remaining hope.

"Then probably I ran a big risk in coming to consult you, Mr. Sharpe," he continued bitterly, "for my action would doubtless come under the heading of 'trickery' referred to. But I've always been a hard fighter, and I somehow cannot bring myself to pay over such a large sum as ten thousand without a struggle, even"—his voice broke—"even though the issue at stake is so great. Victor is everything to me—the boy who will inherit all I possess, and—and— But perhaps it's a trick, Mr. Sharpe—bluff, in short. Could anyone be playing a cruel practical joke on me? You scarcely seemed to credit the story at first, from what you said about brigands!"

Holdbrook's last words had a more hopeful ring in them, as though he were clutching at straws; but Anthony Sharpe's face was grave in the extreme.

"I admit that I suspected something of the kind," he said, "until I saw who it was that sent you this communication. But I can assure you now that it is only too genuine. 'X' never bluffs, as I have learnt to my cost before this!"

"Then—"

"We must act with extreme caution," Sharpe cut in. "We—my assistant and I—will follow you down to Southbeach by the train after yours—it will not do for us to risk being seen together—and go into the matter thoroughly on the spot. We shall be disguised, also, so please be prepared for that. Meanwhile, kindly settle these points for me. Firstly, when did your boy disappear?"

"Yesterday evening. He was on the beach in the afternoon with his governess, but they were late for tea, and I started my own meal without them, thinking nothing of it. Then, about seven o'clock, Miss Dixon, the governess, arrived in a great flurry, saying that she had lost Victor and had been searching everywhere for him."

Holdbrook paused, drawing his hand across his forehead, but continued almost at once:

"We waited a little while, hoping that it was just an ordinary case of straying, and that the youngster would presently find his way back; but the hours passed without result, and then that message was found on the floor of the hall, evidently having been pushed through the letter-slit."

"You are a widower, are you not, Sir Julian?"

"Yes," the other answered. "I married rather late in life, and my wife died shortly after Victor was born. He is nearly thirteen years old now."

"You have not informed the local police, I take it?"

"No. Frankly, I thought it better to place the affair in charge of someone who would not be obliged to conduct investigations so publicly—especially in the face of that warning. But—but what shall I do, Mr. Sharpe? Surely you don't advise—"

"I advise nothing at the moment," said the investigator, "except that you must hurry back home by the first available train. We shall be hard on your heels, after which we can arrange what's to be done. I'll form my plans on the way down. You see, I happen to know the kind of gentleman we are up against, and the greatest care will be necessary in tackling the situation."

CHAPTER 2.

At the White Rock—Shadowed—The Mysterious Steam-Yacht!

THESE tactics were accordingly carried out, Sharpe and Tim O'Carroll arriving secretly at Southbeach, and reaching Silvermere, Sir Julian's place, shortly after

his own arrival. They were both well disguised, for extra precaution's sake.

Sharpe's first question was a curious one. He had been weighing up all the points carefully during the run to the South Coast, and had struck upon a possible theory.

"Have you a motor-boat of your own, lately in your neighbourhood?" he asked. "I know how populous this district is and what a number of people would be passing up and down during the summer season, so that it should be somewhat risky to attempt to kidnap a boy of Victor's age and smuggle him through the crowd while it was still broad daylight. On the other hand, what if a boat with a cover were waiting close by, and he were enticed to examine it? Boys of thirteen are interested in boats of all kinds—"

"By Heaven!" Sir Julian interrupted. "You mean, that he may have been carried seawards? Certainly there is that possibility, and— and— Yes, I saw a steam-yacht anchored in the bay yesterday morning, which was rather unusual, since such craft generally lie off the bigger ports. Everyone noticed her because of her odd colour; she was painted a vivid crimson, with a waterline of cream."

"She is not there now," Sharpe rose from his seat, and stared out of the window, which commanded a broad view of the sea beneath. "No, there is nothing of that kind visible—only a few moored fishing-smacks. You didn't hear who owned the yacht?"

"No; nor did I inquire, having no particular interest in the vessel. But what's to be done about it all?" the baronet added distractedly and a little testily. "We cannot pin our faith to obscure steam-yachts, and such like, which are probably quite as innocent as they appear."

Sharpe made no reply for a short while. Then he asked another apparently odd question:

"Have you a motor-boat of your own, with a quiet engine? If not, can we hire one close by?"

"Yes, it so happens that I have," Holdbrook replied, somewhat mystified at the trend the conversation was taking. "She is lying in a little private pool which belongs to this place. Why?"

"Good!" Sharpe exclaimed, ignoring the last query for the moment. "That will help us considerably if my theory proves worth following up. It is only a shot in the dark, but it's well to leave no possibility unconsidered. Now, here's my plan. At midnight you will meet this—this agent at the White Rock, which you must show me presently, and ask for a little more time. Make any excuse you like—say, for instance, that the notice was too short and the local bank could not provide such a large amount in cash without some delay. All I require is that we shall be in a position to shadow this fellow, whether he comes from the sea or inland."

"But—he's not likely to take any excuse—"

"He'll have to report to his chief," the investigator cut in, "for I'm quite sure it won't be the Mysterious 'X' who meets you in person. From my own knowledge of his methods, he has always remained in the background, deputing such jobs as this to one of his several underlings—which, in all probability, explains why he has so far evaded capture."

"But the risk? They may carry out their threat—"

"A certain risk must be taken," Sharpe interrupted, "but if we play our cards very carefully it should minimise

it considerably. You show me the motor-boat, have her tank filled, and make all ready for a sudden departure if necessary. Then we'll see what happens when you meet our friend the enemy at the appointed spot. That's the best plan, under the circumstances—indeed, the only one I can think of in the time at our disposal."

Sir Julian Holdbrook was punctual at the arranged meeting-place; but another was there before him. The White Rock was a huge, isolated stone standing half-way down a secluded strip of beach, almost directly in front of the private seapath to Silvermere, and Holdbrook saw that a strongly built figure was already standing there, evidently waiting for him.

Anthony Sharpe and Tim O'Carroll also spotted the man, from where they crouched in the shadows, for the moon was nearly at her full. And, a few yards out from where the gently whispering surf edged the foreshore a little beyond, they perceived something else—something that caused the famous investigator to nudge his young assistant sharply, for it was nothing less than a small motor-launch, in the stern of which another figure was seated.

"The possibility has become a certainty!" he whispered. "They took the youngster away by sea, and we've got to follow 'em!"

They waited just long enough to hear Sir Julian enter into conversation with the agent, whose voice grew angry when he found that the ransom had to be postponed. Then, leaving the pair still in altercation, Sharpe and O'Carroll hurried away, taking advantage of all possible cover, until they gained the little pool where floated Holdbrook's own motor-boat.

As previously arranged, her tank had been filled, and she was ready to embark upon a voyage of considerable length should such be found necessary.

They stepped aboard, Sharpe starting the engine at dead slow, and the little craft nosed her way out of the pool.

Reaching the end of the narrow channel which connected the private anchorage with the open sea, Sharpe

shut off power, and here they remained, watching intently. From this point it was quite easy to discern the two figures standing on the beach higher up, and just then the Mysterious "X's" representative, parting company with Sir Julian, hurried towards his waiting boat.

"Going back to report and ask for further instructions, as I surmised," Sharpe muttered, bending again over the engine. "Well, this is where we take a hand, Timothy Dennis! Have your shooter ready for emergencies, though I trust they don't twig us!"

The other boat was already ploughing seawards, and Sharpe kept Holdbrook's craft well in the rear—only creeping up, in fact, when his quarry grew almost invisible. Above all things, he did not wish the pair he was following to suspect his presence until he discovered whither they were bound, and was rather glad when a bank of fleecy clouds at that moment dimmed the rather too brilliant moonlight.

The chase was a moderately long one—all of seven miles—during which Sharpe succeeded in arousing no suspicion in the minds of the pair in front. Finally, on abruptly rounding a bluff, the goal came in sight—a cluster of lights belonging to a small steamer anchored in the shelter of a lofty headland.

Anthony Sharpe instantly stopped the engine, and contented himself by watching the progress of the other boat, which was making a bee-line for the larger vessel. He saw her reach the side, and the shadowy figures climb up the accommodation-ladder. Then he turned to Tim.

"We've got to get aboard that craft," he said. "But how? Stay! I had best go alone, while you wait out here. I want to see what's going on, so if I'm not back within half an hour you'd better make for the nearest town and report at the police-station. I'm well known along this stretch of coast, and they'll soon take the necessary steps to raid yonder vessel. You understand?"

Tim nodded glumly enough. He would naturally have preferred to share the risk, but his master's word was law. Moreover, O'Carroll immediately saw the wisdom of the plan, for if the worst



With a heavy crash Anthony Sharpe leaped through the opening of the deck-light and landed with a heavy crash astride the Mysterious "X's" shoulders, sending him to the floor with a thud.

came to the worst and the "guy'nor" were detected in the act of spying, it was better that only one should be captured instead of the pair of them.

Whilst speaking Sharpe had been swiftly shedding his coat, waistcoat, and boots. Presently he lowered himself over the motor-boat's stern and struck out strongly, though making scarcely a ripple on the surface.

CHAPTER 3.

The Kidnapped Heir—A Surprise for "X."

SHARPE'S first impression on reaching the anchored vessel was that she was a small steam-yacht, painted a vivid crimson, thus suggesting that she must be the identical craft which had been lying off Southbeach the previous morning. It could be no mere coincidence that two ships of such very similar and unusual appearance should be in the neighbourhood at the same time.

He avoided both the port and star-board accommodation-ladders, swinging himself up instead by a rope hanging over the stern. Once on deck, he paused just sufficiently long enough to unwrap his automatic from some waterproof material, in which he had rolled it ere commencing his swim, then he stole cautiously forward with bare feet towards where a bright gleam shone from a glazed decklight.

Bending down, he peered below, and found himself looking into a small cabin containing a couple of bunks, a chair, and a swing-table. And in one of the bunks a boy was sleeping, possibly drugged—a boy of about thirteen who so closely resembled Sir Julian's description of his missing son that there was no doubting his identity.

Sharpe's heart was beating rapidly. So far things were going particularly well for him—better, indeed, than he had hoped, considering the cunning of the criminal he was once more pitted against.

He tested the cover of the decklight, and, to his joy, found that he could easily swing it upwards, for the hasp in the framework beneath was unfastened, thus leaving the way into the cabin open. But, even as he was contemplating this expedient, he suddenly noticed the arrival of another person below him—a tall dark man, with remarkably thin lips.

"'X'!" Sharpe muttered to himself. "'X' once more! But I'd like to know where the rest of his gang are!"

He stood erect, peering along the deserted deck and listening intently, but no sound was audible. Moreover, no boats hung from the davits close by. All of which suggested something to the astute detective.

"With the exception of the pair we followed, the gang must be ashore—possibly on some new coup—and the yacht-hands likewise," he mused. "Dare I take the risk? By Heaven, yes! I've wanted you, my foxy friend, for a long time, and the chance seems too good to let slip!"

The Mysterious "X" was at that moment directly beneath the watching detective, bending over the sleeping boy in the bunk. By now the master-criminal would have had time to receive his agent's unsatisfactory report and to have given further orders to the two Sharpe and Tim had pursued. The motor-boat still bobbed alongside the accommodation-ladder, proving that the pair were yet aboard—probably having a late meal in some other cabin. The time, therefore, was ripe for action—before the man below was reinforced, which would badly spill the fat into the

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fire. Also, what was to be done would have to be performed with astonishing rapidity, as the investigator knew only too well.

Inch by inch, pausing every now and then to make sure that the tall man was still occupied with his captive, Sharpe raised the cover of the decklight. Finally it was open to its fullest extent, and at that moment, as though Fate were playing straight into the detective's hands, the Mysterious "X" sat down on the chair immediately beneath him, drawing out his cigar-case.

But he never lit the weed he raised to his lips, for Sharpe's next action was carried out with lightning speed. Indeed, so swift and soundless was it that the master criminal suspected nothing until something heavy crashed upon his shoulders and he was sent to the floor in a heap, with a strong man straddling his squirming body.

With a superhuman effort he twisted round, endeavouring to grapple with his



With the kidnapped boy in his arms Anthony Sharpe took a wild leap into the rocking boat.

assailant, and, during the ensuing tussle, Sharpe's disguise was swept off. The Mysterious "X," realising his identity, uttered a startled gasp.

"Anthony Sharpe—again!"
"Yes!" the investigator grated, getting a firmer grip on his man.
"Anthony Sharpe again—and for the last time, I trust—"

He broke off suddenly as a sound reached his ears from somewhere beyond the cabin wall, the sound of something bumping against the yacht's hull, accompanied by a murmur of several voices. Either the crew or some of the other members of the precious gang had returned!

Whoever had invented that adage—"There's many a slip"—evidently knew a thing or two, for never had the truth of it been demonstrated more convincingly. Sharpe had the long-wanted master criminal actually at his mercy, yet he was once more obliged to admit himself beaten so far as capturing his man was concerned; for there was no time to follow up his advantage now.

Indeed, it seemed madness to attempt anything at all except to try to save his own skin. But Sharpe was built on determined lines, and resolved to do his

utmost to rescue the still-sleeping boy at any cost.

He acted with lightning speed—ruthlessly, for it was no occasion for kid-glove methods. Clubbing his pistol, he dealt the criminal a smashing blow between the eyes with the butt-end. The Mysterious "X" sank back with a groan, huddled and inert.

Then Sharpe darted towards the bunk, snatching up the form of Victor Holdbrook, and, springing upon the chair, thrust his light burden through the opening he had entered by. Next, he drew himself up quickly, rolling out on deck even as half a dozen figures climbed aboard amidships from the second accommodation-ladder. Fortunately, they were some distance off and did not spot him until he was sprinting towards where the yacht's motor-boat still tugged at her mooring-rope; but before Sharpe reached the foot of the ladder on that side the crowd were after him like a pack of hounds.

It was now a matter of luck, more than anything else. Sharpe sprang wildly into the rocking boat, fairly pitching the now vastly-surprised boy upon some cushions in the stern, and slashed through the rope.

Three or four shots rang out as he started the engine, one bullet shaving the back of his left hand so closely that it actually drew blood. But now he was away, the whirling propeller threshing the water into a lather of white foam.

The fusillade was resumed with doubled intensity, but each passing second lessened the chance of a serious hit, and the shots did little damage save to knock splinters flying from the surrounding woodwork. Evidently he was in possession of the yacht's sole motor-driven boat, and those which had served the gang for going ashore were merely rowing craft in which they could not hope to overtake him.

A few minutes later he had joined up with Tim, who had maintained much the same position since parting from his master.

"Hallo! That you, guy'nor?" O'Carroll called softly. "I was in a bit of a mix when I spotted the motor-launch settin' out again, bedad! I thought they'd twigged me, so I was just goin' to make a dash for it. I heard the shots, an' I— Gee whiz! So you've found the missin' goods?"

Tim gasped out the last words as his eyes fell upon the amazed Victor Holdbrook, now crouching wide awake in the stern, and Anthony Sharpe nodded briefly in the moonlight. Then he steered the purloined boat alongside and together they raced back to Southbeach.

"Well, it was slick work enough, chief," Tim remarked, as they settled themselves comfortably in the early-morning train for London. "Not only did you find the younker, but you almost nabbed old 'X'!"

Anthony Sharpe smiled a little ruefully.

"Yes, almost, my lad," he replied, "but 'almost' is not 'all.' In fact, it was only half a victory. I restored Victor Holdbrook to his father, as you say, but I lost 'X.'"

O'Carroll nodded.
"But you'll get him yet, sir—you're bound to!" he said, with conviction. "Somehow, it seems to me that 'X' is fated to cross our path until he crosses it once too often!"

Anthony Sharpe did not reply, though the look on his face spoke volumes.

THE END.

(Look out for another splendid Anthony Sharpe story soon.)



"I fancy he's gone far enough," remarked Tom Merry, looking at his comrades.
 "Quite!" said Manners.
 "Surround him!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Seven juniors gathered round Grundy. He gave them a lofty, stern stare, without appearing alarmed.
 "You here!" he exclaimed.
 "Yaas, wathah, old bean!"
 "I've warned you to keep clear of the casino," said Grundy. "I wonder you're not jolly well ashamed of yourselves! Get out at once!"
 "Oh, my hat!"
 Grundy raised a stern hand.
 "Go!" he said.
 "Certainly!" chuckled Tom Merry. "You're coming with us, you see."
 Grundy shook his head.
 "I've got business here," he said. "But I'm jolly well going to see you kids clear before I go in. None of your disgraceful tricks while I'm around, I can tell you. Get off!"
 "Come on!"
 "Let go my arms!" roared Grundy.
 "Take hold of his neck, too."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Monty Lowther grasped one of Grundy's arms. Jack Blake fastened on the other, with an iron grip. Tom Merry took him by the collar.
 Grundy, in breathless wrath, struggled furiously.
 "Let go!" he roared.
 "Kin on!"

"I'll smash you! I'll—I'll— Oh! Ow!"
 There was a babble of rapid and amazed French from the onlookers. Nobody offered to interfere. It was only an outbreak of insanity on the part of the mad English.
 Tom Merry & Co. persuaded Grundy towards the gates. Grundy resisted persuasion with all his powers. In France the slightest occurrence out of the common will draw an enormous crowd in an amazingly short time. A circle of staring faces surrounded the juniors—the throng thickened and thickened till it seemed as if the greater part of Boulogne, if not the whole Pas-de-Calais, had gathered on the spot.

There was a babble of exclamations. At last there was a cry:

"Gendarme!"
 The gendarme came up. He gazed at the startling scene and shrugged his shoulders till they seemed likely to knock off his remarkable hat. He seemed in doubt whether to draw his sword—fortunately, he decided not. With a stream of rapid French, he rushed into the fray.

What he was saying the juniors hadn't the faintest idea. But they knew what he was doing. He was pitching them out.

Tom Merry & Co. were quite ready to go out, so long as Grundy went with them. And they did not let go of Grundy.

They did not resist the majesty of the law. Out of the wide gateway went the seven juniors, clinging to Grundy.

Admiring exclamations sounded from the spectators. The gendarme, a little breathless, struck a Napoleonic attitude, with lofty calm. He, Henri Pierre Leon St. Jean Lerocquet, had done this—had handled eight mad foreigners entirely on his own, and hurled them forth—alone, unaided, he had done it. He was a hero in the eyes of his compatriots, and in his own. And it was fortunate that one of Grundy's lunging fists had not landed on him. It might have led to a sudden vacancy in the gendarmerie.

"Got him!" gasped Tom Merry.
 "Yaas, wathah! What a twifhtful scene!"
 "Never mind that. We've got Grundy."

Grundy, still resisting, was marched away. The casino gates, the staring crowd, the Napoleonic gendarme, were left behind. Grundy had lost his false moustache, his collar, (Continued on next page.)

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his studs, and his temper. But Tom Merry & Co. had not lost Grundy.

The cheery youth of Boulogne took a deep interest in Grundy. They followed the party, chattering in rapid French. They walked before and behind the juniors, on the pavement and in the road, deeply interested, and loudly talkative, and increasing in numbers every moment. The din of many tongues was terrific.

"Le pauvre garçon—"

"Malade—"

"Eou, je crois."

"Gris—il est gris. Si jeune!"

It was as well that the infuriated Grundy did not understand the remarks which were made in the French of France and not in that of the Lower School at St. Jim's. The urchins were divided in opinion about Grundy, as to whether he was ill, insane, or intoxicated. They made many remarks about the kindness of his friends in looking after him in that sad state—whichever it was.

"Bai Jove, this is gettin' weally too thick," said Arthur Augustus. "You fellows hold that uttah ass by the yabs, and I will wush off like anythin' and get a cah."

"Good egg!"

Grundy, breathless, exhausted, spluttering, was held—by his ears and several other parts of him—and in quite a short time Gussy came whizzing back in a big car, which he had hired, regardless of expense. Grundy was bundled into the car, and the seven juniors bundled in, and the chauffeur was told to put it on—Manners translating that into "Vite!"—and the car buzzed off. Fifty or sixty young natives of Boulogne raised a cheer as the car started, and yelled till it was out of sight.

CHAPTER 11.

Grundy Gives It Up!

"WHAT a day!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove! I feel awf'ly warm!"

Tom Merry & Co. were all warm, and dusty, and rumped. Grundy was warmest, dustiest, and most rumped. He lay in the bottom of the car, with a goodly number of feet jamming him down, to keep him out of the way and keep him quiet.

The St. Jim's party were fed-up with Grundy, which was not surprising, after all the trouble they had given him.

The car rushed on hilly roads outside Boulogne, from every one of which Napoleon's monument could be seen. It rushed at the reckless speed natural to French cars and car-drivers—whisking past trams with half an inch to spare, grazing the tails of led horses, turning corners on two wheels or one. But the juniors did not mind—they were getting their day out, and certainly covering a good deal of country. Like a deep bass accompaniment to the buzz and roar of the car came Grundy's voice from the floor, in tones of breathless fury.

But nobody heeded Grundy. If he tried to rise, a boot shoved him down again, and kept him there; that was all.

Tom Merry & Co. felt that Grundy had given enough trouble, and that it was time for him to lie low; and low he laid.

"This is a jolly good way of spending our time here," declared Blake. "It will cost a few million francs; but there's always the exchange. You get no end of francs for a quid."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Grundy will have to pay his whack, of course," said Monty Lowther. "He's having the ride."

"I won't!" roared Grundy.

"Quiet! Down dog!"

Grundy's meditations were painful and infuriated. At this rate, he obviously was not going to break the bank.

After the juniors had rested a while, they seized Grundy and turned out his pockets. Racke's list of numbers, and another sheet on which Grundy had worked out his "system," were taken. Blake tore them both into very little pieces, and let the fragments float away from the window as the car fled on.

Grundy watched that proceeding with a Hunnish glare. Then the boots were planted on him again, and he was quiescent.

Several times the chauffeur looked into the car. Sometimes he smiled, sometimes he looked perplexed. He had driven many English, but never before had he driven a party of which one member preferred to lie on the floor of the car with the others resting their boots on him. He made a mental note of it as a peculiar English custom, and that night, over his "vin rouge" at his favourite cabaret, the chauffeur related it to his friends, with many gesticulations and rapid sentences beginning "Figurez-vous" and ending with "Ces fous Anglais."

Meanwhile, the whole party were enjoying themselves—

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with the exception of Grundy. Life seemed weary to Grundy just then, and a holiday in France nothing but a delusion and a snare.

The juniors were twenty miles from Boulogne-sur-Mer when they decided to stop for tea. Then arose the question of what was to be done with Grundy.

"Are you making it pax, Grundy?" asked Tom Merry.

"No!" roared Grundy.

"Then we'll tie him hand and foot, gag him, and leave him in the car," said Lowther. "We can't have Grundy kicking up another shindy."

"Hear, hear!"

"Anybody got a cord?"

"Grundy's necktie—and braces—any old thing."

"Good!"

"Hold on!" gasped Grundy.

"Too late!"

"I—I—I'll make it pax!" gasped Grundy. "You silly owls! I can't go to the casino and break the bank without my system, and you've chucked it away! I suppose you don't think I want to go there to gamble, do you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly fools have got a lot to answer for. I was going to get twenty thousand francs off them, to punish them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And give it to the Cottage Hospital. You've practically robbed the Cottage Hospital of a big donation."

"I don't think they'll miss that donation," grinned Monty Lowther. "There was a certain amount of uncertainty about it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you haven't any sense!" growled Grundy. "With my mathematical brain—"

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

"Let me up, you dummies!"

"On conditions, Grundy," said Tom Merry, wiping away his tears. "You've got to give us your word, honest Injun, to keep the peace, to pay your share in the car, and to stay with us quietly till we get back to Folkestone. After that you can go to Jericho if you like. And if you don't promise at once you're going to be tied up like a turkey."

Grundy had had enough of the car floor. It was dusty and hard, and Grundy was feeling a little worn by this time.

"I—I promise!" he gasped.

"Good enough!"

So Grundy was allowed to get up.

The car halted at an hotel overlooking the sea, where the party alighted for tea, Grundy indulging, first, in a much-needed wash-and-brush-up.

Over tea Grundy was morose, but the rest of the party did not mind. Arthur Augustus gave orders to the waiters in French, which alone was enough to keep his comrades cheery.

Tom Merry looked at his watch at last, and called for the "addition."

"Just about time to get back for the boat," he said. "If we lose it we shall get a Head's flogging all round, which would really spoil our day out. Get moving!"

Eight fellows piled into the car again, and the chauffeur rocketed back to Boulogne with them. Resources were pooled to pay the chauffeur, and the juniors walked down to the boat. George Alfred Grundy cast a last look at the white-walled casino. A number of tourists were streaming away from the building, down to the boat, and Grundy gave a contemptuous snort.

"Look at that lot!" he said.

"What about them?" asked Tom Merry.

"They've been gambling!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"What beats me is that they ain't jolly well ashamed of themselves," said Grundy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Grundy.

"Bai Jove! You weally do take the cake, Grundy!" said Arthur Augustus, with a chuckle. "You weally are a pwiza-packet, old bean!"

The juniors joined the swarm on the boat, which churned out into the Channel in the warm afternoon. They looked back at the white cliffs of France.

"It's been a jolly day!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"No end of a jolly day, only too short," said Blake. "Have you enjoyed yourself, Grundy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" said Grundy. "I shall be jolly glad when I get off this boat. Half these people have been gambling at the casino. I'm jolly well ashamed of being on the same boat with them. And I don't see anything to cackle at, either."

Evidently the great Grundy had his own way of looking at (Continued on page 24.)

A Sensational Film and Adventure Story!



A Grand Yarn, telling how young Dick Fenton outwits his scheming guardian.

CHAPTER 1.

The Plot Against Dick Fenton!

DICK FENTON closed the book he had been reading with a snap and hurled it viciously across the room, and a second later there came a resounding crash of breaking crockery and glass.

"Oh dear, oh lor', Master Fenton! You'll kill me with your tricks one of these days! Caught me right in the eye that time, you did!"

Dick jumped up from his chair just in time to see Jimson, the old and trusted family butler, drop a tray full of crockery and clap a hand to his right eye.

"Ha, ha, ha! I'm sorry, Jimmy, old bean, but I really can't help laughing. You do look such a comical turn-out! Why didn't you let me know you were coming in?"

"Indeed, sir, Hi not honly knocked at the door, but Hi coughed as Hi entered, which is my usual practice, sir!"

Jimson removed his hand and revealed the fact that he was not so badly damaged by the unexpected blow as he had supposed. Then he turned to Master Dick Fenton, and regarded the heir to a million pounds and a vast estate with a very grave air.

"That's your tonic all gone down and spit," he said.

"And a jolly good job, too," retorted the boy addressed. "I'm fed-up to the eyebrows with medicine and tonics; they're not a bit of good to me. Why can't they let me alone, and let me be like any other kid?"

Jimson held up a pair of horrified hands at this outburst.

"Horders his horders, sir," he mumbled, and bent down to gather up the fragments of glass and mop up the liquid. Then, much to his annoyance, Dick took a flying leap over his bent back. Jimson bobbed up a fraction too early, with the result that they both fell in a heap on the floor.

"Oh dear, Master Dick, you'll be the death of me!" gasped Jimson, all the breath momentarily knocked out of his body.

For a moment the young millionaire sat and laughed at the discomfited manservant. Then he jerked out something that nearly sent the astonished Jimson into fits.

"Don't tell anybody," he said, speaking in confidential tones, "but I'm going

away from here. I'm sick to death of all this molly-coddling, and I'm going miles and miles away. Where I shall finish up I don't know yet."

To say that Jimson was astonished was to put it mildly. He turned slowly round and faced the lad, who was still sitting where he had fallen.

"It ain't true, Master Dick," he said solemnly. "Surely——"

"But it is!" retorted Dick Fenton. "Since my father and mother died I've been fed up to the teeth, and now I've determined to go away and not return until I am old enough to claim my inheritance!"

Jimson remained silent for a few minutes. He was casting his mind back to the old happy days when Sir Harry and Lady Fenton were alive. On their death Mr. Oswald Dearth, Dick's guardian, had taken up his residence at the house, and Jimson, the old butler, was not the only servant who had an intense hatred of him. Indeed, were it not for Master Dick he might have thrown up his job at any minute, in spite of his long years of service.

"Then there's Master Dick himself," thought the grey-haired old Jimson. "At one time he was as strong and healthy a lad as you could wish to find anywhere. Look at 'im now—a shadow of his old self. Bah!"

It had occurred to the faithful old servant on more than one occasion that there was some foul play going on.

"Yes, I've made up my mind at last," continued Dick. "I felt I wanted to tell somebody, and you've been my only friend in this old prison. They pretend I'm an invalid, and that I mustn't go to school or mix with other boys, or even take part in any sports. I feel sure that miserable old doctor that Mr. Dearth sends me doesn't know a thing. Why, I feel weaker after every dose of his beastly old medicine!"

Dick turned to the butler in desperation.

"Don't give me away, will you, Jimson?" he implored. "Be a pal. I'll come back and see you again one day;

but I mean to go out into the world and prove that I'm not such an helpless imbecile as old Dearth thinks."

Jimson got to his feet and helped the young millionaire up, and then he gripped the youngster's hand, although he felt that he was taking a tremendous liberty.

"Very well, Master Dick," he said. "It ain't for the likes o' me to question anything you does. But, lor' bless you, don't think that I shall give you away. An' if there's anything I can do to help you, don't be afraid to ask me!"

Dick Fenton went over and closed the door.

"All right, Jimson," he said. "Get me a long coil of rope, and leave it beneath my bed to-night. Old Dearth watches every movement of mine, and I shall have to do this thing carefully. I'll get away when it's dark. Fortunately I've got a hundred pounds or so in cash that I can take with me!"

The butler picked up his tray containing the broken glass, and prepared to go.

"Very good, Master Dick," he said, "an' look after yourself. I don't believe you're taking a wrong step, that I don't!"

Hardly had Jimson left the room than he heard footsteps coming in his direction. He straightened himself up and walked majestically along the corridor with his head high in the air, as is the usual manner of a well-trained butler. Suddenly the sound of his name caused him to pause.

"Er—Jimson, I've been ringing for you!"

The butler swung round and came face to face with a dark, swarthy-looking man with beady eyes. It was Mr. Oswald Dearth!

"Sorry, sir. I've had a slight haccident, has you can see. Hi upset Master Dick's medicine!"

Mr. Dearth frowned.

"You've been rather a long time, haven't you?" he asked, with a hint of suspicion in his voice. "I've told you before not to worry Master Fenton with your ridiculous conversation. He's not at all well. Please serve coffee for three downstairs. I have some important business visitors—and, Jimson!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Don't forget to get another dose of that medicine for Master Fenton!"

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"Very good, sir!"

The butler continued his journey downstairs, and suddenly a terrible suspicion entered his not too brilliant brain. He recoiled with horror at the very thought of it, but somehow he could not dispel it from his mind. Mr. Dearth was trying to get rid of Master Dick! Killing him by degrees with some slow-working poison.

Jimson shuddered with horror.

"It can't be that!" he muttered, trying to laugh away his thoughts. And yet everything pointed to the truth of it. There was the gradual decline of Dick, the dismissal of the family doctor, and other suspicious circumstances which Jimson had not failed to notice.

"Well, may be it's a good thing that Master Dick's decided to go away," he reflected, with some relief. "I'm thinking Mr. Dearth will get the shock of his life in the morning!"

CHAPTER 2.

Dick Goes West!

IT was nearly a month since Dick Fenton had left the roof of his guardian. Jimson had carried his part of the bargain out faithfully, and stealing into the lad's room early in the morning had removed the rope by which he had made his descent.

Oswald Dearth was furious with rage when he learned that the boy who had been placed in his care had disappeared, leaving not the slightest trace of his movements behind him.

Although Dearth had made discreet inquiries in the district, and further afield, nobody could be found who had even seen the young millionaire.

With the disappearance of Dick, all his deep-laid plans fell to the ground, and the vast wealth which he hoped to obtain seemed farther from his grasp than ever.

He brightened up, though, when one morning there came a letter addressed to the Chestnuts, written in round, boyish writing. Dick Fenton had tried to disguise his handwriting, but failed to deceive the shrewd villain who had schemed to bring about his death.

The envelope was addressed to Jimson, but that worthy never got it. As soon as Oswald Dearth saw the writing he ripped the envelope open, and was not disappointed with the news he found inside.

"Dear Jimson," he read,—"Here is the letter I promised to send you. I expect you are surprised to see the address, but I always wanted to go to America, and now I am here. Chance took me to Arizona, where I found a film company who are making cowboy pictures, so I joined up with them, and although I don't get much money, there's plenty of thrilling adventures.

"It's a great life! I feel twice as strong since I've been out West, and shall not come back till I'm old enough to tell old Dearth what I think of him. More next time.—Yours,

"DICK FENTON, Texville, Arizona."

Oswald Dearth's hand shook with suppressed rage as he read, and re-read the startling letter.

"I might have known that old fool Jimson knew something about it," he murmured. "I'll teach him to interfere with my plans, I'll—"

But Oswald Dearth did not finish his sentence, for at that moment the sound of footsteps reached his ears, and a second later there stood in front of him none other than Jimson himself.

Dearth turned guiltily, and, crumpling up the accusing letter, he thrust it into

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his pocket. For a moment he stood glaring at the old butler, his fingers itching to get at the man's throat, to shake the life out of him like a rat. But he held back, telling himself that now was not the time to obtain his revenge.

"Mr. Rupert Grange to see you, sir!" The words came softly, uttered in level tones, although Jimson could not have failed to notice the embarrassment of his master. But Oswald Dearth was not at a loss for long.

"Show him into my study, Jimson," he said, in pleasant, suave tones, forcing a smile to his face. "I'll be down in a minute."

"Hallo, Grange," said Dearth, entering his study a few minutes later. "There's news of the bird at last. Just read that!"

He tossed Dick's letter across the table to Grange.

Grange read it and presently glanced up, his brow furrowed.

"Arizona?" he gasped in surprise. "What made the little idiot go out there? By Jove, that's dished our little game, eh, Dearth? No chance of getting him out of the way now. I suppose he smelt a rat and hooked it!"

Oswald Dearth took out one of his expensive cigars, lit it, and blew a thin wisp of smoke, which he watched, fascinated for a moment. He was a picture of coolness now as he turned to his friend.

"How dull you are to-night, Grange," he remarked calmly. "Nobody would have thought it was you who hatched that other plot that netted us fifty thousand!"

The man addressed sprang to his feet and glanced nervously towards the door.

"Hist!" he whispered, putting up a warning finger. "Don't speak too loud. You never know who's listening. That stunt would get me ten years easy if the truth was known!"

Dearth laughed mirthlessly.

"Don't worry, Grange!" he retorted. "There's nobody about! Listen!"

He drew nearer to his fellow conspirator.

"Don't you see that the disappearance of young Fenton is the finest thing that could have happened for us? It'll be easier than ever to get rid of the kid, and no coroner's inquests, either. Accidents easily happen out West. Why, chaps get knifed and fall over precipices every day out there, and nobody thinks about it for more than five minutes!"

Oswald Dearth was purposely exaggerating, but he made the other grasp his point.

"Tragic End of Wealthy Adventure-Seeker! Killed While Making Films. A fine story for the newspapers"—he laughed callously—"and what is more important, a cool million for us!"

"Ha, ha!" Grange joined in the merriment.

"I begin to see your point," he said; "but how is that—er—accident you talk of going to be fixed up?"

"That's just where you come in, Grange. Young Fenton has never seen you. All you have to do is to start for Texville, Arizona, to-morrow. Get a job as a film actor in the same company, or disguise yourself as a cowboy, and watch the kid's movements. Then, when your opportunity comes, nobble him, or if you don't want to do the job yourself, it's easy enough to find a couple of rough-neck cowboys in Arizona who'll be glad enough to make a bit of easy money!"

Dearth rubbed his hands in eager anticipation of the guilty gold.

"What do you think of that idea, my boy?"

Rupert Grange grinned.

"Not so bad," he answered. "You can safely leave a thing like that in my hands, but—er—of course, I shall need a bit of cash on account. I'm deucedly hard up. Expenses to America are heavy, and you know I like to travel first-class."

Oswald Dearth reluctantly drew out his cheque-book. He realised he was playing for high stakes and must pay the price.

"How much is it this time?" he asked.

Grange smiled pleasantly and helped himself to a cigar from his friend's gold case.

"A thousand will do, old chap!"

He looked up, half-expecting a refusal. Oswald Dearth went over to his desk and wrote out a cheque for the sum.

"Here you are," he said. "I never knew a chap who ran through cash as you do, but seeing that you are doing the lion's share of the work this time, I suppose I mustn't grumble!"

Rupert Grange accepted the cheque with a careless sort of air, and placed it in his wallet.

"I'll start at once," he said, "and I will cable you as soon as I get to the other side! I shall have to have a look round the place first, and shall probably need some more cash, but don't worry. Dearth, old man, I'll see the thing through all right. So long!"

Oswald Dearth sank down into his luxurious chair after the departure of Rupert Grange, and his thoughts once more turned to Jimson, the butler. Although he had no proof, he felt certain that the old servant had assisted Dick Fenton to make his escape, and he was itching to make him pay the penalty for having crossed his path, and incidentally upset all his original plans.

Discretion, however, got the better of Dearth's desire for vengeance, and, after turning the matter over in his mind, he decided not to interfere with Jimson for the present.

After all, he was useful in the house, and if he were sacked it might cause people in the district who were well acquainted with him to talk. No, he would let the butler stay where he was for the present. There would be plenty of time to deal with him later on.

With these thoughts in his mind, Dearth got up with the intention of going to his room and retiring for the night. But once again his peace of mind was to be disturbed.

Going out into the corridor, he once more blundered into the object of his wrath; for at that moment Jimson happened to be walking along the corridor, carrying a tray and some empty glasses. It is true that there was nothing in this action to arouse suspicion. The butler was going about his duties, removing apparently the glasses which Dearth and some friends had left in the billiards-room earlier in the evening. But the mere sight of him seemed to get on Dearth's nerves, and this time there was good reason; for, hiding in an ante-room next to the study, Jimson had overheard every word of the plot between the two schemers. With his head in the air, Jimson passed on down the corridor, leaving Oswald Dearth staring vacantly after him.

CHAPTER 3.

Face to Face.

WHEN Rupert Grange walked into the wooden shanty which did duty as the office of Hiram B. Higson, director of the Cowboy Cinema Company, Texville, he was a vastly-changed man. In place of the well-groomed Society man, stood an unshaven, dishevelled-looking cowboy.

On his head was an old broad-brimmed Stetson, which he had picked up for a dollar at a second-hand clothing-store.

Hiram Higson chewed at the end of his cigar as he sized up the man in front of him.

"So you're broke, and want a job in this outfit—eh?" he drawled. "Waal, I dessey we kin fit you in amongst the extras. What's yer name, stranger?"

"Ted Johnson!"

Hiram made a note of the name, and then glanced up at the man again.

"Ride a horse?" he asked.

The other nodded.

"Five dollars a day is what you'll git!" went on the producer. "An' that's more'n you'd earn at regular work on a ranch in these parts! I always pay my men well, an', believe me, stranger, I make 'em work! You'll get enough hard ridin' by the time you're through here to make you wish you'd never come into movies!"

Ted Johnson, alias Rupert Grange, grinned to himself. The stakes he was angling for were worth a good deal more than the modest five dollars the producer offered him. He had done a fair amount of riding and hunting, and would therefore be pretty much at home on a horse. And as for the hardships—well, he would have to put up with them for a time.

Hiram Higson handed Grange a ticket, which showed that he was duly signed on as a member of the Cowboy Cinema Company.

"You'll find some of the others hanging about outside," he said. "Get one of 'em to take you to the store, an' you kin get fixed up with a horse and an outfit of harness! The sun won't be right for another hour yet; you'll know soon enough when I want you."

Rupert Grange had not gone very far, when he came upon a group of men who were squatting on the ground, engaged in a game of cards. Some distance away were a number of horses grazing peacefully. He stood for a moment watching the men, when suddenly somebody dashed by him on horseback. Rupert Grange started back involuntarily.

"Dick Fenton!" he gasped beneath his breath, and moved away as though to seek shelter.

The suddenness with which the villain had come face to face with the lad had temporarily unnerved him; but, remembering his successful disguise, Grange soon recovered his composure.

Dick Fenton was amusing himself by doing a little horse-riding until it was time to begin work again, and he had chosen a very spirited animal for the purpose, too. Once again he came very near to his guardian's friend, but this time Grange had complete control of

himself, and he did not betray his knowledge by so much as a flick of an eyelid.

"Mustn't let the brat know anything," he reflected; "that would soon spoil our little game!"

Rupert Grange could not help noticing what a change there was in the young millionaire. And this was only to be expected, since he had by this time thrown off the effects of the poisoned medicine. The hot, sunny clime, and the outdoor life, too, had made a vast difference to Dick.

Rupert Grange was already formulating his plans for action, and as he gazed into the faces of some of the cow-punchers he knew that he would have little difficulty in obtaining help for his nefarious scheme. It would require patience, and the expenditure of money; but he had come provided with ample funds for this purpose.

Presently Hiram B. Higson came on the scene, together with the star actor and leading lady and his camera-man.

"Principals only," he shouted through a megaphone.

The assistant producer had a few words of consultation with the chief, and returned with the news that the "crowd" would not be wanted for some time, as some scenes were to be taken in which the leading artistes only were to take part.

This news caused great glee amongst



"Oh dear!" cried Jimson, as the tray of medicine fell to the ground with a crash. "There's your tonic all gone and spilt!" He bent down to gather up the fragments of glass. Then, much to his annoyance, Dick Fenton took a flying leap over his bent back.

the man and file, who received their money all the time they were on the books, whether they worked or not, and they returned with renewed interest to their various diversions.

Rupert Grange had already made friends with a swarthy-looking puncher, half Mexican and half American, and, at his suggestion, he readily walked down to the saloon at the outskirts of Texville.

If there was one thing that Grange really prided himself on, it was his power to read character, and he made no mistake when he selected the half-breed Mesa to be his accomplice. In about half an hour he knew as much about Texville and its inhabitants as if he had been living in the place for a year.

Mesa, he learned, was a member of Black Benham's gang, and at one time Black Benham was an outlaw, who lived by cattle-rustling, and other Western crimes. The leader, however, had acted nobly in saving the life of a sheriff, and he had since been pardoned on condition that he went straight in future. And to his credit it must be stated that he had never once gone back on his word.

Hiram B. Higson, with his usual enterprise, had hired Benham and his whole gang to play the outlaw part in his new film, "A Bandit's Pluck," and most of the rank and file were more than satisfied with their earnings from this source.

Hiram, too, was delighted with his share of the bargain, for the reckless riding and daredevilry of the bandits was all he wished for. There were a few of the gang, however, of which Mesa was one, who had a grudge against Benham, and they were only waiting for an opportunity to get even with him.

Rupert Grange was now lounging carelessly up against the bar of the saloon; and, taking out his well-filled cigarette-case, he passed it over.

"Have a smoke, stranger?" he asked.

Mesa needed no second invitation. He stretched forth a grimy hand and helped himself to half a dozen cigarettes, and then, sticking one of them in his mouth, he grunted out a word of thanks. The swarthy Mexican very soon learned that this generous visitor was not in Texville for his health, or for the sole purpose of making films; but as he appeared to have plenty of

ready money, and was not afraid to spend it, he didn't bother.

For a quarter of an hour or more Mesa fumed about his grievances against Black Benham, and Rupert Grange listened patiently to all the half-breed had to say. He pretended that he also hated the reformed outlaw, although so far he had not yet clapped eyes on him. Then, having got the ear of the Mexican, the crafty Grange proceeded by easy stages to what was to him a much more important subject.

"Is there a youngster about sixteen in this outfit?" he asked casually.

"Yes, meester!"

"What's he like?"

The Mexican proceeded to give a description, and Grange noted with satisfaction that he was well acquainted with the appearance of Dick Fenton.

"E not mix much with us," explained Mesa. "E friendly with Meester Higson an' Black Benham; we no like for 'em!"

"Good!"

The half-breed glanced up sharply at Rupert Grange's exclamation.

"E no good to you—eh, meester?"

Grange shook his head.

"His father ruined me!" came the lying retort. "That is why I am like this—an outcast! I would give anything to get even with him!"

The Mexican's eyes sparkled with greed, for, with the usual cunning of his race, he saw an excellent opportunity to make some money.

"Mesa help you," he said cringingly.

Rupert Grange glanced around him nervously, but was satisfied to find there was nobody in this low drinking-den of whom he need be afraid. He edged nearer to his swarthy fellow-conspirator.

"I want you to get hold of Dick Fenton," he whispered. "Get him out of the camp, and keep him a prisoner somewhere until I see you again. There'll be two hundred dollars each for you and your friends when the job's done. Do you understand?"

Mesa nodded, and accepted with profuse thanks the dollar notes which his new-found friend thrust into his hand. Then, feeling mighty pleased with himself, Rupert Grange strode rapidly away, leaving Mesa to make the journey back by himself.

CHAPTER 4.

Captured by Bandits.

"NOW then, young Fenton, get ready! Here's your real chance coming along to make a name in movies. When Bill waves his stick, that's your cue. You jest gotter ride down that gulch as though your life depended on it; then when yer come to the stream, Black Benham and his gang'll come riding down from the hills, an' they'll fair pepper you with shots; but they won't hurt, 'cos they know where they're shooting. See?"

Dick nodded, and Hiram went on with his instructions.

"When you hear the first shot," he continued, "jump off the back of your horse, catch hold of his bridle with one hand, and then swim across the stream. When you get to the other bank, wait for further instructions. Got that?"

"Yes, I quite understand," replied Dick, who was waiting eagerly to perform his part.

Up to now the lad had only been playing in-crowd parts; but he had pleaded to be given a chance to show what he could do, and the producer had written a special part for him. Hiram B. Higson had, in fact, taken quite a liking to the young millionaire, although he had not the slightest idea of his true history.

The producer was very well pleased with himself just now. Everything was going well, and "The Bandit's Pluck" was to be the picture of his life.

"We're goin' to clean up big on this, Bill," he said gleefully to his assistant. "Action and thrills, that's what I give 'em. Camera man all ready? That's good! Now then, Bill, off you go. Stand over there just by the gulch so as this young whippersnapper can see you all right!"

As the assistant made off Hiram turned to a weather-stained, hefty-looking westerner, who, with a dozen other men seated on restless, prancing horses, were standing by in readiness.

"Are you all here?"

"Four missing, boss," returned Black Benham bluntly. "That Mexican, Mesa, and three other galoots!"

Hiram B. Higson shifted his inevitable cigar from one side of his mouth to the other.

"Drat 'em!" he growled. "There's always something wrong when I'm ready to take! Can't wait any longer! I'll stop their pay to-night; that'll teach 'em!"

Black Benham, the ex-outlaw, was a man of few words, but by a grim nod he showed that he was fully in agreement with that course. He was no lover of Mesa and his cronies, who were always making trouble of some sort.

Dick had now ridden over to his station where Bill was waiting out of range of the camera to give the signal, when he in turn received the "all right" from Hiram Higson.

There were a few preliminaries to see to first, and the camera had to be adjusted for the long-shot that would take in the whole thrilling scene. Then at last Bill waved his stick, and at that moment a boyish figure seated on horseback came charging down the hillside. The lad bent down, well in the saddle, recklessly urging the animal on to faster and faster speed. Then horse and rider swerved alarmingly, and it seemed every second as though Dick must crash to the ground.

"Fine, fine! What a picture!" gasped Hiram B. Higson enthusiastically. "You got all that, did you, camera man?"

"Yep, boss! I got it!"

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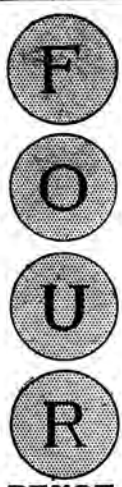
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As the bandits bore down to the edge of the stream, Fenton was halfway across, swimming manfully with one hand, whilst he held the bridle of his horse with the other. Guns were flashing and bullets were whistling all around him.

As swift as the wind Dick rode on, right to the edge of the stream, the horse kicking up clouds of dust as he went. Then, with a clatter of hoofs and a wild yelling, came the bandits. Swiftly they bore down on the young horseman. Guns flashed and a fusillade of shots spat all round him.

Black Benham, in front, was booming out in a big voice, urging his men onward; and then suddenly one of the men in the rear toppled headlong from his saddle and crashed heavily to the ground.

"It's that new guy!" muttered Hiram Higson. "Thought he didn't look much of a cowpuncher! But never mind; it'll all help the picture. Darn good fall, that! Hope he ain't hurt much. Turn up, camera man!"

The others rode on, leaving Rupert Grange, alias Ted Johnson, lying deathly still on the ground. But Hiram had no time to deal with casualties now. He was watching Dick Fenton, who by this time was half-way across the raging stream, swimming manfully with one hand, while grasping the bridle of the horse with the other.

"By heck, the kid's a good 'un!" roared Higson excitedly. "It's the real stuff! Turn up, camera man! Now then, you dog-gone outlaws, shoot him up! Make it look real, you big stiff! Put a punch in it!"

The bandits had now halted on the edge of the stream, the idea being that the water was too deep and dangerous for them to continue the pursuit that way. Then came a bit of play-acting, in which Black Benham, depicting a look of baffled rage, called his men together to find some other means of capturing their prize. And a moment later Hiram B. Higson drew up with them.

"Splendid scene that—splendid!" he exclaimed, full of praise. "Sure, that

was a fine bit of horse-ridin'. By the way, there's one of your chaps in trouble over there; better take him over to my shack, and see what's wrong with him. I'll—Great Scott! What's happening?"

Glancing round to see that Dick Fenton was in no trouble, an astonishing scene met Hiram Higson's gaze. The others turned instantly, and saw four men dart swiftly from behind a ridge of hills on the other bank of the stream, clutch hold of the young film actor, and carry him swiftly away.

"Well, I'm fair nicked!" gasped Hiram B. Higson. "If that stunt in my scenario I'll eat my camera!"

It was Black Benham who first cast some light on the puzzling occurrence.

"That's Mesa," he said, "an' them three galoots o' mine up to no good!"

For a moment Hiram and his men stood paralysed with amazement. Then at the far end of the ridge they saw four horsemen riding swiftly away, and seated on one of the animals, in front of Mesa, was Dick Fenton.

"Kidnapped, b'gosh!" muttered Hiram. "What the dickens does it all mean?"

"Say the word, boss, and we'll get him back for you," put in Black Benham, who had already cast aside the property cinema pistol, and had drawn his own businesslike six-shooter.

Higson was still staring vacantly after the rapidly disappearing horsemen, unable to believe his eyes. He glanced at Black Benham, but was loth to think that the ex-outlaw had played him false, or that he knew anything about Mesa's treachery.

"All right, boys!" he barked. "See if you can catch up with them Mexican trash, and get the kid back. If you

take the stream farther down you'll find it shallow enough to wade across."

Hiram Higson was going on to say that he'd make it all right for them if they succeeded, but Black Benham had already started on the chase, and, with a wild whoop, the remainder of his gang joined in.

Soon they were racing headlong after the treacherous Mesa.

Hiram next turned his attention to the man he thought to be Ted Johnson, and, seeing that he was lying still on the ground, he began to grow alarmed. A brief examination showed that he had indeed received a severe injury, and he was quite unconscious.

"Here, give me a hand, Bill," he said to his assistant producer.

Lifting the inert form of "Johnson" up, the two bore him along to Hiram's shack.

Higson got out his first-aid outfit, and attended to a deep wound in the man's head.

"He's had a bad knock!" he muttered. "Concussion of the brain, it looks to me! Let him lie there on the couch a bit."

Hiram and his assistant took turns in watching beside the silent man, whose face was deathly pale. Although a considerable time had passed since the accident, he showed no signs whatever of returning to consciousness. Soon it became apparent that he was taking a turn for the worse. And a few minutes later the patient turned delirious.

Higson tried everything he knew to bring relief, but at last he was forced to shake his head solemnly.

"I don't like the look of him at all," he remarked gravely. "He won't last much longer. What's that he's saying?"

Bill looked up with a solemn expression on his good-natured, round face,

and he turned towards the injured man, from whose lips came a stream of unintelligible mutterings.

"Listen, boss," he said, holding up a warning finger for silence. "It's plainer now."

"Dick—Fenton—dead. My money—"

Several times the dying man uttered the lad's name, then came a jumbled reference to "a letter containing proof" and mention of Mesa. But the words were all so confused that neither Hiram nor Bill could make anything of it. The two men stared at each other in perplexity.

What could it all mean, and what had this man to do with Dick Fenton and Mesa? Suddenly Hiram recalled the strange kidnapping of the young film actor, and he became even more puzzled, for Ted Johnson had fallen from his horse and received the injury before that occurrence.

They bent still closer to the man, hoping to pick up some more words from the tangled mutterings of his fevered tongue. But his voice had sunk now to a mere whisper, and a few minutes later Rupert Grange, giving a long-drawn-out sigh of exhaustion, breathed his last.

Hiram B. Higson covered the dead man over, and hardly had he completed his task, before the sound of horses' hoofs reached his ears. Dashing to the door of the shack, he saw that the quest had been successful.

"We sure got them dagoes," said the outlaw leader; "but it was a rare chase, an' if we hadn't cut 'em off just below the Pine Ridge mountains they'd have slipped us, boss. It 'ud take a hundred men a month ter dig 'em out of that stronghold!"

"Well done!" said Hiram enthusiastically. "I see you've got our young film actor back safe and sound, too!"

With a grin on his face, Dick jumped from his horse and joined Black Benham, who had already dismounted.

It had all been a thrilling adventure to him to be captured by real bandits, and he did not seem to realise the grave danger he had escaped.

Hiram B. Higson walked over to Benham, and pointed to the bandits, each of whom had the noose of a lasso round his neck, so that there should not be any possibility of escape.

"You'd better get them down," said the producer. "I want to have a few words with Mesa; there's a bit of a mystery to be cleared up."

He was thinking of the incoherent words the dead man had uttered.

"It's all right, boss," put in Black Benham. "We outlaws 'as a way of dealing with the likes of them gentry. It's a sure fine way of making 'em speak. We just stuck Mesa up against a tree, an' got a couple of our crack shots to fire a few bullets at 'im. When

they'd done there was the outline of the greaser as plain as anything on that thar tree, all done in bullet-holes. Then we asked Mesa if he'd like 'em to see if they shoot a bit nearer without hitting 'im, but he shook his head, an' was willing to answer any questions we asked him. Yes; it's a fine way of making a fellow speak, boss."

"Then you know everything?" asked Hiram excitedly. "And the reason for this strange occurrence?"

Black Benham nodded.

"An' so does this youngster," he returned, indicating Dick. "Maybe he kin tell you all about it better'n I kin."

After suitably rewarding Black Benham, and seeing that Mesa and the others were in a safe place until they could be handed over to the sheriff to be dealt with, Hiram B. Higson took Dick into his shack. There the youngster told the kindly producer all he had learnt from Mesa. And if further proof were needed of the guilt of Rupert Grange and his strange allies, it was found in a letter which Hiram discovered in the dead man's pockets. This was in the form of an agreement between Rupert Grange and Dick's rascally guardian, and even stated how much the former was to receive when the job was finished.

"The 'job' was to cause your death, Dick," he said, "so that they could have your inheritance; but fortunately the scheme went wrong."

Bill, the assistant, who had been listening to the conversation in dumb-founded astonishment, at last ventured to speak.

"Great Scott!" he gasped. "We've had a blinking millionaire working for us, boss, and we didn't know it!"

Hiram lost no time in cabling to England and setting the police on the track of the villainous Oswald Dearth, and at Dick's request everything was put into the hands of the faithful old Jimson, whom he knew would be able to look after his estate and other interests.

Dick does not intend to give up film work altogether, and after a brief visit to England with Hiram he intends to return once more to the Land of Adventure. **THE END.**

(Look out next week for a splendid story of mystery and adventure, entitled: "THE LURE OF LIME-HOUSE!")

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The Surrey County Cricket Club commenced in 1846, but the county had played matches nearly a hundred years earlier. Surrey shares with Yorkshire and Nottingham the distinction of having gained the championship eleven times. At present the Oval team is a very strong one, with such men as Fender, great hitter and versatile bowler, Hobbs, the globe's most renowned batsman, etc.

"GRUNDY'S GAME!"

(Continued from page 18.)

things. The processes of his powerful intellect were fearful and wonderful.

"Well, here's Folkestone," said Tom Merry.

And the juniors streamed ashore with the crowd of trippers, and bundled into their train.

Tom Merry & Co. were given lines for being late for call-over that evening. They did not mind very much. They reflected upon what they might have received, had Mr. Railton guessed that they had spent the whole holiday in a trip abroad. Probably from the talk among the juniors afterwards, Mr. Railton did guess; but he said nothing. The Housemaster knew what fellows he could trust, and Tom Merry & Co. were numbered among them. But it was very fortunate that he never discovered Grundy's object in taking that trip across the Channel. All Grundy's excellent motives, and all his wonderful mental

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processes by which he proved to himself that common or garden rules did not apply to him, would not have saved him from being made an example of.

"St. Jim's won!" said Wilkins, when the juniors came up to the studies. "Beat Greyfriars by seven runs."

"Good!" said Tom Merry.

"And how about Grundy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've been interfered with by a set of silly fags," said Grundy. "I've lost my system, and the game's up. I've a jolly good mind to thrash the whole crowd all round now we're back." ♦

"Oh, do!" urged Blake.

"No," said Grundy, "I'll let you off. A set of silly kids like you don't understand, and I'll let you off on account of your ignorance. You're getting off lightly, I can tell you."

And Grundy stalked away—not in the least aware that it was George Alfred Grundy who was getting off lightly. But Tom Merry & Co. did not mind. They had had a ripping day out, and enjoyed their holiday, and they were satisfied—especially with having put so effectual an extinguisher upon Grundy's Game.

THE END.

(There will be another ripping story of Tom Merry and Co. next week. Make a note of the title: "RUSHDEN'S FOLLY!" By Martin Clifford. It is a treat of a yarn and should not be missed on any account.)

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TOM COMPTON, a young piecer, formerly of Barton's Mills, sets out to track down the "Spider," whose evil power has become the curse of Lancashire.

Mill after mill has suffered at the hands of this treacherous foe. At last Tom, by chance, actually catches the Spider in Barton's Mill. He gives chase, but the Spider, a sinister figure in blue goggles, makes good his escape. He drops a pocket-book, however, from which Tom Compton obtains valuable information.

Later, another mill is threatened, and Peter Grant, the manager, calls for Compton's assistance. Tom hurries to the scene, and is just in time to avert disaster. After this Tom receives a strange message—a call for help from Mr. Kane, who is made prisoner by the Spider in an old hulk out at sea. Tom effects a rescue, and a fierce fight with the Spider's men ensues. Tom makes good his escape, however, only to find that Kane has mysteriously disappeared again. Stiff and tired, he moves off to retrieve his bicycle.

All trace of Morton Kane being lost, Tom next makes tracks for headquarters. Pedalling hard and fast in the direction of Duncheater, he again encounters the Spider's men, but their attempt to run him down proves futile.

Reaching Hargreave Buildings in safety, he rushes noiselessly up to Kane's private office, and is just in time to see a picture slide back into position, covering a secret exit from the room. He is turning the matter over in his mind when there is the sound of footsteps, the office door opens, and in walks Morton Kane himself.

(Now read on.)

Revealed at Last!

"YOU, Tom Compton!" exclaimed Kane. "How did you get here?"

"I came up the staircase, sir," said Tom. "I didn't know the way through the wall. I'm glad to see you safe."

"I've had a terrible time," said Kane wearily, sinking into a chair.

He was rather pale, and looked very tired. Tom took particular notice of his eyes. One of them was bloodshot, but nothing more.

"When those ruffians boarded the hulk this morning," said the millionaire, "after we were separated, they flung me into one of their boats, and rowed away. I heard a terrific row behind by the hulk, but I couldn't see anything of you."

"There was rather a noise," said Tom. "Two of the brutes were sitting on me in the bottom of the boat," continued Kane. "Which way we were going I could not tell. I expected every moment that one of them would slip a knife into me, and heave me over with a pig of lead ballast at my heels, and no one was more

surprised that I when the day broke and found me still alive. Just about dawn a launch came alongside—an oil-motor launch."

"I saw her," said Tom; "but I'll tell you my tale later."

"There was somebody on board the launch whom I am almost sure was the Spider," said Kane; "but I had little chance of seeing anything. I was gagged and blindfolded, and put in the launch's cabin. She travelled at a great rate, as I could tell by the sound, and some hours later she stopped—I think, alongside some quay or wharf. Before she arrived there, however, I was rolled up in rags, and put in some sort of a sack—I believe it was a yacht's sail-bag—and in that I was carried ashore over somebody's shoulder, and put, sack and all, in what I suppose was a private store or boat-house for the launch. I was left there some time, and then taken away again, and, after some travelling, I found myself in a small house in a very evil quarter of the town, guarded by three of the Spider's men."

"Ah!" said Tom.

"They took out my gag, and unbound my eyes then. I was given some food. Now, what vexes me more than anything else is that I was unable to find out what the enemy's plan was. Why was I brought into a populous city, when I might have been put out of the way by night at sea, with not a shred of evidence against anyone?"

"I think I can tell you, sir," said Tom. "Bodies come ashore on that coast, however securely they're weighted and sunk. I had already seen you in the hands of your captors, and they couldn't be sure whether I was finished or not. I might live to expose the business. Their dodge was to keep you in hiding till it was known that my mouth was stopped for good, and then it would be safer and easier to put you or anybody else out of the way in the slums of Liverpool than in most places in this country. The police can tell you that."

"By Jove, you've hit it!" said Kane, striking his knee with his hand, and rising to pace the room. "That's it, of course! Trust you to see through a plot, Tom! Well, I haven't told you yet how I escaped; but that was very simple, though unusual with the enemies we're dealing with. Can you guess it?"

"You bribed the men heavily to let you go, sir," said Tom.

"Bribed them!" exclaimed Kane. "Why, boy, don't you know there's not a man in that gang dare take any bribe, great or small, to betray his master or his comrades?"

"Except in Liverpool, sir," said Tom.

"There, with an order on the local bank for a really big sum apiece and the certainty of getting away to the ends of the world by one of half a dozen ships as soon as they'd got the cash, out of reach of the Spider's vengeance, they'd do it, of course. It was nearly half-flood when the launch reached Liverpool. At high-water your gaoles could be aboard ship and bound for South America, with £1,000 apiece in their pockets."

Kane chuckled.

"You're right in every detail, Tom," he said. "That's just what happened, except that I had to give them open cheques for £1,500 apiece, made out to myself and endorsed. I gave them letters to the bank, too, and I suppose they got the money all right. I hope they'll start afresh in America and make an honest living, for a change. Now let's hear your story."

Tom told it briefly, and without embroidery, leaving out a few details which he thought were best kept to himself.

"We're both well out of it!" said Kane, with some excitement. "But we've got a good clue. Tom, I shall stay and follow the matter up here with all my resources, and you must go back to Liverpool and put every scrap of your wits into tracing that launch and finding what the Spider does there."

There was a pause.

"If you don't mind my saying so, sir," said Tom slowly, "I think that would be a waste of time."

"Not at all—not at all!" said Kane. "Don't look too far into this, Tom. Don't ask my reasons. I can tell you this. By the time you come back with your report from Liverpool, I shall have the Spider and his gang fast in gaol, and yours will be the last link of evidence I want to complete the chain and crush them."

Tom said no more on that head, but he allowed himself a private wink.

"By the way, sir," he said sympathetically, "have you hurt your eye? It is badly blood-shot."

"Nothing much," said Kane. "They handled me pretty roughly when they blindfolded me, and the bandage was forced into my eye."

"It was a nasty fix to be in," said Tom. "By the way, you got back pretty quick, sir."

"There was no time to lose," said Kane. "I took a special train right through; but you beat me, you see. I've only just arrived."

"I came by motor-cycle," said Tom; "but, of course, it must have been nearly eleven when they let you go. Well, good-morning, sir!"

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Like a flash, Compton darted forward, tore the goggles and eyeshade from the Spider's face and snatched at his hair. They came away in his hands, and Tom saw before him Morton Kane.

inch by inch. It took him an hour, but he pressed and handled every part. "No way through there," he said, at last.

And then, even as he said the words, he felt something move in the wall under the pressure of his palm, and a large square of the wall swung slowly inwards towards him like a door.

"By George!" he muttered. "Found at last! That's where the unknown spy enters!"

He stepped to the opening that was shown, and looked up and down it. It opened on to a narrow, dark lift-shaft that ran from basement to roof of the whole great building. Far below his feet it went down, and far up as well, to where a ground-glass skylight roofed it in.

"This is a discovery," said Tom to himself, his spirits rising again. "That wall opposite is the inner wall of the Spider's part of the building. The shaft separates his from ours."

At each floor, up and down the shaft, there was a recess, with a door. The square that opened in Tom's office wall was one of these doors, though on the inner side there was nothing to show its existence.

A large pulley-wheel hung at the top from an iron beam just below the skylight, and over this wheel ran a steel rope, its two lengths running right from top to bottom of the shaft. Looking down, Tom saw a little lift-platform far below.

He reached out and pulled one of the wire ropes downwards. It answered with ease, and the lift-platform began to rise up. Tom pulled it up to his own door, and stepped carefully upon it.

As he expected, it was so weighted that by hauling gently on one or other of the ropes one might easily work himself up or down the shaft past all the doors.

Tom ran himself up a little way, and then started down. He paused at every floor, and inspected the door on the opposite side carefully. Two floors below he paused, and thought for a moment.

"By George," he said to himself, "this must be the very one!"

On this, as on the shaft side of the others, there was an ordinary door-handle, however secret the inner side might be. Tom put out his hand towards it, and then paused. His heart beat fast.

"Shall I, or shall I not?" he thought.

Then, grasping the handle, he turned it quietly, and very slowly pushed the door inward.

Tom stepped without a sound into the room it revealed, and found his calculations were correct. He was in the private office of the Spider himself.

It was a map that screened the inside of the door—a map of Dunchester city. It swung back neatly into its place again as Tom entered the room. All was as he had seen it the last time. The same dust and gloom lay over everything. The same great safe stood in the middle, and before it the same wide desk.

Above all, at the desk sat the Spider himself. Like some brooding vulture he bent over his work, the blue goggles over his eyes, and an eye-shade on his forehead. The black cloak hung on a peg behind him.

So quietly had Tom entered, so engrossed was the Spider in his work, that he was unaware of the boy's presence.

"Be quick about that work, Tom," said Kane, as the boy took his leave. "Take a rest first, or you'll be fit for nothing; but go ahead like steam afterwards, for the trail's hot. I want that news from Liverpool at once."

"Very good, sir!" said Tom.

He went down the stairs to the next floor, where his own room was, and shut himself in.

"Start for Liverpool?" muttered Tom. "Not much!"

It might be thought that Tom was relieved and cheered by his interview with Kane. Instead, he was more gloomy and despondent than he had been before.

All had fallen out so well. Kane had seized his opportunity, and escaped unscathed. The enemy were left where they were before; their deep-laid plans had fallen through. The dark suspicions the boy had formed, in spite of himself, should be dissipated. So it seemed.

But Tom had a gift of reading between the lines and he was not encouraged now by what that faculty showed him. He did not like what he read.

"Pray to goodness I'm wrong!" he muttered. "Now, let's see."

He went out and made his way quickly to the railway-station, where, keeping his eyes about him, he bought a ticket for Liverpool. He went to the platform; there was a train about to start, but he did not get into it. Instead, he strolled up to the station-master, who was standing by.

"Have you had a special train in to-day from Liverpool?" asked Tom civilly.

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"No," said the station-master, in surprise. "Haven't had one for a week."

Just then a ticket-inspector came up. "That special Morton Kane came in cost him a pretty penny, sir!" said the inspector to the station-master. "They had to hustle to get in here in the time he wanted it."

"What do you mean?" said the station-master angrily. "There's been no special. How could there be, and I not know it?"

Tom waited but another minute, and then putting his ticket to Liverpool in his pocket, returned to the office, and went up to his room again.

"The ticket-inspector lied!" he said to himself gloomily. "Who paid him to lie, just at that particular moment? There was no special train."

He thought for a minute, and then, used as he was to blows below the belt from his enemies, a kind of despair seized him.

"Is there no end to it?" he muttered savagely. "Is there no quarter in which I can look for loyalty? Lies and trickery, trickery and lies, everywhere!"

He looked round the room.

"Why, this very place of mine is ransacked and spied upon day by day, though I always leave the inner room double-locked! All my shelves are gone through. Here's some cigarette-ash on the floor, too."

"The doors are fitted with Yale locks—I had them made myself—and the only keys are in my possession. No others can fit. How is the room entered?"

He cast an eye over his shelves grimly, and then examined the walls

Tom took a step forward. The Spider raised his head, and the blue goggles stared at the boy. Both looked at each other in silence.

"So it is you!" said the arch-villain, in his silkiest tones.

"Yes, it is I," said Tom hoarsely, taking another step forward, "and I have come to see who you really are, you unspeakable scoundrel—to see who you really are, without your cloak and your goggles, and your infernal theatrical make-up! Who are you?"

And, like a flash, darting forward, he tore the goggles and eye-shade from the Spider's face and snatched at his hair. They came away in his hands, stripped from their place at last, showing the man as he was, with no touch of art or skill to disguise him, and Tom saw before him Morton Kane!

The man rose slowly in his seat, and so awful was the look of rage on his face that Tom recoiled in spite of himself.

"You?" he gasped. "You fend! Then the Spider is Morton Kane!"

"The two are one!" replied the arch-criminal; and he bent his glittering

eyes on Tom. "I am the Spider, and I am Morton Kane. And you are a dead man!"

For the first time in his life, as Tom's eyes met those of Kane, he felt a thrill of physical fear of his enemy. The two glared at each other in silence for some moments.

The look of fury on the arch-villain's face was appalling. His eyes, cold and steely, seemed to hold all the fierceness and cruelty of a wild beast, with the brain of a great man behind to back it up. Then slowly the anger died out of his face, and the cold, sneering expression seemed to close over it like a mask.

The truth at last! Kane was the Spider—the Spider was Kane! The great philanthropist, whom the world believed to be fighting the evil influence, was the influence himself. Tom had unmasked him, and the boy guessed what the penalty would be. Had he known of this before, Tom would have laid his plans differently.

"So," said the Spider quietly—for it was still as the Spider that Tom knew him best—"you have answered the riddle. You have dared to lay hands on

me in my own citadel, and you will have to pay the penalty! You seem surprised."

"Nothing can surprise me in this plague-stricken city," replied Tom. "I was a little sick to find the one power in Dunchester that I thought worked on the right side as foul as the rest; that is all. You took me into your employ, as Morton Kane, to fight against the hidden enemy, and that enemy was yourself. You hired me to hunt you down!"

"Yes," said the Spider coolly; "it was the safest way. It allayed suspicion. I do not, as a rule, take so much trouble to crush those who annoy me, but I saw you were likely to be dangerous. I never under-rate my enemies. One sharp cotton-piecing lad, born and bred in the midst of it all, and with pluck and brains, could do me more harm than a dozen noisy agitators or heavy detectives. You started by getting hold of my cipher notes, and after that I saw you needed special attention from me. And you are going to get it!"

(Another rattling fine instalment of this thrilling serial next week, boys, Don't miss it!)



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Jones rather fancied himself as a portrait painter, so he painted a portrait of his wife and himself. He took it to see the picture was his young son, Tommy, who said in a slightly puzzled tone: "Whose the lady, dad?" "Why, your mother, of course," replied Jones in a pained tone. The young critic was silent for a moment, and then he remarked: "Well, daddy, I think it's very unkind of you to paint her with a strange gentleman!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Miss L. Hook, 81, Ombersley Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.

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A pretty girl entered a crowded tram-car and an old man immediately rose from his seat. "No, please don't!" she protested. "I don't mind standing a bit." "But I—" began the old man. "No, really," she insisted, and pushed him gently back in his seat. "But—" he protested again, attempting to rise. "Please don't," she repeated, and once more pushed him gently back. "But, really," he exclaimed again, trying to rise. "I insist," she said sweetly. "Confound it, miss," cried the old man at last, "I want to get out! I've been carried about thirty yards past my station already!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Mrs. Tarbottom, 37, Lyndhurst Street, Leeds Road, Bradford.

AND SO IT SEEMED!

Three novices were experimenting with a hired bicycle, and after a practice one of them corkscrewed along the road, and passed from sight round a corner. As he did not return, his friends formed a search-party, but could find no trace of their companion. Meeting an old woman, they inquired if she had seen a man on a bicycle. "A what?" asked the old dame. "A man on a bicycle," they repeated. "Na, na," the old lady said, wagging her head, "I've seen nae man except a man in the ditch mendin' umbrellas!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss Evelyn Bowles, 34, Collins Cross, Bishop's Stortford.

OBEYING TEACHER!

Going into the stable one day a country farmer found his little son with a notebook and pencil in his hand, sitting astride one of the horses. "Why, Eddie," he exclaimed, "what in the world are you doing?" "Writing a composition," replied little Eddie. "Well, why don't you write it in the library?" "Because," answered Eddie, "the teacher told us to write a composition on a horse!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Percy Lynch, 8, Greenough Street, Ancoats, Manchester.

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