

"THE OTHER GRUNDY!" An Amazing and Humorous School Story of St. Jim's By Martin Clifford.

The GEM 2^D

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

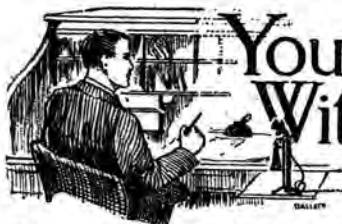
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SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES



GRUNDY'S GREAT FEAT!

Grundy astonishes Tom Merry & Co. by his hefty and perfect drive of the "leather." (An incident from "THE OTHER GRUNDY!" the magnificent tale of St. Jim's contained in this issue.)



Your Editor Chats With His Readers.

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
"JUNGLE JINKS" Every Thursday
"THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL" Published Yearly

My Dear Chums,—Before I start giving details for next week, just let me quote a letter from New Zealand. "The 'Gem,'" says the writer, "is the best paper going." And this cheery correspondent has not as yet, he it noted, seen the issue for next Wednesday. When he does see it, I hope he will write to me again. For the "Gem" next week is specially good. It is extra all the way along, so mind you get it!

"RACKE, THE RENEGADE!"

By Martin Clifford.

There is always plenty of interest attaching to the doings of Aubrey Racke. This is not simply because he deserts the safe pathway of rectitude. Racke appeals to one because of his weakness. Mentally, he is a shocking wobbler, a sitter on fences, and as unstable as water. The yarn of St. Jim's next week is simply tremendous in its dramatic effect and its fascinating plot. Racke is faced by a tremendous temptation. There you have it in a nutshell.

KOUMI RAO'S PERIL!

St. Jim's has never known a fellow just like Racke. The black sheep is built on peculiar lines, and his conduct is usually ruled by the most distorted motives. In the new yarn we find him heavily in debt, as usual. There is no need for Aubrey to outrun the constable. His people are well placed and provide him with plenty of cash—plenty, that is, for any reasonable being. But extravagance and debt are Racke's two chief handicaps, and, wallowing in difficulties as he is, of course he makes an easy mark for certain conspirators whose machinations take them to St. Jim's. You will ask where Koumi comes in. The Indian boy—who has been asked about of late a good deal—is in peril, and the fact that he is living amidst the secure surroundings of a big public school is the only thing that stands between him and his enemies.

THE WEAK LINK!

The conspiracy against Koumi might have come to nothing had the plotters failed to find a means of reaching their victim. They are on the look-out for an agent, an intermediary, somebody who will assist them to gain their ends. They are helpless without such aid. You cannot help but be keen on what follows. The most ordinary, everyday sort of fellow has no possible use for treachery. He does not write home about it, but he just is not a traitor. Aubrey Racke is no ordinary fellow. That's where you have it. Racke is the proprietor of a twisted imagination. You can guess at his sort of mind. It has a kink. Just what happens when Racke, the clever, scheming, and vacillating ninny, is brought up sharp by what looks like a golden chance for him, you will see next Wednesday. This story is notable for many reasons. It has a slug in it. It is a yarn which jerks up the attention, and makes you think hard.

A TALBOT SUPPLEMENT!

There will be a lot of compliments knocking about over the next issue of the "Gem." THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 842.

This week you have the "Marie Rivers" number of the "St. Jim's News." Of course, as a follow on you will want a Talbot supplement. That is the ticket for Wednesday next. Talbot will figure prominently. Talbot's popularity has never been in question, and we have not even yet got to know half his history. That he is held in the highest estimation is proved by the numerous letters to hand, asking for more Talbot yarns. I am sure the coming supplement will get a jolly good reception.

"FAN-TAN ONE EYE!"

By Edmund Burton and Captain Reginald Glossop.

This is a topping tale of the Formosan pirates. Formosa has a pretty name, but its piratical hordes have given the place a reputation of the most horrible kind. In this sensational yarn in the "Gem" next week you get a vision of what has been, which is creepy to a degree. The two writers in question are mailers at Oriental adventure. Fan-Tan, with his single optic, will be remembered, and there will be a sigh of relief at the manner in which things turn out in the end.

"THE MYSTERIOUS IVORY TRAIL!"

By Cecil Fanshaw.

Another grand adventure yarn for you! It is real adventure, palpitating with excitement and thrills. What is more to the point, perhaps, is the imaginative power of the writer. You cannot help but feel sympathy for young Ted Fawcett, the sturdy young Britisher, who starts with Uncle Seth in quest of ivory. The message that reaches them, written on a leaf, helps them to a great discovery, guiding them onward

through countless adventures, and many a peril to a treasure-trove which is priceless, and has nothing to do with the ivory of their original quest. This is a story with the right ring. It touches the heart.

"TOM OF THE AJAX!"

Speed the parting guest! That is the old custom, and we shall bid farewell to Tom, of the good ship Ajax, with much regret, cherishing the hope that the stalwart young seaman will turn up again, one of these fine days, to delight us all. For the serial has been a striking one, and it leaves a pleasant remembrance behind—something to con over in a quiet moment.

"RIVALS OF THE RACECOURSE!"

By Andrew Gray.

They say it is the pace that kills. That may well be doubted. It keeps life a vivid actuality, brimful of inspiration, and the good, sound spirit of advance. Exit Tom of the Ajax, and enter the week after next—don't make any mistake of that!—a splendid newcomer, by name Mat Martingale.

OUR NEW SERIAL.

Space is short, and I cannot do full justice to the merits of Andrew Gray's latest story. It opens with a bang, and grips your sympathies in an unmistakable fashion. Mat is the son of a trainer, and his prospects look bright enough, when disaster falls to his father's lot. Old Martingale comes to utter grief, and Mat is left to fight alone as unprincipled a scoundrel in the rascally Sir Roger Rackstone as you would wish to meet. Of the plot I shall say nothing here, further than that it is a clincher. All I do want to point out is that Dick Derringer, the true chum of Mat, a friend from the land of the Star Spangled Banner, is a character who will be welcomed with enthusiasm. Remember, the week after next!

ORDER EARLY!

That's the best advice as regards next week's "Gem." There will be a special rush, and newsagents are but human, and must have an inkling of the number of copies wanted. The biggest pile of "Gems" melts away like snow in the sun when Wednesday morning comes.

Your Editor.

'WEIGHING IN' for the GREAT EVENT!

Be sure you make the acquaintance of



MAT MARTINGALE,

The Boy Jockey,
in

"RIVALS

OF THE

RACECOURSE!"

BY ANDREW GRAY.

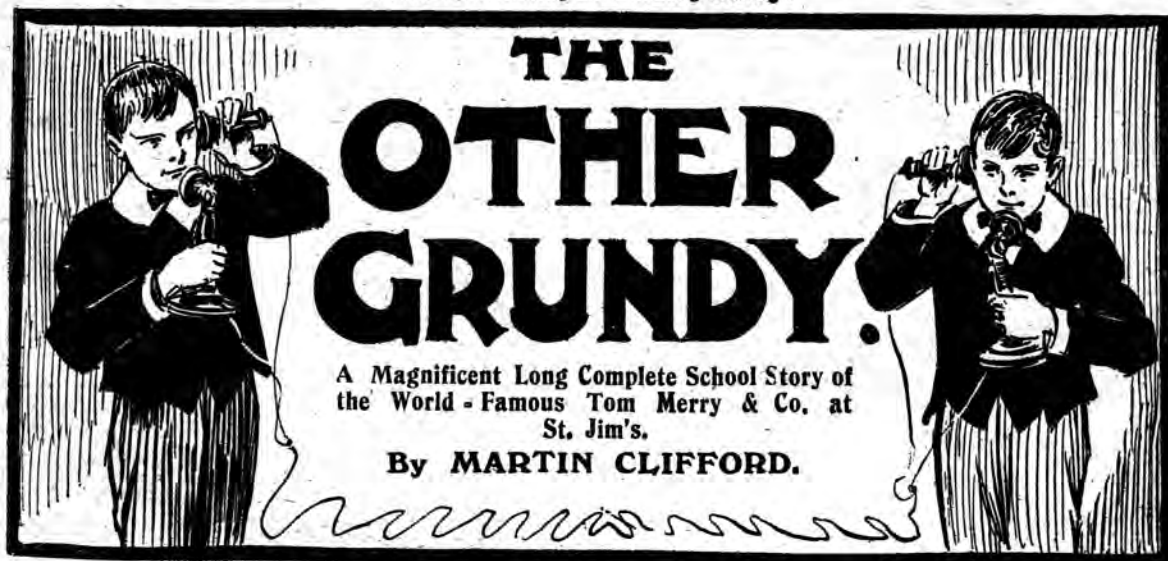
The Most Thrilling
Tale of the Turf
ever told. Starting
a fortnight's time in

THE

"Gem Library."

See what you think of it,
Chums!

His determination to escape for a day the rigours of the form-room gets the upper hand of George Alfred Grundy, and he consequently takes "French" leave. His amazing device for escaping the consequences of this escapade makes the most entertaining and amusing reading!



CHAPTER 1. No Exeat.

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY came into his study, in the Shell, and hurled his books upon the table with a crash.

Grundy was wrathful.

His cheeks were crimson; and, like the celebrated Alpine climber, his brow was set, his eyes beneath flashed like a falchion from its sheath.

Something, evidently, had happened to disturb the equanimity of Grundy of the Shell.

Wilkins and Gunn, his study-mates, jumped, as the books crashed down and the study table rocked. Grundy was generally emphatic, and often wrathful; life in Study No. 3 in the Shell seldom was a quiet or peaceful affair.

"The cheeky ass!" exclaimed Grundy.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"The cheeky chump!"

"What is it this time?" asked Wilkins, in a tone of patient resignation. "Has Tom Merry refused once more to put you in the junior eleven?"

"It's not Tom Merry——"

"Oh, good!" said Gunn.

Grundy's study-mates were quite relieved. Grundy was a bore on most subjects; but on the subject of football he bored his hapless chums almost to tears.

"It's Linton!" snapped Grundy.

"Mr. Linton—our jolly old Form master?" exclaimed Gunn.

"Yes—the ass!"

"The—the what?"

"The chump!" said Grundy.

"Soft pedal, old chap," murmured Wilkins. "You don't want anybody to hear you calling Mr. Linton fancy names. And your dulcet tones can be heard as far as the staircase."

"The burbling dummy!" said Grundy, unheeding.

"But what——"

"I'm not standing it, of course!" said Grundy. "Mr. Linton thinks I'm going to! But I'm not, of course!"

"Lines, for mucking up your construe this morning?" asked Wilkins sympathetically.

"I didn't muck up my construe this morning, George Wilkins. I can play Mr. Linton's head off at Latin. He found fault with my construe. That was only his ignorance."

"Oh, my hat!"

"But it isn't that," said Grundy. "I want to visit my Uncle Grundy on Wednesday, and—would you believe it?—I've been refused an exeat."

Wilkins and Gunn could quite believe it. There was nothing surprising about it, to Wilkins and Gunn. If fellows could have had all the extra holidays they wanted in term time, classes at St. Jim's would have been very thinly attended—if they had not reached vanishing point.

"Well, old chap," murmured Gunn, "you couldn't expect——"

"Wednesday's a half-holiday," said Grundy. "I simply

wanted a whole holiday instead, and to clear off on Tuesday evening. Nothing unreasonable about that, I suppose?"

"Nothing at all, old fellow," said Wilkins soothingly. "Still, Form masters don't seem to see these things as we do."

"I asked him quite civilly," said Grundy. "I told him my Uncle Grundy wanted me for a motor trip, and had told me to ask for an exeat. And what do you think he said? Said I was the most backward fellow in the Shell——"

"Not really?" said Wilkins, with a private wink at Gunn.

"Yes, really; and said that so far from missing lessons, what I needed was extra lessons. Me, you know! And, of course, I've already written to my uncle that I should be with him on Wednesday."

"You'll have to wire, then——"

"Nothing to wire about. Of course, I'm going all the same."

"But you can't, old chap—it's impossible," said Wilkins, looking really concerned. "If you cut classes on Wednesday morning, after what Linton's told you, it will be a matter for the Head."

"I know that!"

"It would be a flogging, at least—it might be the sack! Dash it all, old man, don't be an ass! You can't do it!"

"I've already said that I'm going to do it, George Wilkins," said Grundy. "The only question is, how?"

"But——"

"I have to leave St. Jim's on Tuesday evening—I can get back on Wednesday night all right," pursued Grundy. "I shouldn't dream of disappointing Uncle Grundy. He likes to see me."

"No accounting for tastes——"

"What?"

"I—I mean, of—of course, it would be a pity to disappoint the old gent," said Wilkins hastily. "But——"

"I've told Linton I'm going all the same."

"What?" yelled Wilkins. "You've told Linton you're going, after he's told you you're not?"

"Certainly."

"Great pip! What did he say?"

"He gave me five hundred lines, and told me that if I did not appear in class as usual on Wednesday morning he would report it to the Head, and request Dr. Holmes to administer a very severe punishment."

"I wonder he didn't lick you."

"Don't be an ass, Wilkins. I'm going."

"Then it's the order of the boot for you, Grundy, old man! The Head would come down on you like a ton of bricks."

"I want to avoid that, of course," said Grundy. "I'm bound to go, because I've told my uncle to expect me, and, of course, I can't allow myself to be bullied by Linton. These Form masters put on too many airs, in my opinion. It's different with you chaps, of course; but a fellow in my position has to consider what is due to himself."

"Oh!" gasped Wilkins.

"It's settled that I'm going. That's definite. But how am I going to avoid trouble with the Head afterwards?"

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am I going to avoid trouble with the Head afterwards?" asked Grundy. "I don't want to be bunked from St. Jim's. I've got the school to think of."

"Oh!" gasped Wilkins again.

Evidently Grundy of the Shell considered that his departure from the school would be something like a disaster for St. Jim's.

"I shall have to think it out, of course," said Grundy. "You fellows can't help me—that's the worst of being the only brainy fellow in the study; I have to do all the thinking that's done here. But I'm going—that's settled."

"If you go, I fancy you'll go for good," said Wilkins. "For goodness' sake, Grundy, don't play the goat!"

"I'm going!"

"But—" urged Gunn.

"I'm going!"

"I tell you—"

"Don't jaw! I'm going!"

George Alfred Grundy's tone was final. He was going—that was settled. And if that was settled, it was the opinion of Wilkins and Gunn that George Alfred Grundy was settled, too!

CHAPTER 2.

Grundy Means Business!

TOM MERRY came over to Grundy in the junior Common-room that evening. As a rule, Tom did not seek the society of his burly Form-fellow. Grundy did not pull with the captain of the Shell. They disagreed chiefly on the subject of football. The way Grundy played football, and the way he fancied he played it, were as wide as the poles asunder; and Grundy's claim to be played in the junior eleven was the cause of much hilarity among the junior footballers, and the subject of much recrimination on the part of Grundy. So relations were strained between the two; and, as a rule, Tom was quite keen on avoiding the pleasure of Grundy's society. But on the present occasion the captain of the Shell was concerned about the headstrong George Alfred.

All the School House juniors knew by this time that Grundy had demanded an exeat for Wednesday and had been refused, and had declared his intention of going all the same.

Grundy, indeed, had stated his intention up and down the House, careless by what ears his powerful voice was heard. And there was general interest in the subject. It was quite certain that if Grundy openly defied his Form master's authority, the Head would take an extremely serious view of the matter. Grundy, if he was lucky, might get off with a flogging. But it was more probable that he would be expelled for such an act of flagrant insubordination. Nobody wanted to see Grundy "bunked"—indeed, Cardew of the Fourth declared that life at St. Jim's would lose its necessary comic relief if Grundy went. So Tom Merry had thought the matter over, and decided to speak a word in season.

Grundy eyed him rather truculently as he came up.

"What's this about your breaking bounds on Wednesday, Grundy?" asked the captain of the Shell mildly. "I hope there's nothing in it."

"Lots of it," answered Grundy cheerfully. "I'm going on a motoring trip with my Uncle Grundy on Wednesday."

"But Mr. Linton has refused leave."

"That's so!" assented Grundy.

"Well, you can't go, then."

"I'm going!"

"I hope you'll decide to do the sensible thing, Grundy," said Tom. "You can't buck against the beaks in this way, you know. Cut it out!"

"I never go back on my word!" said Grundy calmly. "I've told the whole House I'm going. Of course, if you were going to show a little horse-sense for once, and play me in the House match on Wednesday afternoon it would be a different matter. In that case, I should stay, for the good of the House."

"I can't do that," said Tom with a smile. "You see, we want to beat Figgins & Co. in the House match."

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth. "You are weally askin' too much, Gwunday. Tom Mewwy could not thwow away a House match to save you fwom makin' a fool of yourself!"

"We'd jolly well lynch him, if he did!" growled Blake.

Grundy smiled bitterly.

"You're going to play your fumbling game as usual, and you don't want a really good player in the team," he said. "I'm not surprised. I've always known you were a silly ass, Tom Merry, and no good as a football captain—no good at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're playing such duds as D'Arcy and Manners and Lowther and Blake," went on Grundy. "Well, play 'em and be licked by the New House, and be blowed! But don't give me any of your advice—I'm going motoring on Wednesday, and that's that!"

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"But look here, Grundy—"

"Rats!"

George Alfred turned his back on Tom Merry and walked away. Tom Merry frowned, and then he shrugged his shoulders. He had done his best; and if Grundy chose to hunt for trouble it was Grundy's own look-out.

"Nothing doing, old chap!" grinned Monty Lowther. "What's the good of talking sense to Grundy? Though you bray a fool in a giddy mortar, yet will not his folly depart from him!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"After all, very likely it's only gas," remarked Manners. "Even Grundy isn't ass enough to ask for the sack!"

"He's ass enough for anything, I'm afraid," said Tom.

"Look at the way he plays footer!"

"Yaas, wathah!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy thoughtfully. "A chap who plays footah like Gwunday is weally capable of anythin'!"

Grundy's voice was heard across the room. He was talking to Talbot of the Shell, who apparently was remonstrating with him; and he was talking in his usual powerful tones.

"I know you mean well, Talbot. But, you see, I can't be treated like a common-or-garden fellow in the Shell! I've got my position in the Form to think of."

Talbot looked at Grundy.

"How's your position in the Form different from any other fellow's position, Grundy?" he asked mildly.

Grundy snorted.

"That question only shows that you are an ass, Talbot."

"Oh!" said Talbot.

"Mr. Linton has no right to treat me like this! Why, he's treating me as if I were an ordinary chap like Wilkins or Gunn or Tom Merry, or yourself, Talbot!" said Grundy hotly.

"He can't expect me to stand it! He simply can't!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Talbot.

"Fellows who have a prominent or distinguished position in the school have to be treated accordingly," Grundy condescended to explain. "Mr. Linton doesn't seem to see that. It's time he learned!"

"Grundy is a specially distinguished fellow," Cardew of the Fourth remarked. "That's acknowledged."

"Well, that's a sensible remark, for a silly fag!" said Grundy graciously.

Cardew grinned.

"Thanks, old man!" he said. "You see, Talbot, Grundy is distinguished as a footballer—he's the only fellow at St. Jim's who habitually kicks the ball through his own goal—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's distinguished in class—he's the only fellow who ever construed 'arnia virumque cano' into 'The armed man and the dog.'"

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

"I never did!" roared Grundy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's distinguished in geography," went on Cardew. "Who but Grundy ever knew that Ireland was divided into the Irish Free State and the Orange Free State?"

"So it is!" said Grundy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's distinguished in history," said Cardew. "Didn't he put in his history paper that when King Alfred was in the neatherd's hut, he heard Blondel, the minstrel, harping under the window, and said, 'Take away that bauble!' and never smiled again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, I did," said Grundy; "and I had it right, too! Linton found fault with it—in his ignorant way. Linton's a silly ass!"

"Hush!" said Levison suddenly, as he caught sight of a rather angular form in the doorway of the Common-room. It was the figure of Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell.

But Grundy had his back to the door and did not see Mr. Linton. His powerful voice went on regardless.

"I take no notice of Linton! He says I'm not to leave St. Jim's on Wednesday! Well, I'm going! He's given me five hundred lines! Well, five hundred Lintons would not keep me in the school to-morrow!"

"Grundy!"

"Oh, my hat!"

George Alfred Grundy spun round. There was a silence of utter horror in the room, as he faced his Form master. Mr. Linton's face was almost pale with anger.

"Grundy, how dare you!"

"I—I didn't know you were listening, sir!" gasped Grundy. It was an unfortunate way of expressing himself. Mr. Linton's angry face became quite furious.

"Grundy! You disrespectful young rascal! I shall cane you most severely for your insolence!"

Grundy gave a grunt.

"I came here to speak to you," said Mr. Linton. "You have not written your lines, Grundy! They are doubled!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Grundy.

"Now follow me to my study!"



Grundy did not see Mr. Linton in the doorway. His powerful voice went on regardless. "I take no notice of Linton. He says I'm not to leave St. Jim's on Wednesday. Well, I'm going. He's given me five hundred lines. Well five hundred Lintons would not keep me in the school to-morrow." "Grundy!" "Mr. Linton's face was almost pale with anger. "Grundy, how dare you!" (See page 4.)

Mr. Linton whisked away in great wrath. Grundy, after a moment's hesitation, followed him.

"Well," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "Gwunday has asked for it now, and no mistake!"

In a few minutes Grundy of the Shell came back into the Common-room. His face was a little pale, and he rubbed his hands. But he looked very obstinate and determined.

"Had it bad, old chap?" asked Wilkins.

"Horrid!" said Grundy.

"You weally begged and pwayed for it, Gwunday, you know!" remarked Arthur Augustus.

"Well, it's up to me now!" said Grundy. "Linton's told me that if I dare to clear off on Wednesday I shall be expelled."

"That settles it!" said Tom Merry.

"It does!" agreed Grundy. "I feel that it's up to me. I'm going!"

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Tom.

"Gas!" said Racke of the Shell.

"Weally, Gwunday—"

"Gas, is it?" said Grundy, fixing his eyes on Racke.

"Just that," said Racke. "I'll bet you two to one in fivers that you don't clear on Wednesday!"

"I'm not a betting blackguard!" said Grundy. "If I were, I would take your bet, Racke!"

Racke shrugged his shoulders.

"But I'll hold you to it," said Grundy coolly. "I'll put it like this. I'm going away for a whole holiday on Wednesday. If I don't, I'll put a fiver in the Cottage Hospital collecting-box. If I do, you'll put a fiver, Racke!"

"That isn't a bet," said Racke. "Nobody stands to win."

"Yaas, wathah! The Cottage Hospital does!" said D'Arcy.

"Blow the Cottage Hospital!"

"Weally, Wacke—"

"You'll stand to that, Racke," said Grundy. "If you don't, I shall wallop you for saying my remarks are gas, see?"

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Aubrey Racke, shrugging his shoulders again. "It's a go!"

"You fellows are witnesses," said Grundy, looking round. "Racke pays up a fiver to the Cottage Hospital if I keep my word! I pay up if I don't!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But you're not going!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"I am going."

"Grundy, old man—" urged Wilkins.

"Shut up, Wilkins!"

"Weally, Gwunday—"

"Shut up, D'Arcy!"

"Bai Jove—"

"But look here—" said Talbot.

"Shut up, Talbot!"

Evidently George Alfred Grundy was not to be argued with. And the other fellows gave it up, and gave Grundy his head, so to speak—wondering what would come of it.

CHAPTER 3.

Got It!

"I'VE got it!"

Grundy made that observation quite suddenly. He was seated in the armchair in Study No. 3 in the Shell, while Wilkins and Gunn sat at the table working at their prep. Grundy had no time for prep. He had a problem to think out that was steeper than any to be found within the covers of Euclid.

Grundy was a headstrong fellow, not much given to reflection. But even Grundy had been forced to reflect a little.

He even realised that he had placed himself in a very awkward position. It was only after a long time that the awkwardness of the position became quite clear to him. Ideas sank very slowly into the powerful brain of George Alfred Grundy.

But there it was—it came to him at last! He had "gassed" up and down the House of his intention to go motoring with his uncle on Wednesday, in spite of his Form master's prohibition. To retreat from the position he had taken up would make him the laughing-stock of the House. Fellows often made hasty remarks as to what they would or would not stand, and conveniently forgot them later on when matters were put to the test. But Grundy's remarks had not been hasty; they had been deliberate and oft repeated. While making them, he had been firmly convinced that it was

"up" to him to show Mr. Linton and all St. Jim's who was who and what was what. He fully intended to carry out his own plans, though the shadow of the "sack" now loomed over him if he kept his word.

But it dawned upon him at long last that he was up against irresistible forces. Whatever a fellow might say in the heat of the moment, there was no doubt that the school authorities were too strong for any rebel. And to be expelled from school was a disgrace as well as a disaster; and the effect of it on his affectionate Uncle Grundy was scarcely to be contemplated.

Yet Grundy could not retreat. He had left himself no retreat, in fact, unless he was prepared to be laughed to scorn, after all his high and lofty words. That was really out of the question.

The problem, therefore, was to carry out his declared intention, and at the same time avoid the inevitable consequences.

To avoid that which was inevitable was a problem few fellows would have undertaken to solve. But that was the problem Grundy had set himself, and his sudden exclamation seemed to indicate that he had found a solution.

Wilkins looked up from his prep. Grundy was rather trying as a study-mate—Wilkins and Gunn often found him so. But he was a good chap in his own way, and his chums were concerned about him. A licking, in their opinion, would have done Grundy good; but they did not want to see him sacked from St. Jim's. Perhaps other considerations appealed to them also; Grundy was the moneyed man of the study, and his disappearance from St. Jim's would have meant much shorter commons in Study No. 3 in the Shell.

"Yes; I've got it!" said Grundy. "I dare say you fellows thought I was up against the limit—what?"

"Well, you can't go, of course!" said Wilkins.

"I've already told you I'm going, Wilkins! The problem is to keep clear of the sack afterwards. I've thought it out."

"My hat! I'd like to know the answer to the conundrum, then!" said Wilkins.

"It's simply this—I shall go, but I sha'n't let Linton know anything about it."

Wilkins and Gunn stared at him.

"Do you think he won't miss you from class on Wednesday morning?" hooted Gunn.

"Just that!" said Grundy coolly. "I've got the wheeze! I'd better not tell you fellows, as you may blab! I'll tell you afterwards, of course! Old Gilbert will help me out!"

"Who the thump's Gilbert?"

"My cousin Gilbert Grundy! You fellows haven't seen him—"

"Never heard of him!" yawned Wilkins.

"I've mentioned him to you before."

"Well, you've mentioned such lots of things, Grundy, old man! A fellow can't remember the lot. What's he like?"

"A well-set-up, handsome fellow," said Grundy.

"Oh! No family resemblance?" asked Wilkins.

Grundy glared at him.

"He's just like me!" he roared. "Exactly like me, in fact!"

"Didn't you say he was a handsome fellow?" asked Wilkins, with an air of perplexity.

"If you're going to be a funny ass, Wilkins—" bawled Grundy.

"Not at all, old fellow! One's enough in any study," answered Wilkins. "But how is this chap Gilbert—"

"Gilbert, you ass!"

"I mean Gilbert! How is this chap Gilbert going to help you to bamboozle Linton on Wednesday? Where is he?"

"He lives in Kent, with his people. He has a tutor at home," explained Grundy. "He used to be quite near me when I was at Redclyffe School. You remember I used to be at Redclyffe—"

"You've told us so about a million times," assented Wilkins.

"I had to leave Redclyffe for whopping a prefect," said Grundy. "I've mentioned that—"

"A billion times," agreed Wilkins.

"When I was at Redclyffe I used to meet Gilbert often enough—now I only see him in the holidays," said Grundy. "We're great friends. We generally have a fight in the holidays. He's a good chap, but ignorant in some ways. He thinks I can't play footer—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" roared Grundy.

"Nothing, old bean! Get on!"

"Of course, when we scrap, I always lick him," said Grundy. "But he's a bit conceited. If you ask him he'd tell you that he licks me, and he really thinks so. Still, he's a good sort, and will do anything for me—same as I would for him, of course. He's the man for this job."

"But how the thump can he help you?" exclaimed Gunn, in amazement.

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Grundy rose and looked at his watch.

"I shall have to get on the telephone to him," he said. "It will be a trunk call! I suppose I can't ask Linton to let me use his telephone; he seems quite annoyed with me now for some reason. I'll ask Railton, if he's in. I can see Gilbert after lessons to-morrow."

"He's in Kent, and you're in Sussex!" said Wilkins. "Are you going to take a stroll of a hundred miles to-morrow after class?"

"Gilbert will come over. You see, being at home, he's not tied up with these silly restrictions," said Grundy. "I mean, the restrictions are silly in my case. All very well for you fellows; in fact, I know you kids have to be kept in order. Well, I'd better get on the telephone and speak to old Gilbert."

"But I say—"

"You needn't say anything, Wilkins. You talk too much, old chap." And George Alfred Grundy walked out of Study No. 3.

Wilkins and Gunn stared at one another.

"Is he potty?" asked Gunn.

"Well, he was always more or less potty, you know," remarked Wilkins. "A chap couldn't be such an ass as Grundy is without a certain amount of pottiness. I wonder what he's got in his silly head."

Wilkins and Gunn resumed their prep. Prep had to be done, whatever Grundy might have in his silly head.

George Alfred went downstairs with a satisfied expression on his rugged face. Fortunately, he found that Mr. Railton was gone out, so he was able to borrow the House master's telephone without a fuss. He rang up the exchange, and asked for his number, and sat down in Mr. Railton's arm-chair to wait till he was through. It was fortunate for him that the House master did not come in while he was waiting there.

The telephone bell buzzed at last. Grundy went to the receiver.

"Hallo, is that you, Gilbert?" he asked. "Your cousin George speaking from St. Jim's."

"I will call Master Gilbert, sir!" came the reply.

"Buck up!"

In a few moments a boyish voice—a powerful voice greatly like Grundy's own, came through.

"That you, George, old fathead?"

"Yes, Gilbert; you ass."

"What the thump are you chucking away money on trunk calls for?"

"I'm not; I'm using my House master's telephone."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I want you to do me a favour, Gilbert."

"Oh, my hat! Stony, old man? I've just written to you to ask you to lend me a fiver."

Grundy chuckled.

"Tain't that! I'll lend you the fiver with pleasure—a tenner, if you like."

"Good old George! What a nice fellow you'd be if it wasn't for your looks and your manners, old man."

"Fathead! Can you get away to-morrow and Wednesday, Gilbert? On a visit here?"

"Yes; if you want me. But what—"

"I'm in a bit of a scrape, and you can help me out."

"I'm your man."

"Don't come to the school. I'll meet you at Rylcombe railway-station—that's about a mile from here. I'll get there after lessons, and wait for your train."

"Why not come up to the school?" asked Gilbert. "I haven't seen St. Jim's yet, and I'd like to, if I come over all that distance."

"Afterwards, old fellow, but I want to explain first."

All serene. I'll wait at Rylcombe Station, then," said Gilbert. "I shall have to look out trains and all that; but rely on me. Put the fiver in your pocket."

"That's all right."

"I'll come with pleasure, George. I'd like to visit you at your school before they boot you out, old man."

"Look here—"

"Do you want another three minutes?" asked a sweet voice from the exchange.

"No, thanks! Good-bye, Gilbert, old ass."

"Good-bye, George, old owl."

And Grundy put up the receiver and walked out of Mr. Railton's study. As he returned to the Shell quarters he came on the Terrible Three on the staircase.

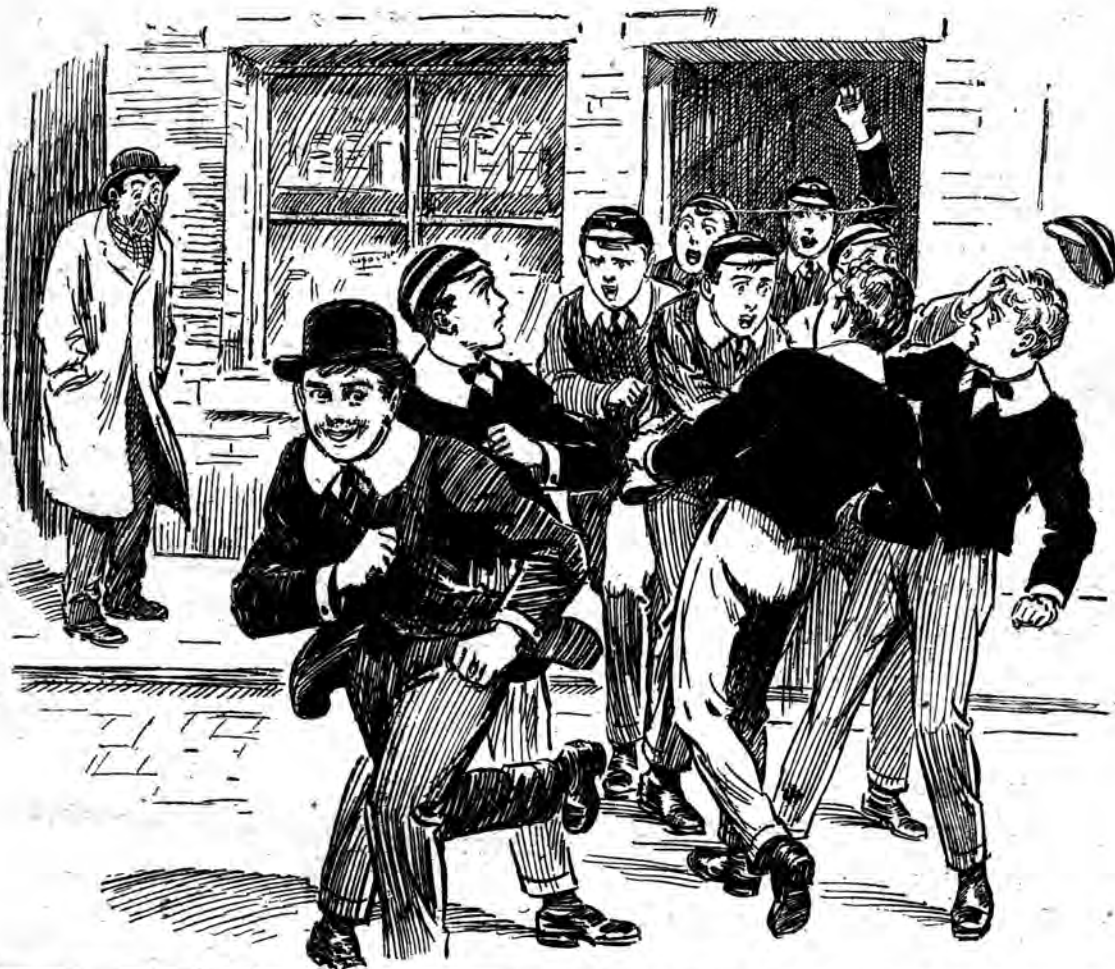
"It's all right," he said loftily. "I've fixed it up for Wednesday. You'll see."

"We shall see you sacked, you mean," said Tom Merry.

Grundy smiled.

"Leave it to me," he said. "I know how to work the giddy oracle. You see, you're rather an ass, Tom Merry."

And Grundy walked on cheerily. Evidently everything in the garden was lovely, from George Alfred Grundy's point of view.



As the hustling crowd with the supposed Grundy in their midst passed Mrs. Murphy's tuck-shop, half a dozen fellows in Grammar School caps came out, and there was a shout, "St. Jim's cads!" It was a most untimely interruption for the Terrible Three, and by the time they got free the youth in the bowler hat had made a dash for liberty. (See page 8.)

CHAPTER 4. Grundy?

TOM MERRY and Manners and Lowther of the Shell strolled down to Rylcombe after lessons on the following day. It was Tuesday, and according to Grundy's programme he was going to clear off on Tuesday evening to visit his Uncle Grundy, and not return to St. Jim's until the following night. And as that meant the "sack" for Grundy, it had occurred to Tom that it would be an act of kindness to catch Grundy in the act and persuade him to come back to the school. Verbal persuasion had already been tried on Grundy, in vain; but there were other modes, such as taking Grundy by the arms and legs and carrying him off bodily. And the Terrible Three decided that, for Grundy's own sake, it was up to them. Which was, as Monty Lowther pointed out, a very unselfish decision, for there was no doubt that the disappearance of George Alfred Grundy would have improved the landscape at St. Jim's.

Immediately class was dismissed by Mr. Linton, therefore, the Terrible Three started. Grundy had intended to start as soon as class was dismissed; but Mr. Linton had asked for his lines; and as the lines were not done, Grundy had had to remain in the School House. But it was fairly certain that Grundy would only remain long enough to dodge Mr. Linton's eye, and then would proceed to carry out his hare-brained scheme. Indeed, a dozen fellows had seen him looking out Rylcombe trains in a time-table that day. The Terrible Three were ahead of Grundy, and their intention was to loaf about the station till he turned up, and then deal with him. They could not watch him about the school, as there were half a dozen ways by which he might have slipped out unnoticed, and on the road they might have missed him, as he had the choice of two or three short cuts to the village. But he could not take a train without turning up at the station, and there they were sure of him.

So, after sauntering cheerily down to the village, the

chums of the Shell took up their stand in the station vestibule and waited. They looked at the advertisements, and they extracted chocolate from an automatic machine, and they watched the old High Street; but Grundy did not appear. A train came in from Wayland Junction; but they did not heed it or the passengers that passed them on the way out. And then, all of a sudden, the surprising thing happened.

"Grundy!" ejaculated Manners.

"Where?" asked Tom, looking out into the village street again.

"Here!"

"What?"

"Look!" said the astonished Manners.

"Well, my hat!" said Tom.

Standing by the platform barrier was a burly youth. He took no notice of the Terrible Three. Indeed, from his manner he might have been a stranger to them. His rugged features, his short stumpy nose, his mouth of considerable extent, his burly figure—all were Grundy's, but he was not in Etons. He was dressed in grey lounge clothes, which—like all Grundy's clothes—looked as if they had been made for somebody else. Neither was he wearing a St. Jim's cap—he wore a bowler hat. The Terrible Three blinked at him in amazement. For a moment or two they wondered whether they were deceived by a chance resemblance. But the fellow was Grundy all over—Grundy's features were distinctive, if not beautiful.

"How the thump did he get into the station without us seeing him?" said Manners.

"Well, there he is," said Tom. "Lucky we've spotted him! Come on!"

The three juniors crossed over. By this time the youth in grey had taken note of their deep interest in him. He returned their hard look with a stare.

"Hallo! You'll know me again!" he said. And the voice

was the voice of Grundy. There was only one voice in the world, as far as the Terrible Three knew, that so closely resembled the tones of a bulldog.

"Know you again?" repeated Tom Merry. "Well, naturally we shall know you again, Grundy!"

"Hallo! You know my name!"

"Know your name?"

"Yes, you seem to have got it pat."

"What the thump are you driving at?" demanded Tom.

"Of course I know your name, Grundy!"

"I don't see where the 'of course' comes in. I don't know yours."

"You don't know my name?" ejaculated Tom.

"No—unless it's Paul Pry, or Peeping Tom."

"Are you off your rocker?" asked Manners.

"I hope not."

"Then what do you mean?" asked Lowther. "Nobody ever expects to hear you talk sense, of course, but there's a limit. Anyhow, you're coming to St. Jim's now."

"I'm jolly well not!"

"You are! We're here to see that you do!"

"Oh!" exclaimed the youth in the bowler hat. "You've been sent here to meet me, is that it?"

"Meet you! We've come to wait for you—to take you back to the school. We're not going to let you break bounds. You're asking for the sack, and we're going to stop you, see?"

"You're talking in riddles, it seems to me. Do you belong to St. Jim's?"

"D-d-d-do we belong to St. Jim's?" stuttered Tom Merry, quite taken aback by that question.

"Yes."

"Have you lost your memory, or gone potty?" roared Monty Lowther. "If you're trying to pull our leg, Grundy, the sooner you chuck it the better!"

"I think it's you fellows that are potty! I've never seen you before in my life, and you march up to me and make out that you know me! Sheer off!"

"You've never seen us before?"

"Never!"

"You—you silly ass, what are you getting at?" demanded Tom Merry hotly. "You've cleared out of St. Jim's, and I suppose you changed your clothes, as you know you'll be looked for. Now, enough rot! Come back to the school with us, or we shall take you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the youth in the bowler hat. "I see now! I've been taken for him before!"

"What—who—which?"

Grundy—if it was Grundy—did not answer. He roared with laughter, much to the exasperation of the Terrible Three.

"Here, I'm fed-up with this!" said Tom Merry. "Come on, Grundy!"

He grasped Grundy by the arm.

"Hands off!"

"Come on! Collar him, you chaps!"

Three pairs of hands collared the youth in the bowler hat. He was propelled out of the station by the Shell fellows. He struggled vigorously, but he resisted in vain.

"You silly chumps!" he roared. "You're making a mistake! I'm not coming with you!"

"You jolly well are!"

"Leggo!"

"Rats!"

Down the old High Street of Rylcombe the four fellows went in a hustling crowd. As they passed Mrs. Murphy's tuck-shop half a dozen fellows in Grammar School caps came out, and there was a shout.

"St. Jim's cads!"

And Gordon Gay & Co., of the Grammar School, rushed on the Terrible Three and jerked off their caps and hustled them merrily. It was a most untimely interruption. By the time Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were free of the Grammarians Grundy had vanished. He had not taken part in the scrap—he had disappeared round the nearest corner. The Grammarians went laughing on their way, and the Terrible Three looked round in vain for Grundy.

"Funk!" snorted Manners. "He's bolted, instead of backing us up against the Grammar School cads! I shouldn't

have thought it of Grundy! He's generally too keen for a scrap!"

"Blessed if I understand the fellow at all to-day!" growled Tom Merry, rubbing a damaged nose. "Shall we go back to the station?"

"Oh, blow Grundy! I want to bathe my eye."

"Bother Grundy!"

And the Terrible Three, in an exasperated mood, walked back to St. Jim's, leaving Grundy to his own devices. They had not had the best of the tussle with Gordon Gay & Co., the odds being on the side of the Grammar School fellows, and they were very much annoyed with Grundy for not having supported them.

"Grundy!"

"Funk!"

"What's that?" roared George Alfred Grundy.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther came in at the school gates, and the first person they saw was George Alfred Grundy.

"So you've got back before us?" snorted Manners. "Ran all the way, I suppose? Did you think the Grammar cads were after you?"

"Why didn't you back us up?" snapped Lowther.

Grundy stared at them.

"What are you driving at?" he demanded.

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Tom Merry & Co. walked on to the School House. Grundy, apparently, had returned to St. Jim's of his own accord, and there was no further need to concern themselves about him. And they were feeling just now more concerned with the damages they had received in the scrap with the Grammarians than with George Alfred Grundy. So they walked on and gave him no further heed.

Grundy stared after them. He seemed amazed.

"He, he, he!" came from Baggy Trimble of the Fourth.

"Calling you a funk, Grundy! I'd mop 'em up!"

Grundy stared at him.

"I've got no time now," he said. "I'm just off! But you can tell Tom Merry, Trimble, that I'm going to pull his nose next time I see him."

"He, he! I'll tell him!" chorried Trimble.

And Grundy of the Shell walked out of the gates and took the road to Rylcombe.

CHAPTER 5.

A Wonderful Wheeze!

"UTTER rot!"

"Look here, Gilbert—"

"Piffle, old man! Never heard of such a rotten wheeze! Blessed if I don't think you're a bigger ass than when you were at Redclyffe—and I thought you were the limit then!" said Gilbert Grundy.

George Alfred Grundy glared.

He was seated in a waiting-room at Rylcombe Station, and, sitting on a table, facing him, was the youth in the bowler hat, whom Tom Merry & Co. had taken for Grundy—and still believed to be Grundy.

Had the Terrible Three seen him now they would, of course, have realised that he couldn't be George Alfred Grundy—as George Alfred was sitting facing him.

"I haven't come here to scrap with you, Gilbert," said George Alfred, after a pause. "If I had time, I'd wallop you same as I did last holidays!"

"Well, I have time, and I'm ready to wallop you same as I did last holidays!" said Gilbert Grundy.

Grundy breathed hard.

"I want you to help me out," he said. "It's as easy as falling off a form! You're just like me—just my size—exactly the same as me to look at, excepting that you're plain—"

"Well, you cheeky ass—"

"Get into my clothes, and you'd pass anywhere for me," said George Alfred. "You know you would! We've done it before for a lark."

"I know that! But—"

"Then what's the matter with your going to St. Jim's for a day, and letting me get off to see uncle?"

"It's rot!" said Gilbert uneasily. "Suppose I get bowled out—"

"Well, I should have to stand most of the racket, shouldn't I?" said Grundy. "Besides, you won't get bowled out. Haven't you just told me that some St. Jim's fellows took you for me only an hour ago?"

"That's so! But—"

"But what?" said Grundy impatiently. "I tell you I want you to do it. You're not expected at home, as you've told them you're visiting me at the school. Well, so you are visiting me. Anyhow, I'm going off to see Uncle Grundy, and it's the sack if I can't throw the dust in old Linton's eyes. And this is the only way. I thought it a splendid wheeze when it occurred to me."

ANSWERS

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"Yes; it's the kind of wheeze you'd think splendid!" conceded Gilbert Grundy. "That's the kind of brain you've got!"

"Look here——"

"How can I make out I'm you when I've never seen St. Jim's, don't know a chap there, don't even know where your study is, or your class-room——"

"I'll give you some tips about all that. It would be a lark, anyhow! It only needs cheek! You haven't much brains, but you've got tons of cheek!"

"You silly ass!"

"Look here, there's something behind this," said Grundy. "Why don't you want to do it?"

Gilbert hesitated.

"Well, we're much alike to look at, excepting that you look an ass and I don't," he said. "But—but you want me to put it plain?"

"Yes, you dummy!"

"Well, I've got all my wits about me, and you're a champion chucklehead!" said Gilbert. "How can I keep it up for a whole day that I'm a silly ass like you?"

"Why, you—you——" gasped Grundy.

"I can't make out I'm a dunce in class, can I? Suppose there's football about? Can I make out that I'm a born fumbler at the game? Now, can I?"

Grundy did not answer that question in words. It was a fact that Gilbert Grundy resembled his cousin only on the outside of his head, and not at all on the inside. But facts did not appeal to Grundy. He knew that Gilbert was said to be clever at his lessons, and was considered a first-class footballer. But in Grundy's opinion all Gilbert's performances, compared with his own, were as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine.

Grundy, instead of answering in words, answered in deeds. He rushed at Gilbert, and dragged him off the table.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

For five minutes there was a first-class tussle in the deserted waiting-room. Then the two affectionate cousins, both of them dusty and dishevelled and breathless, separated. They gasped for breath, and glared at one another; and then Gilbert grinned. George Alfred did not grin; he frowned in wrath.

"That will do for you!" he snapped. "I'm done with you. You refuse to oblige a pal! Go and eat coke! Yah!"

Grundy stalked away to the door. But at the door he turned, and came back, fumbling in his pocket.

"I forgot the five!" he said. "You put it out of my head with your cheeky rot! Do you want five or ten? I've got lots of tin, as it happens!"

Gilbert Grundy looked at him affectionately.

"Always the same silly old ass, George!" he said. "You're offering me the five, though I've refused to oblige you!"

"That's got nothing to do with it, has it?" said Grundy.

"You're wandering from the subject. Five or ten?"

"Neither," said Gilbert. "The pater stood me five when I told him I was coming over here to visit you. That's all right. Now, where can we change clothes?"

"Eh? You said you weren't going to do it!"

"I'm not going to let you get kicked out of your school, anyhow! I'll make out that I'm a born fool for a whole day, and then nobody will guess that I'm not you, old man!"

"If you want another licking, Gilbert, that's the right way to ask for it!" bawled Grundy.

Gilbert Grundy chuckled.

"Cheese it, old man! Let's get somewhere and change, and I'll try my luck at St. Jim's—and you can catch the next train."

"Now you're talking!" said Grundy.

And all was calm and bright.

CHAPTER 6.

The Other Grundy!

"TOM MEWWY, dear boy, do you know where Gwunday is?"

Tom Merry rubbed a nose that still twinged a little from a set of Grammarian knuckles, and answered:

"Blow Grundy!"

"Yaas, wathah! I quite agwee!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Blow him as much as you like. But where is he?"

"Isn't he knocking about the House somewhere?" asked Tom.

"He came back from Rylcombe all right."

"Bai Jove! Did he go down to Wylcombe, Tom Mewwy?"

"Yes; we saw him there."

"And he slid off when we had a scrap with the Grammar cads!" growled Manners.

Arthur Augustus looked puzzled.

"That is not like Gwunday," he remarked, "and I weally do not see how you fellows can have seen him in Wylcombe. I saw him in the quad just before you came in."

"He came back, I suppose," said Tom. "I thought from

that that he had chucked up his silly stunt. I dare say he's about the House."

"But he isn't," said D'Arcy. "I've looked for him. Of course, Gwunday doesn't maitah vewy much; but a fellow doesn't want to see a fellow sacked for playin' the ox! It's close on callin' ovah, and Gwunday is out of gates!"

Tom Merry frowned. He was quite unaware that the Grundy he had seen at Rylcombe was not George Alfred of the Shell. So he was considerably puzzled.

"Well, if he's gone, he's gone!" said Tom at last. "If a silly ass keeps on asking for trouble, he's bound to butt against it in the long run. Can't be helped!"

"It's wathah wotten, you know!" said Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, it can't be helped, of course. I twust that Gwunday will weturn for callin' ovah; if he does not, it will be bunkin' for him!"

And Arthur Augustus walked away thoughtfully. Baggy Trimble met the Terrible Three a little later, and grinned at them.

"I say, Tom Merry—he, he, he!—Grundy says he is going to pull your nose next time he sees you! He, he, he!"

"Oh, dry up!" said Tom.

"But he says so, you know," said Trimble. "He says——"

"How does Grundy pull noses?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Like that?"

And Monty laid a sudden grip with finger and thumb on Baggy's fat little stubby nose.

"Yarooooooch!"

"Or like that?" asked Lowther, giving Baggy's nose another jerk.

"Mmmmmmmooooohhh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry and Manners.

"Ow! Wow! Oooch! Led do by dose!" gurgled Trimble.

And as soon as his fat nose was released, Baggy Trimble scuttled off, without delaying to amplify Grundy's truculent message any further.

"I suppose Grundy's gone," said Tom, with a rather worried look. "We did all we could, I—I suppose! The fellow's an awful ass!"

"He may change his mind and come back at the last minute. Let's look out before Taggles locks up."

The Terrible Three walked down to the gates. In the falling dusk they surveyed the road. Taggles came out of his lodge with his bunch of keys, and at the same time, the chums of the Shell sighted a burly figure coming up the road from Rylcombe.

"Grundy!"

Nobody, as a rule, was very glad to see Grundy. But Tom Merry & Co. were glad to see him now, for his own sake.

The youth who paused at the school gates was dressed in Etons—Grundy's somewhat baggy Etons. There was a great smear of spilt ink on the jacket, for which Grundy had been reprimanded in class only that afternoon. Grundy never was tidy. That it was Grundy's jacket, was absolutely certain—there was no other jacket at St. Jim's quite so slovenly. It was not likely that the juniors would guess that a fellow wearing Grundy's undoubted jacket, and looking just like Grundy, was not Grundy of the Shell. Possibly they had heard of Gilbert Grundy. For George Alfred prided himself upon being one of the strong silent characters; and, like most of such characters, he was a tremendous talker, mainly about himself and his affairs. So no doubt he had talked of cousin Gilbert, and even of cousin Gilbert's remarkable likeness to himself; but nobody was in the habit of remembering what Grundy talked, or even listening to it when listening was avoidable.

So it did not even occur to Tom Merry & Co. that there was any question of mistaken identity in the present case. Here was an undoubted Grundy, so naturally they supposed that it was their Grundy.

"Trot in, you ass," said Tom Merry, in great relief. "Blessed if I ever expected to be glad to see you, Grundy! But I'm glad!"

Gilbert Grundy smiled. He had had no doubt that he would be taken for his cousin George, especially after the encounter at the station with the Terrible Three. But this unquestioning recognition was reassuring.

He trotted in cheerily, and Taggles clanged the gates behind him. Gilbert was not any too early.

"Close on calling-over, isn't it, you fellows?" asked Gilbert Grundy.

"Don't you know it is?" said Manners. "Come on, and don't play the goat any more!"

"Why didn't you back us up against the Grammar cads, Grundy?" demanded Monty Lowther, as the Shell fellows walked towards the School House.

"The what?"

"Gordon Gay's gang, in Rylcombe——"

"Oh, that lot!" said Grundy. "You see, I had to get back to the station."

"What rot! You came on here—we found you here when we got back."

"Oh! Did you?" ejaculated Gilbert, realising that the Shell fellows must have found George Alfred.

"Yes, we did, you ass!"

"Bai Jove! There's Gwunday!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the Shell fellows entered the School House. "It's all wight!"

"I knew he wouldn't go," said Racke of the Shell. "I say, Grundy, you're losing the fiver."

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "The Cottage Hospital will be five pounds wiahah-to-mowwow."

Gilbert grinned. His cousin had told him about the wager with Aubrey Racke.

"Wait and see," he answered. And Gilbert went with the stream of St. Jim's fellows heading for Big Hall.

Mr. Railton was calling the roll that evening, and undoubtedly Mr. Linton had mentioned Grundy's threat of taking French leave to the Housemaster. Mr. Railton's keen eye rested on the ranks of the Shell, when he called Grundy's name, and he called it very distinctly.

"Grundy!"

"Here!" answered Gilbert promptly.

Mr. Railton went on with the roll; but some of the Shell fellows looked round at Gilbert. It was customary at St. Jim's to answer "adsum" when one's name was called, but Gilbert was unacquainted with the fact. Grundy had posted him on many points, but he had not been able to think of every detail.

After roll-call, Gilbert left the hall with the other fellows. From his cool and self-possessed manner, certainly no one would have guessed that he was a total stranger at St. Jim's, and had never even seen the school before. To Gilbert, the whole affair appealed as a tremendous lark; and he was prepared to enjoy the strange situation. But he knew that there were many difficulties ahead, and he was very wary.

"Well, I'm glad you're still here, old chap," said Wilkins, joining him with Gunn. "I won't rub it in; but I knew you wouldn't have the nerve to clear off. I said so, didn't I, Gunn?"

"Yes, and so did I, Wilkins," said Gunn.

Gilbert grinned. He knew now that these two fellows were his cousin's chums, Wilkins and Gunn; he was already learning his way about.

"That's all right," he said. "I've got lots of nerve—more than you'd think."

"I say, Grundy!" called out Baggy Trimble.

"Hallo!"

"There's Tom Merry!"

"Well, what about it?" asked Gilbert.

"He, he, he! You told me to tell him that you'd pull his nose next time you saw him!"

"Did I?" said Gilbert. "Never mind—I'll pull yours instead!"

"Ooooooch!" spluttered Trimble, as his fat little nose was jerked once more.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gilbert Grundy walked away with Wilkins and Gunn, leaving Baggy rubbing his nose, and the other fellows laughing.

CHAPTER 7.

A Change for the Better!

TOM MERRY & CO. smiled when Gilbert Grundy came into the Shell dormitory that night. After all Grundy's high talk on his independent intentions, it was rather amusing to see him turn up for bed-time as usual. But the Terrible Three had no desire to rub it in, and they made no remark on the subject. Other fellows in the Shell, however, were not so considerate, and a general fusillade of banter greeted the burly junior when he came in with Wilkins and Gunn.

Contrary to general expectations, Grundy took it all quite good-humouredly. It was not like Grundy of the Shell to take chipping with good humour; he was far too great and important a person in his own estimation to be chipped by common mortals. But he only laughed now over the banter, and even Racke and Crooke giped at him with impunity.

Wilkins and Gunn looked at him several times in a rather perplexed way. They were, in point of fact, surprised that Grundy had not lived up to his lofty boasting. He was just the reckless, headstrong fellow to take any risks rather than climb down. They had been still more surprised by him in the study that evening. Grundy had not called them fat-heads or dummies or idiots once. And instead of having to help him with his prep, as usual, Grundy had helped them—choosing a group of Latin that was simply amazing in the fellow who was considered the dunce of the Form. And he had helped them, not in the lofty, patronising way that they would naturally have expected from Grundy, but quietly and unostentatiously. It was amazing, and Wilkins and Gunn

agreed that old Grundy was improving. But the suddenness of the improvement was rather perplexing.

Lights out did not close the chipping of Grundy. For a quarter of an hour, at least, remarks were made to him, and at him, on the subject of the lofty declarations which had been followed by no signal a climb-down. The bantering ceased at last when the juniors realised that Grundy was not to be drawn; and that he had, in fact, gone quietly to sleep.

Gilbert Grundy turned out with the rest of the Shell when the rising-bell clanged on Wednesday morning. In his situation George Alfred would have made irretrievable blunders in the first ten minutes of the imposture, but Gilbert was endowed with intellectual powers very different from those of his cousin George. He was of an adaptable turn of mind, and he was already feeling quite at home at St. Jim's.

He had the key of Grundy's box, and he rather surprised his friends that morning by sorting out several articles, and dressing himself with unusual care. For the first time in his history Grundy was seen with a clean collar, a well-tied tie, brushed hair, stainless finger-nails, and no appearance of being dressed in second-hand clothes. Certainly, both the Grundys were a little ungainly, and could never look well-dressed; but Gilbert did what was possible, and the change from George Alfred's slovenly manners and customs was a little striking.

At the breakfast-table, where Mr. Linton presided over the Shell, that gentleman fixed his eyes on Grundy, sternly at first, but then with a mollified expression.

"Grundy!" he said.

"Yes, sir!"

"I had occasion to speak to you yesterday on the subject of your general slovenliness," said Mr. Linton. "I am glad to see that a great improvement has already taken place. I trust that this will continue, Grundy."

"Certainly, sir!" said Gilbert, though with great inward doubts as to whether it would continue after that day.

"You did not hand in your imposition before bed-time last night, Grundy," added Mr. Linton. "I trust that this was simply an oversight, and that the lines are done."

"I'm awfully sorry, sir!" said Gilbert. "They're not finished, sir. But if you will allow me, sir, I should like to express regret for having cheeked you, sir. I mean for having been impertinent, sir."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Linton, quite taken aback.

"I shall finish the lines to-day, sir, as it is a half-holiday," went on Gilbert. "It was rather a long job, sir."

"No doubt, no doubt!" said Mr. Linton. "I felt bound, Grundy, to make the imposition a heavy one. But since you appear to have reflected on the matter, and to be sorry for your rebellious conduct, I shall not be hard on you. You may take till Saturday to finish the thousand lines."

"Thank you, sir!" said Gilbert.

The Shell fellows regarded Grundy curiously. The "sweet reasonableness" he was displaying now, this proper sense of the fitness of things, was utterly unlike the Grundy they knew.

"I say, old chap, what's come over you?" asked Wilkins, as the juniors went out after breakfast.

"You're changed, old man," said Gunn.

"Think so?" asked Gilbert. "For the better, do you mean?"

"Well, yes, rather!" said Wilkins emphatically. "Blessed if I understand it—it's jolly sudden. You've put Linton into a good temper, and he was awfully down on you. You fairly put his jolly old back up by telling him you'd cut to-day without leave."

Gilbert grinned.

"Of course, you've made yourself look an awful ass," said Gunn. "The fellows will chip you no end for your brag. But I'm jolly glad you've done the sensible thing, and stayed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"Still here, Grundy?" called out Cardew of the Fourth, in the quad, with a laugh.

"Still here!" assented Gilbert.

"The jolly old motorin' trip with Uncle Grundy isn't comin' off after all, what?"

"Oh, yes, it's coming off all right," said Gilbert coolly.

"Eh! How's that?" asked Cardew in surprise.

"You can work that out for yourself," answered Gilbert. And he walked on, leaving Ralph Reckness Cardew staring. Racke of the Shell stopped him in the quad. Several fellows were with Racke, and they were all grinning.

"You've lost your bet, Grundy," said Racke.

"I never bet," said Gilbert.

"Well, your wager, or whatever you call it," sneered Racke. "You can't crawl out of it now. You've got to hand over a fiver to the Cottage Hospital. When are you handin' it over!"



"You see!" said Gilbert Grundy. "I can't make out I'm a dunce in school, can I? And supposing there's football about—can I make out that I'm a born fumbler at the game?" George Alfred Grundy, instead of answering in words, answered in deeds. He rushed at Gilbert and dragged him off the table. Thump! Thump! Thump! For five minutes there was a first-class tussle in the deserted waiting-room. (See page 9)

"Wait till it's lost," said Gilbert. "That is, if you are sticking to the wager, Racke."

"I jolly well am!" said Racke emphatically. "It will show up your brag. I stand to put up a fiver if you cleared off for the day, you stand to put it up if you don't. And I want to see you do it."

"Yes, rather!" said Kangaroo of the Shell. "We're all witnesses."

Gilbert nodded.

"That's that!" he agreed. "But the day's not over yet. To-morrow will be soon enough to pay up."

"Do you mean you're going to bolt after all?" demanded Talbot.

"Not a bit of it!"

"Then the motoring trip isn't coming off?"

"Yes, it's coming off."

The juniors stared at Gilbert Grundy.

"How do you make that out?" demanded Kangaroo.

"If you're here you can't be away motoring with your Uncle Grundy, I suppose?"

"Why not?"

"Why not?" stuttered Kangaroo. "Why, you silly owl, you can't be in two places at once, can you?"

"Wait and see!" answered Gilbert. And he walked on with his friends. Wilkins and Gunn exchanged a curious glance.

"I—I say, Grundy, old chap," murmured Wilkins.

"Yes, old bean?"

"You—you don't feel ill or—or anything, do you?"

"Fit as a fiddle."

"There isn't any insanity in your family, is there?"

"Eh! No. Why?"

"Oh! I—I thought there might be," stammered Wilkins.

"Fathead!"

Wilkins and Gunn were getting more and more perplexed. Really, Grundy's remarks could scarcely be explained on any other ground than "pottiness," and yet Grundy, so far from showing any trace of pottiness, seemed brighter, more sensible, more reasonable, than his chums had ever known him before. It was really very puzzling.

Still more puzzling was Grundy's conduct in class that morning. The juniors grinned to see him there, after all they had heard of Grundy's lawless intentions. But they stared as lessons proceeded. Grundy was called on to construe, and Grundy's construe was generally of a kind that made his Form fellows inclined to chuckle, and his Form master tear his hair. On this occasion Grundy's construe was faultless, and Mr. Linton could scarcely believe his ears. There was a history class that morning, and Grundy showed an acquaintance with the subject that was amazing. Grundy of the Shell was quite capable of stating that it was Napoleon Bonaparte who sat in the neatherd's hut and let the cakes burn, and then remarked "Kiss me, Hardy!" But this amazing Grundy came through without a single howler.

"Well, I'm blessed if I understand that chap," Tom Merry remarked when the Shell came out. "Has he been taking us all in this time, making out that he was the biggest dummy at St. Jim's? If so, why?"

It was quite a puzzle.

CHAPTER 8. Astonishing the Natives!

"FOOTBALL!"

"Yes," said Gilbert.

"Oh dear!" said Wilkins and Gunn together.

It always gave them a tired feeling when Grundy of the Shell started on the subject of football. For Grundy's

ignorance of that important subject was not merely great. It was colossal, it was monumental. And the game he played was not merely faulty, it was not merely bad. It was ludicrous, it was unheard of, it was almost unnerving.

"Let's give football a rest, old chap," said Wilkins soothingly.

"Isn't there a House match or something this afternoon?" asked Gilbert. "I've heard the fellows talking about it."

"You jolly well know there is a House match," said Wilkins. "And I suppose you haven't forgotten that you've bothered Tom Merry to play you in it. Don't be an ass, old chap!"

"Well, I want to play."

"Yes, yes, we know all that," said Gunn, as if he were soothing a child. "We know—we know! What do you say to a spin on the bikes this afternoon, Grundy? Wilkins is in the football, you know."

"Oh, Wilkins is in it, is he?" said Gilbert.

"Well, you know I am, unless you're losing your memory," said Wilkins tartly. "About time I got changed, too."

And Wilkins moved off—not being keen to hear Grundy on football. Gilbert Grundy glanced after him, looked at Gunn, and then followed Wilkins.

"What about the bikes?" called out Gunn.

"Oh, bother biking! I want to play footer!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Gunn. And he left it at that.

Wilkins headed for the changing-room in the School House, where some of the junior footballers had already gathered. Gilbert Grundy followed him in. He was looking a little morose. In point of fact, Gilbert was keen on Soccer, and was a good man at the game, and had given up a football match that afternoon in order to oblige Grundy of the Shell. So he felt that it was rather hard lines to be left out of the footer at St. Jim's—and he did not mean to be left out if he could help it.

"You don't want a new man in your lot, Merry?" he asked, addressing the captain of the Shell.

Tom Merry smiled.

"Thanks, no!" he answered.

"I'd like you to give me a chance."

"My dear man, the team's full up," said Tom good-naturedly. "Now, don't take the trouble to tell me that you're the best footballer in the school or out of it, Grundy—I know all that. You see, I've heard it so often."

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Well, I wouldn't brag about my game," said Gilbert.

"You wouldn't!" ejaculated Tom in astonishment.

"No!" hooted Gilbert.

"You mean, you shouldn't!" said Monty Lowther, laughing. "You would, of course—but certainly you shouldn't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gilbert eyed the grinning juniors. He knew a good deal of his cousin George's style at Soccer, and he was not surprised. But he wanted very badly to play in that match.

"I wouldn't brag about my game," he repeated. "But I think my play is fairly decent."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You could hit a haystack with the ball, if it wasn't more than three yards off?" asked Blake.

"Two yards," said Herries. "Not more than two yards."

Gilbert's eyes glimmered.

"Do you think I couldn't kick a goal?" he asked.

"You know you couldn't, old man," said Tom. "Give us a rest! It's hard on a chap to play footer as you do; but we really can't chuck away a match to Figgins & Co. to amuse you, Grundy!"

"Wathah not!"

"I don't mind showing you that I can kick a goal," said Gilbert. "Look here, you've got a Soccer-ball there. I'll send it out of that open window without touching the window."

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

The kick that Gilbert Grundy proposed was a difficult one enough. The window he pointed to was high up the wall, and was open at the top, a space about two feet by eighteen inches. It would have taxed Tom Merry's skill to send the footer through the open space without risk of smashing the glass. Not that anyone supposed that Grundy would risk smashing a pane; nobody supposed for a moment that he would land the ball anywhere near the window. If Grundy broke a window with the ball, it would not be that window, but a very distant window!

"Oh deah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Go easay, Gwunday, old man! You should not make us laugh so much just befoah a match. Why, I hardly believe I could bring off that kick, you know."

"I dare say you couldn't," agreed Gilbert. "I think I could."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Put it to the test," said Gilbert Grundy. "You're in the team, I think, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, wathah!"

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"If I bring off that kick, first shot, will you stand out and make room for me? That's a sporting offer."

"Ha, ha!" roared Arthur Augustus. "Yaas, wathah! I agree."

"Do you agree, as skipper, Merry?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"What's the good of chin-wag, Grundy?" he said. "You must know that you won't get within a yard of the window."

"Then you're all safe to agree," said Gilbert cheerily.

"Well, that's so," said Tom. "But—"

"It's all wight," said Arthur Augustus. "Play up, deah boy! Let's see Gwunday take the kick."

"Well, I don't mind," said Tom, laughing. "If you send the ball safe through that space first shot, Grundy, you play in the House match this afternoon in D'Arcy's place. It's a safe offer, as you can't get within yards of it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give a chap room!" said Gilbert.

The grinning juniors gave him room. There was a little time to fill in before the match, and they were willing to fill it in by watching Grundy's antics with the footer. Grundy was providing comic relief, which, according to Cardew, was his mission in life.

"Go it, deah boy!" chuckled D'Arcy.

Grundy placed the ball carefully, the juniors watching him with grinning faces. Then he took a little run and kicked.

The ball rose from his toe.

It did not bump on the wall, or on one of the spectators, as was generally expected. It did not crash through a window-pane. It sailed gracefully through the air, whizzed through the open top of the window, and vanished outside. A sudden yell from somebody outside the house showed that it had not fallen direct to the earth.

Tom Merry fairly jumped. He had followed the flight of the ball with his eyes, and he was astounded to see it vanish through the high window without contact.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's jaw dropped.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped.

Gilbert Grundy looked at Tom Merry with a smile.

"All right?" he asked.

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom blankly.

"I'm rather keen on playing footer this afternoon, so I shall hold you to your word," said Gilbert blandly. "I suppose I'd better get changed."

Tom Merry still looked blank. Not for an instant had he supposed that Grundy could bring off that difficult shot. What on earth had come over Grundy!

"Was—was—was that a fluke?" stuttered Tom at last. "Of course, it must have been!"

"You're keeping your word?"

Tom coloured with vexation.

"I was an ass to give it!" he said. "I must keep it, of course, if you hold me to it."

"I do!" said Gilbert.

"Oh cwums!" said Arthur Augustus. "This is weally howwid!"

Wilkins nudged Gilbert Grundy.

"Cut it out, old man!" he whispered. "It's pretty mean to take advantage of a weird fluke like that—nobody thought you could do it, of course—"

"It wasn't a fluke!"

"Oh, don't be an ass, old chap! Let Tom Merry off," urged Wilkins. "The fellows will almost lynch him if he plays you!"

"They'll be satisfied all right when they see me play."

Wilkins gave it up. When Tom Merry's team came down to Little Side there was a buzz of amazement among the onlookers to see Grundy among them.

"Grundy's playing!" yelled Trimble.

"Grundy! Rot!"

"Is Tom Merry mad?" howled a dozen fellows.

"Grundy—that's the limit!"

And Figgins & Co. of the New House saw Grundy come into the field with the School House eleven, and stared and chuckled.

"Grundy in the team!" said Figgins. "This is going to be a jolly old walk-over for us, my sons!"

And that opinion was shared by every fellow in the field, New House and School House.

CHAPTER 9. The Limit!

"GOAL!"
"Grundy!"
"Goal!"
"Great pip!"

Fellows standing round Little Side rubbed their eyes.

It was incredible—absolutely incredible, but there it was! Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking on, could scarcely believe the evidence of his celebrated eyeglass.

Tom Merry & Co. had started the House match in uneasy



Gilbert Grundy came through the New House defence, and sent in a shot that beat David Llewellyn Wynn to the wide. The whole crowd gasped. "Goal!" stuttered a crowd of fellows blankly. "Goal, Grundy—Grundy!" mumbled Tom Merry, dumbfounded. There was a cheer and a roar of laughter. Nobody fancied that it was anything but a fluke. But certainly Grundy was fluking with remarkable success. (See this page.)

spirits. With George Alfred Grundy in the ranks, any team was foredoomed to defeat—that was indubitable. It was not only that George Alfred played a wild and barging game himself. Nobody else could play with Grundy at hand. His gift for getting in everybody's way amounted to genius. If miraculously he trapped a pass, he was certain to fall on the ball, or send it to an opposing forward. If he charged a man over, it was sure to be a man of his own side—unless it was in the penalty area in the wrong way at the wrong moment. Tom Merry felt that he had been "done"! An amazing fluke that couldn't have been foreseen had landed this bargee on him for the match, and he wouldn't have been surprised if his followers had asked him to resign. The game started, and then came the amazing thing.

Fatty Wynn was in the New House goal, ready and watchful. When he saw Grundy with the ball Fatty grinned, but he was none the less watchful. Fatty was too good a custodian to take chances. But all his care did not save his goal. Gilbert Grundy came through the New House defence, and sent in a shot that beat David Llewellyn Wynn to the wide.

The whole crowd gasped.

"Goal!" stuttered a score of fellows blankly.

"Goal, Grundy—Grundy, goal!" mumbled Tom Merry, dumbfounded.

There was a cheer, and a roar of laughter. Nobody fancied that it was anything but a fluke. But certainly Grundy was fluking with remarkable success this afternoon.

"Bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "this is weally miwaculous! The age of miwacles is not past, deah boys!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Grundy!" yelled the crowd. "Take another goal! Ha, ha, ha!"

Gilbert Grundy lined up with the School House side again, smiling contentedly.

All eyes were on him when the game got going. The New House players gave him their attention now. Nobody had ever dreamed that it would be necessary to "mark" Grundy in a game of football. But Figgins & Co. marked him carefully now. It was amazing, it was incredible, but Grundy was as dangerous a man as any in the School House ranks, and Figgins did not blink that fact, astounding as it was. For Grundy was still showing good quality, though goals did not come his way. He seemed to have lost all his clumsiness; he did not barge into the other fellows, he did not butt in to take a pass that was not meant for him, he did not try to play the whole game off his own bat—in a word, he was an entirely new Grundy, a fellow whom the St. Jim's crowd hardly knew.

With Grundy in the team the House had looked for a defeat, with a good margin of goals on the other side. And they wondered whether they were dreaming when the first half ended with the School House one up—and that one Grundy's!

"Wondahs will nevah cease!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sapiently. "Gwunday was a dark horse, and no mistake! That goal wasn't a fluke, afaah all. I've been watchin' him all the time, and he hasn't made a mistake. It beats me!"

(Continued on page 16.)

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EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

A PERFECTLY stunnin' gal, bai Jove!" Such is Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's summing-up of Miss Rivers, the charming young lady who occupies the position of school nurse, and who assists the matron in the school sanatorium.

Miss Marie is certainly a splendid type of girl. She well deserves a special number of the "St. Jim's News" all to herself.

A career crowded with adventure, and crammed with excitement—such has been the lot of Miss Marie. Her early days were spent in the slums of London, among crooks and crackmen. Her father, John Rivers, was the leader of a notorious gang of looters and lawbreakers. He was known as the Professor, and Talbot, and Talbot's father, were members of the gang. But both Talbot and Marie were unwilling parties to the shady schemes of the Professor. It was no fault of their own that they were thrown among thieves.

When the Great War came along, it brought dramatic events in its train. John Rivers joined the army as a private soldier, and reformed his character. He turned his back upon the past; and no amount of persuasion on the part of his former confederates could induce him to rejoin the gang.

Miss Marie, who originally came to St. Jim's as Miss March, assumed her proper name, and has remained at her post ever since. She has had more than her share of trouble—for not long ago there was a strong rumour to the effect that her father had gone back to a career of crime; but this rumour happily proved false. Attempts have also been made, from time to time, to kidnap Marie and her boy chum, Talbot, and to get them back into the clutches of the gang; but all such attempts have ended in disaster.

Marie is naturally a more serious type of girl than Gussy's cousin Ethel, or Levison's sister, Doris. She has seen something of the seamy side of life; and she has faced privations and perils such as fall to the lot of few girls. As a result, she is less flippant and frivolous than her fair rivals. But she is very charming, and Reginald Talbot would go to the ends of the earth for her. Gussy declares that Miss Marie is simply adorable. And although Gussy himself is usually adorably simple, he has shown very shrewd judgment for once.

Hats off to Miss Marie! And may her future career be as happy and prosperous as she could wish!

Tom Merry

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MISS MARIE!

By Monty Lowther.

WHO helps the matron in the sanny, And sometimes calls her "Dear old Grannie"? Whose skill at nursing is uncanny? Miss Marie!

Who treats a host of schoolboy ills With patent medicines and pills? Who always cures, but never kills? Miss Marie!

The matron gives us pills and potions, And plasters us with lint and lotions. But who does this, without commotions? Miss Marie!

Who watches all our pranks and games, And calls us by our Christian names? Who shares our youthful hopes and aims? Miss Marie!

Who read to me the words of Henty When I was ill, in Nineteen-twenty? Who has admirers here in plenty? Miss Marie!

Who has a wondrous winning smile, Holds the girls' record for "the mile," And plays all games in glorious style? Miss Marie!

"The matron is a howwid hussy!" Such are the scathing words of Gussy. "I like the gal who's nevah fussy— Miss Marie!"

Who has few weaknesses or whims? Who bandages our injured limbs? Who's the great healer of St. Jim's? Miss Marie!

Who is it when one's ill at night That oft forgets to sup and bite, But watches o'er you till you're right? Miss Marie!

Who is it when we've got the flu Will sit with us the whole night through, And tend us just as mothers do? Miss Marie!

Who, when the busy day is done, Will stay behind and share the fun, Drink someone's health, and eat a bun? Miss Marie!

She's always doing good by stealth; We wish her well, we wish her wealth. We wish her happiness and health! Miss Marie!

SNAPSHOTS FROM THE SANNY!

By Marie Rivers.

THE life of a school nurse is not exactly a bed of roses. With all sorts of ailments—real and imaginary to attend to, I am kept on the go from the rising up of the sun to the going down thereof.

Bagley Trimble is a boy who is always getting imaginary ailments. He came to me on Monday morning looking quite scared. "I say, Miss Marie!" he blurted out. "I felt awfully queer when I got up this morning, and Lowther said something about rapid consumption!" I gazed at Trimble's ample form, and smiled. "Lowther was evidently referring to the rapid consumption of your meals!" I said. "You are certainly not suffering from any form of wasting disease. But I will give you some medicine, if you like. Perhaps a good dose of quinine—" But Trimble didn't wait for that. He promptly fled!

On Tuesday, Trimble found a fresh complaint. He said that D'Arcy minor had run into him in the quadrangle with his hoop. He therefore feared he had contracted "hooping" cough, if ever you heard of such nonsense! I told Trimble I had no time for such absurd tales, and sent him about his business.

I fondly hoped that Trimble would keep his distance after that. But on Wednesday morning he rushed into the sanatorium whilst I was dispensing cough mixture to a number of barking juniors. (They like my cough mixture, and they always cultivate a bad cough in order to get a generous dose!) Well, as I say, Trimble came rushing in, and he fairly collapsed at my feet. He complained of stabbing, shooting pains all over his anatomy. I asked him if he had just been flogged; and he said "Noooo, Miss Marie! But I'm just going to be—missus you keep me up here, and explain to the Head that I'm not in a fit condition to receive corporal punishment!" Naturally, I did not grant Trimble's request, but sent him away to meet his doom.

Another of my recent patients was George Alfred Grundy. He said he didn't know what was the matter with him, and he wanted me to find out. I took his temperature, and it was perfectly normal. "The only conclusion I can come to, Grundy," I told him, "is that you are suffering from swelled head!" For Grundy, as everybody knows, is the most conceited and cocksure person at St. Jim's. He didn't like my snub, and I could hear him grumbling and growling as he stamped away down the stairs.



A BOMBHELL for Gussy!

By Sidney Clive.

"GOOD-MORNING, Master D'Arcy!" said Miss Pinch, the matron, meeting Arthur Augustus at the entrance to the sick bay.

"Good-mornin', ma'am!" said Gussy in his politest manner. "Is Miss Mawie anywhere about?"

"She is probably having breakfast in her room," said the matron. "I cannot say for certain."

"Good!" said Gussy. "I want to ask her to come an' play the piano to-morrow evenin' at the juniah concert. I am goin' to sing 'Dwake Goes West,' an' 'Where my Cawavan Has Wested,' an' I feel suah Miss Mawie would like to accompany me."

The matron nodded and smiled, and Arthur Augustus stepped along to Miss Marie's room. He tapped on the door, but there was no response.

Gussy waited a little while, then, hearing no movement from within, he opened the door and stepped into the room.

Miss Marie was not there. This was rather a pity, for Arthur Augustus would have liked a pleasant chat with the charming school nurse. But the matter of the concert was not an urgent one. It would have to wait.

Gussy was about to withdraw when he happened to catch sight of a number of postcards lying on the table. They were birthday cards, and the picture sides were uppermost.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Gussy. "Birthday gweetin's for Miss Mawie! An' I had no ideah it was her birthday! I don't think anybody else knows, eithah. I've not heard any of the fellows mention it."

Looking quite excited, Arthur Augustus hurried down into the quad. Tom Merry & Co. were there, punting a football about. Gussy bore down upon them like a whirlwind.

"I say, deah boys! What do you think? It's Miss Mawie's birthday!"

"My hat!"

"I knew nothin' about it until a minute ago, when I saw some birthday cards lyin' on her table. But it was a stvoke of luck that I happened to see those cards. We shall be able to buy Miss Mawie a birthday pwesent."

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry. "Fancy it being Miss Marie's birthday! Everybody seems to have overlooked the event—even old Talbot. But we've got time to buy something for Miss Marie, and we'll present it to her this evening. You can make the presentation, Gussy, and an appropriate speech for the occasion."

Arthur Augustus flushed with pleasure. Nothing would delight him more than to make the presentation, and a flowery speech into the bargain.

"All sewene, deah boy!" he said. "Now, the question is, what are we goin' to buy Miss Mawie?"

There was a divergence of opinion on that point.

Monty Lowther suggested a gold brooch; but Tom Merry pointed out that Miss Marie already had brooches galore.

"Then I'll 'broach' another suggestion," said Lowther. "What about a pearl necklace?"

"Miss Marie wants something more sensible than that," said Manners. "A really useful present is better than an ornamental one, any day."

"That's so," agreed Tom Merry. "I've often heard Miss Marie say that the clock in her room never keeps good time. It's a stupid old clock, provided by the school. One morning it's half an hour fast, the next morning it's half an hour slow. What are you to do with a clock like that?"

"Pawn it, and buy another!" said Lowther.

"Well, I don't know about pawning it," said Tom Merry with a laugh. "Can't pawn the school property, you know. But we can at least buy Miss Marie another clock—a really good clock, that she can thoroughly rely on."

"Heah, heah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I'll start the subscription-list wight away."

Gussy himself set the ball rolling with ten shillings, and the other fellows quickly rallied round. They were surprised to find that it was Miss Marie's birthday, but, as Jack Blake pointed out, Miss Marie had birthdays, just like everybody else. And everyone agreed

.....

The Imaginary Epitaph of

HERBERT SKIMPOLE.

By the St. Jim's Joker.

Cheer, traveller, cheer!

For buried here

lies

HERBERT SKIMPOLE,

the brainy genius of the Shell, who was wont to distract his long-suffering schoolfellows by expounding to them, for hours on end, the doctrines of a tame lunatic named Professor Balmcrumpet.

HE PERISHED MISERABLY

(Skimpole, not the professor)

after swallowing several dictionaries, an encyclopedia, and a bulky volume on "Determinism," and his weedy frame has been deposited here as a warning to all long-haired, goggle-eyed swots!

Apart from imbibing stores of learning, Skimpole was by way of being an inventor. He invented a rocking-horse that wouldn't rock, a bathing-machine that wouldn't bathe, a typewriter that wouldn't type, a pop-gun that wouldn't pop, and a safety-razor that wasn't safe.

In short, he was

A DANGEROUS IMBECILE,

and it is a matter of relief that he is dangerous no longer.

"Thus Skimpole of the Shell departs!

Who likes it not must lump it;

Instead of swallowing jam-tarts

He swallowed Balmcrumpet!"

that it was a splendid idea to present the popular school nurse with a clock.

Arthur Augustus had collected quite a large sum by dinner-time. And after dinner he went over to Wayland to purchase the clock. Tom Merry & Co. accompanied him. They could not trust to Gussy's "tact and judgment."

After a good deal of discussion the choice was made. It was a very handsome clock that the juniors purchased, and they were highly pleased with it.

On the way back to St. Jim's Arthur Augustus was busy preparing his speech for the presentation. He was muttering flowery phrases to himself as he swung along the road.

About five o'clock that afternoon Marie Rivers received a message to the effect that she was wanted in the Junior Common-room. The messenger did not say why she was wanted. He had been sworn to secrecy.

Greatly wondering, Miss Marie made her way to the Common-room. And when she got there she found practically the whole of the Fourth and the Shell gathered together.

"My goodness!" she gasped, staring at that vast assembly. "What ever is going on?"

"It's all wight, Miss Mawie!" said Arthur Augustus, who stood behind the table with a big brown paper parcel in front of him. "Nothin' to be alarmed about, deah gal."

Gussy then glanced at Tom Merry, who made a sign to him to proceed.

"Ahem!" began Arthur Augustus, clearing his throat. "What I have to say is vewy bwief—"

"Thank goodness!" murmured Lowther.

"I am a fellow of few words," continued the speaker. "When I get into the House of Lords, deah boys, I shall probably make much longah speeches, occupyin' several days."

"You're not in the House of Lords now, Gussy!" shouted Blake. "Cut the cackle, and get to business!"

"Weally, Blake, you are vewy wude, an' when these pwoccedin's are ovah I shall have to administrah a feahful thwashin'. Meanwhile, I must ask you, Miss Mawie, to accept this token of our esteem an' wegard on the occasion of your seventeenth, eighteenth, or nineteenth birthday—I'm not suah which!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Miss Marie stood thunderstruck. Arthur Augustus held out the brown-paper package to her, but she did not take it.

"I—I'm afraid there is some mistake," she stammered. "It is not my birthday!"

"N-n-not your birthday?" gasped Gussy.

"No."

"But—but I saw a numbah of birthday gweetin' cards on your table this mornin'—"

"Oh!" Miss Marie was smiling now. "Those cards were last year's! I had been looking through them just to amuse myself."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus in deep distress. "It looks as if I have been too pwemature!"

Gussy certainly had. But when Miss Marie explained that her birthday was only a fortnight hence, Gussy's face cleared.

"In that case, pewwhaps you would not mind acceptin' the pwesent in advance, Miss Mawie?" he said.

Miss Marie had no objection. And the handsome gift was handed over amid loud and prolonged cheers—cheers which amply testified to the wonderful popularity of Miss Marie.

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"THE OTHER GRUNDY!"

(Continued from page 13.)

"We shall wake up presently," said Gunn, still more amazed.

In the interval Wilkins clapped his chum on the shoulder. "Grundy, old man, why have you been pretending all this time to be a born idiot at footer?" he asked.

"Have I?" said Gilbert.

"Well, you know the way you played, and the way you talked!" said Wilkins. "Now you're playing up as well as Tom Merry or Talbot! What does it mean?"

Gilbert Grundy chuckled, and did not answer the question. The fellows would know what it meant when George Alfred Grundy returned—the mystery would be elucidated then. And until then he had to leave them to their perplexity.

The whistle went for the second half in the House match that had turned out to be the most amazing and exciting of the season. Figgins & Co. no longer expected a walk-over for the New House. With that astonishing new recruit in the ranks, the School House side outclassed the New House, and the fact was not to be denied. Even Arthur Augustus could see that Tom Merry had strengthened the team by changing him for Grundy!

From the whistle the game was hard and fast. Figgins & Co. were trying to pull it out of the fire. Figgins put the ball in, and Redfern followed it with a long shot that luckily materialised. But the New House success was transient. Tom Merry followed on with a goal, and equalised.

"Two to two—and anybody's game!" said Gunn. "But who'd have thought it! Look at Grundy—there he goes!"

The School House forwards came up the field with the ball, passing finely. And Grundy took and gave passes with finished skill. Talbot sent the ball in, to be fisted out by Fatty Wynn, and then an active figure leaped forward and headed the ball.

"Grundy!"

"Goal!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The leather was in the net again, and the School House were three to two!

"We're dreaming!" said Gunn, with conviction. "Grundy taking two goals in a House match! It's a dream, of course!"

"Weally, it does seem like a dream!"

"Bravo, Grundy!"

"Good old Grundy!"

And even yet the amazing Grundy was not finished. It was close on time when a New House attack was broken up and Tom Merry & Co. swept up the field. And Grundy, taking a pass from Tom, sent the ball crashing in—almost on the stroke of time!

"Goal!"

"Four to two, bai Jove!" yelled Arthur Augustus. "Bwavo, Gwunday! Oh, good man—good man!"

And the swell of St. Jim's waved his eyeglass in delight. The whistle went, and the players came off ruddy and breathing hard. All eyes were on Grundy!

"You spoofing ass!" said Tom Merry, touching him on the arm. "What have you been pulling our leg for all this long time? Why didn't you tell me you could play footer? I mean, why didn't you play it before, instead of always barging about like a potty elephant?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We shall want you in School matches after this, Grundy," added Tom Merry.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Gilbert. "Better not!"

"Eh! Why not?"

"You'll know to-morrow."

And Gilbert Grundy went into the changing-room, leaving Tom Merry more perplexed than ever.

In the Lower School of St. Jim's, in both Houses, there was only one topic—the amazing form Grundy had shown in the House match. Fellows who hadn't see the game simply couldn't believe it.

In Study No. 3 in the Shell, Wilkins and Gunn were quite proud of their study-mate. It was the first time they had been proud of Grundy—it was quite novel. They would have been patient now, if he had talked football; but he didn't—he let Wilkins and Gunn have their fair share of the talking, which was more surprising than ever.

After tea in the study, Gilbert Grundy disappeared.

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Fellows—for once interested in Grundy—looked for him; but they found him not.

He had answered to his name at evening call-over, but after that he was not to be seen.

Apparently he had gone out after lock-up, breaking bounds. Tom Merry & Co, unusually cordial towards Grundy now, wondered where he was.

It did not even occur to them that he was tramping away on the dark road to Rylcombe, there to meet another Grundy and change clothes with him; then to take a train and vanish for ever from the St. Jim's where he had caused so great a sensation in so short a time. But thus it was!

CHAPTER 10.

Light at Last!

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY dropped over the school wall, and strolled with a careless air to the School House. He strolled into the House in quite a casual way, and walked to the junior Common-room. He was a little tired, after a long day motoring, and then the return journey to St. Jim's. But he was very cheerful. He had had his day out—he had kept his lofty word—he hadn't been over-ruled by a cheeky Form master! True, Mr. Linton was never to know how his authority had been defied; but all the juniors would know, and that was enough for Grundy! He strolled into the junior Common-room with a smiling face.

"Hallo, here he is!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You've come back, old bean?" said Wilkins quite affectionately. "I say, you haven't left yourself much time for prep!"

"I'm not doing any prep this evening," said Grundy. "Too jolly tired after a day's motoring!"

"After what?"

"Motoring!"

That answer caused every fellow in the Common-room to look at Grundy.

"I suppose that is a joke," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "It is wathah too deep for me, Gwunday!"

"And for me!" said the puzzled Wilkins.

"Oh, don't be an idiot, Wilkins. But you always were a silly chump!" said Grundy.

It was the old Grundy again!

"How did the House match go?" asked Grundy, looking round.

"How did it go?" ejaculated Blake.

"Yes; did you beat the New House? I suppose you were licked, as I warned you you would be without me."

Tom Merry looked quite concerned.

"It can't be sunstroke," he said. "But what is it?"

"The poor chap is weally off his wockah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Gwunday, deah boy, have you weally forgotten that you played in the House match this afternoon, and kicked thwee of the goals?"

George Alfred Grundy jumped.

"Great Scott! You don't mean to say you played that chap in the House match, Tom Merry? He never mentioned it to me!"

"What chap?"

"That chap!" exclaimed Grundy. "Why, he's not a patch on me at footer! If you've played him, you ought to jump at me!"

"What do you mean?" roared Tom Merry. "I played you in the House match, Grundy!"

"Oh, you're an ass!" said Grundy impatiently. "Didn't I tell you I was going motoring to-day? Well, I've been. That's why my cousin Gilbert came here!"

"Your—your what?"

"My cousin Gilbert—the chap you fellows met at the station yesterday and took for me," said Grundy.

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"Your cousin Gilbert?" said Wilkins dazedly.

"I've mentioned him to you, Wilkins, more than once—I've told you he's just like me, only not so good-looking. I should have thought you'd have tumbled when he turned up here. You knew I was going motoring with my Uncle Grundy!"

"Great Scott!"

"It—it wasn't you?" yelled Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

"Of course it wasn't! It was a spoof on Mr. Linton—to keep him from grousing while I took my day's leave!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Did you think I was going to eat my words?" said Grundy scornfully. "I said I was going motoring, and I went motoring! Linton can go and eat coke! Racke—where's Racke! Racke, you've lost your wager, and you've got to stump up five quids for the Cottage Hospital!"

"I—I—" stammered Racke. "I don't believe it. I—"

"You don't believe me?" roared Grundy. He made a stride at Aubrey Racke.

"I—I mean—yes—I—I do—"

"That's better! If you don't stump up that five, your features will want some repairs," said Grundy. "Well, what are all you fellows blinking at? Haven't I explained?"

"So—so—so you spoofed us all—or, rather, your blessed cousin did!" gasped Tom Merry. "I'd jolly well punch his nose if he were still here—pulling our legs like that! Still, he put up a good game of footer, and helped us beat the New House! Now I understand—"

"We ought to have guessed," grinned Blake. "We all knew that Grundy couldn't play footer—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, don't be a cheeky ass!" said Grundy. "I can play Gilbert's head off at any game! Of course, this isn't to be spoken of for the prefects to hear—it's the sack if it comes out—"

"It will be kept dark," said Tom Merry. "We don't want you to be sacked, Grundy! Now, you've kept up your brag, you've gone motoring without leave, and you've made our Form master look an ass, though he will never know it—and now you're jolly well going to be bumped for your cheek!"

"Yaas, wathah! I disapprove uttably of Gwunday's pwoceedin's."

"Bump him!"

"Look here—" roared Grundy.

Bump, bump, bump, bump!

The story could not be kept quite dark. It was talked of too much for that. It reached Mr. Linton's ears in the long run; but it was too extraordinary a story for the Form master to credit. He pooh-poohed it, and did not even mention it to Grundy of the Shell. Wilkins and Gunn were the fellows who remembered the incident longest. Grundy—the new Grundy—had been so immense an improvement on the old Grundy, that they found it hard to reconcile themselves to the change when the old Grundy was restored. And Wilkins and Gunn sighed to think how happy life would have been in Study No. 3 in the Shell, could they but have changed George Alfred permanently for the Other Grundy.

THE END.

(Another magnificent yarn of Tom Merry & Co. next week, chums. And a thriller it is, too! Make a note of the title: "RACKE, THE RENEGADE!" Miss this and you will miss Martin Clifford's finest story.)



Tuck Hampers and Money Prizes Awarded for Interesting Paragraphs.
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EXETER WINS OUR TUCK HAMPER!

A LABOUR DIFFICULTY!

Wife (addressing husband from the window, at 1 a.m.): "Well, what's your excuse for coming home at this hour?" Husband: "Let me in, M'ria. Just come from the meeting of the Labour Union. Been considering what we'd do about the recent strike." Wife: "Well, you just sit down on the doorstep and consider what you'll do about the present lock-out!" And she slammed down the window.—A Tuck Hamper filled with delicious Tuck has been awarded to Dudley S. Summer, Barley Lodge, Okehampton Road, St. Thomas, Exeter, Devon.

MAKING THE BEST OF IT!

A boy, who was bathing, was trying to don a very ragged pair of trousers. His foot, however, slipped first through one rent and then through another, till a bystander burst out laughing. "See," said the boy, looking up with a grin, "there's so many little lanes that I can't find the main street!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to S. H. Morley, 29, Salisbury Road, Southsea, Hants.

THE SAFEST PLACE!

A man was invited to the country for a day's shooting. The keeper, in great disgust, witnessed miss after miss. "Dear me!" exclaimed the sportsman. "The birds seem strong on the wing!" "Not all of them, sir," came the remark. "You've shot at the same bird for a dozen times. 'E's following you about, sir." "Why?" asked the sportsman. "I dunno, sir," replied the man, "unless 'e's 'anging round for safety!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Master J. Tansley, 28, East Street, Coventry, Warwickshire.

SPEED!

"Talkin' about railway travellin'," said Arthur Augustus, "I was in a twain the othah day that twavelled sixty miles within the hour." "Oh, that's nothing," chimed in Tom Merry. "You know how far it is from Edinburgh to Wayland? Well, I went into the station at Edinburgh and bought a third-class ticket, and, would you believe it, I came to Wayland in a 'second!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss V. Ahlgrea, 1, Mowbray Street, Leicester.

AND THEN HE SMILED!

A gentleman was motoring through Devonshire, and thinking he would get some Devonshire cream, entered a shop and asked to be supplied with a pint. "Sorry, sir, we have none," said the shopkeeper, "but the London train has not arrived yet!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Frank Barnett, Charlton House, St. Mark's Road, Wolverhampton.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

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Little did Dick Derwent realise when rescuing the faithful dog, Watch, from the villagers, how his kind action was to be repaid!

THE BEAD NECKLACE



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CHAPTER 1.

The Fight in the Wood!

DICK DERWENT carefully folded the letter he had been perusing, thrust it into his pocket, and turned to his chum, Roderick Carless, who was seated next to him at the breakfast-table at Tawley House.

"Hugh is on his way home, Rod," he said, with a calmness that the excited glitter in his eyes belied.

"Hugh's Hugh?" demanded Carless. Dick Derwent was far too excited to notice the atrocious pun.

"My elder brother, whom I've told you about a score of times," he returned impatiently. "He went to South America to make his fortune—and he's made it!"

"Lucky bargee! Heartiest congrats, Dick!" replied his chum, and left his seat as Mr. Storrs, the second master, signalled permission for the boys to rise.

"Coming for a kick about, Dick?" asked Rod, as the two chums emerged from the school-room.

"Could not see a ball, much less kick one!" returned Dick. "Come for a walk, and I'll tell you all about Hugh."

Ever since they had fought and made friends—all within the first hour of their arrival at Tawley House some twelve months before—Dick and Rod had become inseparables.

Muttering something about wasting a lovely evening footling around muddy lanes, Rod turned his back on the playing-fields, and accompanied his chum across the road leading to the village of Cranstead, some half-mile away, on the one hand, and to a nearby market town on the other, over fields and meadows to a remote wood, which was guarded by notice-boards announcing that "Trespassers will be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law."

Climbing a dilapidated and moss-grown gate, they pressed into the heart of the wood, until they came to the moss-grown trunk of a fallen tree.

"What has your brother been doing in South America?" asked Rod, as the boys seated themselves on the log.

"Oh, all kinds of things—ranching, mining, and having a high old time generally," replied Dick Derwent.

"Found a gold-mine—eh?" suggested Rod Carless.

Dick shook his head.

"My mother does not seem to know," he admitted, drawing the letter he had received that afternoon from his pocket. "All she says is: 'Hugh is coming

home a rich man, and will be with us in less than a month.'"

"How long has he been gone?" asked Rod.

"Just about three years," replied his chum.

"Humph!" grunted Carless. "Can't have made much of a pile in three years. Perhaps it's pirates' treasure, Dick, or may be gold."

"May be," admitted Dick Derwent, "and may be not. I rather incline to the gold-mine theory myself. He may be coming home to fit out an expedition. If so, he will certainly have to take me with him, or—"

He ceased speaking, and both boys sprang to their feet as the shrill cry of a dog in fearful agony fell upon their ears.

It was followed by loud roars of cruel laughter, mingled with a babel of excited shouts.

"It's those young village hooligans torturing a dog!" cried Dick, his face almost livid with rage.

The next moment the two boys were running in the direction from whence the pain-laden cries came as swiftly as the undergrowth would allow.

Presently they reached an open space, thick with bracken, in the centre of which four boys were dancing excitedly around a large sheepdog.

Three were stout, overgrown youths from the neighbouring village, but the fourth they recognised as Pete Alvados, a Peruvian boy, who had come to Tawley House that term.

All were armed with sticks, with which they were striking viciously at the half-mad dog, taking care to keep out of reach of its strong, white teeth.

Dick Derwent and Rod Carless saw red.

Any one of the four would have been a match for either Dick or Rod separately, but without a moment's hesitation the plucky youngsters hurled themselves upon the dog's tormentors.

So unexpected was the attack, so fierce the onslaught, that two of the biggest boys—one a hulking youth of seventeen, the other a red-haired, round-faced lad of about the same age—found themselves sprawling on the ground, the former rolling within reach of the dog's jaws, his companion sitting down, with a force that changed his laughter into howls of pain, in the midst of a peculiarly prickly blackberry-bush.

Scarce able to believe the good luck which had enabled them to put two foes hors de combat at the first onslaught, Rod charged headlong at the remaining

villager, whilst Dick, eager to avenge the honour of the school, closed with the South American.

Before that worthy could raise a finger in defence, Dick had got his head in chancery, and pummelled him until he sank to the ground, with many marks of his opponent's kindly attentions on his face.

A swift glance round the battlefield brought a roar of irrepressible laughter from Dick Derwent's lips.

The boy who had first fallen before the avengers' onslaught was howling for help, with the dog's teeth firmly grasping his trousers, and, to judge by his outcries, a goodly portion of flesh likewise.

But Dick was not allowed to enjoy the sight in peace.

Feeling as though his body had been turned into a perambulating pincushion, the second village boy had scrambled out of the blackberry-bush, and sprang at him, his big-fisted arms thrashing the air like windmill sails.

The thrashing fists caught Dick on the side of the head, and sent him rolling against Rod Carless' opponent, just in time to divert a deadly upper-cut, which would certainly have laid his chum out had it reached its mark.

As it was, Rod was able to meet his foe's attack with a body blow that sent him rolling on the ground, too breathless even to give utterance to the cry of pain that rose to his lips.

Dick Derwent had also fallen, but was soon up again. Sending his foe's head back with a trenchant blow from his right, he got his left home with deadly precision on the point of his chin.

With a stifled grunt the yokel sank to his knees, rolled on the ground, and "subsequent proceedings interested him no more."

It was about this time that Rod Carless' opponent conceived a decided distaste for his present company.

Turning on his heels, he dashed off as swiftly as his legs could carry him.

At the same time his comrade succeeded in wrenching himself free from his canine captor's grasp, and he also fled, leaving a goodly portion of his nether garment in the dog's jaws.

The two chums looked proudly around them. Of their four foes, only the knocked-out one remained upon the field of battle.

Pete Alvados had slunk off whilst Dick was engaged with his second opponent.

A moan of pain drew Dick Derwent's attention to the dog.

"It's old Watch—Farmer Higgins'

bob-tailed sheepdog!" he cried. "Poor old chap! What have the brutes been doing to you?"

The dog whined pitifully, raised a pair of dark-brown, pain-laden eyes to the boy's face, then drew himself slowly towards him, revealing the fact that one of his hind feet had been caught in the iron jaws of a large vermin-trap.

Not for a moment did Dick hesitate, though well he knew that a trapped dog, mad with pain, is out to snap at anyone who comes within reach. He laid his hand soothingly upon the dog's head, and, pressing his foot down on the steel spring, eased it sufficient for the animal to withdraw its foot.

Whimpering with pain, Watch turned its shaggy head to lick its rescuer's hand.

Very gently Dick ran his fingers over the injured limb. The paw was swollen, but, so far as he could make out, no bones were broken.

Lifting the animal in his arms, he carried it to a bubbling stream a short distance away.

Instinct telling him that the boy was doing all in his power to aid him, Watch remained perfectly still whilst Dick bathed the swollen paw, and bound it up with his handkerchief.

With Rod's assistance, Dick carried the dog to Woodland's Farm, where its owner lived. After having handed it over to a labourer's care, they dashed off as quickly as their legs could carry them, for the waning light told that it would be as much as they could do to reach Tawley House in time for evening prep.

"We will have to go careful when near the village, Rod. We've made three pretty hefty enemies this evening," remarked Dick Derwent, as they entered the school grounds.

"Make it four, Dick," laughed Rod. "I chanced to see the amiable glances Pete Alvados cast upon you just before he slunk off, and there wasn't much friendly feeling or brotherly love in it, I can tell you."

As Rod Carless had said, the boys had made four dangerous enemies. But they had gained a staunch friend, who, though only a dog, was destined ere long to prove its gratitude.

CHAPTER 2.

The Unseen Listener!

"DEAR Dick,—I enclose a string of beads which I want you to take special care of, for I hope that one day it will make us all rich. I dare not tell you more at present, but hope to explain everything when I relieve you of your charge in a few days' time. There are those who will stand at nothing to obtain the beads. I am very doubtful if they even know of your existence. If you see a slightly-built, brown-skinned Brazilian, named Jose Arno, and Sam Sorgun, a huge negro, hanging about the school, look out for trouble. Arno has just entered the post-office in which I am writing, but I will take good care he does not see the address when I hand the parcel across the counter. Back me up for all you are worth, Dick, old son, and we'll do the bounders yet.

"Yours ever,

"HUGH."

"He's in London, then, Dick?" cried Rod Carless excitedly.

"So it seems," replied Dick Derwent, and lapsed into a thoughtful silence.

It was two days after the fight in the wood, and the registered package containing the letter which Dick had just read aloud had reached him by that morning's post.

This was the first opportunity he had had to show it to his friend, for it was a half-holiday, and Paisley House—a school some five miles from Tawley House—had sent their first footer eleven over to play the Tawlians' first.

Thus it was that Dick and Rod had wended their way to see the match.

Rod Carless was the first to break the silence.

"Is the necklace valuable, old chap?" he asked at last.

Dick Derwent grinned.

"You could get a better one at Woolworth's for sixpence!" he declared emphatically.

With a cautious look round, he produced a battered cardboard box from his pocket. Throwing back the lid, he drew out a string of black, white, and green beads, which he dangled laughingly before his chum's eyes.

"What did you expect—diamonds and pearls?" he demanded, bursting into a roar of laughter as he noted the look of disappointment on Rod's face.

Truth to tell, the necklace looked scarcely worthy of a place on the neck of a wooden doll, for the beads appeared to be strung anyhow, the green beads, which predominated, being interspersed with white and black ones in the most haphazard manner imaginable.

"They don't look the kind of things jewel-thieves would worry their heads about. Sure your brother isn't pulling your leg?" suggested Rod Carless.

"Not in your young, and hitherto useless, life, Rod, my boy. Hugh isn't that kind," declared Dick, with conviction.



Scrambling out of the blackberry bush the villager sprang at Dick Derwent, his big-fisted arms thrashing the air like windmill sails. The thrashing fists sent Dick rolling against Rod Carless' opponent.

"He might fool me, but he thinks far too highly of our people to play monkey tricks on them."

Rod Carless nodded.

"It would be a bit off, when you come to think of it," he admitted.

"No, sweet youth. Depend upon it, old Hugh was up against it good and hard, or he wouldn't have let this necklace out of his possession, and it's up to me to see his trust is not misplaced," returned Dick seriously.

"Just so," agreed Rod. "I'm with you to the precious old limit!"

Solemnly the two clasped hands, and Dick felt his anxiety considerably

lightened now that he had taken this trusty comrade into his confidence.

"Anyhow—" began Dick.

The sentence ended in a boisterous shout of welcome, as a large dog burst into the coppice, and rolled Dick over on his back in a frantic attempt to lick his face.

"Hallo, Watch, old chap!" cried Dick, holding the excited dog off. "How's the paw getting on? Better—eh?"

"Woof, woof!" barked the dog, which had hung about the school quite a lot, since Dick had rescued it from its tormentors.

Suddenly its deep-throated bark turned to a threatening growl, as, baring its teeth in a ferocious snarl, it commenced darting backwards and forwards along the fence immediately behind Dick and Rod, as though in search of some gap through which to crawl.

Close upon Watch's growl had come a stifled cry of alarm from the other side of the hedge, followed by the beat of rapidly retreating feet on the hard road.

The two boys sprang to their feet just

as Watch found a weak place, through which it forced its way.

Jumping on to the bank, they looked over the hedge, to see Pete Alvados sprinting down the road, with Watch less than a hundred yards behind him and overtaking him at every stride.

Casting fear-laden glances over his shoulder, Alvados sped on, until at length

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he darted through an opening in a brick wall at the back of the school, and slammed the door to just as Watch was about to seize him.

With a baffled howl the dog flung himself at the door. Then, realising that his foe had escaped him, he came limping back, wagging his ridiculous stump of a tail, and looking very pleased with himself on the whole.

"Watch has a good memory for his foes," commented Rod Carless. "And for his friends, also," replied Dick, leaning forward to see what lay on the other side of the hedge.

"Look, Rod, that dago beast was deliberately spying on us," he declared, pointing to the dry ditch immediately beneath them, the loose leaves in which still bore a faint impress of the eaves-dropper's body.

"The mean rotter!" ejaculated Rod in disgust.

"He's all that, and more, but I do not see how he can do us any harm. Hugh knew what he was up to when he sent the necklace to a mere schoolboy like myself!" laughed Dick.

CHAPTER 3.

Watch Pays Back!

FOR the next three days Dick Derwent and Rod Carless lived in a state of constant expectancy, half-hoping that the Brazilian and the negro would put in an appearance.

But when a week had slipped by, and nothing further had been heard from his brother, Dick began to fear that Hugh had fallen a victim to foul play.

These fears were not lessened when he received a letter from his father containing a humorous account of how a foreigner, accompanied by a black servant, had put up at the principal inn of the little village in which Dr. Derwent lived, and had fallen in love at first sight with Mrs. Derwent's housemaid. But her sweetheart, a stalwart young game-keeper had ended the affair by throwing the foreigner into a horse-pond, and administering a good thrashing to the negro servant who had gone to his master's rescue.

Dick read the letter with growing uneasiness. It looked as though, having discovered that the necklace was no longer in Hugh Derwent's possession, the two men had visited his home, and had probably extracted his address from the housemaid.

He soon had proof that his fears were well-grounded. That very evening someone had been at his box, whilst during the night the study he shared with Rod Carless was entered, and the whole place turned inside-out, without anything having been taken.

The masters paid scant attention to what they considered a rag, in which Dick and Rod had been the victims, and even though a side door had been found open, which the porter declared he had locked, as usual, their statements were received with incredulity.

Dick Derwent maintained a discreet silence.

The fact that the burglars—if burglars there had been—had known which was his box, and which study he occupied, warned him that he had to contend against some foe within the school.

Who that foe was neither Dick Derwent nor Rod Carless had any doubts.

Who but Pete Alvados knew about the bead necklace?

And yet, when the chums, with considerable difficulty, got him in a classroom by himself, the look of surprise

with which he met the accusation shook their belief in his guilt.

"If it wasn't you, who was it?" demanded Dick.

"How should I know? What do you think I would want to go fishing about in your box for?" growled Pete sullenly.

"That is what you are going to tell me, or take what's coming to you!" cried Dick, moving threateningly towards the alarmed boy. "Anyhow, I owe you a thrashing for spying on me yesterday."

"I wasn't spying on you!" retorted Pete Alvados. "I was in the ditch long before you and Carless came."

Dick Derwent laughed incredulously. "What were you doing there?" demanded Rod.

"Smoking a fag, if you must know," was the sullen reply. "All boys smoke in my country."

"And I suppose it never entered your head that it would be playing the game to let us know you were there?" cried Dick, clenching his fists.

Pete Alvados shrugged his shoulders. "Why should I?" he replied, with over-acted indifference. "Your conversation did not interest me."

Taking advantage of the interruption of a number of boys entering the room, Pete Alvados grinned in his questioner's face, and walked jauntily away.

Dick and Rod then left the room, and made their way into the playing-field, where they could talk without fear of interruption.

"Do you think it was Pete Alvados?" asked Rod, as soon as they were alone.

Dick Derwent shook his head. "I'd feel a great deal easier if I thought it was," he said. "For if he did not make hay with our belongings last night it was one, or both, of the two scoundrels Hugh mentioned in his letter."

"But you don't believe he was so close behind us and yet did not hear what we were talking about?" persisted Carless.

"Oh, he only said that to escape a thrashing!" asserted Dick carelessly. "Hang the old fortune! I wish Hugh had never found it. I don't like his continued silence by a long way. Anyway, I'm going to write home and tell my father all about it, and until I hear from him I'm going to stick to the House and school grounds as tight as a snail to its shell."

Rod Carless nodded. "And I'll stick to you like a limpet," he laughed. "At any rate, our dark-skinned friends sha'n't get you alone."

It was possibly the wisest programme, under the circumstances, that the temporary custodians of the bead necklace could have decided upon. But as Burns had said:

"The best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft agley."

That afternoon Rod Carless had a slight disagreement with his Form master on the subject of a Latin noun, and, in consequence, was detained in the classroom for half an hour after the class had been dismissed to perfect himself in the neglected lesson.

Dick Derwent was standing at the door awaiting him, when the headmaster laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Will you run down to the village and send off this telegram, Derwent?" he asked kindly. "It is Jinks' afternoon off, and I've no one else to send."

For a moment Dick hesitated. But a request from such a source is virtually a command, and, with a ready "Certainly, sir!" he hastened on his errand.

Nor did he go unwillingly. A British schoolboy is always ready to take a sporting chance. Of course, he did not know that the seekers for the bead necklace were within easy distance of Tawley

House. But even if they were, he had sufficient confidence in his own sense and ability to have taken the risk.

Indeed, had only his own personal safety been at stake, it would have taken more than a South American and a negro to have kept either Dick Derwent or Rod Carless within the narrow confines of the school.

The possession of the bead necklace was a very different matter, however, and as Dick emerged through the school gates on to the road, he glanced anxiously to right and left before setting off at a good trot to where the village nestled in a well-timbered valley a mile or so away.

There was little traffic, and Dick had the road to himself until he came to where a rutted lane formed a short cut to the village.

Seated on a heap of stones at the entrance to this lane was the heaviest of the three village boys, from whom Dick had rescued the trapped dog.

The yokel's attention was fixed upon a stick, evidently cut from a nearby hedge, which he was trimming with a large knife.

As Dick was running on the grass by the side of the lane, the villager was not aware of the boy's approach until Dick Derwent sprang past him with a loud, mocking whoop.

In a moment the yokel was on his feet, and, recognising Derwent, he started off in pursuit.

Soon realising the hopelessness of overtaking the nimble youngster, the villager slowed down, contenting himself with the thought that he would take his revenge when the boy returned.

Laughing confidently, Dick continued on his way until he reached a spot where a tall thorn-bush hid a turn in the lane, beyond which lay the first houses of Cranstead.

Even as he negotiated the bend, he came to an abrupt halt, almost within touch of Pete Alvados and a thin, wiry, dark-skinned man and a huge negro, whom he recognised as Jose Arno and Sam Sorgun.

So unexpected was the meeting that, for quite an appreciable time, Dick and his enemies stood gazing at each other in amazement.

"That's him!" cried Alvados. "That's the boy who has the necklace!"

The next moment all three made a dash at Dick, thinking he would prove an easy capture.

But Dick had recovered from his surprise just a fraction of a second before them. Wheeling swiftly on his heels, he sped back the way he had come, whilst, shouting and yelling like fouds running to view, Pete, Jose, and Sam took up the chase.

For fifty yards Dick Derwent sped on, then, to his dismay, he saw the bulky form of the village yokel standing in the centre of the lane some twenty paces ahead.

A moment's hesitation would have cost Dick Derwent dear, but a swift glance showed him a gap in the hedge, through which he sprang, and was soon speeding over a level meadow as fast as fear could wing his feet.

Fortunately for Dick, the yokel and the three pursuers reached the gap at the same time, and, trying to negotiate it together, had fallen in a shouting, yelling mass to the bottom of a fairly deep ditch, from which they extricated themselves just in time to see Dick plunge headlong into a thick-set hedge, and worm his way through, careless of scratched hands and torn clothes.

Another meadow now lay before him, and beyond it the very wood in which he had rescued the farmer's dog.

Suddenly he heard a scrambling of feet, and the next moment his four-footed friend, Watch, was jumping around him, barking joyously, and evidently eager to participate in the race.

"Down, Watch—down, old boy!" cried Dick, slackening his speed to avoid collision with the excited animal.

But Watch misunderstood him; and, barking loudly, dashed ahead, glancing back at his friend, and now and again pausing, in a way which made Dick lose ground with terrifying rapidity.

"Oh, Watch, you mean well, but you have put the lid on it with a vengeance," gasped Dick, as he scrambled across a ditch into the wood, not twenty yards ahead of his pursuers.

In vain he looked around for some place in which to hide. Deeper among the trees was thick undergrowth, which might have offered him a haven, but well he knew that before he could reach it his foes would be upon him.

Determined to keep the bead necklace from his pursuers as long as possible, Dick staggered a dozen yards into the wood, then drawing the necklace from his pocket, was about to throw it into a muddy pool close at hand, when his eyes fell upon his four-footed companion.

Throwing one arm round Watch's neck, Dick flung himself to the ground, drew the dog down with him, and wound the necklace swiftly round the under part of its collar.

"Rod, Watch! Find Rod! Good boy, find Rod!" shouted Dick.

For a moment the dog hesitated, turned, snapped at Sam's legs, and then dashed by him and disappeared amongst the trees.

With a cry of triumph the negro flung himself upon Dick, and, seizing him by the coat collar, dragged him to his feet.

"I've got the young varmint!" he shouted, shaking Dick until the boy felt as though every joint in his body was being dislocated.

"No need for ze rough house, Sam. Richard Derwent is a very cleaveira boy, who knows when he is beaten. He gives up the bead necklace without making trouble for himself," said Jose Arno ingratiatingly.

"Oh, it's the necklace you are after, is it?" inquired Dick, with simulated surprise. "Then I'm afraid you're out for a bit of a disappointment."

The smile vanished from Jose Arno's swarthy face.

"Do you say you have it not?" he demanded fiercely.

Dick Derwent shrugged his shoulders. "Search me!" he retorted, with a brave attempt at a laugh.

Jose Arno drew a knife from beneath his coat, and raised it threateningly above his head.

"The bead necklace—where is it?" he hissed. "Tell me, or—"

He did not complete the sentence; his actions were more eloquent than words. Dick Derwent shuddered, but turned a resolute front to his foes.

Despite the pain he was suffering, despite the conviction that his ruthless captors would stay at nothing to attain their ends, Dick did not lose his head. His one hope lay in Watch's speed and intelligence.

Frantically he pointed to the muddy pool close at hand, and his ruse succeeded beyond his wildest hopes.

Drawing a length of thick cord from his pocket, the negro bound him hand and foot, then, shouting to the village



Determined to keep the bead necklace from his pursuers, Dick flung himself to the ground, drew the dog down with him, and wound the necklace swiftly round the underpart of its collar. "Rod, Watch!" he shouted. "Good boy, find Rod!"

led to aid in the search, dropped by the side of Jose Arno, who was already groping about at the bottom of the pool.

The next moment all three were clawing frantically at the black deposit beneath the slime-covered water.

Thankful for the respite, but labouring under no delusions that it would be anything but a "respite," Dick lay, smiling grimly to himself as he saw the three searchers plastering themselves from head to foot in mud.

Suddenly the boy's frame tautened, and he bit his lips to choke back the cry of joy which rose to his throat as Watch sprang through the undergrowth and commenced licking his face, whimpering with delight.

A single glance showed Dick that the necklace was no longer attached to the dog's collar, and his brave young heart beat high with exultation at the thought that the precious string of beads was safe.

It was Sam Sorgun who first discovered the dog's presence. Rising to his knees, he snatched a jagged stick from the ground.

"Git, you beast!" he cried, raising the stick above his head.

But Watch refused to budge. With bared teeth white and glistening, he crouched on Dick's body, glaring at the negro with a ferocity that caused him to draw back in alarm.

There was a startling interruption the next moment when a tall, bronzed young man, Rod Carless, and a group of boys and men—prominent amongst whom was the helmeted form of the village constable—poured into the wood.

"Look out, Jose, or it will be a cop!" yelled Sam, as he threw down the cudgel and plunged into the undergrowth.

His comrade's warning cry ringing in

his ears, Jose Arno sprang to his feet, but before he could flee Rod Carless had charged upon him, and, catching him in the middle with his shoulder, had sent him, gasping for breath and howling with pain into the centre of the pool.

The stranger knelt by the prostrate boy's side.

"Dick, old chap! What have the beasts been doing to you?" he demanded anxiously.

"Hugh, you splendid old bounder! You've turned up in the nick of time!" cried Dick gratefully. "Where's the necklace?"

"Safe in my pocket, old chap, thanks to you," replied Hugh Derwent, rapidly cutting the bonds which bound his brother's hands and feet.

Whilst this was taking place some half-dozen boys had dragged Jose Arno from the pool, a couple of villagers had secured the yokel, and the remainder of the party were close on the heels of Sam Sorgun, who, though he escaped for the time being, was captured at a town some twenty miles away the following day.

Later that evening Dick Derwent and Rod Carless were seated in their study, listening with breathless interest whilst Hugh unravelled the mystery of the bead necklace.

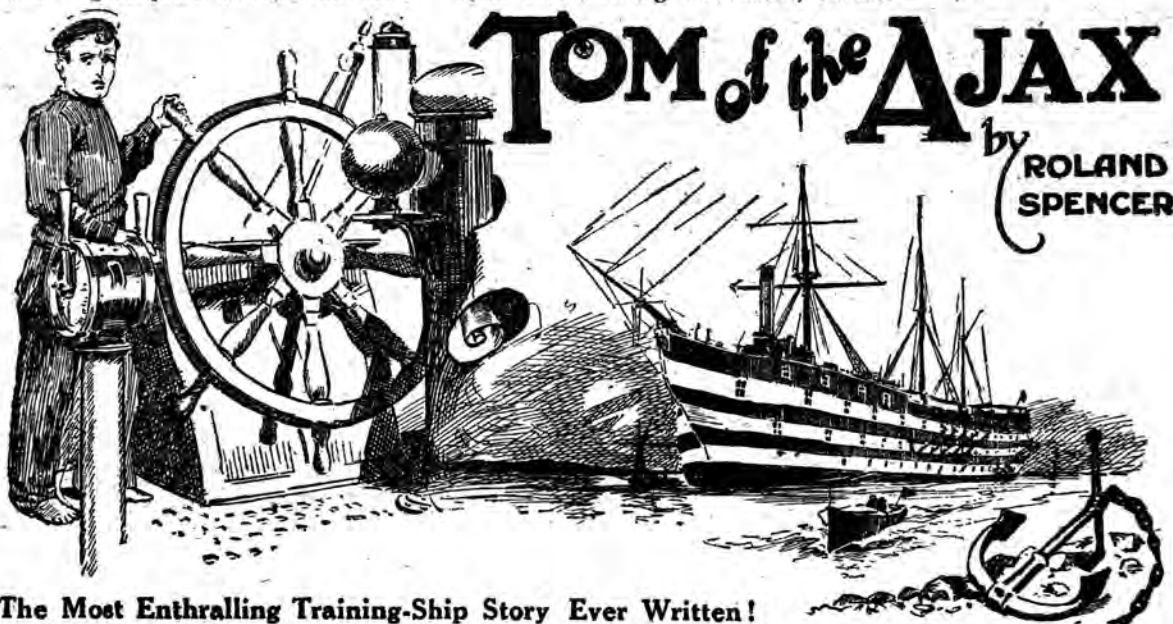
Some twelve months before, Hugh Derwent had found an Englishman penniless, stricken with an incurable disease, and lying at the point of death in a South American port.

Grateful for the care and devotion with which Hugh—a perfect stranger—nursed him until the end, the stranger had given him the bead necklace, which, he asserted was the clue to a highwayman's hoard buried in a house in the outskirts of London.

(Continued on page 28.)

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What big surprise awaits Tom Gale? Read this thrilling instalment, chums.



The Most Enthralling Training-Ship Story Ever Written!

Kalche's Flight!

THE well-known chuckle sounded, and then followed the rush that had given the famous detective, Hume, his nickname—Avalanche. The revolver held in Kalche's shaking hand spoke again and again. The concussion of the shots, Gale being just underneath and ahead, nearly deafened the training-ship boy. The lad gasped and crushed his head close to the floor. What if Kalche should shoot Hume?

Through the rolling smoke from Kalche's weapon came the sounds of hard breathing and scraping along the floor, as of someone crawling on hands and knees. At first Tom thought it was Hume, wounded, but gamely crawling on towards his old enemy. The boy's senses began to swim; but a sudden shout, a chuckle, and another rush occurred, and the lad felt heavy feet trip over his body. The big bulk of a man sailed through the pungent air above him, and the well-known voice of Hume sounded.

"I've got him! Tackle the other, you!"

There was a desperate scuffle, the sound of retreating footsteps, and then an electric torch bit through the smoke-fogged atmosphere.

"It's the pug you've downed, sir!"

"Did you get Kalche?"

"No, sir! He got away."

"Cut this 'boy free, and follow me. Harper, watch this man!"

Tom's gang was removed in a flash by practised hands, a knife slashed across his bonds, and he rose, staggering. "Stop here!" ordered the man who had cut him free. "Harper'll protect ye—"

The man had gone, and a heavily breathing man in the uniform of the River Police loomed up. Evidently he was Harper. Tom did not wait. As quickly as his cramped limbs would allow he followed in the wake of Hume and the man who had cut him free.

Someone shouted behind, but Tom took no notice. If it cost him a severe reproof, he'd be in at the death in the Kalche hunt; of that he was determined.

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Along the passages he ran, following the pounding feet before him. Blankets had been torn down from their hangings, and Tom's feet padded softly at times as he passed over them. Right, left, up a short flight of steps, and then straight. Tom followed the chase pretty closely.

At last a shout sounded from ahead, following the slamming of a door.

"He's in here! Locked in! Down with the door!"

Tom arrived just as the door gave under the united efforts of Hume and the river policeman. All three burst into

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

TOM GALE, a sturdily-built youth and chief petty officer of the starboard watch aboard the famous old training-ship *Ajax*.

STONIKY BURR, C.P.O. of the starboard watch, a bully of the first water.

DICKY WEST is a cheerful ginger-headed youth and a staunch chum of Gale's.

Trouble arises when a mysterious, sinister man in green spectacles approaches Burr. He gives his name as **KALCHE**, and he enlists the aid of Burr in a plot against Tom Gale, without, however, giving any reasons.

Following this Tom falls an easy prey to a trick of Burr's, is deserted, and struck off the list of boys detailed to sail on the annual cruise round the British Isles aboard the *Ulysses*.

A mad impulse seizes him, however, and, stealing out of his bunk at night, Tom plunges over the side of the *Ajax*, swims to the *Ulysses*, clambers aboard, and stows himself away in the chain-locker. His wild adventure comes to a sad ending, for, on reaching Harwich, he is taken ashore and delivered to the guard of an express for his journey back to the *Ajax*. Kalche is also a passenger.

The train is wrecked, and Tom is captured. He effects an escape, reaching the *Ulysses* in time to win the boxing contest for the "Avalanche" Cup.

A confession of Hemming's then sees Gale reinstated as C.P.O.

Next follows the gig-race. The victory of the Hood's ends rather dramatically, for with startling suddenness Kalche's launch appears, a hand grips Tom's shoulders, and he is hauled over the gunwhale and made prisoner. Taken to Chinatown, he is imprisoned in a cold, dank room of shadows and silence.

His capture had been noticed, however, for Tom hears the sound of approaching footsteps and the well-known chuckle of Avalanche Hume.

(Now read on.)

the room, and Tom saw Hume shoot forward like a flash towards the window. In the blackness of the window-frame, the training-ship boy had caught the green glimmer of spectacles—just like the eyes of a frightened cat at a cellar-mouth. Then Hume leaned far out of the open window as a dull splash sounded below.

Hume swung round and cannoned into Tom and the policeman.

"Hallo, Tom!" whipped out the detective. "He's gone—into the river. Can swim like a duck! Still game, boy? Then follow me. We'll get him!"

Tom stuck close to Hume, though it meant putting every ounce of his strength into his stride. Down the passages they sped, leaping down the short flight of stairs, taking the turns they had before taken.

They leapt over the now-bound form of the big pugilist, and were in the street like a flash.

"There!" cried Hume, pointing. "The steps to the river. There's a dinghy tied up to the wall. Cast off, Tom, and I'll take the paddles!"

Grimes Speaks!

FOR ten minutes Avalanche Hume's strong arms strained at the dinghy's paddles, making the bouncing little boat leap forward over the short tidal popple that was disturbing the surface of the water.

Tom was steering with one of the bottom-boards he had wrenched up, steering and searching the dark waters ahead and abeam as the dinghy sped on.

"No good!" at last said Hume, resting on his paddles. "Fraid he's given us the slip again, Tom. We must get back and secure the rest, though I expect the police will have mopped up for us in the house. Got the whole gang this time, Tom. All except Kalche."

"Except Kalche!" echoed Tom, as the dinghy began to draw back towards the wet, slippery river-steps.

There was a short silence. Then Hume spoke.

"I needn't ask if you are hurt much, Tom, after the way you followed me. But there's blood on your neck—"

"Oh, that's nothing, Mr. Hume!" laughed Tom easily. "The brutes dragged me head downwards over the floors of the house, and the tin-tacks in the boards jagged the back of my head a bit."

"The curs!" grunted out Hume savagely. "Well, so much the worse for them at the trial. Brutality as well as their other crimes."

The dinghy slid easily up beside the steps, and Tom hitched the painter to the ring with a deft clove hitch, then followed Hume back towards the house that had been raided.

They entered with an assurance by the policeman at the door that Kalche was the only one who had escaped from the house.

"Where are the others?" asked Hume.

"All crowded into the room on the left. Big room it is, sir," said the policeman. "Looks like as if it was an opium den. Couches there, an' tables an' curtains. Couldn't find any other signs of its bein' an opium den, though."

"Are they all in there?" asked Hume.

"No, sir! One o' the men—the big brute like a professional pug—is in a room under guard by hisself. He said as he had something to tell you, which he didn't want the others to hear. That room at the end o' the passage—see, there's someone comin' out to see if you've got back to the house yet."

A sergeant came doubling down the passage towards Hume.

"We saw you didn't catch Kalche, sir," said the sergeant. "I had a telephone message sent to all the stations on either side of the river, up and down. On the river and ashore the police will be looking out for Kalche. But there's the man Grimes here says he has something to report to you."

Hume's eyes were gleaming.

"Did he say what it was?"

"No, sir! He wouldn't say anything to us. Just said as we'd not be thanked by you if we didn't let him have a talk with you without the others hard by to listen."

Avalanche Hume turned to Tom, into whose eyes an eager light had leapt, a light such as was shining in the eyes of the detective.

"Something about you, Tom, I should say. I never make guesses, but this doesn't seem a guess. It's a pretty sure thing. Come on!"

The three then advanced towards the room, Tom and Hume hurrying impatiently.

"Do—do you think he'll—he'll be able to tell me who I am, Mr. Hume?" said Tom.

"Can't say, my boy," replied Hume. "But that it is about you I feel convinced. Apart from the pleasure—or—er—Look here, Tom, are you sure you want to come in—yet. It—it might not be a pleasure to you to know who you are, my boy. It will help my chain of evidence towards a certain end, of course, but though it might clear up mystery—well, you never know, Tom, what—"

"You—you mean I might be the son of someone—someone connected with Kalche in crime?" said Tom, with a quaver in his voice.

"It might be anything, lad."

"I'd like to know, Mr. Hume. Not knowing is worse than knowing something unpleasant. But perhaps it's all right."

"Come along, then. You're a stout youngster, Tom."

Hume led the way, and the three strode into the room.

Grimes was sitting huddled in a corner, handcuffs on his wrists. The man struggled to rise as he saw Hume and

Tom, and a couple of policemen gripped his arms and dragged him roughly to his feet.

The brutal face of the man had an expression of fear. He was a coward at heart, although so big and strong and hard.

"Well, my man, what do you want with me?" said Hume.

"Everything, guv'nor," said Grimes. "I can tell a thing or two, I can. Ye've got us all snaffed right enough, an' I reckon me record'll go pretty well agen me at the trial."

"Has this man been warned?" snapped Hume, swinging round on the sergeant.

"Yes, sir. He was warned as soon as he was conscious after that—er—collision with you."

"Good! I needn't repeat that warning, my man," said Hume. "What you have said just now will be evidence against you. It is a confession. Anything else you may say will or may be used in evidence against you."

"I understand all about that, sir," said the man. "Strike me, I've been warned afore now, many's the time. But—"

"Get to the point, man. What do you want me for?"

"If I tell you something that will 'elp considerable in this 'ere business of wreckin' the crime syndicate, that'll go for me in hevidence, won't it?"

"For or against, I don't know. I'm not a jurymen."

"Well, I can tell something as'll 'elp considerable to wreck this 'ere crime syndicate—"

"It is wrecked already. We have rounded up the whole gang—"

"Except Kalche—"

"Ay, ay, except Kalche. But we'll have him soon. What ever you tell me, I warn you, won't help me to wreck the crime syndicate, for that is already done."

"Well, I'll tell you something about that there boy!"

Grimes nodded his big head towards Tom, and the training-ship boy's lips parted with eagerness. The lad clenched his hands to hear the best—or the worst. Hume, however, held up his hand.

"This boy," he said, putting his other hand on Tom's shoulder, "is a friend of mine—a very great friend of mine. What ever you have to say, be careful how you choose your words."

"There don't need much care about it, guv'nor! I knew that boy when 'e was a boby, an' I treated 'im well. Dear little chap 'e were, an' I was farver, mother, an' nursey to 'im, I was. Nah, if it 'adn't been for me—"

"Will you get to the point, man?" roared Hume. "Why hedge about like this? You have been exceedingly solicitous for his comfort of late weeks, I've noticed—"

"Ay, that I 'ave, guv'nor. Nah, didn't I strike up a man's 'and and wot was going to shoot 'im when 'e was hurlin' rocks at us at a fowling-station on a marsh, onst. Hurlin' rocks as big as me 'ead, 'e was, a verritable son of 'is farver, 'e is."

Hume, his face tense and strained, stepped towards the man.

Grimes winced, and drew back.

"Old off, guv'nor, 'old off!" he cried. "I'll tell 'e all. That boy there is—"

.....

Suddenly feet pounding on the boards of the passage-way made the man break off. All swung round towards the door as it was broke open and a red-faced policeman burst into the room.

"Kalche," gasped the policeman—"Kalche was scouting round the house two minutes ago. He's made a break for the river again. Doesn't think that he was spotted, but has discovered that the game is up, so he's off—"

"Wait a minute," said Hume. "Grimes has something important to report. He must finish now, in two or three words. Then we'll get Kalche."

All turned their attention to the prisoner once more. But the square, blue chin of the man had sunk down on to his breast, his eyes rigid and staring. He was incapable of speech for the moment, for his senses had left him.

After Kalche!

GRIMES had fainted! But Avalanche Hume, with a very grim expression hardening his mouth, strode over towards the man and grasped his shoulder. He turned the brutal face up towards him, and then whipped out an order to the policeman standing near.

"Brandy!"

A drop was forced down the throat of the insensible man, and his eyes began to roll. Then he looked up.

"What's the game?" he began; but immediately memory came flooding back to him.

"Quick!" said Hume swiftly. "Who is this boy? We have no time to waste, so—"

"He—he's your son, Mr. Hume."

A gasp of astonishment was heard from all. This training-ship boy the son of Avalanche Hume, of the Criminal Investigation Department, Scotland Yard!

Hume himself was the first to recover. He took one stride towards Tom, put his hands on the lad's shoulders, and turned the rather frightened face of the boy upwards.

"Tom—my son!" said the detective faintly.

Tom said nothing. He could not believe it.

"My son!" repeated Hume, dully. For once the famous detective was at a loss. "I—I had a son, but he died when he was a baby—or we thought he had. My—my son! Yes, boy, like enough! I see someone now in those eyes—"

Suddenly Hume whipped round on Grimes, whose head was again sunk on his deep chest.

"Explain!" rasped Hume. "Confirm what you have said. Prove it, my man, and any word of mine that can be given to ease your sentence shall be given freely—gladly—"

The heavy eyes of the villainous-faced man looked straight at the detective. There was an eager light in them.

"Ain't 'e a small edition o' the famous Avalanche?" he said thickly. "Didn't 'e fight like a gamecock every time 'e was captured—"

"That's no proof. Whip it out, man!"

"He's your son, Mr. Hume. I took 'im meself when 'e was a boby, and you all thought him burnt to death. You thought 'im dead; but 'e weren't. When you copped Kalche that last time, we desarted 'im in Walworth. Before Kalche was copped 'e thought as the hold o' your on'y son would be a big pull for 'im over you. But 'e was copped before we could work the scheme. So we desarted the kid. We fed 'im well, though, THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 842.

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gun' nor, whiles we 'ad 'im. That was my job, an' I done it like a farver. Arter Kalche got out o' quod 'e inquired for the kid. We traced 'im to the Ajax—"

Hume's eyes were shining as they turned on Tom once more.

"It's true, lad!" he said hoarsely. "It rings true—must be true! I am three times a lucky man—"

The police-sergeant stepped forward.

"Trustin' you don't think as I exceed my duty, sir," he said, "but I know as how I'd feel if I found a long-lost son. But Kalche, sir—"

Avalanche Hume swung round to the door.

"Brainless fool that I am!" he cried.

"The man will get clear away again. Lead on, constable. Come along, Tom, my son—my boy. Father and son will run down their common foe if anyone can—"

Tom and Hume were out of the room like a shot, the overwhelming wonder of their new discovery having been pushed in the background, with a duty to perform. Two police-constables pounded after them, the one who had made the report of Kalche's fresh appearance gasping out explanations on the way.

"Made for the river, he did, sir!" he said. "He didn't seem to want to waste much time, but he wasn't hurrying as if he feared he had been spotted. Saw him from an upper window, I did."

"Did you leave a guard over the launch we had captured?"

"Yes, sir—one police-constable."

"Well, we'll see if he saw anything to—"

The little party had now arrived at the wharf where the captured motor-launch had been tied up. But Hume broke off in his talk with a low gasp of chagrin. There, stretched out senseless, lay the policeman who had been left in charge of the launch. And the boat was gone!

"Quick!" ordered Hume. "Our own launch. He must have gone down-river, or we'd have heard the engine going past River Way. He'll be making a break for sea, or my name's not Hume."

Tom was first into the launch which had brought Hume so quickly to his rescue from the Ajax. Hume was soon

beside the lad, who was coiling down the stern painter, which he had thrown free from the bollard on the shore.

"A sharp look-out, Tom, my son!" said Hume, chuckling. "We'll have him. If he goes ashore there are police watching every river alley from Rotherhithe to Plumstead, and on this shore right down to Barking Creek—"

The powerful engine roared out, and the swift launch swept round in a wide semicircle for the middle of the river. Hume was at the wheel, and Tom stood upright beside his father, searching the curdling, dark waters for signs of any movement.

At last Tom looked down at Hume and found the grey eyes, not steely now, fixed on him. The boy opened his mouth to speak, feeling he ought at last to say something. But he had no idea of what words to form. Hume saved the boy the trouble.

"Your mother, Tom," he said, "she'll be—"

"Yes," replied Tom, his voice husky.

"Yes, my mother, sir—"

"She will be overjoyed. The loss of you years ago was a grief she never properly recovered from. You were such a jolly little chap, Tom. You had golden curls then—"

"And now I've a scum-yum training-ship knob, sir," replied Tom.

"Now, my boy," said Hume sternly, "you have a close-cropped head of a shape to be proud of. I'm proud of it; and I'm proud that you were leading boy on the Ajax till bad luck dogged your heels—"

"Bad luck—er—"

"Father! Whip it out, son; there's no doubt about it. And I can soon prove the matter."

"Father! Bad luck! The best luck in all the world! Jingo, what a wonderful thing has come into my life! I—I—I'll be as good a son as I can be to you, sir!"

"The Ajax has brought you up as well, if not better, than I could have done, Tom. You have been taught independence during your entire dependence on the State. You have been taught that there are others in the world beside yourself—countless others. You have been

taught that there are better boys than you—and worse ones. You have been taught how to serve as a servant as well as have a furrow of your own to hoe.

"Do you know what the nobility of Old Scotland used to do with their sons? They used to send them to the castles of neighbouring nobles to be mere page-boys, Tom, to teach them humility and to knock some of the unbearable conceit out of them. For all boys who are born to wealth run a terrific danger of becoming detestable cock-a-whoops unless they are trained very carefully.

"And you, my lad, a son of the State—well-drilled, obedient, plucky, with the salt of the sea in your veins—why, my boy, I'm proud of your training; and a donation shall go from your mother and me to the board which controls the Ajax."

Tom took a deep breath. Wonder of wonders! Here was his father! He'd soon see his mother. Would she be like the woman he had pictured in his dreams? Younger, probably, for Avalanche Hume was only about thirty-eight years of age. But she'd—

"Motor-launch ahead, sir!" sang out one of the police-constables. "And goin' slow. Missing fire, seems. Ay, an' it's the launch we captured!"

Avalanche Hume and Tom peered into the darkness ahead.

"She's missing all right, sir!" said Tom. "Look! There she is, just past that string of lighters. Steady about pointing over. We've no lights, you know, and there's a tug coming down astern of us—"

Hume judged his distance from the tug, was about to point across the river, crossing the tug's bows, when the launch ahead seemed to be making a break for the northern shore.

They were now well down Barking Reach. Kalche, for they did not doubt that the man in the launch ahead was he, no doubt meant to run the launch ashore and then take his chance on the marshes stretching away out towards Dagenham, just beyond the mountainous dust-heaps—London's rubbish dumps.

Hume, therefore, kept his own launch on the northern side of the river. The tug astern drew closer and closer. The little steamboat was going all out. Probably had a tow waiting impatiently off Hole Haven Creek, near Canvey Island. The fussy, powerful, blustering little vessel had no time to spare.

"I want a bit more from that engine," said Hume, with the chuckle Tom had grown to understand thoroughly. "And stand by, all, to grab Kalche and drag him aboard here as soon as I run alongside. We're doing two yards to his one easily."

The tug and the launch now kept pace pretty well. And Kalche's launch, like a wounded duck, staggered along just ahead. The boat was just passing a dredger, and the lights from the clanking, grinding monster shone on the figure in the stern, steering. The green glimmer of Kalche's spectacles could be seen, and Tom exultantly told himself that never again would he see those sinister green eyes glimmer—to his own peril.

The tug had drawn slightly ahead of Hume's launch now. A man, smoking a pipe, leaned indolently on the rail and watched the launch. He could see that it was a chase of some description, and he was interested.

Kalche's launch was being rapidly overhauled. He could not escape the vengeful arm of Avalanche Hume now, and, with the launch only about three lengths ahead, everyone braced muscles in preparation for the desperate struggle that would be certain.

Hume was chuckling, but suddenly



Gale burst into the room as Hume and the river policeman darted towards the open window after the fleeing form of Kalche.

the chuckle froze on his lips, and swift exclamations of alarm escaped the other occupants of his launch.

Kalche had jammed the tiller of his launch over hard a-port. The launch listed heavily from its curve, and went flashing diagonally across the river, right across the course of the tug.

Shouts of horror sounded from the deck of the tug and from Tom. There was a splintering crash, a roar of yellow, creaming water under the bows of the tug, and then above it appeared for an instant the heel of the motor-launch, with its propeller still whirling.

Nearing Home!

THE launch had been over-ridden by the tug! The stout little iron bows of the powerful craft were rolling the boat under and down, down. It would bob up astern, a wrecked, splintered, shapeless mass, to float for an instant and then slide down to the bottom of the river.

And Kalche!

Tom felt sick as he turned his white face to look at the set features of Avalanche Hume.

"He—he'll be killed, for sure, sir!" gasped Tom. "He'll sink with the launch—"

Hume was sober and grave.

"So be it!" he said. "Never mind, Tom. Don't look so tragic, boy! Kalche was wanted for two murders beside other crimes. He has cheated the hangman, that's all!"

The tug was slowing down and heading round as the wreck of the launch poked a pathetic stemhead above the yellow water for the fraction of a second, then disappeared for good. Something black was dragged down with it. They could see it go.

Tom, with a shudder, realised that he had seen the last of Kalche. He sat down, faint and dizzy, on one of the seats of the launch, and his father's firm hand closed on his arm.

Hume was still grim and unmoved. He steered the launch up alongside the tug and hailed the skipper, a bearded man, who had tumbled up in a hurry at the sound of the crash.

"Get to your work, captain!" shouted Hume steadily. "It wasn't your fault. The man committed suicide. He is a criminal I was about to arrest. I'll see you cleared—"

"Thank 'e—thank 'e, sir!" sounded from the tug.

Without more ado Hume took his hand from Tom's arm and forced the steering-wheel of the launch over and over. They came round and headed up-river again as the engine-room telegraph of the tug clanged out "Full ahead!" and the powerful little boat sped on to pick up its impatient tow.

The party landed near Ratcliffe again. The Chinese den Kalche had used as a depot had been cleared out. Two policemen were in charge. They said that the prisoners had been taken off in a police van, and that Scotland Yard had telephoned for Hume to return as soon as his work was finished.

"Come along, Tom!" said Hume, who now seemed rather weary.

His work was finished. He had smashed Kalche's crime syndicate. All that remained now were formal proceedings and the trial. But Kalche had gone to a greater trial than earthly beings could accord him.

As Tom and his father walked up towards Commercial Road together,



There was a splintering crash, a roar of yellow creaming water under the bows of the tug, and then, above it, appeared for an instant the heel of the motor-launch with its propeller still whirling.

Hume seemed to shake off his weariness. He suddenly turned to Tom, and his face was lit up with such a smile as Tom had never seen before.

The man halted, put his hands on Tom's shoulders, and swung the lad round to face him.

"My son," said the detective, "to-night I have completed the work I have been on for the past sixteen years. You've been through the hoop, my boy, like a brick, to help me. I've often looked at you wistfully, though you've never known it, and thought of what my own boy would have been like if he had lived. We found the nursery a charred wreck after the fire. I was like a madman, and your mother was broken—broken! And you are he—our son—a fine, strapping boy who'll be a credit to his father and mother ever more, as he has been a credit to the land of his birth ever since he was taken on to the Ajax."

"You'll never find me wanting where duty to you and mother is concerned, father," said Tom.

Hume laughed like a schoolboy, and together they continued their journey.

They entered a police-station, and Tom glowed as he saw the respect with which Hume was greeted by all.

"I want to telephone, inspector," said Hume.

"Right there, sir!" said the inspector, indicating the telephone. "Congratulations on to-night's success, sir!"

"More successful than you think, Brierly. That's my son, who was stolen from me over twelve years ago."

Everyone in the station looked astounded at Tom, who grinned back at them in a friendly way.

"And I congratulate you too, Master Hume!" said the surprised inspector, pulling himself together, as Hume spoke into the transmitter of the telephone.

"Is that Fairthorpes? Yes? Tell your mistress to come to the phone, Ethel. Mr. Hume speaking. Don't alarm her, now. Tell her I have some good news."

For a minute or so Hume stood listening at the telephone, looking across

at Tom, with a smile. Suddenly, he began to talk:

"Oh, Jenny, I've finished the job! Got them all. Yes, Kalche is safe. He won't be a menace to us any more. But I've something more important to tell you, dear. It's great news—splendid! You must prepare yourself for a shock of joyful surprise. You remember young Gale I told you about? We were going to have him at Fairthorpes for a holiday, you'll remember."

Tom's mother was evidently saying something, for the metallic sounds in the receiver could be heard. Hume motioned for Tom to go closer. Then the lad could hear his mother's voice, staccato and metallic, 'tis true, but really a soft, pleasing voice.

"He must come!" Mrs. Hume was saying. "You're bringing him soon?"

"To-morrow morning, Jenny," replied Hume. "But I have more to say, dear. Now, don't get too excited. Is Ethel in the room with you?—Yes? Good! Jenny, I—I— Kalche did his best to harm me, you know. You'll remember we blamed him for having set fire to—"

"Yes, yes, John! Don't mention it! He has confessed?"

"No, dear. Our boy did not die at all—"

"Speak, speak, John, for Heaven's sake! What is it you say?"

"Our son is living. He is here with me. He is Gale—Tom Gale, of the Ajax. The villains confessed. They had kidnapped our baby Tom. They didn't kill him. Jenny, are you all right?"

Faintly came the words in the receiver:

"Yes, John—yes! I—I— Oh, do tell me all!"

"They kidnapped him and then deserted him. He was found. He could slip his name, and there was a gale blowing at the time. So, knowing he was Tom, they called him Tom Gale. He was later drafted to the Ajax. They've made a splendid fellow of him, Jenny. He's here at my elbow. Would

you like him to speak to you—just a word or two?"

"Oh, yes—yes please, John!"

Hume held out the receiver to Tom, but the lad drew back.

"I—I— Through the telephone, sir?" he gasped. "What can I say?"

"Just say, 'Coming home at once, mother,' that's all. Your mother wants to hear your voice, boy."

Tom took the receiver and stretched up to the mouthpiece of the telephone. He could hear the light gasps through the receiver.

"I'm coming home at once, mother!" said the lad tremulously.

"God bless you, my boy! Come quickly, Tom!" was the reply.

Hume took the receiver from Tom.

"We'll fly as quickly as petrol and pneumatic tyres will drive us, Jenny!" he said through the transmitter. "You'll get his room ready? Good-bye!"

The dazed feeling was beginning to wear off with Tom. The boy was brightening up wonderfully, and when Hume had telephoned to the Fleethithe Police Station, telling them to get a message of Tom's safety through to the Ajax and that the boy would report there in a couple of days or so, the young Hood was full of animated talk and impatience to get down to Fairthorpes, his old—and new—home in Kent.

Then there was a rush to Scotland Yard, a dismal half-hour's delay while Hume talked with the C.I.D. chief, introductions and handshaking for Tom, then a drive in a big, powerful touring car.

Westminster Bridge, the Elephant and Castle, Old Kent Road, Dartford, Fleethithe passed on the left, where in the early morning sunlight Tom got a glimpse of the rigging of the Ajax.

A purring rush along roads leading inland followed. Then Fairthorpes!

Home!

"MOTHER!"

Tom raced across the gravel to the big doorway of the rambling old country house. Avalanche Hume descended

more leisurely from the motor-car that had just driven them down from London, and followed Tom with a quiet smile on his lips to where the graceful, gentle-faced woman stood holding out her hands. Mrs. Hume's eyes were shining happily, moist though they were.

"Tom—oh, Tom—"

He seized her hands.

For it was true!—Tom's identity had been established beyond all doubt as Hume's son. And now father and son were in the big house where Tom had been born, where his mother was waiting for him.

It was still like a wonderful dream to Tom. Even now he could scarcely realise that it was true.

"I've got a good deal to thank Kalche for after all!" he exclaimed happily late that night, when the three were sitting in the firelight of a big old-fashioned room, dim with warm shadows. "A thumping lot to thank him for!"

Hume had learnt the whole story. Tom knew that he had been kidnapped as a small child by Kalche's criminal organisation, who had left the nursery on fire. At that time Hume had been hot on Kalche's heels, and the man had intended to use the kidnapped child as a weapon against the father. By threatening to kill their captive unless Hume ceased his efforts against them, the criminals had hoped to force Hume's hand.

But Kalche had been caught before his plan had been put into execution. His underlings, in terror for their own skins, had broken up the organisation, and the child had been deserted in a Walworth slum.

Hume had never doubted but that his son was dead, and Tom, taken in at a creche in the Walworth Road, had been drafted in due course on to the Ajax as a charity boy.

But Kalche, on his return to the outer world after his long period in prison, knowing as he did the place and circumstances of the boy's desertion, had succeeded at last in tracing his present whereabouts. And with Hume once more hot on his heels, Kalche had determined to put into practice, after the lapse of years, his old plan of holding Tom as a hostage.

The man's mysterious attempts to get hold of Tom had led Hume to the training-ship, though the detective never guessed for an instant the cause of Kalche's interest in the youngster. For the man with the green spectacles had not, of course, allowed a hint of Tom's identity to reach Hume, though if he had succeeded in capturing the young leader of the Hoods he would have at once informed Hume, with proofs, that this was his son who was in his power.

But Hume had beaten Kalche at every turn, and now Kalche was dead, his accomplices captured, and the truth out at last.

It was a wonderful day for them all—father, mother, and son.

"But who was Kalche, dad?" asked Tom, looking up at the strong, forceful face outlined in the firelight against the gathering dusk. The youngster's arm was in his mother's, and there was a look of joy and pride in her face as every now and then she would glance at the manly youngster sitting beside her.

"Kalche?" answered Hume. "No one knows. It's believed he was a South American up at the Yard, but we never knew for certain. All we knew was that

he had an amazing brain, criminal though he was. He—"

Hume broke off as a servant entered the room with a telegram. It was addressed to Tom Hume, and the lad tore it open eagerly. His eyes went to the signature. It was Dicky West's.

"Hoods wish you best of luck!" read the telegram. "But you must be back Ajax for swimming Hume Cup."

Tom, laughing, passed the telegram on to his mother and Hume.

"Yes, I don't want to miss that!" he said. "It's the day after to-morrow that they're having the swimming, and it looks as though the Hoods want me to swim for 'em. It's the last contest for your cup, dad, and it ought to be pretty thrilling, too! You see, since we beat the Blakes at the gig race, the Blakes and the Hoods are dead level at the top of the list. Whichever licks the other in the swimming will walk off with the Avalanche Cup."

"Blakes?" queried Hume. "Isn't that the division with that fellow Burr in it?"

Tom nodded.

"That's right, dad. I say, what about Burr? There's no doubt that he was in with Kalche."

But that problem was solved in an unexpected way.

For when, on the following day, Tom arrived at the Ajax with his father and mother, who had come to watch the swimming contest, Tom learnt something that made him gasp.

Burr had "done a dingie," as training-ship slang terms it. He had run away!

The Last Tussle!

"YES, old Stoniky's cleared off, Tom—nipped out of a port last night in his clothes, and must have swum for the shore."

Dick grinned as he spoke. He and Tom were down on the orlop deck. Tom was changing into his swimming costume, in preparation for the great event—the last contest for the Hume Cup.

His mother and father were with the commander in his quarters. Tom was still surrounded by an excited group of training-ship youngsters. All the Hoods had come to congratulate him, for it was known throughout the Ajax of Tom's wonderful good fortune. The popular young chief petty officer of the Hood division was also a centre of interest on another account. His division were pinning their faith to Tom to carry off the Hume Cup for them.

"There was old Harry here when it was found that old Stoniky Burr's hammock was empty and that he wasn't anywhere aboard the ship," went on Dicky. "He was on shore yesterday, and he must have read in the papers something about the round-up of Kalche's little lot. Burr got the wind up, evidently, then. He wondered what was going to happen to him if it leaked out that he was mixed up with Kalche. So he cleared off, and a thumping good job!"

"A good job for the Blake division, I should say, too," put in Tom, chuckling.

"Rather!" They're none too sorry. They're a hot-stuff crowd, are the good old Blakes, in spite of having had such a rotten leader. We've got to whack 'em, though, for the cup, and don't you forget it!"



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"Who's swimming for them?" asked Tom.
 "Hemming," Dicky told him. "A good man in the water, too. Still, I'd back you to beat him to my last farthing, old man," he added. Dicky was always a thorough optimist.
 "Well, I hope so," said Tom. "But I shouldn't put your shirt on it if I were you, Dicky. Hemming's good. Funny, isn't it, that the Hoods and the Blakes have run dead level for points till now? The Nelsons are still third, but they can't hope to win the cup, even if they win the swimming. They're too many points behind us and the Blakes."

"No; the Nelsons are out of it, though I'll back 'em for third place," answered Dicky thoughtfully. "It's just between the Hoods and the Blakes, and you've got to see that your father's cup is collared by the Hoods."

And Tom laughed. Even now it seemed queer to hear Avalanche Hume spoken of as his father.

He slipped a coat over his swimming costume, and he and Dicky turned towards the ladderway to go up to the upper deck. Sudden footsteps behind them caused Tom to turn. Hemming, also with a coat over his costume, was coming towards them. He held out his hand, and Tom grasped it warmly.

There was a big difference in Hemming now. The pale face had taken on some colour, and Hemming was smiling cheerfully.

"I was jolly glad to hear about you and Mr. Hume!" he said, a ring of genuine sincerity in his voice. "My hat, but aren't you a lucky dog? It still seems rum to think of it—I dare say it does even to you!" He paused, to add abruptly: "You've heard about Burr, of course?"

Tom nodded.
 "I've heard he's done a dingie," he answered. "You aren't sorry?"

"Can't say I am, Gale! He never did me much good." And a shadow came into Hemming's eyes for a moment. Then he went on cheerfully: "So you're swimming for the Hoods? Well, I'm for the Blakes. Wonder which of us is going to carry off that cup? Your father will be wanting the Hoods to get it, I suppose, but I'm afraid I'm out to disappoint him if possible!"

Tom chuckled.

"Good!" he said. "Let's hope the best man wins! And—Hallo, here's old All-boat Bowser! He seems to have same good yarn to tell! Look at him grinning all over his face!"

The crew of the Ulysses had not yet been dismissed; Mr. Bowser, the barrel-shaped little mate, was coming towards them now with his sea-roll and a grin on his cheery round face.

"Hallo, sonny!" he sang out to Tom. "You're the lad what's turned out to be Mr. Hume's son, ain't you? Best o' luck!" He chuckled suddenly. "Maybe you'll be interested to hear a bit o' news!" Again he chuckled, a deep, rumbling sound that swelled to a mighty, foggy guffaw.
 "But that chap Burr that cleared off last night!"

The three youngsters' faces showed their interest at once.
 "I seems to remember that you an' Burr never did hit it off well aboard the old Ulysses," went on Mr. Bowser.
 "Well, we've had news of him. He's got a job on the barque Strathshaw, o' Glasgow, bound for the Indies! What do you say to that?"

Mr. Bowser succumbed again to his attack of chuckling. For the moment he could not speak.

"Has he?" said Tom questioningly, puzzled. To the youngsters there seemed nothing particularly humorous in the news.

"Yes!" gasped Mr. Bowser painfully, smacking a shaking knee, almost doubled up. "Ain't that good? Ain't that just as mother makes it?"

"But what about it?" said Dicky. "Will—"

"What about it?" echoed Mr. Bowser, controlling his voice with an effort. "What about it, ses you? Why, the Strathshaw is the toughest barkie that's ever anchored in the London river! She's a hell-ship, that's what she is—a blitherin' great iron wall-sided man-killer out o' Glasgow. If this swab Burr gets to the Indies with one square inch o' him that ain't blue or black an' smartin' like a mustard-plaster, blow me for a bloomin' sojer! Why, they'll have knocked his block off afore they sight the Lizard! That's how 'e got the job easy. Men fight shy of Glasgow barkies wot kill a man per trip!"

Mr. Bowser paused to fill his lungs for yet another chuckle. He turned as if to pass on, then turned, tears of merriment in his eyes.

"The Strathshaw!" he repeated hoarsely. "Oh, ain't that rich?"

And with that the little mate rolled away, chuckling.

Tom laughed.
 "Looks as though old Stoniky is in for a rough time!" he said.

(Who will win the Avalanche Cup? Don't miss the conclusion of this splendid serial next week, chums.)

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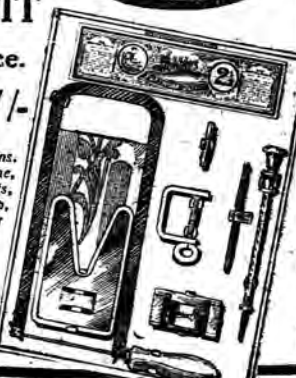
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"THE BEAD NECKLACE!"

(Continued from page 21.)

Hugh Derwent at first attached but little importance to the gift, the more so as the donor absolutely refused to say how it came into his possession; but, the very night the man died an attempt was made by Jose Arno and Sam Sorgun to obtain the necklace.

Hugh Derwent embarked at once for England, but was dismayed to find that Arno and Sorgun were amongst his fellow-passengers.

By the time he reached England he had mastered the secret of the bead necklace, and knew that the treasure was hidden in the cellar of what had once been a highwayman's place of call on Hounslow Heath.

Scraping together every farthing he possessed, he opened up negotiations for the purchase of the premises, and had

just secured them when he found that his enemies were still on his trail.

"But why didn't you destroy the necklace when you had deciphered the message, Hugh?" demanded Dick.

For answer Hugh Derwent took the string of beads from his pocket and ran them thoughtfully through his fingers.

"As I have already explained, the white beads denote the beginning of a word, the green beads are letters, count A as one, B as two, C as three, etc. But the black beads are the most important of all. As you will see, they are cut in different shapes, which, when fitted together, form a key that will unlock the secret door—the position of which is accurately described in the necklace," explained Hugh.

He then glanced at his watch.

"Come along, lads," he said, rising to his feet. "A train leaves Cranstead in a quarter of an hour. I have obtained permission for you to accompany me, and we will seek the treasure together."

Nine o'clock the following morning saw the trio in a tumbledown, rickety old building, which had once been a

disreputable "drinking den," but which now held the more innocent role of a farmhouse.

It was an anxious moment for the two Derwents and Rod Carless when, having placed the black beads together, they thrust them into the hole to which the mysterious clue had led them.

Slowly a solid stone slab dropped inwards, revealing a short flight of steps, at the bottom of which was an oak chest containing gold and silver coins, whilst articles of plate—some of which were priceless samples of old-time craftsmanship—were strewn carelessly about the dust-covered floor.

The recovered treasure brought in close upon seventy thousand pounds. As there was no chance of the original owners of the property being traced, Hugh Derwent had no scruples in using it for the benefit of his father and mother, his brother, and himself.

THE END.

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