

"Grundy's Chance!" **"The Faded Film!"** **"The Secret of the Galleons!"**

By Martin Clifford.

By Geoffrey Prout.

By Roland Spencer.

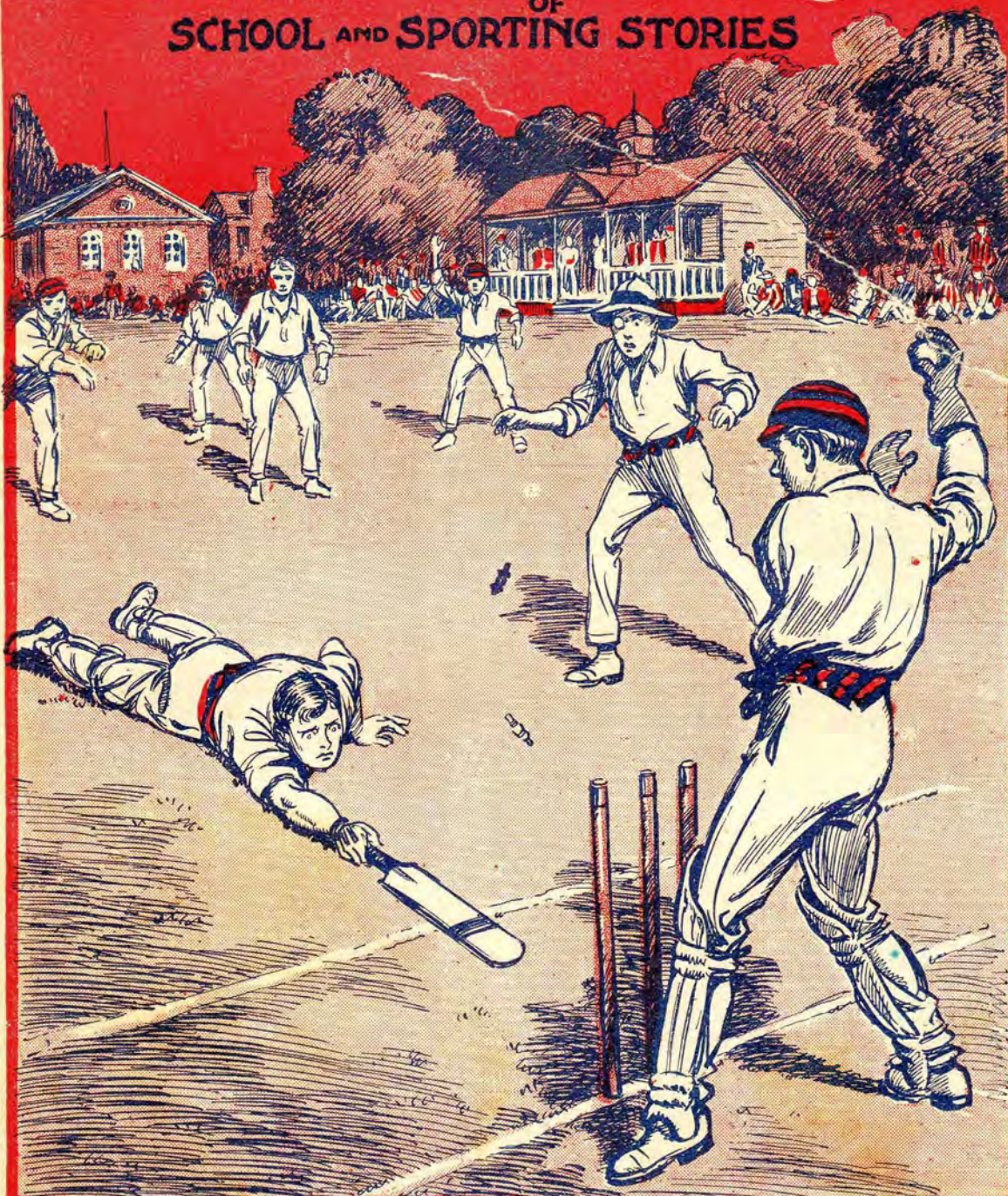
and many special features.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2^D

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"HOW'S THAT, UMPIRE?"

A Stirring Incident from the Long Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, contained in this Bumper Number.



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,—As the summer goes gliding on the "Gem" programme gets better and better. My budget of letters contains plenty of rare compliments to the famous Wednesday paper with the best yarns.

THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL."

Make sure and certain of your copies of the great book. It will be published September 1st, price six shillings, and there never was a better moneyworth. Order early—not late. I know these things are apt to get pushed off, but it is a big mistake. There will be a terrific rush for the "Holiday Annual," and you do not want to be disappointed by finding that the whole edition has been swooped away, and that you are left out in the cold.

"GRUNDY GOING STRONG!"

By Martin Clifford.

Next week's story of Tom Merry & Co. describes another jolly old feud between School House and New House. Feeling runs as high as ever. It looks as though there never will be peace in that quarter—but what can you expect, in the circus? Anyhow, the happenings narrated next Wednesday do not help matters a bit, for Grundy makes a hopeless hash of his part. Grundy is the most thorough and efficient bungler who ever bungled. Spectators have a laugh, but Tom Merry has reason to feel as sore about things as Pertinax in Rudyard Kipling's famous book.

GRAND SWIMMING SUPPLEMENT!

The "St. Jim's News" is going swimmingly, and next week's issue will be extra-marked in this way. There are many proficient exponents of the graceful art of natation at St. Jim's. Grundy is always going off the deep end. Baggy can bob about like a hilarious cork. In the coming number there are swimming hints, and wise articles about the business.

"A RECORD RACE!"

By Cecil Fanshaw.

A story dealing with Sid Morris is always welcome. For next week I have a yarn which shows up the real grit of the dogged-as-does-it stable-boy in splendid fashion. Sid finds himself in a very difficult position indeed. There is tricky and dangerous work going on, and had it not been for the "straight" action of young Sid, matters would have been out and out serious. This is a fine character yarn, and it will have a big appeal to my chums. Sid Morris did not have an easy job. Everything looked

black enough, but he brings to the solution of the problem with which he is confronted just that plain common sense of his, and he gets through the peril with flying colours.

"THE SECRET OF THE GALLEONS!"

By Roland Spencer.

A brilliant instalment of the serial will appear in our next issue. It deals with just about as neat a bit of work in the way of turning the tables as you could possibly imagine. The author is prolific with his surprises, and you will read of the further adventures of the chums who are in quest of the treasure under the sea with extra-special keenness. Rayne thought he was winning. That's just where his mistake crept in, for his rivals are a little too clever for him, and, thanks to a most ingenious piece of manoeuvring, they pull off a big coup.

THE TUCK HAMPER!

Roll up with your entries for this fascinating competition with the tempting prize as reward! Bright storyettes are always welcome.

THANKS MUCHLY!

I am no end grateful to all those loyal chums who have sent me letters of late about the doings of the "Gem." Charles Dick says it is the best paper in the world, and can we have more about the Kangaroo? An Irish reader cannot say enough about the old paper's right down excellence. He says his nom-de-plume is "Blush and Bluster"; but it does not fit. I will think over his suggestions about more wit. A Peckham pal praises "Rivals of the Race-course" to the skies. He asks for more about Talbot and the "Pro." About ten thousand questions come from a correspondent at Alburgh. I have replied to these by post.

TOM MERRY FOR EVER!

"A Delighted Reader," who insists upon more yarns concerning the Shell leader, can watch out for next week's notable tale. He will find what he wants. A stalwart supporter at happy Haverfordwest assures me that he likes the "Gem" best of all. What he asks for is something further about Bernard Glyn. Mr. Martin Clifford shall hear of this. Glyn has several more cute wheezes on the stocks.

TOP-HOLE TOOTING!

In the old song we hear of how they all took tea at Tooting; but nowadays they do better, for the chums I have down that way take the very keenest pleasure in the stories of St. Jim's. The "Gem," says my Tooting correspondent, is the very best, and he uses italics, so I know he means it—and, anyhow, he is right. From Coventry comes a letter from a friend who informs me that our serials in the "Gem" could not be beaten. Right again! He asks for another story about Tom Compton, the youngster who put up such a record fight against the Spider of the North.

A TEN-YEAR READER!

From Lancashire comes a brief note from a correspondent who has read the "Gem" for a decade—otherwise ten years. He begs for longer stories of St. Jim's, and an enlarged "St. Jim's News." The school tale is "the thing," which is correct enough; but variety as well as excellence in its school yarns is something the paper has always fought for, so we must let it stand at that. My chum will have since read the extra-long stories which recently appeared, and he can rest assured that there will be many more to follow.

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER!"

OUR TUCK HAMPERS ARE PRIME!

Remember, boys and girls, we award a delicious Tuck Hamper for the best storyettes sent us each week—also half-a-crown is paid for each other contribution accepted. Cut out the coupon on this page, and send it, together with your joke, to me.

SWANSEA WINS TUCK!

THE RIGHT SPIRIT!

Jack (reading): "Think of those Spaniards going three thousand miles on a galleon!"

Jill (not quite catching last word): "Pshaw! One can't believe all they hear about these foreign cars!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Walter Hitchings, 50, Marlborough Road, Swansea, Glam.

ONCE OR TWICE?

Boss: "I never rang for you. I rang once, twice."

Boy: "I thought you rang twice, once, sir!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss Marion Wood, Whalley Range, Manchester.

AN AMAZING RETORT!

Teacher: "How many voyages did Columbus make?"

Stupid Tony: "Four, miss."

Teacher: "Correct. And after which voyage did he die?"

Stupid Tony: "I'm not sure, but I think it was the second!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to James Fraser, 14, Bank Street, Woodside, Aberdeenshire.

EASY TO ANSWER!

Schoolmaster: "Smith, now we have read of the principal reigning monarchs of the world, which ruler inspires the most respect and fear?"

Smith (still thinking of his sore knuckles): "The one on your desk, sir!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Rankin, Gasworks, Cardigan, S. Wales.

A GOOD TARGET!

A little boy went to the house of an old lady and asked her if she would get his arrow for him, which had fallen in her garden. "Certainly!" she said. "Which part of the garden is it in?" The little boy hesitated, and then said: "Plea—p—please, mum, it is sticking in your cat!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Hopkins, 3, Alma Road, Cardiff.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

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The Children's Best Coloured Paper
JUNGLE JINKS
Out on Thursday—Price 2d

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Your Editor.

George Alfred Grundy's great opportunity to shine as a cricketer comes at last. But, alas, he proves to be by no means a second W. G. Grace, and his performance only raises a record laugh!



GRUNDY'S CHANCE!

A Magnificent, New Long Complete School Story of the Famous Chums of at St. Jim's.

By

Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1. Odd Man Out!

"MY name isn't there!"

Grundy of the Shell spoke in tones more of sorrow than of anger.

A paper, in Tom Merry's "fist," was posted on the wall of the junior Common-room in the School House. Grundy and Wilkins and Gunn had stopped to look at it.

It was a list of the men down to play in the next House match, and all three of the Shell fellows were interested. Wilkins expected to find his name there. Gunn hoped to find his name there. George Alfred Grundy neither expected nor hoped to find his name there, but was absolutely convinced that it ought to be there.

"Good!" exclaimed Wilkins with satisfaction.

"Good?" repeated Grundy, staring at him.

"Yes, rather! My name's down," said Wilkins. "So's yours, Gunny, old man. This is our study's lucky day."

"Jolly good!" said Gunn heartily. "I think it's about time I had a chance in a House match."

"So you call that list a good one?" asked Grundy with quiet sarcasm.

"Pretty good," said Wilkins. "The New House will find it hard to beat that lot. Tom Merry, Talbot, Blake, Levi-son, Cardew, D'Arcy, Kangaroo, Lowther, Herries, Gunn, and little me. I think that's a jolly strong team to represent the House, Grundy."

"My name isn't there."

Gunn smiled, and Wilkins yawned.

How Grundy could fancy that his name ever would appear in a cricket list was a mystery to his chums. He was as likely to be selected to play for England as for School or House at St. Jim's.

"Mind, I didn't expect to find my name there," said Grundy. "I've been overlooked all the season. Tom Merry has his own reasons for passing me over. He will play a tailor's dummy like D'Arcy, or a slacker like Cardew, or an ass like you, Wilkins—"

"Eh?"

"Or a dud like Gunn. You don't mind my putting it plain, do you, Gunny?"

"Oh, not at all!" said Gunn. "Go it, Grundy."

Grundy went it.

"He will play all sorts of duds. He won't play me. At one time I supposed it was just his fatheaded obtuseness," said Grundy, "but I've been driven to think otherwise. It's not Merry's obtuseness."

"Not a bit of it," agreed Wilkins. "I'm glad you can see that at last, Grundy. It's his knowledge of a fellow's form, of course."

"Don't be a silly ass, Wilkins."

"Eh?"

"It's not his obtuseness. It's envy."

"Tom Merry and his friends have got a sort of corner in cricket at this school," said Grundy bitterly. "They're determined not to let in a man who could put them all in the shade. That's the genuine explanation. See?"

"Oh! Ah! No! Yes!" gasped Wilkins.

"The proof is that, when he's short of a man, Tom Merry will put in duffers like you and Gunn, still leaving me out."

"Oh!" said Wilkins and Gunn together.

"I've been thinking this out," said Grundy, shaking his head. "It won't do, you know. I'm not the sort of fellow to be treated like this. I've pushed my claims hard enough for—"

"You have!" assented Wilkins.

On that point, at least, Grundy's chums could agree with him. There was no doubt that Grundy had done that. His disregarded claims had been heard of, time and again, from one end of St. Jim's to the other. In fact they had become a standing joke in both Houses.

"I felt that that was my duty," said Grundy. "I had the House to think of, and the School. But I've been forced to realise that this conspiracy is too strong for me at present."

"This—this what?"

"Conspiracy."

"What conspiracy?" ejaculated Wilkins, staring blankly at George Alfred Grundy.

"The conspiracy to keep me out of the cricket matches."

"Oh! Ah! Yes! I—I see!"

"Therefore," continued Grundy, "I'm simply driven to letting House and School matches go to pot in incompetent hands. I've got to stand by with my hands in my pockets, while duffers like you two fellows fumble at the game and give away matches. It's a bit sickening, isn't it?"

"Oh dear!" murmured Wilkins.

"The fact is that, in present circumstances, there's no place for me in St. Jim's cricket," said Grundy. "Therefore I'm going to look elsewhere."

"Oh!"

"Outside this school there are clubs that will play a man on his merits," said Grundy. "That's where I shall come in. Mind, I don't like doing it. I don't like the idea of coming over here with an outside team and whopping my own school at cricket. But what else is a fellow to do, in the circumstances? I can't chuck up the game—the game that I'm a past-master of."

"Oh, my hat!"

"It's only fair, though, to put it plainly to Tom Merry before I take such a serious step as that," said Grundy. "I've had an offer from a club."

"Great Scott!"

"Before I finally accept it I think I ought to give Tom Merry a last chance of doing the right thing. What do you fellows think?"

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Grundy, like Brutus, paused for a reply. But no reply was forthcoming. Wilkins and Gunn only stared at him blankly. Often and often Grundy's chums had felt that Grundy was really too much for them. Now they were conscious of the same feeling again.

"Cricket sort of runs in our family," said Grundy. "We're all good cricketers. You remember that cousin of mine who came here once—Gilbert Grundy? Well, he's a good man at the game—nothing like me, of course, still, a good man. Lots of my people are good cricketers, but, without bragging, I think I can say that I could play their heads off!"

"You batting, and the other chap keeping wicket?" asked Wilkins with a feeble attempt at humour. "I dare say you'd play his head off—brain him, at least!"

Grundy did not pause to see the joke, which was perhaps fortunate for Wilkins. Grundy did not like jokes on serious subjects; and to Grundy his cricket was a very serious subject. To other fellows, on the other hand, it was a scream.

"What do you think?" asked Grundy. "Shall I give Tom Merry a final ultimatum? It seems only fair, before I turn my back on St. Jim's cricket, and give the school the go-by—what?"

"Oh, yes! I—I should!" stuttered Wilkins. "Give Tom Merry a last chance, by all means. Oh, yes!"

"Do!" gasped Gunn.

"I will," said Grundy. "He may see reason. He may try to overcome this mean and narrow spirit of envy of a better man, for he's not a bad chap, take him all in all. Come along! I'll go and put it to him now, and you fellows can be witnesses that I've done my best."

Grundy stalked away.

Wilkins and Gunn exchanged a glance.

"Incredible, isn't he?" murmured Wilkins. "Beyond belief, you know, if we didn't see him with our own eyes. How a fellow who plays cricket like Grundy can fancy that he can play—"

"It beats me!" said Gunn. "It's really mysterious!"

"Come on, you chaps," called back Grundy, "I want you!"

"Oh! All right!"

Wilkins and Gunn followed Grundy as far as the stairs. But they did not follow him up to the Shell passage. They did not want to figure as Grundy's witnesses in the interview with Tom Merry. If Grundy was going to add to the gaiety of the House by talking cricket, he could do that on his own.

Grundy tramped up the stairs with a set and determined brow. Wilkins and Gunn faded away through the doorway and disappeared in the quad.

CHAPTER 2.

Grundy's Ultimatum!

TOM MERRY nodded and smiled as he sighted Grundy of the Shell at the door of Study No. 10. Tom was in a cheery and hospitable mood. There was a spread going on in Study No. 10 in the Shell, and Grundy was welcome—though the study was already crowded. On the occasion of a spread, it was surprising how many fellows would crowd themselves into a junior study. Certainly, Study No. 10 in the Shell had never been designed to hold so many as it held at present, yet somehow there was room for more.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, the owners of the study, were all there, of course. So were Blake and D'Arcy, Digby and Herries, of the Fourth. Talbot and Kangaroo of the Shell had come in, and Levison and Clive and Cardew of the Fourth. D'Arcy minor of the Third had come with his major, and, of course, he had brought Levison minor and Manners minor. It was a strict rule with the three minors that when one of them had a chance at a study spread, he would squeeze in the other two if that were humanly possible. Tompkins of the Fourth was there also. Tompkins being an inoffensive, negligible, and neglected sort of fellow, Tom Merry had kindly thought of him and asked him, by way of bucking him up a little.

Really, there did not seem much room for the big and burly Grundy; but though space was limited, hospitality was unbounded.

"Trot in, old scout!" called out Tom. "Just in time for the jolly old cake!"

"Oh!" said Grundy, rather taken aback.

Grundy had come, not exactly on the warpath, but determined to speak his mind in the plainest of plain English. If speaking his mind led to trouble, Grundy was ready for it. He always was ready for trouble—indeed, Grundy of the Shell seemed to live, and move, and have his being, in an atmosphere of trouble. But this cheery and hospitable greeting rather took the wind out of his sails, so to speak. He was annoyed with Tom Merry—angry with him; for had not Tom barred him out of the cricket from motives of jealousy and envy? That was clear, at least, to Grundy. But it was difficult to look at Tom's bright, cheery, sunny face, and imagine that he ever had any discreditable motives for any-

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thing. Perhaps, after all, it was sheer obtuseness on his part—a strange inability to realise what a wonderful cricketer Grundy was. Looking at him, Grundy felt that that was probable.

"Yaas, twot in, or wathah, wedge in, old man!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The more the mewwiah, you know."

"Make room for Grundy, you chaps!" said Monty Lowther.

"Here you are, Grundy—a corner of this box," said Manners. "Shift a bit, young Wally, and take your feet out of the way, Blake. That's right."

Grundy stood in the doorway.

"I haven't come to tea," he said awkwardly.

"Oh, that's all right—tea's here, and you're here, so roll in!" said Tom Merry. "And it's a top-hole cake!"

"It's the cake of the term, Grundy," said Monty Lowther solemnly. "A cake of cakes—a cake that, in fact, takes the cake. Made by Miss Priscilla Fawcett's own hands, and sent down specially to her darling Tommy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, you ass!" grunted Tom Merry.

"My dear man, don't blush!" said Lowther. "I jolly well wish I were somebody's darling Tommy, when it means cakes like this!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"Hear, hear!" said Blake. "Pass the cake, Lowther! There's a waiting list for that cake."

"Come in, Grundy—you can find room," said Tom, wondering why George Alfred lingered in the doorway.

"The fact is," said Grundy, "I didn't know you had a party on. I came here to talk cricket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a roar of laughter from the tea-party. Somehow or other, Grundy could never mention cricket or football without setting the table in a roar. No doubt it was because it reminded fellows of the way he played those games.

"Nothing to cackle at, that I can see," said Grundy, frowning. "I came here to talk cricket. But if you're busy I'll look in later."

"Look in now, old bean!" said Kangaroo of the Shell. "We want to hear you talk cricket. It cheers—a fellow no end."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, do!" urged Blake. "I've missed my 'Jungle Jinks' this week. But you're as good as anything in 'Jungle Jinks' when you talk games."

"Hear, hear!"

"We'll let you talk cricket, old man," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Any old thing!"

"It's about the House match!"

"Well, you can talk about the House match, if you like."

"I think I'd better come to the point," said Grundy.

"Enough time has been wasted, and, besides, these fellows had better hear what I've got to say. It's practically an ultimatum to the House."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Pass the cake, will you?" said Wally of the Third.

Monty Lowther was slicing the huge cake. There was more interest centred in the cake than in Grundy. But he had succeeded in interesting Tom Merry & Co.; they were quite curious to hear his ultimatum to the House.

"I won't come in to tea!" went on Grundy. "I may be punching your head in a few minutes, Tom Merry, and I can't do that after breaking bread with you!"

"You can't, anyway, old man," said Tom, with a smile. "You see, I shouldn't let you!"

"That's cheek!" said Grundy. "But never mind—I'll get on with it. I've just looked at the list for the House match downstairs."

"Cake this way!" said Manners minor.

"I'm not satisfied with that list," said Grundy. "My name isn't in it. Don't cackle—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't cackle!" roared Grundy. "This is a serious matter!"

"Blessed if I see it," said Cardew of the Fourth. "It would be a pretty serious matter if your name were in the list. But it's not in it—so what matters?"

"Whether it's stupidity, or envy, or jealousy," said Grundy, "I'm left out of all the matches. I've stood it a long time, hoping for better things. But it's pretty plain by this time that there's a conspiracy to keep me in the shade, and most of you fellows are in it!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm here to offer you my services, Tom Merry, for the last time!" said Grundy impressively.

"The last time?" repeated Tom.

"The very last!"

"Oh, good! You really mean that you're not going to bore a fellow to death on the subject any more after to-day?" asked the captain of the Shell incredulously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"



George Alfred Grundy was not a match for Wilkins and Gunn, but he was able to put up quite a respectable scrap. The table went reeling, and chairs were knocked right and left, books strewed the floor, the clock came off the mantelpiece with a crash as the three gasping and breathless fellows staggered about the study in wild combat. (See page 7.)

"I mean what I say. It's an ultimatum. I want your answer here and now. Do I play in the House match?"

"Not quite!"

"That's final?"

"Oh, yes!" said Tom, with a smile. "Quite final!"

"Bai Jove, I should jollay well think so!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Weally, Gwunday, you ought to wealise that the way you play cwicket is enough to make the angels weep."

"You shut up, D'Arcy!"

"Weally, Gwunday—"

"I don't want any cheek from Fourth Form fags!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm talking to you, Tom Merry. If I'm not played in the House match I shall take it that I'm turned down for the whole season."

"Just that!" assented Tom.

"In that case I shall withdraw from the House club. I shall not be available for St. Jim's cricket at all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall offer my services to another club outside the school," said Grundy.

"Great Scott!"

"I've resolved on this. A first-class cricketer can't be shut out of the game by jealousy, and so on. If I'm not going to play for my school I'm going to play for an Abbotsford club. See?"

"I wish them joy of you," said Tom. "I'm glad to hear it, Grundy."

"I shall ask Kildare to let me off games practice here, and practice with my own club," went on Grundy. "I shall try to get them to make a fixture with St. Jim's, and come over here with them and mop up the ground with you!"

"Go it!" said Tom, good-humouredly. "We've got some vacant dates, and we'll give you a chance—if you can get a club to take you on."

"It's a rotten position for a St. Jim's chap—helping an outside club to beat his own school," said Grundy. "But the fault is yours, Tom Merry, not mine. The responsibility is yours."

"I'll try to bear it," said Tom.

"Mind, I mean business! After to-day I shall not be available for St. Jim's cricket. Think while there's yet time!"

"Bai Jove! Gwunday weally is a funnay merchant," said Arthur Augustus. "Is it weally a cwicket club you are joinin' at Abbotsford, Gwunday?"

"Of course!"

"And are they goin' to let you play for them in matches?"

"Naturally."

"Then I fail to compwehend it," said the swell of St. Jim's, shaking his head.

"Somebody's pulling his silly leg," said Blake, after a little reflection.

"Yaas, that must be it, I suppose."

"I decline to take notice of silly remarks like that," said Grundy. "You will sing a different tune when you see my play reported in the local papers."

"When!" murmured Levison.

"Is it a club we know?" asked Tom Merry, really interested now. Like Arthur Augustus, he failed to comprehend.

"Abbotsford Ramblers."

"Well, I don't know them personally, but I've heard that they're a good club, and I remember seeing them put up a good game against Wayland once," said Tom, puzzled. "I shall be surprised to see you playing for the Ramblers, Grundy. Have you got it quite right?"

"Perhaps the giddy wish is father to the thought," murmured Monty Lowther.

"That's my ultimatum," said Grundy, unheeding. "For the last time, Tom Merry, am I wanted for St. Jim's cricket or not?"

"Not!" said Tom. "When we play matches at marbles or hop-scotch I'll think of you. Not at cricket."

"That's enough. I resign from the club, and I'm going to tell Wilkins and Gunn to do the same. You can take their names out of your precious cricket list."

"I think I'll wait till Wilkins and Gunn ask me to do so."

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smiled Tom Merry. "Even in Study No. 3, Grundy, you are not quite monarch of all you survey, you know."

"I'm done with you!"

"Good!"

"And I don't want any cheek!" roared Grundy. "I'm done with you, Tom Merry, and I've a jolly good mind to give you a thumping good hiding to finish with."

"Go it!" smiled Tom.

"My hat, you've asked for it!" exclaimed Grundy. And he rushed into the crowded study, fairly on the warpath at last.

There were eight or nine juniors in Grundy's way, and he trampled through them with his usual disregard for lesser mortals. From those lesser mortals, however, there rose a roar of wrath. The merry tea-party in Study No. 10 were not in the least disposed to see that cheery function turned into a scrapping match. Still less were they disposed to be hurled right and left by the obstreperous Grundy.

Hands were laid on George Alfred on all sides. He did not reach Tom Merry. He rolled on the floor with half a dozen fellows rolling over him.

"Chuck him out!" roared Kangaroo.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Bump him!"

"Outside!"

"Ow! Leggo! I'll lick the lot of you!" howled Grundy. "Gerroff my neck! Leggo my ears! Leggo my hair! Oh crumbs! Yooocoo!"

Crash!

Grundy departed into the passage.

"Oh, let him come in!" said Tom Merry cheerily.

"Wats! We wefuse to let the wuffian come in, Tom Mewwy. I have a great mind to go aftah him and give him a fearful thwashin'!"

"Ow, ow! Wow!" came from the passage.

"Cut off, Grundy!" said Talbot of the Shell, laughing.

"No, come in and have some more!" urged Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Grundy sat in the passage and gasped. In the circumstances, Talbot's advice seemed to him better than Blake's.

He picked himself up, shook a large fist at a crowd of grinning faces, and limped away.

He left the tea-party in Tom Merry's study chortling. Grundy of the Shell had delivered his ultimatum. It had been intended to dismay the conspirators. But it hadn't. As in the celebrated case of the jackdaw of Rheims, never was heard such a terrible curse, but nobody seemed a penny the worse.

CHAPTER 3.

The Turning of the Worms!

WILKINS and Gunn came in rather late to tea in Study No. 3 in the Shell. They were not anxious to see Grundy. They had heard of the delivery of his ultimatum, and the result thereof. They anticipated that George Alfred would be in an unpleasant mood. George Alfred always was liable to be a little unpleasant when his great importance was not properly acknowledged. Often and often it was not properly acknowledged. So Grundy was often rather trying as a study-mate. Wilkins and Gunn even thought of having tea in Hall, and giving the study a miss till prep. However, they turned up in Study No. 3, prepared to be as tactful as possible with Grundy. He was a good fellow in his way, and they rather liked him, more or less. And, anyhow, they did not want a row in the study.

Grundy was there with a deep frown on his brow. Wilkins coughed as he came in, and Gunn smiled a propitiatory smile. Grundy looked up.

"Oh, you fellows," he said, "I've been waiting to speak to you!"

"So sorry," murmured Wilkins. "What about tea?"

"Never mind tea now," said Grundy. "I've given that fool Merry my ultimatum. I suppose you'll hardly believe that, in spite of it, he persists in turning me down?"

Wilkins and Gunn could quite believe it. In fact, they had been quite sure of it. But it was no use telling Grundy so.

"Not really?" murmured Wilkins hypocritically.

"Yes, really. The fellow's a born fool!" said Grundy. "I hardly think it's envy, though, of course, he lays himself open to that suspicion. But if he's simply a born fool that would account for it."

"Oh! Ah! Yes."

"I've resigned my membership of the school club and told him that you fellows will do the same."

"Oh, have you?" said Wilkins, rather warmly.

"Of course, you are standing by me in this! I expect my own friends to rally round me," explained Grundy. "We all three withdraw. I've told him to take your names off his cricket list for the House match."

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Wilkins and Gunn gasped—fairly gasped. They are accustomed to George Alfred Grundy and his high-handed ways. But really this seemed a little thick, even for George Alfred.

"And—and what did he say?" ejaculated Gunn.

"I forget; some cheeky rot about asking you fellows first, or something of the kind," said Grundy carelessly.

"Look here, Grundy—"

"So that there shan't be any mistake, you may as well go along and tell him personally now," said Grundy. "Get it over."

Wilkins and Gunn did not stir. They only stared at Grundy. Evidently Grundy expected them to stand out of the House cricket at his behest, to suit his lordly will and pleasure. "It was amazing, even in Grundy. As Wilkins had often remarked, it was only by seeing Grundy daily that he could be convinced that a fellow could really be such an ass—otherwise he would have regarded George Alfred as incredible. Wilkins and Gunn bore much for the sake of peace in the study—and perhaps for the sake also of the magnificent spreads that Grundy stood in Study No. 3. But there was a limit. Getting out of House cricket to please Grundy was miles beyond the limit.

Grundy looked at them impatiently. So far, it had not occurred to him that there might be rebellion in Study No. 3. He did not expect his own familiar friends to join in the "conspiracy" against him.

"Well, what are you waiting for?" he asked.

"Eh? What!"

"Better tell Merry at once, so that he can take your names off the list. Give him time to find some other duds! Plenty of duds in the House, if it comes to that!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Wilkins.

"To-morrow's a half-holiday," went on Grundy. "I'm going over to Abbotsford to see the Ramblers about it. You fellows are coming with me."

"Oh, are we?"

"Yes; I'm going to squeeze you in somehow. I'm a fellow to stick to my friends!" said Grundy. "Of course, you can't expect at first to be playing members. I can't ask the club to put fumblerers like you chaps into matches. But I'll do my best for you. You'll join up, and I'm prepared to give you a lot of coaching; in fact, I'll make cricketers of you in the long run!"

"Oh dear!" groaned Gunn.

"Look here," exclaimed Wilkins hotly, "when we want to learn to knock over a wicket with a bat, and to get leg-before, and to muff catches, and to bowl yards wide, and so on, we'll come to you for coaching, Grundy. Not till then—see?"

"Don't be a funny ass, Wilkins! Joking isn't in your line," said Grundy calmly. "Besides, I don't like it. So chuck it! Get along and tell Tom Merry at once to take off your names, you two!"

"We're not going to do anything of the kind!" hooted Wilkins.

"No fear!" said Gunn emphatically. "Why, I hardly ever get a chance in a House match! Catch me telling the skipper to scratch me out!"

Grundy rose to his feet.

"Do you fellows mean to say that you're going back on me?" he asked.

"We're not going to cut cricket to please you, and I think it's jolly well like your cheek to ask us!" exclaimed Wilkins hotly.

"I'm not asking you—I'm telling you!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I expect you to back me up," said Grundy. "I'm willing to do all I can to get you into Abbotsford cricket, duds as you are. I'm willing to teach you all I know—so far as you have intelligence enough to benefit by it!"

"A fat lot that is!" said Wilkins, really roused now. "There are fags in the Third who could play you to little pieces. Why, D'Arcy minor would simply cackle if you asked to play for the Third Form team."

"What!" roared Grundy.

"You can't play cricket, any more than you can play footer, or fives, or anything else," said Wilkins. "You simply can't do it! Any fellow but you would see it and chuck up. Tom Merry doesn't play you because you're no good—see?"

"No good at all," agreed Gunn. "Utterly rotten, in fact! The very worst cricketer that ever was, Grundy!"

Grundy stared at his chums. He was getting some home-truths now—long suppressed with difficulty in Study No. 3. Wilkins and Gunn realised that the parting of the ways had been reached. They were willing to pull Grundy's leg, so long as that was practicable. But they couldn't stand out of the House cricket; that was impossible. So as there had to be a row, Wilkins and Gunn determined to have their money's worth, as it were. Often and often they had yearned to tell Grundy what they thought of his cricket. Now they told him.

"It's not only that you're a bad cricketer," went on



Grundy was alone in his study when Tom Merry came along to round up the great man of the Shell. "Getting ready, old man?" asked Tom, with a smile, as he glanced at Grundy's cricket-bat. "Kildare is giving us some coaching to-day," Grundy laughed. "Kildare can coach fellows who know less about the game than he does!" he answered. "I don't happen to be in need of any coaching!" (See page 10.)

Wilkins. "You're no cricketer at all. You handle a bat as if it were a chopper. You bowl as if you were chucking stones at ducks!"

"Enough to make a cat laugh!" concurred Gunn.

"Fellows gather round to see you at games practice," resumed Wilkins, taking advantage of Grundy's dumbfounded silence. "They do it because it's such a joke—a regular scream."

"A shriek!" said Gunn.

"Funniest thing going," said Wilkins. "I've seen fellows doubled up with laughing when you've been at the wickets, Grundy. I saw Kildare of the Sixth once, trying not to laugh; but he couldn't help it. I saw Cutts of the Fifth almost in hysterics one day—fairly yelling. You're the comic man when you come down to the nets, Grundy!"

"Too funny for words!" added Gunn, coming in as chorus, so to speak, whenever Wilkins paused for breath.

"If Tom Merry were ass enough to play you, even in a game with the Third, the fellows would lynch him. And he'd deserve it!"

"No doubt about that!" said Gunn. "You see, Grundy, the less you talk about cricket the better. I know you can't help being such an ass—but let your pals advise you. Drop it!"

Grundy had listened to all this in a dumbfounded state, apparently finding it difficult to believe his ears. But he had to believe them; indeed, Wilkins and Gunn would have gone on, with increasing eloquence, had not Grundy interrupted them at last.

"So you're in it, too!" gasped Grundy.

"Eh? In what?"

"The conspiracy!"

"Oh, cheese it!" hooted Wilkins. "It doesn't need a

conspiracy to keep a fumbling idiot from mucking up matches."

Grundy pushed back his cuffs.

"I sha'n't take you over to Abbotsford with me to-morrow," he said.

"You jolly well won't, that's a cert!" agreed Wilkins. "Not that I believe the Ramblers will take you on. They wouldn't and couldn't, unless they were blind and potty!"

"I'm done with you!" said Grundy. "I drop you! I'll thank you to find some other study after this!"

"Go and eat coke! This is our study as well as yours. If you don't like our company, bunk!" said Wilkins, with new and amazing independence. "I'm sure that any other study is welcome to you!"

"That's enough!" said Grundy. "I've been deceived in you! I'm done with you. I'm going to lick you and then cut you, see?"

Grundy wasted no more time in words. He rushed at his recalcitrant chums.

But Wilkins and Gunn were in a warlike mood by this time. Grundy was a hefty fellow, certainly more than a match for either Wilkins or Gunn. He fondly believed that he was more than a match for the pair of them together, with two or three other Shell fellows thrown in. Wilkins and Gunn had allowed him to think so, being accommodating fellows, and willing to allow him to think whatever he liked, so long as there was peace. Nevertheless, Grundy's belief was ill-founded: he was not a match for two fellows at once, and he now made the painful discovery.

Wilkins went staggering under a hefty drive, and Gunn yelled as he caught Grundy's left. Then they collared Grundy together.

There was a terrific scrap in Study No. 3.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 862.

Grundy was not a match for the two, but he was very nearly so. So he was able to put up quite a respectable scrap.

The table went reeling, and chairs were knocked right and left—books strewed the floor—the clock came off the mantelpiece with a crash—as three gasping and breathless fellows staggered about the study in wild combat.

The din was heard all along the Shell passage, and a crowd of fellows collected. Baggy Trimble of the Fourth was the first to arrive, and hurl open the door. Blake & Co. came next, and Levison & Co., and Wildrake and Gore and Skimpole—indeed, in a few minutes nearly all the Shell and the Fourth seemed to be packed outside Study No. 3.

There were shouts of laughter as the struggling three reduced the study to a state of wreck and ruin.

"Go it, Wilkins!"

"Go it, Grundy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! What a feahful wow! You fellows will have the Housemastah up heah soon."

"The giddy worms have turned at last!" grinned Cardew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

George Alfred Grundy went down on his back. Wilkins, his nose streaming crimson, sat on his chest. Gunn trampled wildly on his legs. Having got Grundy down on the floor, Wilkins and Gunn sagely decided that that was the safest place for him, and determined to keep him there.

"Ow! Lemme gerrup!" gasped Grundy. "I'll pulverise you!"

"You'll stay there till you behave!" gasped Wilkins. "Stand on him, Gunny."

"Yes, rather!"

"Yaroooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar from the crowded passage.

"Bai Jove! This is wathah wuff on Gwunday."

"Gerroff!" yelled George Alfred.

"Are you going to make it pax?"

"No!" roared Grundy.

Wilkins grasped Grundy's ears. He proceeded to bang Grundy's head on the study floor.

Thump, thump, thump!

"Oh! Ow! Wow! You rotter—you funk—lemme gerrup and I'll smash the pair of you—Ow, ow, ow! Stoppit!"

Thump, thump, thump!

"Are you making it pax now?" roared Wilkins.

"Ow! No! Ow!"

Thump, thump, thump, thump!

"Bai Jove! Mind you don't go thwough the floor, Wilkins."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Pax!" yelled Grundy. "I'll make it pax—I'll let you off! Ow! Stoppit!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wilkins and Gunn had tea farther along the passage that afternoon. Grundy was not good company in Study No. 3. As for George Alfred, he ceased, for a time, to think about cricket and House matches; his principal occupation for quite a long time was rubbing his head and dabbing his nose.

But peace had been established.

Prep in Study No. 3 that evening was done in grim silence, but without any outbreak on the part of George Alfred Grundy. The study floor was harder than Grundy's head, and Grundy did not want to establish contact again.

CHAPTER 4.

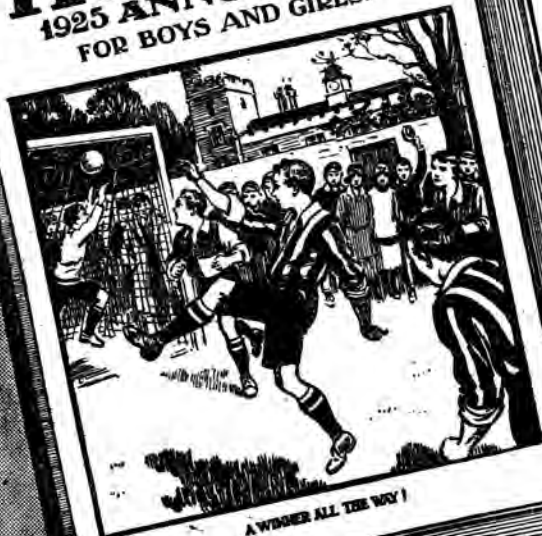
Grundy Goes Ahead!

TOM MERRY & CO. observed Grundy with some slight amusement on the following day. Grundy of the Shell was quite celebrated as a bore; but for once he had succeeded in making himself a little interesting. That he couldn't play cricket was a fact so self-evident that it was a marvel that Grundy could not see it. That he attributed his exclusion from House and school matches to the existence of a "conspiracy" was really too funny for words. Above all, his declared intention of playing for an outside club, and giving St. Jim's cricket the go-by, excited interest and made the fellows chuckle. That any cricket captain who knew his business would play Grundy, for any imaginable reason, was simply impossible. Yet Grundy seemed absolutely sure of being taken on by the Abbotsford Ramblers as a playing member. Grundy had heaps of money, and there were clubs, no doubt, who might have taken him on to pay his subscriptions on condition that he kept in the background and did not aspire to wield bat or handle ball. But that, of course, would never have suited Grundy.

It seemed that Grundy was deceived by his own opinion of himself, and took it for granted that the Ramblers would bag him because he was so good a man at cricket. So the general expectation was that Grundy, after his visit to Abbotsford, would return bootless home. Unless, as Monty

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Lowther suggested, Grundy had suddenly and miraculously developed powers at cricket which no one had hitherto suspected. That suggestion raised a laugh among fellows who had last seen Grundy at games practice.

Heedless of hilarity, Grundy went on his way loftily. His precise plans he was keeping to himself—being no longer on speaking terms with Wilkins and Gunn, and not at all inclined to take grinning fellows into his confidence. Everything Grundy said about cricket was taken as a joke, which made it a little difficult for him to talk seriously on the subject. His deepest and wisest observations would be interrupted by chuckling; and it was of no use for Grundy to snap out that he wasn't joking—fellows persisted that he was.

Not a word did Grundy utter in Study No. 3 to his former chums Wilkins and Gunn. He was giving them a marble eye of the most frozen description.

They had raised a rebellious heel against him, and that did it. Grundy had done with them. Had they "come round" in a proper apologetic manner he would have forgiven them, and taken them into favour again, for Grundy could be generous. But as a preliminary to forgiveness they had to resign from Tom Merry's team and throw in their lot completely with their great leader. That they declined to do. Wilkins remarked to Gunn that after the House match they might "butter" Grundy again, and bring the old donkey round; and Gunn agreed. But certainly they weren't going to stand out of the House match to please him.

So it looked as if the magnificent spreads in Study No. 3 would be things of the past. Wilkins and Gunn felt that it was hard. For whole terms, while they had stood Grundy patiently, they had browsed on the fat of the land. Now it was over—unless they made it up with Grundy. Like the Israelites of old, they looked back with regret to the flesh-pots of Egypt—nevertheless, they did not turn back to the house of bondage. House matches came even before spreads in the study.

After dinner that day George Alfred Grundy emerged from the School House and started for the gates. Everybody who saw him smiled. Grundy was off for Abbotsford.

Grundy saw the smiles, and did not heed them. Lofty and disdainful, he went on his way. The Terrible Three of the Shell were chatting by the old gateway, and they, too, smiled as Grundy came along. Grundy paused for a moment, then.

"You can grin!" he said.

"Thanks—we will!" said Monty Lowther.

"Just wait!" said Grundy darkly. "In a few weeks I hope to bring a team over here and wipe up the field with your lot."

"What a sanguine temperament!" remarked Manners.

"Are they going to make you skipper?" smiled Tom Merry.

"Probably! The best man always comes to the top in the long run, unless he's kept down by a conspiracy!" explained Grundy.

"Oh, my hat!"

Grundy stalked on, and left the chums of the Shell laughing. He took the local train at Rylcombe, and changed at Wayland Junction, and arrived at last at Abbotsford, which was about ten miles from the school. At Abbotsford Station he stepped into a taxicab, and was driven away into the residential quarter of the country town.

He alighted at a garden gate, where beyond rows of laurel a handsome house could be seen, standing in its own grounds. An old gentleman in a velvet skull cap was hoeing among the laurels, and he looked round as Grundy pushed the gate open.

"Oh, it's you, George."

"Yes, uncle. Where's Gilbert?"

"Somewhere indoors," said Mr. Grundy.

"Like your new house, uncle?" asked Grundy. "Think you'll be staying on in Abbotsford?"

"I don't know. Gilbert likes the place," said Mr. Grundy. "He has made many young friends here—cricketing friends mostly. Anyhow, we shall be here for the summer, and I hope we shall see you sometimes, George."

"You'll see quite a lot of me," assured Grundy, and he walked on towards the house, without waiting to hear his uncle express his pleasure at that prospect. Perhaps, however, the old gentleman would not have expressed any, had Grundy waited.

"Hallo, old George!"

"Hallo, Gilbert, old kid!"

A youth remarkably like Grundy in looks was standing in the french windows, and he greeted the St. Jim's junior cordially. It was easy to see that they were near relations; in form and feature they were very much alike. But there was a bright intelligence in Gilbert Grundy's face that was rather wanting in George Alfred's. Like as they were to look at, there were inward differences of a far-reaching kind.

The cousins shook hands in a very cordial manner. It was rare that they met without a "row"; nevertheless, there was a very sincere friendship between them.

"Roll in, old man," said Gilbert. "Jolly glad to see you! Squat down in that chair; it's comfy. I say, were you glad

to hear that the pater had taken a furnished house here for the summer?"

"Well, in a way," said Grundy. "Of course, I'm glad to see you at any time, old man. But what interested me most in your letter was your telling me that you were in a cricket club here."

Gilbert nodded.

"I know you're great on cricket, George," he remarked, with a private wink at the ceiling.

"It's my game," explained Grundy. "Of course, I'm a good footballer. I row well, I swim well, and so on. But cricket really is my game." He looked quickly at his cousin.

"What are you sniggering at?"

"W-w-was I sniggering?"

"You were. Don't give me any of your rot about what you think of my cricket. I get enough of that at school from the fellows."

"I've no doubt you do," agreed Gilbert.

"You're a member of the Abbotsford Ramblers club now?"

"Yes. I knew some of the fellows, and they asked me to join as soon as I came here," said Gilbert.

"You play for them?"

"Only in one match, so far; but they've asked me to play whenever I can."

"Why?" asked Grundy.

Gilbert Arthur Grundy grinned.

"They seem to think I'm a good man," he explained.

"Blessed if I know why they should think that," said Grundy. "Of course, I wouldn't say so anywhere else; but, between ourselves, Gilbert, you can't play cricket, you know."

"Between ourselves, old man, you don't know what you're talking about," said Gilbert Grundy cheerfully.

"Look here, Gilbert—"

"Look here, George—"

"I didn't come here to row," said George Alfred Grundy.

"You oughtn't to mind my speaking the plain truth to you about your cricket, Gilbert: it's a proof of friendship, really. But never mind that. If the club is so hard up for players that they'll put you in their team, it stands to reason that they'll be glad to get hold of a really good man. That's what I've come about."

"Eh?" said Gilbert, puzzled.

"I've been turned down at cricket in my school," said Grundy. "You'd hardly believe it, knowing my form, but I have. So I've told our skipper plainly that I'm joining an outside club, and giving St. Jim's cricket a miss this season."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I don't know any of the Abbotsford chaps personally, so I'd like you to take me along—"

"What?"

"And introduce me to the club, and get me in as a member. Of course, once they've seen me handle a bat they'll be glad to have me on any terms."

"Great Scott!"

Gilbert Arthur Grundy stared at his cousin in dismay. He liked "old George." He had done him many good turns, and received many from him, at one time and another. But he really felt that this was the limit. He had no objection whatever to introducing George to the Abbotsford cricket club. But to recommend him as a player was quite another matter. He really did not want the Abbotsford fellows to see George play cricket. He realised that he would be chipped considerably on the subject. He knew, moreover, that George had no more chance of playing for Abbotsford Ramblers than for I Zingari.

Gilbert Grundy was not quite so plain a speaker as his cousin George, so he hesitated before replying.

"Of course, I can't get this distance every day, only on a half-holiday," said Grundy. "So you'd better take me along to-day, Gilbert. I really want to play for the Ramblers."

"But—but—but—" stammered Gilbert.

"On match days I can get leave from my Housemaster; that's all right. Of course, I don't expect to play in the next match. Your skipper will have to see my quality first. You'll be glad to have me along with you, Gilbert, old man?"

"Yes, but—"

"But what?"

Gilbert Grundy sighed. He did not want to wound old George, and he knew from old experience how futile it was to argue with Grundy.

"The chaps will be glad to see you, as a relation of mine," he said. "I was going down to the ground for some practice at the nets this afternoon, if you hadn't written that you were coming over. You can come along with me. I—I dare say I can manage all right about your joining the club: but—"

"Well?"

"Well, it's not my job to select the playing team," said Gilbert. "That isn't anything to do with me, of course. If

our skipper, Blaine, likes your form—hem!—he will tell you so. Perhaps he will jump at the chance; your cricket is enough to make anybody jump!"

"What?"

"I—I mean, let's get a move on," said Gilbert hurriedly.

"I'm ready," said Grundy.

And the two Grundys sallied forth together in the sunny summer afternoon, and headed for the cricket-ground of the Abbotsford Ramblers.

CHAPTER 5.

Going Strong.

TOM MERRY & CO. did not pay much heed to Grundy of the Shell, during the following days. The House match was close at hand, and other fixtures were coming along. The weather, after long hesitation, had made up its mind to be good, and so the heroes of the School House had plenty of other matters to think about, much more important than George Alfred Grundy. They did not even know whether he had succeeded in joining the Ramblers, and did not care very much; in point of fact, they hardly gave the matter a thought. Certainly it was a relief to have Grundy no longer pushing his claims to represent the House or the School on the cricket-field.

Wilkins and Gunn, of course, came more in contact with Grundy, as his study-mate in the Shell, than the others fellows did. So they had to sit up and take notice, as it were.

Grundy was quite unpleasant in these days.

The old harmony in Study No. 3 was gone. No longer did Grundy hold forth on all sorts of subjects with the air of an oracle, Wilkins and Gunn listening with respectful attention, what time they munched Grundy's cakes, or scoffed Grundy's tarts.

Grundy did not hold forth. He did not speak to Wilkins and Gunn at all. It must have cost Grundy an effort, to refrain from laying down the law, to listeners willing or unwilling. But he made the necessary effort. He felt that it was up to him. His lordly will and pleasure had been disregarded in his own study—his own familiar friends had turned on him, even to the extent of handling him and thumping his head on the study floor. They had thumped it, and thumped it hard—indeed, had there been anything in Grundy's head liable to suffer damage from rough usage, it might have been damaged.

This was beyond forgiveness. Besides, the two cheeky fellows persisted in keeping in the team for the House match. Grundy had ordered them to get out of it, and they remained in, defiantly refusing to get out. So Grundy turned them down utterly. In the study he maintained the aloof attitude of a graven image; in the passage and the quadrangle he passed them by as if they were not.

It was rather rotten for Wilkins and Gunn. True, there was some relief in not hearing any more of Grundy's conversation. That was a distinct advantage, not to be forgotten in summing up the case. Still, the situation was unsatisfactory. A graven image in the study was not inspiring company. And Grundy's chums had not forgotten the fleshpots of Egypt. Grundy took it for granted that in the present circumstances, as he was not on speaking terms with Wilkins and Gunn, he could not offer them a share in the good things that came to him in hampers, or the ample supplies that were delivered from the tuckshop. Such an offer, to fellows he had turned utterly down, would have been an insult, of course. Naturally, they would have felt insulted, and Grundy, who had a proper feeling in such matters, did not think of insulting them in such a manner.

This was very right and proper of Grundy; but it is possible that he attributed to Wilkins and Gunn an extreme delicacy to which they could, strictly speaking, lay no claim. Possibly they would not have felt insulted; probably, if they had, they would have swallowed the insult along with the tarts, the cakes, the chocolate eclairs, and the other excellent provender.

As matters stood, however, the fleshpots of Egypt, which had comforted Wilkins and Gunn in the house of bondage, were now things of the past, and they enjoyed independence and tea in Hall.

Independence was grateful and comforting; tea in Hall was very far from being so.

Nevertheless, Wilkins and Gunn stood to their colours; they remained in the House junior eleven, at the cost of losing the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.

But it was rather rotten; for, as Wilkins remarked to Gunn, if they were going to break with Grundy at last, it was a sheer waste of endurance to have stood him for whole terms. If they had known that it was coming to this, they might as well have banged his head on the floor long ago, on the many, many occasions when they had manfully resisted the temptation to do so.

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The House match came along, and both Wilkins and Gunn figured in the School House team. Grundy did not see the match. Wilkins had the good luck to take Figgins' wicket, and Gunn brought off two catches in the field that were very creditable, sending out Redfern and Kerr of the New House. They would have liked Grundy to see this; but George Alfred was not there.

That day, Grundy had wheeled out his bike immediately after lessons, and cleared. He had gone over to Abbotsford, and he remained out of gates till lock-up. It seemed that he had leave to cut dinner in the House, which was unusual, and surprised some of the fellows who missed him. It was not really surprising, as Grundy had relatives in Abbotsford, and his uncle had obtained leave for him to visit them as often as possible. But the St. Jim's fellows knew nothing about Grundy's relatives at Abbotsford. Grundy would naturally have told Wilkins and Gunn all about them, on the old footing. On the new footing, he told them nothing, as he never spoke a word to them. So they were surprised to see that Grundy seemed able to get an exact whenever he wanted one.

Grundy, indeed, not only cut Wilkins and Gunn, but he spoke very little to anybody in the House in these days. Tom Merry & Co. were excluded from the delights of his conversation, an exclusion which they bore with great equanimity. Grundy's thoughts and ambitions were now all outside the school—the cricket club had turned him down, and now, in his turn, he had turned the cricket club down. He did not ask for, or demand, a place in the junior eleven, for House or School. He cut games practice with persistent regularity. St. Jim's cricket no longer seemed to exist for him.

Tom Merry, at least, would have been quite satisfied with this state of affairs; the more Grundy did not seek his society, the more Tom was pleased. But as junior House captain, it was Tom's duty to see that Lower School fellows did not cut games practice, and this brought him into contact with Grundy again. Certainly, games practice did not seem of much use to Grundy; but it was the law, and Grundy had to toe the line with the rest. At least, he got the open-air exercise, which, after all, is chiefly what games exist for. So a day or two after the House match which had caused such a revolution in Study No. 3, Tom Merry dropped in to see Grundy.

Grundy was alone in Study No. 3, oiling a cricket-bat. It was Saturday afternoon, a half-holiday; and compulsory practice was the order of the day that Saturday. Tom Merry had rather let Grundy slide for a long time, but duty was duty, and he came along to round up the great man of the Shell at last.

"Getting ready, old man?" asked Tom, with a smile, as he glanced at Grundy's cricket-bat.

"Yes."

"All juniors down to the nets at three," said Tom. "Kildare of the Sixth is giving us some coaching to-day, Grundy."

Grundy laughed.

"Kildare of the Sixth can coach fellows who know less about the game than he does," he answered. "I don't happen to be in need of any coaching."

"Well, turn up, all the same, will you?" said Tom good-humouredly.

"Can't be done."

"Now, look here, Grundy, old scout," said Tom persuasively. "You've cut games practice a lot of times now. You know I've got my duty to do. Put in an appearance this afternoon."

"I've not cut games. I'm practising with my own team."

Tom Merry blinked at him.

"Your own team?" he repeated.

In point of fact, Tom Merry had forgotten by that time Grundy's airy talk about joining an outside club. That Grundy and all his works could possibly be forgotten by anybody had never occurred to George Alfred. Yet so it was!

"The Abbotsford Ramblers," said Grundy.

"Oh, I remember!" Tom looked puzzled. "Mean to say that you joined them?"

"Didn't I tell you I was going to?"

"I remember now," assented Tom. "I believe I've noticed that you clear off a lot from the school now. You've been going over to the Abbotsford ground—is that it?"

"That's it."

Tom rubbed his nose thoughtfully. This was a peculiar situation with which any junior House captain might have been puzzled to deal.

"Well, if you're getting cricket, I suppose it's all right," he said. "But the rule is that fellows have to turn up at the nets here. I'm not empowered to make new rules."



After reading about Grundy's glorious display at Greenford in the paper, Tom Merry naturally expected to see Grundy handle even Fatty Wynn's bowling with success. But he was disappointed. Crash! Grundy's bat swept the empty air in the old familiar style, and his wicket went into fragments. "Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Tom in dismay. (See page 17.)

Grundy, and you're not. I'd better speak to Kildare, as Head of the Games."

"Speak to him and be blown," said Grundy.

Tom Merry left Study No. 3, and went along to the junior ground to speak to Kildare. The captain of St. Jim's was there; he was to give two hours of his valuable time that afternoon to the Lower boys. Kildare listened to what Tom had to tell him, with surprise and some amusement.

"I've heard about the Ramblers," he said. "They're a very good junior club in Abbotsford. It's a bit irregular, but if they choose to take Grundy in, I don't see any harm. I suppose there's no spoof about it, Merry; he really goes out for cricket."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Tom at once. "Grundy's a born ass, but he's straight as a die. I don't believe he would tell a whopper to save his life."

"It's rather odd. From what I've seen of Grundy's style, I can't understand any club wanting him. Has he improved lately?"

"If he has, I haven't noticed it. He may have, of course."

"Well, I'll speak to him," said Kildare. "If he is learning to play cricket better than a babe-in-arms, I'm jolly glad to hear it, and I wouldn't like to stop him."

So Grundy did not appear on Little Side that afternoon. He was seen to leave on his bike, and as usual on half-holidays he did not come in till lock-up. In the evening Kildare spoke to him, and was apparently satisfied by Grundy's explanation, for it was understood afterwards that Grundy was excused from compulsory practice for the present. Nobody was likely to miss him; on fine days there was always a crowd at the nets, and Grundy's antics there only interrupted more serious business.

But the incident drew some attention upon Grundy again. The Ramblers were known to be a good team, and if Grundy was playing for them, it looked as if some sudden and mysterious improvement had taken place in his form. Some fellows had heard that the Ramblers had a good professional coach; and it was possible that that coach had done something for Grundy. But as Monty Lowther remarked, if Grundy ever turned out to be a cricketer, it would prove that the age of miracles was not past.

The explanation, simple as it was, naturally did not occur to anyone. That Grundy had an affectionate relative in the Ramblers, who was a first-class player, and greatly valued by his club, was not in the least surprising, only the St. Jim's fellows did not happen to know it. That Gilbert Grundy,

being a great gun in the Ramblers' club, had been able to "wedge" in his cousin, and get him the benefit of practice under the eye of the club's professional, nobody was likely to guess, as nobody knew that Grundy had a cousin within hundred miles of St. Jim's. Even Gilbert's influence with the Ramblers would never have been strong enough to get Grundy into the playing eleven—had he sought to exert it to that end. So nobody was likely to see Grundy playing for Abbotsford. But the St. Jim's fellows did not know this, either.

The general impression was that Grundy must have improved very much, and Tom Merry was quite pleased to think so. Grundy, at least, had the qualities of determination and keenness, and if only he could catch on to the rudiments of the game, Tom Merry felt that he would be very glad to reward him with a chance in a match.

So in the following week, as he met Grundy wheeling out his bike on a half-holiday as usual, Tom spoke to him on the subject.

"Abbotsford again?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You're getting on all right there?"

"I fancy so," said Grundy complacently. "I rather fancy I shall be figuring in their match with Greenford."

"That's good!" said Tom dubiously. He had once seen the Ramblers play Greenford, and he knew that it was a good fixture. He simply could not imagine Grundy figuring in such a match.

"Later on we'll come over here and lick your crowd," added Grundy.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Right-ho!" he said. "I'm jolly glad to hear that you're getting on at cricket, anyhow."

"Blaine says—"

"Who's Blaine?" asked Tom.

"The Ramblers skipper. He says he's never seen a man deal with bowling quite like I do."

Tom Merry suppressed a grin. It seemed to him that Blaine's remark might have had a double meaning, imperceptible to Grundy.

"Well, we play cricket here, you know," said Tom cheerily. "If you're getting on like this, Grundy, why not let us see what you can do? Put in a show on Little Side here."

"Not likely, after what I've stood from you!" said Grundy scornfully.

"What I mean is, that if you can play, I'm quite willing to give you a chance in the House cricket," explained Tom.

Grundy laughed ironically.

"I expected this," he said. "Now that another club wants me you're finding out my value. Well, it's too late. I'm done with St. Jim's cricket for this season, and you won't see me on Little Side again with your crowd of fumbler. See?"

"Fathead!" said Tom politely.

"I might agree to play in a good fixture," said Grundy, relenting. "If you ask me decently I'll consider it. I couldn't let it interfere with any of my engagements with the Ramblers, of course. That wouldn't be playing the game. But, that understood, I'll back you up if you want a really good man for something important, something that wouldn't be beneath my dignity."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom.

"Eh? What are you cackling at?" demanded Grundy.

"Well, if I were hard up for men—which I'm not—I shouldn't be likely to put a fellow in without having seen him play," said Tom. "You'd have to go through your paces on Little Side first."

"Catch me!" said Grundy disdainfully. "I'm done with Little Side. Go and eat coke!"

And Grundy mounted his machine and pedalled away for Abbotsford.

CHAPTER 6.

The Marble Eye!

"HEM!"

"Um!"

Wilkins and Gunn made those remarks. Not very intelligible in themselves, but indicative of the uncertain state of mind in which Wilkins and Gunn found themselves.

It was more than a week since the House match had taken place, in which the two Shell fellows had played, thus alienating their valued chum George Alfred Grundy.

Study No. 3 was still the home of discord. G. A. Grundy still treated his former comrades to the marble eye and the cold shoulder. Enthroned, as it were, upon his lofty dignity, Grundy looked down on them with disdain and indifference. He did not seem to miss their company at all. Grundy of the Shell was sufficient unto himself.

But Wilkins and Gunn felt that it was time for this disagreeable state of affairs to end. The House match was safely over—they had played for their House—so it was time to placate Grundy, and restore the old harmonious state of affairs in Study No. 3, and make that study once more a land flowing with milk and honey.

Wilkins and Gunn did not put it exactly like that. They did not own up, even to themselves, how much Grundy's hampers had to do with their friendship for Grundy. Considerations of that kind were better unspoken and even unthought. Wilkins said to Gunn, and Gunn agreed with Wilkins, that Grundy, in his way, wasn't a bad chap. In fact, was quite a good chap in some ways, and that they really liked the old fellow, and thought it better to take him up again. The doubtful point was, whether Grundy would take them up again if they took him up.

A cheery word or an agreeable grin, intended as an extension of the olive-branch, had no effect on Grundy. He paid no heed. It was necessary to come out into the open, and that, at last, the two juniors intended to do. Hence the somewhat embarrassed "Hem!" and "Um!" with which they started.

Grundy was at prep at the study table, taking no more heed of Wilkins and Gunn than of the fender and fireirons. He did not seem to hear George Wilkins' "Hem!" or the "Um!" of William Cuthbert Gunn.

"Hem!" said Wilkins again.

Grundy remained unmoved.

"Hem!" said Wilkins, more loudly.

Grundy looked up at last.

"Have you got a cold, Wilkins?" he asked.

"Eh? Oh, no!"

"Then what are you grunting about?"

"Oh!"

"Shut up, will you?" asked Grundy.

Wilkins shut up. He felt discouraged. But after a time he returned to the charge.

"I say, Grundy, old man, I hear you're getting on fine with the Ramblers, at Abbotsford," he said affably.

"I don't see how you can have heard anything of the kind."

"Well, the fellows are saying—"

"I don't want to know what the fellows are saying! Don't repeat to me the chit-chat of the passages."

"Oh!" said Wilkins, discouraged again.

Gunn took up the tale. The two chums had agreed that Grundy was to be brought round. By this time Wilkins and

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Gunn were feeling like the old Egyptians during the seven lean years. They were anxious for the fat years to recommence, and Grundy was the man with the horn of plenty. So both of them felt that it was up to them to be rather patient and tactful with an old comrade like Grundy.

"Isn't it the Greenford match to-morrow?" asked Gunn.

"What do you know about the Greenford match?"

"I mean, the Ramblers are playing Greenford," said Gunn. "It's a jolly good fixture, I hear. You're in their team, of course, Grundy?"

"Find out!"

Grundy laid down his pen and looked across the study table at his discomfited comrades.

"I'd better be plain," he said. "I'm done with you chaps. I want you to shut up. You've been in with the conspiracy here against me. It's too late to back out now. Shut up!"

"But I—I say, old fellow—"

"If you call me old fellow again, Gunn, I'll heave the dictionary at you."

"Wouldn't you like us to come over to-morrow and see you play for the Ramblers against Greenford?" asked Wilkins.

He did not suppose for a moment that Grundy would be playing for the Ramblers. But he felt that it would be tactful to take it for granted.

"No, I wouldn't," said Grundy.

"It's a half-holiday, you know, and we'd simply enjoy seeing you knock up a century for your new club, Grundy."

"I may not get a century—the Greenford lot are hot stuff," said Grundy. "And I don't want you there. If I see you hanging about I'll come to you and boot you off. See?"

Grundy was absolutely uncompromising. Wilkins and Gunn exchanged a hopeless glance, and gave it up.

On the following day George Alfred Grundy was not in class in the morning. It was learned that he had an exeat for the whole day on account of the Ramblers match.

Mr. Railton, his Housemaster, had given him the exeat. No doubt Mr. Railton was surprised, as Kildare had been, at a St. Jim's fellow joining an outside club, and still more surprised at any club taking in a player of Grundy's calibre. But he saw no harm in it, and he would not place any bar in the way of a keen cricketer. Grundy was to be trusted out of gates—he was not a fellow like Racke or Crooke, who required a watchful eye kept on them. Fellows at St. Jim's playing in matches were always excused classes on match days, and Mr. Railton made the same concession for Grundy, though the circumstances were unusual.

Grundy had told him that he was in the list of the Ramblers reserves, and that was good enough. He did not add—he did not even know—that his cousin had succeeded in gratifying him to that extent, by his influence with the Ramblers, on the distinct understanding that Grundy might be called a reserve if he liked, but that in no circumstances whatever should he ever be called upon to play. But as it got Grundy a day off from classes, Gilbert and his Abbotsford friends were quite willing to give him that little pleasure, which cost them nothing and did no harm.

Grundy took it quite seriously. He thought Blaine rather a fool not to play him, but, after all, he was a new member. He was going over to Greenford as a reserve, and he might be wanted to play, so he happily fancied. If his chance came he would distinguish himself to such an extent that Blaine would never dream of leaving him out of any further important fixtures all through the season. This cheery day-dream quite bucked Grundy, and he looked very bright as he started out from St. Jim's with his bag.

Tom Merry & Co. noted his absence from Mr. Linton's Form-room, and were interested to learn the cause. What Grundy had told Mr. Railton they did not, of course, know. They only knew that Grundy had an exeat because his club was playing a match at Greenford that day. It looked as if he were playing for Abbotsford, though this was too astonishing to be believed without proof.

Grundy was not back that evening till lock-up.

He came back in a rather cross temper. Wilkins and Gunn were in the study to greet him after roll-call.

"Had a good game?" asked Wilkins.

Grunt from Grundy. He was not in the least disposed to confide to Wilkins that he had spent the day watching the cricket at Greenford, refreshing himself with ginger-beer and pungent criticisms of the players.

"Knocked up a lot of runs—what?" asked Gunn.

Grundy glared.

"Did I mention to you fellows that I didn't want any jaw from you, or did I not?" he asked.

"Look here, Grundy!" Wilkins was getting exasperated. For days and days he had been holding out the olive-branch, and still it was contemptuously rejected.

"Shut up!"

"Duck's egg in each innings, I suppose?" said Wilkins, changing his tune, as it were, in his exasperation.



It was unfortunate for Grundy, for the exasperated cricketers collared him on all sides, and bumped him in the grass, and bumped him again, and rolled him, and ragged him, and finally kicked him off the field with innumerable and powerful kickings. The New House crowd roared with laughter. (See page 17.)

"What?"

"That is, if you played at all, which I don't believe. Stands to reason the Abbotsford skipper couldn't be potty enough to play you."

"Jolly well think not!" said Gunn. "Why, that's a good match—they report it in the papers. Did they let you score, Grundy? If so, did they get a kid of eight to show you how to do it?"

Then Wilkins and Gunn left the study rather hurriedly, as Grundy picked up his bat.

CHAPTER 7.

Amazing!

TOM MERRY rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"We beat them last time," he remarked.

"We did," agreed Manners.

"But this time—"

"Looks a bit doubtful," said Monty Lowther. "Never mind. We can't always win House matches."

"Nunno!" said Tom. "But we want to."

The junior cricket captain of St. Jim's was feeling up against it. Figgins & Co. of the New House were keen to avenge their late defeat, and the New House junior team were in great form. Fatty Wynn had never been better at bowling, and Figgins was a mightier man than ever

with the willow, and Kerr, and Redfern, and Owen, and the rest, seemed to be at the top of their form. And the School House were in difficulties. Certainly, they had Tom Merry, the best all-round junior cricketer in the school. They had Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, a good man at games in spite of his fastidious manners and customs. But otherwise their best men were wanting on the date of the return match.

Talbot of the Shell was crocked with a bruised wrist. Blake of the Fourth had hurt his leg in a tumble from his bike. Ralph Reckness Cardew had gone home for some days, and he had taken Levison of the Fourth with him to Reckness Towers. As it never rains but it pours, Sidney Clive had also been called away, some of his relatives from South Africa having come over for Wembley, and applied to the Head for leave for him from school for a week. Lumley-Lumley, who had lately been looking up as a cricketer, had quite gone off his form again. It really was a discouraging prospect for a junior House-captain.

It would not have mattered so much in a School match, for which Tom would have drawn on the players of both Houses. But in a House match, of course, he had only the School House to draw on, and on this occasion the big battalions were on the side of the New House.

(Continued on page 16.)



The St. Jim's News

SPECIAL "CAMPING"
NUMBER.

EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

A FORTNIGHT ago the Shell and Fourth Form spent the week-end under canvas, and this special Camping Number of the "News" is the outcome—or, at any rate, the event suggested to me the possibilities of such an issue.

As a general rule, most of the camping that goes on at St. Jim's is in connection with the scout troop, but on this occasion Mr. Railton decided to have the whole of the two Forms under canvas, whether scouts or not.

When I said that the Shell and Fourth were there, by the way, I ought to have made it clear that only the School House fellows were camping. Mr. Ratcliffe, as was only to be expected, refused permission to members of the New House.

We had a most enjoyable time, and incidentally, I trust that none of you will take Monty's article at all seriously. As a matter of fact, he's one of the most enthusiastic campers you could hope to meet, but he can't resist the temptation to poke fun at everything, especially when he's turning out copy for the "News."

Wildrake, as was only to be expected, proved invaluable, not for the first time. He always does the lion's share of the work when we're under canvas, simply because he's about the only fellow who can do it absolutely "jakerloo," to use his own expression.

He spends a lot of time when he isn't doing things himself in showing other fellows how to do them, and he never seems to lose his habitual good-humour with even the clumsiest and most dull-witted of his pupils.

In fact, I only saw him once rather badly put out. That was when Trimbale came into camp with a huge bough of poplar for use as firewood. Wildrake promptly booted him back into the woods, and made him take the poplar with him.

He explained that it is supposed to be very unlucky to bring any of this particular tree into camp.

Of course, Monty Lowther had to say that he didn't understand what Wildrake was kicking up a fuss about, because, if nobody liked poplar, it simply proved that it wasn't really "poplar." Therefore, there was nothing at all to worry about. I might add that Monty himself had something to worry about when we'd recovered from the shock that the awful pun gave us.

Tom Merry

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By Kit Wildrake.

I GUESS that when you glad-eyed my monicker hooked on to the label of this few inches of solidified hot air you sorter got a notion that I was fingerin' on handin' out several cents' worth of information on camping out—something you could cut out and gum in your hat when you hit the trail with a couple of blankets, a billy, a haversack plumb full of junk you think you're going to want (and nary a thing that you sure are going to need more than pretty had before you've been an hour in camp), and a large-sized hope that it ain't going to rain any more'n you want it to, cause your mackinaw was the first thing you packed, and you've got to disturb the whole of your outfit if you want to get it in a hurry.

Shucks, you'll say, that's a tenderfoot way of settin' out. Well, I'll allow it is; but it's a pretty general way, from what I've seen in the Old Country, and I'll sure tell the world I've seen more tenderfoot camping outfits decorating the landscape than any other kind.

And now I guess I'll back trail a few. I was just making it clear that it wasn't part of my programme to charm your ears with a couple of verses and a harmonised chorus on "How to Do It," though I dare say I might be able to manage that if I took a notion to try, having been used to a star-spangled roof to my bed-room ever since I was knee-high to a steer.

But that was in British Columbia, where you have to do things pretty well according to Hoyle if you ain't hankering after a swift and sudden termination to your career. Fool tricks aren't healthy way out where the blue grass grows.

Here in England it's more than a bit different. Camping is a sure enough picnic. Wherever you go you've only got to hike a stone, and it'll crease up somebody's drawing-room window. It's like standing on the shore of a lake with one foot in the water and claiming you're swimming.

You never get really up against it—never have to rely on hitting something with a lump of lead before you can fill the hole behind your belt.

One thing, though, I'd sure like to say before I drop my pen. I can't help smiling some when I hear tenderfoots spilling hot air about roughing it in camp.

Believe me, brothers, the guy who's satisfied with roughing it under canvas isn't camping at all. He's just fooling about.

The old-timer has no aspirations in the way of discomfort. He knows how to make himself just as comfortable as he would be in a first-class hotel—only more so. And it's the Boot Leg Ranch to a picket-rope that he does it, too.

A FEW HINTS!

By Monty Lowther.

CAMPING out is the form of holiday which always affords the most "in tents" pleasure. Indeed, to all intents and purposes it is the most healthy and enjoyable kind of life one can possibly lead.

If any of my readers have decided, on the strength of my recommendation or otherwise, to spend a few days under canvas this year, I should advise them to endeavour to get a few tips before they set out. If you happen to have any friends who have camped out, and survived the experience, they will doubtless be more than willing to give you lots of hints.

In case, however, you have no friends with any trace of this particular form of insanity, I will supply a few tips which may prove helpful to you.

Always pitch your tent so that the door faces away from the wind, and light the camp fire directly opposite to it. This is done in order that the smoke may be blown away from the tent. As soon as the fire has commenced to burn up, the wind will change direction and drive the smoke into the tent.

This necessitates moving either the tent or the camp fire, and, as fires are unhandy things to shift about, most people prefer to move the tent. As soon as you have finished the job the wind will again change direction, and you can shift your tent again if you think it worth while to do so. I might inform you, however, that the wind is capable of keeping up the game as long as you like to play your part in it.

If it rains—or, rather, when it rains (I am assuming that you are going to camp in England)—you at once loosen the guy-ropes and lace the tent door. Having done this, you can then sit down in the gloomy, humid, close atmosphere, with water dripping down your back from the tent-seams, and the pleasant prospect of nothing but cold water and dry bread for dinner, in consequence of the camp-fire's being quenched. This will be a fine opportunity for expressing your pity for those poor idiots who know no better than to go and shut themselves up in hotels on their holidays, where they are forced to eat and sleep and that sort of thing under a roof instead of under the bright blue sky. What do they know of the joys of camp life—of finding ants in the butter and wasps in the jam; of sharing a blanket with a family of earwigs, a colony of wood-ticks, a couple of wire worms, and sundry spiders, which waken you in the middle of the night by jazzing around your features? No; all these delights, and many more of a similar nature, are denied them.

I may add, though, that you couldn't possibly have a better or more healthier holiday than camping, especially if you are in the company of one such as Kit Wildrake.



PITCHING a TENT!

By Robert Arthur Digby.

THE news that the Shell and Fourth were to spend the week-end under canvas was received by most of the fellows with the greatest enthusiasm. Grundy, especially, was delighted—which certainly couldn't be said of Wilkins and Gunn, his study-mates.

They were well aware that they would be quartered in the same tent as Grundy, and the fellow who finds it possible to work up any enthusiasm over the prospect of sharing a tent with Grundy either knows very little indeed about George-Alfred, or else he's got peculiar ideas on the subject of what constitutes an enjoyable time.

I happened to be in the junior Common-room one evening when Wilkins and Gunn came in and talked the matter over. They sat down near to me and set out a draught-board while they were talking, so I couldn't help overhearing their conversation.

"Do you think there's the slightest chance of wangling it so that we got into another tent?" suggested Wilkins wistfully. "Suppose we fixed up with Talbot and two or three others, say, and told Grundy that—"

"Nothing doing!" interrupted Gunn positively. "You ought to know better than that, Wilkie. Take it from me, we're booked for a merry time, and there's no way of dodging it."

"I suppose not," sighed Wilkins miserably. "What a life! Grundy's bad enough in the study, but in a tent he's a thousand times worse. Remember last time?"

"Remember it!" repeated Gunn grimly. "Some chance of my forgetting it, isn't there? When a tent collapses in the middle of a pouring wet night, and nearly smothers a chap, and he has to crawl out into the rain in his pyjamas and squelch round for half an hour sticking the rotten thing up again, it's apt to stick in his memory."

"And all through Grundy telling Wilkie to mind his own business when he came to show us how to slacken our guy-ropes ready for the rain. The blessed pole gave the idiot a bluff on the napper, though," he added, in a more cheerful tone of voice.

It was plainly to be seen that the recollection of that tent-pole baffling Grundy on the napper was a very pleasing one to Wilkins. Gunn, however, was not so easily consoled.

"What's a crack on the nut to Grundy?" he said scornfully. "It's the most solid part about him. Oh, hang it, let's get on with the game, and try to forget him for a bit!"

Gunn, however, was too optimistic. Before half a dozen moves had been made on the board, George-Alfred himself came in at the door and crossed over to them.

"I've been looking for you two," he began. "I suppose you've heard about this camp?"

They nodded gloomily. "Good! Now I want a clear understanding before we start. There's got to be no fooling about. Everything has got to be left to me in the way of deciding what is to be done and how it's to be done. In the first place, I shall see that the tent is properly struck this time."

"Struck?" repeated Wilkins, in a puzzled voice. "I suppose you mean pitched?"

"I said struck, and I mean struck!" snapped Grundy. "And don't interrupt when I'm talking to you!"

"But aren't you talking about putting the tent up?"

"Of course I am, you ass!"

"Then you mean pitched. To strike a tent is to take it down."

Grundy breathed hard.

"Look here, Wilkins," he said grimly. "If you're going on in this fashion interrupting and contradicting at every twist and turn, you're booked for trouble. Now, you're going to share a tent with me—What did you say, Gunn?"

"Nothing!" disclaimed Gunn hastily.

Grundy stared suspiciously at him for a few moments.

"It sounded to me as if you said 'Worse luck!' he growled. "If I thought you did, I'd—well, anyhow, you understand the position now, don't you? You've got to put yourselves in my hands. And now I'll just give you a few tips on how to play draughts."

I haven't space to give an impression of Grundy as a draughts-player, but I might say that if anybody was very anxious to obtain the booby prize at a draughts tournament, he couldn't do better than to take a few lessons from Grundy. Wilkins and Gunn had the consolation of knowing that while their leader was making a prize idiot of himself in that way he hadn't the opportunity for making things unpleasant for them in some other fashion. Which, at any rate, was something to be thankful for.

On Friday evening we went into camp in a field about a quarter of a mile the other side of Rylcombe. Within an hour of our arrival all the tents had been unpacked and pitched. All, that is, with the exception of that which was to be occupied by Grundy and his merry henchmen.

Having nothing better to do for a few minutes, I strolled over and joined the crowd who were watching the performance that was taking place in connection with that particular job.

When I arrived on the scene Grundy was endeavouring to free himself from a mess of guy-ropes and wooden runners that were tangled round his legs. Gunn and Wilkins were straightening out the tent, and every time they pulled on the canvas Grundy was yanked off his feet and came down with what must have been a most unpleasant bump. Curiously enough, that tent seemed to require quite a lot of straightening out, and Gunn and Wilkins found it necessary to pull and heave at it for about five minutes. Every time they gave a tug Grundy gave a yell. You couldn't wonder at it, either. It can't be very enjoyable to be tripped up and dragged a couple of yards on the back of your neck every few seconds or so.

They continued their efforts at straightening the canvas until they were quite exhausted, and then Grundy got his first chance to free himself. He didn't waste any time about it, either, but dragged out a pocket-knife and cut the guy-ropes. It wasn't a very sensible thing to do, considering that the tent had got to be pitched, and the guy-ropes were essential to its support, but the action was typical of Grundy.

When he finally staggered to his feet he looked as though he'd been pulled backwards through a particularly thick and prickly hedge. It was clear that he'd had a jolly rough time, and it was also clear, by the gleam in his eye, that Wilkins and Gunn were booked for an even rougher one.

However, they escaped it, after all—for the time, at least—in consequence of Kildare's coming along at that moment and wanting to know how it was that the tent wasn't up. He chewed the three of them up pretty thoroughly for fooling about, and told them to get on with the job. He hadn't time to stop and supervise them, but he warned them he was likely to be back within a few minutes, and gave a hint of what they might expect if he didn't find the tent up by then.

They set about it at top speed. Grundy grabbed the tent-pole and tried to fit one end of it into the cap at the top of the roof. All three of them struggled and sweated at the job of making the cap go over the pole, and there is no doubt that they would have succeeded if the tent hadn't happened to be inside out! It took them the best part of ten minutes to make that discovery, and then they had another little tussle with the canvas to set it right. Wilkins and Gunn were getting more than a bit sick of the business by then, and they kicked the folds of canvas straight instead of stooping to pull it. There was one bulge that refused to flatten down, in spite of their kicking and walking over it, and it was not until the onlookers became aware of the fact that Grundy had vanished into thin air that they made the interesting discovery that the obstinate bulge in the canvas they had been vainly trying to flatten out was really Grundy, who had managed to roll himself up in the tent when they were pulling it right side out.



Every time Wilkins and Gunn pulled on the canvas Grundy was jerked off his feet.

Well, after he'd been sat on till he promised in a very muffled voice to forget and forgive, they permitted him to crawl out and play with them once more.

"I'll hold up the tent if somebody will take four pegs and square it off with the red-runners ropes," said Wilkins.

"Chuck me that mallet!" snapped Grundy.

Gunn obeyed him, literally.

It's the biggest wonder out that the blessed thing didn't crack Grundy's skull. When Grundy had finished telling Gunn what he was going to do to him when there was time, he wanted him to hold the tent-pegs while he used the mallet. Gunn thanked him for the offer of the job, and said he didn't think it mattered. So Grundy tackled the job himself in a fashion that induced Monty Lowther to call him "lightning Grundy," not in allusion to his speed of working, but because it is generally believed that lightning never strikes in the same place twice. On an average Grundy hit the tent-peg with the mallet once in every five attempts—or about half as often as he biffed his thumb.

Well, they managed between them to get the tent erected after a fashion. In consequence of the guy-ropes that Grundy had cut off, it had a curiously lopsided appearance—a sort of tired look. Certain humorists in the crowd made great show of holding their breath for fear of blowing it down.

It stood up, however, until Grundy went inside, and hung up his coat on the pole, whereupon it immediately collapsed.

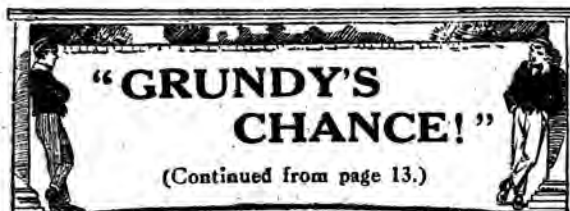
Kildare came up and surveyed the ruin with a "Just what I expected" sort of expression, and told Grundy a few things about himself that were more true than polite.

It was left to half a dozen of us to splice the cut ropes and pitch the tent so that it was likely to stay put for as long as it would be wanted.

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 862.

WHO
COULD
BEAT
SUCH A
WONDERFUL
TREAT
as the—
HOLIDAY ANNUAL?

Out September 1st.



In the circumstances Figgins & Co. were looking for something like a walk-over. And Tom Merry felt that he could scarcely hope for anything better than putting up a hard fight, and keeping down the margin of runs.

"You two," said Tom. "I shall have to play you, Manners."

"Thanks," said Manners with a touch of sarcasm. "And Herries, and Digby, and D'Arcy, of course. Kangaroo is all right. That's seven, with little me. Julian's a fairly good man, and there's Wildrake—he's coming on well. Wilkins will do all right. That's ten men. Gunn will make eleven. But that's not a team to beat the New House at the top of their form. Rotten luck Talbot being crooked, and that ass, Blake, at the same time. But I suppose these things will happen?" said Tom, rubbing his nose again, ruefully.

"Tom Mewwy, deah boy!"

The celebrated eyeglass of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gleamed in at the doorway of Study No. 10.

"Hallo, old bird!" said Tom. "Flutter in. We shall want some of your centuries to-morrow, Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, lounging elegantly into the study. "I am goin' to do my best, old scout. But I wathah think you've got a pwetty weak team togethah this time."

"Right on the wicket," said Tom. "If you've happened to notice any undiscovered cricket genius lying about, you can tell me."

"That's why I droopped in, deah boy. What about Gwunday?"

"Don't be funny, old man, at a serious time like this."

"I am quite serious, Tom Mewwy. Look heah!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had a newspaper in his hand. He laid it on the study table.

"You fellows know that Gwunday is in the Abbotsford Wamblahs now," he said.

"Yes, what about it?"

"Well, it looks as if they've done him a lot of good," said Arthur Augustus. "He must have bwhitened up a lot since he left off playin' the goat on Little Side heah. I've just been lookin' at the weport of the Gweenford match."

"Grundy wasn't playing, surely?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What?" exclaimed the Terrible Three together.

"Not only playin', but he seems to have won the match for the Wamblahs," said Arthur Augustus. "And he hasn't said a word about it, eithah. Look at the weport."

In great surprise and with great keenness Tom Merry and his chums looked at the report of the cricket match between Abbotsford Ramblers and Greenford, played the previous week.

Some of the details were simply amazing.

"Caught and bowled G. A. Grundy" occurred four times.

"Caught Grundy" occurred five times. "Bowled Grundy" occurred three times. As a bowler and in the field G. A. Grundy had evidently gathered heaps of glory.

But that was not all. The description of the Abbotsford innings was still more surprising.

In their first innings G. A. Grundy had taken seventy. In their second innings G. A. Grundy was "80 not out."

Tom Merry rubbed his eyes.

There it was in black and white—in plain print! G. A. Grundy, discarded by his own club, had fairly covered himself with glory playing for another.

It was amazing, astounding, almost unnerving! But there it was! Batsman, bowler, fieldsmen—in all branches had G. A. Grundy distinguished himself—far and away ahead even of Blaine, the Abbotsford skipper!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy grinned cheerily at the amazed faces of the Shell fellows.

"It wathah made me jump," he said. "What a jolly old surprise—what? Fancy Gwunday!"

"It beats me hollow!" said Tom. "It's some weeks since I saw him play—but then he was simply a silly fumbler, as he's always been."

"A regular goat!" said Lowther. "I say, that Abbotsford coach must be a wonderful man if he's made a cricketer of Grundy."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, I suppose even a rotten player like Grundy might

improve, with plenty of practice and a good coach," said Tom.

"There was plenty of room for improvement, anyhow," remarked Monty Lowther. "The odd thing is that Grundy hasn't bragged of it up and down the school. He's not generally so jolly modest."

"Yaas, but pewwaps he is gwowin' more modest now that he can weally do things," said Arthur Augustus sagely. "Fellows who can do things are not so much given to bwaggin' as fellows who can't! A weally first-class man wouldn't swank. You fellows have noticed, I winstance, that I nevah swank about my cwicket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you know—"

Tom Merry read through the whole report carefully. He was still greatly surprised, but he had to believe his own eyes. And his surprise was mingled with satisfaction. If G. A. Grundy was such terrifically hot stuff as this, G. A. Grundy was a rod in pickle for the New House. Just when Tom Merry was short of players G. A. Grundy had developed in this amazing style. It was sheer good luck for the School House. For the first time in his career George Alfred Grundy was the right man in the right place.

"It beats me; but it's good news!" said Tom.

"Yaas, wathah! That's why I wambled along with it," said Arthur Augustus. "Gwunday's your man, Tom Mewwy."

"Looks like it," said Tom.

And Arthur Augustus lounged elegantly away again, greatly pleased at having helped his worried skipper in a difficult position.

Tom took up his pencil and crossed Gunn's name off the list. In its place he wrote "G. A. Grundy."

"You've settled it?" asked Manners.

"Well, yes. If Grundy puts up a game like the one he seems to have put up at Greenford he's as good as Talbot at his best. We'll beat the New House, after all. I'll go along and speak to him at once, and post up the list. This is really gorgeous luck!"

Tom Merry, greatly cheered, put the cricket list in his pocket and walked along to Study No. 3 in the Shell. He found Grundy and Wilkins and Gunn there, at prep, in frozen silence as usual.

"Grundy, old man," said Tom.

Grundy looked up.

"You're not booked for to-morrow, I hope?"

"That depends," said Grundy. "What do you want?"

"I want you for the House match."

Wilkins and Gunn stared. Grundy, who a few weeks ago would have received the announcement with delight, did not look delighted now. He looked lofty and reserved.

"That's all very well," he said, "but I've arranged to go over to Abbotsford to practise with my club."

"I suppose practice isn't quite so important as a match," said Tom tartly. "Your own House, too."

"I've been turned down here," said Grundy surlily. "I told you at the time I was done with St. Jim's cricket, and that you'd come round, sooner or later, asking me to play."

Tom knitted his brows.

"I'm offering you a place in the House team," he said. "Take it or leave it. You were turned down because you were a rotten player, and you ought to know it. You're taken up again because you seem to have got into great form. But the House isn't cadging anybody to play! Yes or no?"

"Yes," said Grundy.

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry left the study with that, to post up the cricket list downstairs. Wilkins and Gunn stared at Grundy and at one another. They simply couldn't understand it. But they realised that this was a chance of bringing Grundy round, and once more getting within range of the fleshpots of Egypt.

"Congrats, old fellow!" gasped Wilkins.

"Same here!" said Gunn heartily. "This is really good news. Old Grundy's recognised at last!"

Grundy unbent. In spite of his assumption of surly indifference, he was secretly overjoyed at his selection for the House team. It was his chance at last of showing all St. Jim's what a cricketer he was. Why Tom Merry had changed his mind so abruptly Grundy did not know or care. He only supposed that at long last Tom had somehow realised that Grundy was the man for the job. In his deep satisfaction he relented towards his offending study-mates.

"Well, I'm glad to see that that rotten conspiracy is over," he said. "I've come into my rights at last—like the king coming into his own again, you know."

"Oh, my hat! Yes, exactly!"

"Jolly glad, old fellow!" said Gunn. "Look here, Grundy, there's been a misunderstanding in this study. Let's forget all about it. Perhaps we were—hem—rather hasty. Perhaps there was wrong on both sides."

"Only on one," said Grundy. "Yours."

"Oh! Ah! Well, a fellow like you, Grundy—a fellow in your position in the school, you know—can overlook that."

"If you put it like that, all right," said Grundy, mollified. "I'm willing to be friends if you fellows will know your place and keep in it. By the way, there's a hamper in the box-room. When we've done prep you fellows might help me unpack it."

They did. There was a royal supper that night in Study No. 3, and all was calm and bright.

CHAPTER 8.

More Amazing!

FIGGINS whistled.

"Grundy! My hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That was how the New House fellows greeted the news next day that G. A. Grundy was a member of the School House team.

"I knew poor old Merry was hard up for men," said Figgins, "but I never thought the poor old chap would come down to this! What on earth is he playing Grundy for?"

"Wants to make us a present of the match," suggested Fatty Wynn.

"Blessed if it doesn't look like it!"

When stumps were pitched, George Alfred Grundy came along with the School House team. He looked as lofty as ever, seeming slightly to disdain the company in which he found himself. Already he had taken occasion to tell Tom Merry & Co. that their sort of play was not what he was accustomed to at Abbotsford. He had told every individual member of the team what he thought of him, and what he thought was not in the least complimentary.

School House won the toss, and Tom Merry elected to bat. Grundy came up to him at once.

"I suppose I'm opening the innings?" he said. It was George Alfred Grundy in his most dictatorial mood.

"I've got you down third," said Tom.

"I'm afraid I can't consent to that!"

"Look here, Grundy—"

"You've found out at last that I'm a cricketer," said Grundy sarcastically. "It's taken you a long time, but you've found it out. Well, now you've found it out, make the most of it!"

Tom Merry repressed a desire to hit Grundy on his prominent nose, and conceded the point.

George Alfred Grundy swaggered to the wickets, with Tom Merry at the other end. Fatty Wynn went on to bowl against Grundy.

After reading that report of the Greenford match, Tom Merry naturally expected to see Grundy handle even Fatty Wynn's bowling with success. He was disappointed.

Crash!

Grundy's bat swept the empty air in the old familiar style. His wicket went into fragments.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Tom, in dismay.

Grundy stared at his wrecked wicket in great surprise.

"How's that?" yelled the New House crowd.

"Out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go home, Grundy!" shouted the School House fellows derisively.

Grundy tramped back to the pavilion.

"A fluke!" he told the fellows there.

The rest of the innings was watched by Grundy with a critical eye. He commented freely and disparagingly on the play—which was rather cool in a batsman who had captured a duck's egg, but very like Grundy. When School House were all down for fifty, and the New House innings began, Grundy asked for the ball.

"I suppose you want me to send them home," he remarked carelessly to Tom Merry.

And Grundy was given the first over, against Figgins.

That over made the onlookers stare.

Obviously, that bowler was not the G. A. Grundy of Greenford. It was the G. A. Grundy the St. Jim's fellows had always known.

Grundy, no doubt, was under the impression that he was bowling at Figgins' wicket. The fieldsmen were under the impression that he was deliberately chucking the ball at them. After the first ball, which narrowly missed Tom Merry's head, they fielded deep—very deep.

Only one ball came near enough to the wicket for Figgins to hit it. It gave him four.

After that, Grundy was not called upon to bowl again. Tom Merry realised that, whatsoever might have happened at Greenford, Grundy at present was in his old form again—a dud of the duds, a hopeless passenger in the team, whose inclusion had simply meant keeping a better man out.

It was a dismaying disappointment—but it could not be helped. Grundy fumed during the remainder of the New House innings—but he was not allowed to touch the ball again. In the field, indeed, he might have touched it, as

many easy catches came his way, the New House batsmen favouring him as much as they could. But easy catches were the same as difficult ones to Grundy—he missed them all by yards.

Figgins, the New House captain, hit up a splendid 35 before being run out, from a smart throw-in from D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, when the innings ended with 120 up for the New House. "Bai Jove! What's the mattrah with the chap? I weally wish I had nevah come acwoss that, Greenford report!"

"Blessed if I can understand it!" said Tom Merry. "There must be a mistake somehow. Grundy's no cricketer, and never has been a cricketer!"

"It weally looks like it. But—" Arthur Augustus shook his noble head in perplexity.

Grundy did not open the second innings for the School House. In spite of his wrathful and indignant expostulations, he was put last on the list. He even threatened to walk off the field, and was told that he could walk off as soon as he liked.

Grundy did not walk off. As things were going, it was pretty clear that the New House would win by an innings. A team already weakened had been further and hopelessly weakened by the inclusion of a hopeless dud.

"Last man in!" growled Tom Merry, with the score at 52. He had given up hope now.

Last man in was George Alfred Grundy, with Julian at the other end. He had the batting, and all Tom Merry hoped was that he would survive long enough for Julian to get the batting. But that faint hope only lasted till Redfern of the New House sent the ball down.

Grundy's bat missed the leather by about a yard, and his middle stump was hooked out.

"Well, my hat!" said Grundy.

"New House wins! Hurrah!"

Grundy walked back to the pavilion, and the School House fellows greeted him with grim looks.

"Astonishing fluke!" he said.

"Fluke!" howled Lowther. "You silly ass! You couldn't keep a wicket up against a kid of five!"

"Yaas, wathah! You cwass ass—"

"What does it mean?" exclaimed Tom Merry savagely.

"You were put into the team on your form, Grundy—and you've played as rottenly as you ever did. What does it mean? How the thump did you get your name in the Greenford report? It simply couldn't be genuine!"

Grundy stared.

"What report? What are you driving at?"

"Didn't you play for Abbotsford against Greenford?" snapped Tom.

"Eh? No!"

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"I was there as a reserve," said Grundy. "That fool Blaine hadn't sense enough to play me! Why?"

"Bai Jove!"

"But—but your name was down in the report," yelled Tom Merry. "That's why I gave you a chance, you silly ass. Did you wangle it somehow? The report was full of G. A. Grundy from start to finish."

"Well, you must be an ass!" said Grundy contemptuously.

"Did you fancy that was me?"

"Of course, you chump! Wasn't it?"

"Of course it wasn't! That's my cousin, Gilbert Arthur Grundy!"

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

"He's not a bad cricketer—nowhere near my form, of course!"

"Oh cwumbas!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "You—you— you cwass idiot, why didn't you tell us you had a cousin in the Wamblahs' team—why didn't you tell us there was another G. A. Grundy—"

"You never asked me."

"Yaas; but—"

"So that's it!" said Monty Lowther. "And when Tom offered you a place in the team, Grundy, what did you suppose it was for, if you're not the G. A. Grundy who played for the Ramblers?"

"Eh?" Grundy stared. "I thought, of course, that he had sense enough at last to see that he had left out the best cricketer in the school, and decided to do the right thing."

"What?"

"I supposed that the conspiracy against me was over."

"The—the conspiracy?" bawled Tom Merry.

"Yes!" Grundy looked round darkly. "But it seems that it isn't! I fancy you fellows are still keen on keeping a better man in the background, and—"

That was too much. Perhaps it wasn't Grundy's fault that the G. A. Grundy was not the G. A. Grundy Tom Merry & Co. had supposed G. A. Grundy to be. Perhaps it was not his fault, but only his misfortune. Certainly it was unfor-

(Continued on page 28.)

Again on the road of adventure the three staunch chums, Denny Burdett, Bob Harkley, and Sandy Munro, stumble across the path of a certain film-producer, little realising the painful discovery which was to follow.



The FADED FILM!

A Stirring Yarn of Exciting Adventure, featuring the THREE CHUMS A-WHEEL.

BY

GEOFFREY PROUT.

CHAPTER 1.

Something Wrong!

THE reports circulated of late that earthquake shocks, and peculiar distant rumblings, punctured by fearsome bangs, have been heard by pedestrians, motorists, horsemen, and cyclists on the Great North Road have no foundation.

Three people who passed along the road at the time, south bound for London, indignantly repudiate the assertion that anything was heard but a faint purring sound. These three were travelling in a motor-van, and they were optimists in the first water. They hoped to get to London.

The van was the most wonderful thing of its kind in existence. True, it was rusty and battered, but its note of gladness as it ground along on its way south was something to marvel at. And the three owners made a good living with that van. They had, indeed, picked up a couple of pounds at a town they passed through, running the van as a hackney carriage to a fete in a beautiful park two miles out of the town.

But hack work was not for Ermyntude, as a general rule. That old motor-van, dubbed Ermyntude by her owners, had her own wonderful way of filling the coffers of her masters.

Somehow, she humped up against all sorts of money-making stunts which are denied motor-cars of more aristocratic appearance. And she lived up to her reputation on her passage along the Great North Road.

Bob Harkley was the leader of that cheery band of three. A tall youth, with closely-cropped black hair, square jaw, and determined mouth was a fitting driver for such a van as the Ermyntude. He, with his chums, Denny Burdett, immaculate, polished, self-possessed, and Sandy Munro, an ever-grinning, red-headed Scot of fifteen years, led the life of wandering knights of the road—and a jolly, free-and-easy life it was.

"Ermyntude requires a rest!" shouted Denny into Bob's ear, as the latter, with set face and tight lips, gripped the steering wheel. "So does this bruised and beaten lump of clay dimly resembling Denny Burdett. Pull up, Bob, if Ermyntude will let you, I pray. For I see a quivering splash of green on the left, which might be a common."

Bob grunted, and shut off power. Ermyntude, with a mighty grating and

coughing, pulled up slowly, and came to rest, quivering with excitement, like the steed of metal she was, after her hard run.

The three chums dismounted, and walked about stiffly to stretch their legs. The earthquake rumblings on the Great North Road had ceased, for a time.

Sandy Munro stepped back a pace or two with the idea of viewing the lines of Ermyntude to the best advantage. Sandy never ceased to gloat over his third share in the van. He chose the after part—said he wouldn't own anything near the engine.

Bob Harkley's conversation, while under way, was confined to grunts and growls. But now Ermyntude had dutifully stopped, he began to talk.

"Sandy, you red-headed lump of laziness, get out the nosebags, and light the stove!" he ordered.

And Sandy, with an eye on his own needs in that direction, obeyed meekly.

Denny and Bob stood clear of the irradiation from the rusty bonnet of the vehicle, for it was hot enough without being near the engine.

"Why on earth we're heading for London, I don't know," said Bob. "My idea is we'd do better in provincial towns."

"Oh, fie!" replied Denny. "London calls, and we obey. The state of the exchequer is such that we can well afford a jaunt in town, comrade."

"Well, I hope something will turn up on the way, Denny," said Bob doubtfully. "For the state of the exchequer won't always be good, if we don't keep adding, you know."

"Something turns up as you speak," broke in Denny. "See, a touring-car of caste, driven by her owner. She stops! Something wrong with the ignition, perhaps. Puzzled owner. The skill of Robert Harkley—futile. The job of towing the car to the nearest garage."

Bob looked quickly over towards the fine touring-car that had stopped a hundred yards farther along the road.

"Tow that!" he cried scornfully. "Ermyntude couldn't tow a baby's pram. We'll see if we can help the puzzled owner, however. Perhaps he's switched off the ignition by mistake, or something."

Denny and Bob walked up the road, while Sandy, throwing a grin in their direction as he looked round from the stove, busied about preparing lunch.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Bob, to the form whose legs could be seen below the bonnet of the car.

The investigator of motor troubles jerked his head into a fresher atmosphere, and grinned ruefully at the chums.

"Confounded thing! Cost a thousand only two months ago; and now she's stopped!" he said. "Understand motors?"

"Our car," replied Denny loftily, waving his hand towards Ermyntude, "cost twenty over three months ago, and she hasn't stopped without our wanting her to do so once! My comrade, here, and legal adviser to our van, is the last word in motor mechanics, sir!"

The owner of the refractory car turned his smudged face towards Bob. He was a good-looking man, clean-shaven, with artistic hands and thoughtful-looking eyes.

"If you can tell me what's wrong here, I'd be greatly obliged," he said. "I'm no hand at motors. There can't be much wrong, for it's a brand new car."

"If I can spot the trouble I'll be happy to do so, sir," replied Bob, conning the engine. "What happened?"

"Missed fire a bit first, then stopped. Won't start up again, and I've practically ruined the self-starter."

"H'm!" said Bob. "All the cylinders? Can't be the plugs; and the high-tension wires look all right. May I look at the mag, sir?"

"Do, please, if you'd be so good! If you've kept a twenty-quad motor going for three months you ought to be able to make short work of this one."

Bob opened the magneto, and peered critically here and there.

"Lift the engine round a bit slowly, Denny," he said.

Denny obeyed, and Bob straightened himself with a smile.

"Nothing much, sir," he said. "Mag's shorting. Contact-breaker sprocket has worn down. You ought to put a spot of oil on it. I'll pack in a tiny piece of paper, and she'll fire then, right enough."

In three minutes the engine was purring contentedly, and the owner of the car was profuse in his thanks.

He fumbled about awkwardly, and Denny tactfully remarked that a little job like that was a mere nothing.

"You'll have no more trouble," said Bob. "But get a new sprocket as soon as you can, and keep a tiny spot of oil on it."

The motorist closed the throttle of his car and the engine stopped.

"Look here," he said, "I'm no end

obliged to you fellows! You're just going to have lunch, I see. So am I. May I come over and munch my grub while you munch yours? I haven't been driving my own car very long, and I must say the spirit of sportsmanship on the road has gripped me. May I?"

"Rather!" chorused Bob and Denny. "We've got a kettle boiling. Come on!"

The sportsman of the touring-car was a humorist. And the chums, not being exactly dullards, the four had the jolliest lunch imaginable. They were two hours conversing about nothing in particular, and at the end of that time they had become so friendly that they began to chip each other without restraint.

The owner of the touring-car gave his name as Raynley. He said he was a film-producer. The chums, in their turn, told him of their own venture—that of making a living with Ermyntude. Mr. Raynley was greatly tickled. He also expressed his admiration for the chums' enterprising ideas.

He walked round the van to have a good look at it. Sandy and Denny and Bob had never before seen an artist suddenly gripped by inspiration. But they saw one now. Mr. Raynley's eyes shone. He stroked his chin with his long fingers. A dreamy, far-away look then settled on his face. It was ecstasy, exquisite, heaven-sent.

Bob spoke.

"Yes, she is a corker, isn't she?" he said.

Mr. Raynley jerked himself back to earth.

"She's the very thing," he replied, blinking. "Yes, the very thing. Look here, you three, I've got a comic film on the boards and a few of the scenes require a comic motor-van with comic drivers. I—I—do you think you'd like the job?"

"Rather, sir," grinned Denny. "At your service, if we stand all right financially."

Sandy guffawed loudly.

"Och, but that's a good one," he said.

Raynley suddenly realised what he had said.

"Oh, it's the van, I mean," he added hastily. "She's a rattling good van—"

"You're right, sir," said Sandy, "particularly about the rattling. But I don't own that third part of her. Mine's the back."

Raynley and the chums laughed loudly, and Raynley continued.

"Yes, she's a good van, I can see. But she looks a bit—er—er—just what I want. You're all bound for London? Well, if you get there—I mean, when you arrive, if you'd like a good, well-paid job in my new production, just call at my London office, will you—the Jewel Film Service, Long Acre? The job will be easy. All you'll have to do is drive, but if you do show any abilities to act, I may elaborate the scenario a bit."

"Sir, we're on this like a falling chimney-stack," said Denny.

And Bob echoed "Rather!"

Sandy Munro broadened his grin.

"Ermyntude's turned up trumps again," he said.

Raynley laughed, and shook hands all round.

"Well, boys, I'll see you at Long Acre, perhaps."

"No perhaps about it," responded Denny. "You'll hear us coming through-out the next twenty-four hours."

Still chuckling and gloating over his find, as he eyed Ermyntude, Mr. Raynley got aboard his own car, and set off with a friendly wave of the hand towards the chums. When he was out of sight, which was not many seconds, the

chums shook hands with each other, as was their wont on a stroke of luck, and then went over and patted the most battered portions of Ermyntude.

Denny said he could have sworn that the old van grinned. Ermyntude was showing that her luck was still holding, and Sandy said as much.

"Well, she and her luck will have to hold a bit longer if we're to get the old girl to London," chuckled Bob. "And we'll do it, if we have to get down and push!"

The chums got there, and they did not have to push. And, as usual, Ermyntude dumped them right into the middle of adventure, for just as they were shaking hands with Mr. Raynley in his beautifully furnished office in Long Acre a piercing scream sounded at the end of the corridor from which the office opened. As Raynley and the chums tore out of the room, wild cries for help were heard, then a heavy thumping, groans, and silence.

"This way!" gasped Raynley. "Photographer's department. It sounds like foul play."

The film producer led the way towards the apartment used for storing films. They were no sooner through the door than a rasping voice cried out:

"At 'em now. Knock 'em all out so's we can make a getaway!"

Bob caught a glimpse of the speaker's face. It was a thin face, the cheek-bones high, complexion pale, and there was

something ferrety about the man. Cunning was written all over his features.

The parties clashed, and a terrific struggle took place. The men other than the leader, who had shouted out his instructions, fought with more ferocity than skill.

There was enough noise to bring everyone in Long Acre up to the rescue. Denny Burdett, his boredom and drawing sarcasm forgotten, hit out like a battering-ram. He had two of the men clinging to him, trying to smother his swishing blows. But Denny led them a pretty dance, while Bob Harkley was pressing one of the men towards the window.

Denny, hard pressed, brought up against a cabinet loaded with spools of films. This came crashing down with a fearful sound, and at the same instant Sandy Munro charged Bob's assailant with lowered head, and the ruffian went crashing back against the window.

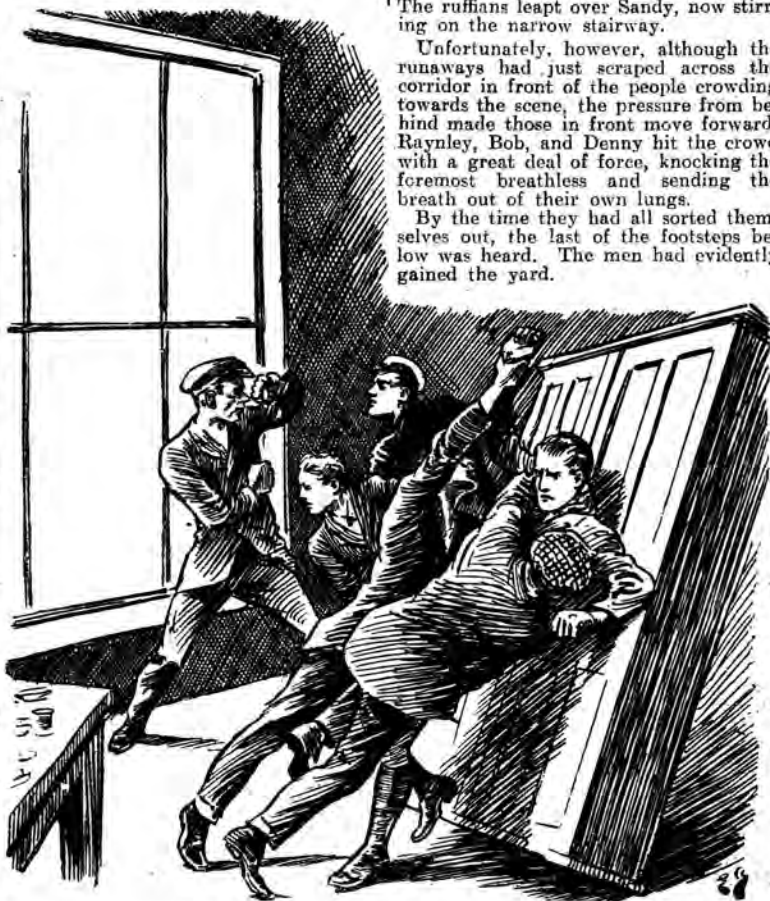
The glass shattered, and the man crumpled up on the floor just under the window. But Sandy had been caught in the whirlwind of Raynley and the two other ruffians. He was pressed into the corridor, and was sent hurtling down a narrow stairway leading to the basement from the corridor.

Denny, Bob, and Raynley now came crashing out of the storing-room, following the running villains closely.

"Follow us, you!" cried Raynley to the people who had now arrived on the scene, and who crowded back in the corridor in surprise as the men crashed by. The ruffians leapt over Sandy, now stirring on the narrow stairway.

Unfortunately, however, although the runaways had just scraped across the corridor in front of the people crowding towards the scene, the pressure from behind made those in front move forward. Raynley, Bob, and Denny hit the crowd with a great deal of force, knocking the foremost breathless and sending the breath out of their own lungs.

By the time they had all sorted themselves out, the last of the footsteps below was heard. The men had evidently gained the yard.



Denny Burdett, hard pressed, was brought up against the big cabinet, and sent it crashing backwards. At the same moment, Sandy Munro charged Bob's assailant with lowered head, and the ruffian went crashing back against the window.

Bob and Denny went down the narrow, winding stairway five at a time. At the bottom they met Sandy, who had followed the men as soon as they had leapt over him.

"They went over the wall, an' I climbed up, meaning to follow," said Sandy, "but the beggars jumped into a blue touring car at the end of the lane. The car drove off with a bigger jerk than Ermytrude can put into her own starting off—"

"No good following, then," said Bob ruefully, as he breathed hard. "All the brutes got away, even the man you butted against the window, Sandy. Wonder what their game was! Let's get back and see."

"Yes, let us aloft and see if Raynley's hurt," said Denny. "I left him shouting in something akin to anger, with a labourer's No. 10 boot on his stomach—"

The chums were soon on the upper floor again. They found Raynley excitedly dashing into the washing-room, which opened out from the store-room.

"It'll be the man on the procession film who was attacked," said Raynley, his long hair dishevelled and his clothing crumpled and dusty.

The chums were close on the producer's heels, and there on the floor of the room, his head bleeding from a nasty wound on the forehead, lay the man. He was not dead, but a quick examination by Raynley resulted in the producer curtly ordering one of the people crowding in through the door to run off for a doctor.

"He's badly hurt," said Raynley, turning towards the chums. "The ruffians got away, did they?"

"Yes," replied Bob. "Flashed off in a car. Sandy saw them go. Blue touring car."

"Here, you, you're a good first-aid man," snapped Raynley, turning towards a gaping young employee nearby. "Do what you can for this poor fellow. We must look for the motive, boys."

The producer and the chums searched about. At last Denny, having poked his straight nose over a basin of some sort of solution, in which was a film, drew his head back more quickly than he put it forward.

"Jingo, something strong there," said Denny, with a gasp and a cough. "Shouldn't like to swig any of that, even to commit suicide."

Raynley was beside Denny immediately. He poked about the film with a piece of stick. The film was bleached white, and Raynley pronounced the stuff bleaching solution which they had to use occasionally to bleach out tiny spots in the finished films.

"Why, this is the procession film!" cried the producer. "It's ruined! Those ruffians must have done this! You can still see some parts of the picture on the inside coils where the acid has not touched the sensitive side."

"It would be an act of wisdom, sir, not to disturb the film too much till the police see it," remarked Denny. "Take it out and try to preserve the unbleached portions."

But Denny's warning was too late. The film by this time, now that it had been disturbed, had bleached on every square inch of it. Not a vestige of picture remained.

CHAPTER 2.

Ermytrude to the Rescue!

RAYNLEY grunted with disgust. "Bah! This'll cost me a pretty penny!" he said. "But it's poor Tomkins we must worry about. Ah, doctor, here you are!"

The doctor busied about with the photographer. Almost immediately he pronounced the man not very badly injured. But he ordered someone to go out and phone for a hospital ambulance.

The man was taken away, after which the police arrived and took charge of the faded film. Raynley, now decidedly disgruntled, told the chums to follow him to his office. Denny and Bob and Sandy obeyed.

Once inside the comfortable apartment Raynley began to brush himself down, motioning to the other to do likewise.

"Well, friends of the road, this was a pretty fine welcome I gave you! However, now we can talk business."

"Will that be a very big loss to you, sir?" asked Bob. "The loss of that procession film I mean. I take it, it was the picture of the procession that came from Victoria yesterday."

"Yes, that's the film. That was the only negative, worse luck; but we had already made a positive. That was sent in, by request, to Reading for a picture-palace there. Some johnnie of Reading figures in the procession, I believe. Thank goodness I can get copies of the film for release to the different parts of the country from that positive. But it's a confounded nuisance! However, thank Heaven, Tomkins is all right and conscious again!"

"Wasn't he talking about the attack, sir?" asked Denny.

"Yes. He told the doctor as soon as he opened his eyes that the ruffians had forced him to tell them where the negative was. He also said they'd forced him to give them the bleaching solution—"

"Did he tell them anything else? I'm not merely idly curious, sir, but I have an idea."

"He says he doesn't rightly remember everything he said. But he produced the negative, worse luck, as we could deduce from the fact that it was ruined and—"

"Someone trying to harm your business, Mr. Raynley," said Denny, trying to dismiss the subject, but with a keen look at Bob and Sandy.

Raynley then plunged into business. He wanted the chums to hold themselves and the van in readiness for rehearsals and picture-making. They were to make the old van look about as decrepit as they could, and Denny remarked they'd have no difficulty about that.

The terms that the chums were offered seemed to them exceedingly generous. But, as a matter of fact, they were just what a film producer would expect to pay for such services as the chums were expected to give.

The interview lasted no more than a few minutes. Raynley was very friendly, but business all over. And he was busy, so the chums bade him good-day and slipped out of the office.

Once in the road, Denny said he had an idea. Bob said the idea was his; and Sandy grinned that he knew what their rotten idea was, but he had a better one.

"Go straight to the Bijou Picture Palace, Reading," said Bob quickly, but not before Denny had snapped out:

"Picture-palace, Reading!" "We'll share the honour of the idea," laughed Bob. "My idea is that if those rotters have destroyed the negative, nearly going to the length of murdering a man to do so, they'll have a quick shot at the positive."

"It is my idea," stated Denny firmly. "The shrewdness I show in all things is—"

Bob and Sandy howled their chum down.

"Here, we are wasting time because you like to act like a kid of ten, Denny!" shouted Bob. "With Ermytrude panting to get away nose-down on the trail. Of course, we may draw a blank, but I've always had a hankering to see Reading and—"

"The one aim of my life has been to go to Reading," put in Denny. "Reading is the place I have panted to view ever since I munched stolen biscuits with 'Reading' printed on them when the housekeeper was out of the way. There's an arboretum there, too—a place where jolly old scientists grow trees, don't you know! And the river—oh, joy! The height of my ambitions must be realised at—"

"Not so much old guff, then, you chump!" snapped Bob. "Let's get round to the garage and haul Ermytrude out. We'll get there in plenty of time, since those ruffians could hardly try a raid on a picture-palace in daylight. An audience will be there. They'll wait for night—"

"They did at Long Acre, didn't they?" said Denny sarcastically. "But, there, of course, Long Acre is a nice, quiet, countrified spot—"

"True, we'll have to get a move on!" cut in Bob, his brow furrowed in thought. "We could hire motor-bikes and—"

"Fie, for shame, comrade!" cried Denny, in horror. "What if Ermytrude got to know of it? She'd never budge again without being pushed. Besides, money—"

"Ay, ye're forgetting all about the money side o' the business!" remarked Sandy. "We'll just have to back Ermytrude, or go by train; and we'll have to wait a while for a train, maybe."

"We'll back Ermytrude, and she'll do it, or bust in the attempt," said Denny. "Happily, there is an easterly wind, so Sandy can sit on the top and spread out his ears—"

"Sandy'll spread out his arms in a minute if ye don't leave his ears alone!" shouted the young Scot wrathfully.

"I wouldn't touch 'em—" began Denny.

But Bob howled for peace, and the wrangling pair stayed their tongues, for the garage was hard by.

Ermytrude ground out of the garage, stern foremost, frightening horses and making pedestrians halt in wild alarm as soon as the sounds of joyous motor-life reached their ears.

Quivering like a jelly, the old van curved backwards into the road; then the clang of changing gear from the reverse rang out, and Bob Harkley, with mouth tight, and determined features grim and tense, twisted the wheel as the vehicle jerked forward with a grating roar.

Soon they were round the corner, and the people on the road breathed again.

Hammersmith, Brentford, Hounslow, and Staines turned out in force to see what was coming. But Ermytrude lingered not. Her old wheels simply whirled her along at a good fifteen miles an hour, leaving gasping citizens and plunging horses in her wake.

In the open country Bob really could get up a bit of speed, though he did have to throttle down miles before any turning that they might spot ahead. Ermytrude was not noted for her powers of pulling up or quick acceleration. Still, she was the chums' best friend, and they loved her.

Jolting and coughing and grinding and jerking, the old van churned along

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towards Reading. She arrived, panting and quivering, and Bob guided her along the Wokingham Road, across the Kennet, and so into King's Road, where was the Bijou Picture Palace, near Market Place.

"Doesn't look much like a jolly old tragedy here," said Denny. "We are in time, old beans. Ermytrude has not let us down. See the picture-goers or comers, whichever you will, streaming out of the place after the last of the evening performance. What does it say on the placards?"

CHAPTER 3.

The Fight for the Film!

ERMYTRUDE now at peace, the chums walked over towards the entrance and read the notices of the various pictures. There was the announcement of the fifty-third episode of the serial, "The Poison Phial"; Larry Semon grinned at them from the farther corner; the lamps of Lloyd shone brightly from a centre placard; and Charlie Chaplin shared the big-lettered notice at the top with the announcement of the drama, "Hearts Afame."

"Nothing about the jolly old procession—ah, what's this?"

A man had hurried out with a new poster, the ink still wet. He pasted it up on one of the boards, to the detriment of a wild-eyed heroine who was hanging over a cliff by a piece of blind-cord.

"To-morrow!" shouted the poster at the chums, as they stood watching. "The Royal Procession! Exclusive to this Theatre! Alderman Berry in Royal Bodyguard!"

Bob and Denny and Sandy sprang up the steps and accosted the busy person with the paste-pot.

"Just arrived?" asked Bob. "That film, I mean?"

"Yep!" said the young man, whose hair apparently had been plastered down with the paste he was using. "See it to-morrow. It's a corker! We're the first theatre to get the film shown. Alderman Berry—"

"Could we see the manager?" asked Bob. "It's very important. We're from the Jewel Film Service."

An immaculately-dressed man in evening dress sauntered out of the main entrance at that moment. A cigarette hung between his nicotine-browned fingers.

"I'm the manager," he said, having overheard Bob's request. "Anything important?"

"Rather," said Bob. "Can we talk inside?"

"By all means; follow me. Nothing wrong, I hope, to prevent me showing the film. An important person of Reading figures largely in it."

"Oh, you'll be able to show it all right, if you're careful," said Bob, as the chums followed the manager down the now deserted alley-way of the theatre. A musician or two, with their instruments in swaddling clothes, brushed past with a "good-night!" to the manager. Then the latter, and the chums had the place practically to themselves.

The chums rather liked the look of the manager. He seemed keen and sensible. Bob told him the whole yarn—the attack at the Jewel Film Service, the destruction of the negative, the possibility that the photographer had told the villains that a positive had been sent to Reading.

"So the Jewel people will be wanting my film back instantly?" queried the manager. "Confounded nuisance. Why didn't they wire?"

"Don't know at all," said Bob, and Denny broke in with his amusing drawl.

"The worst of the trouble won't be the taking away of your jolly old film, sir," he said. "Don't you see that if men will nearly murder someone in broad daylight to destroy a negative film, they'll move Heaven and earth to destroy the only proof, too!"

"By Jove, you're right," said the manager, throwing his cigarette on the floor and tramping on it. "Yes, you're right. I'll jolly well stop here all night, by Jove! I'll tell the police—phone them now. The film is in my office. Come along with me, will you?"

The manager strode down the hall, and the chums followed. He led them into a small office, where a couple of covered typewriters stood on a long desk, dimly visible in the now descending darkness.

The man was just stretching out his hand for the electric light switch, when a click was heard. It was at the window, and the chums saw a dim form pressed against the glass.

The manager drew the chums outside the doorway.

"Stop here and watch!" he breathed. "We'll catch the boulder red-handed!"



The manager of the theatre was just stretching out his hand for the electric-light switch when a click was heard. It was at the window, and the chums saw a dim form pressed against the glass. The manager drew them back. "Stop here and watch!" he breathed.

Hardly daring to breathe, the chums crouched beside the manager.

Suddenly, a swift exclamation escaped Sandy.

"Och, 'tis the hatchet-faced man o' Long Acre," he whispered.

Denny and Bob nodded in reply to the quick look the manager shot at them from the gloom of the passage.

"There'll be a bunch of them," said Bob, in a low voice. "Better let me run in and grab the film, sir—where is it?"

"At the end— Oh, blazes, there are three in the room now!"

"Well, it's now or never, old thing," said Denny.

The manager led the way. He sprang into the room, switched on the electric

lights, and the thin-faced, cunning-looking man the chums had before met at Long Acre turned with a swiftly-uttered, startled gasp.

The manager grabbed at the film in its package, while Denny and Bob clashed with three leaping figures, who dashed in to intercept the manager.

There was confusion indescribable on the floor. The manager was hauled down by the feet before his hands closed on the film. Sandy made a dive for the package, but was tripped up and fell heavily on to his face.

The chums and the manager were sadly out-numbered, but they managed to tear their way towards the window, to try to cut off the retreat of the attackers. The thin-faced man—he



looked every inch a crook—had grabbed the film, and, seeing the row going on at the window, he darted out of the door, and his feet were heard thumping along the alley-way leading to the rooms right at the back of the theatre.

One by one the villains detached themselves from the struggling, seething mass by the window. Then, able to see something of what was really happening, they began to turn the tide of battle.

"Quick, mates, bundle 'em out into the passage," gasped one of the ruffians. "The boss'll be out into the yard by now. Into the passage and slam the door, then we can get clear off down the road."

The manager and the chums were unceremoniously bundled into the alleyway. The manager, as soon as the door banged, at once ran off to the right, Sandy close on his heels, and Denny and Bob bringing up the rear.

They burst into a bare room, and were just in time to see a sheet of white flame flash upwards from the floor. The thin-faced man had fired the film, and he was now vaulting through the window. He turned his head as he went, and his mouth was twisted into a laugh of triumph.

The manager, Denny, and Bob pulled up in dismay at sight of the burning film, the celluloid spluttering away madly. Sandy was the only collected one of the party. He seized a fire-bucket from its hook near-by and sent a stream of dirty water between the legs of his chums and the manager.

The three hopped and yelped. But Denny and Bob began pumping Sandy's arm up and down as they saw the flame die out immediately. Bob knelt down on the floor and scraped a number of pieces of unburned film out of the ashes on the floor.

"Might be useful," he said. "Your film's ruined, sir, I'm afraid. It'll be a loss to you and also to the Jewel Film Service. I'd advise you to phone the police and tell 'em what's happened. They'll get off on the track if they're at all smart. Describe that hatchet-faced brute and say they'll probably be driving in a blue touring-car!"

The manager whisked back out of the room and ran towards his office again. He rang up frantically at the phone and was soon put through to the police.

"We've to get back to the Jewel Film Service at once, sir," shouted Bob. Then, not waiting for the manager's assent, they slipped out of the theatre, wound up Ermytrude, and were soon clashing and banging their lights shining dimly, on the road back to London.

They made for Raynley's private address, which the producer had given to them when he presented his card on their first meeting. They took a good while to get there, because they took a rather round-about way. They had a faint idea that the police would be a bit peeved at them for running off with the salvaged bits of the film, and they didn't want to be caught yet. They could explain later, and plead ignorance that they were doing something unlawful.

They managed to dodge the police, if, indeed, the latter had set off in pursuit of the ruffians. And Ermytrude, more dead than alive, panted up to the door of Raynley's dwelling.

"Good Heavens, boys," said Raynley, when the frightened man-servant showed them into the producer's study, where the man sat in evening dress, a big, expensive-looking cigar between his fingers. He had that expression on his face which denotes that a man has dined well.

"Yes, that's what we said," replied Denny swiftly. "We went to Reading, sir, and ran neatly into an attempt to get the only proof of that procession film. But we were too late to save the thing. However, my red-headed comrade here, showing rather more sense than you'd think from the look of him, threw a bucket of water over the burning film and we've rescued a few fragments. Trot 'em out, Bob, you dummy!"

Bob grinned, and carefully took the fragments of the film from his pocket. He placed them on the desk by Raynley's shoulder, and the producer glared at

them, then at the chums, who were looking quite-pleased with themselves.

"You fellows are either confoundedly stupid or confoundedly impudent," said Raynley. "I thought you were young gentlemen when I met you on the road. Now you come barging into my private residence at this time of night, cramming down my throat, with grins, that I've entirely lost a whole reel of film, without a copy. What do you mean by it?"

The chums at once pulled themselves up. But Bob looked a trifle testy.

"Don't accuse us of stupidity if you do of impudence, sir," he said. "As a matter of fact, we are neither stupid nor impudent. I would point out that you yourself show great lack of thought in this matter. Naturally, you think only of your pecuniary loss. But, unless I'm greatly mistaken, Scotland Yard will be intensely interested in these fragments of film. Those men did not destroy these films for the pure joy of the escape; nor did they do it at the instigation of someone who doesn't like the colour of your hair. To knife one man, then go rushing off by car to Reading—"

Raynley held up his hand. "I'm sorry, boys," he said, with a smile. "Forgive me. You're right. There's a motive, and it'll be a crime one, or I'm a Dutchman. In the Sharman Shrewd detective series my company is running, Sharman Shrewd always grops for motives first of all."

"And Sharman Shrewd shows shoud shrewdness," said Denny. "There's a motive there, sir, you can bet your best shirt. I'll wager Sharman Shrewd would soon solve the mystery."

Raynley laughed. "Well, what sort of a theory have you three motoring freelances worked out?" he said.

"One that would make Sharman Shrewd's eyes glint green with jealousy," said Denny.

But Raynley began to frown, and Bob motioned to his irrepressible chum to be silent.

"This, sir," he said. "Please don't take any notice of that dummy. That film contained some sort of evidence which the rat-faced man tried to destroy—and may have destroyed, for all we know."

Bob held the pieces of film up to the light.

"I can see here, Mr. Raynley, a ladder leaning against a wall. There's a man on the ladder, at the top. He looks like a window-cleaner. That's in the distance. In the near foreground are the crowds of people, evidently waiting to see the procession. This was taken in Victoria. Has anything happened in Victoria of late?"

"Dunno," said Raynley. "But I'll soon find out. I'll ring up Scotland They'll tell me."

The chums stood aside while Raynley phoned. The producer merely asked if anything had happened in Victoria the day before—any sort of a crime. Then the producer's brow wrinkled in a frown. At last he said:

"All right. Raynley himself speaking. Yes, come round at once."

He turned to the chums, his face rather worried. Denny choked back a facetious remark on seeing Raynley's troubled countenance.

"The brutes were quite terse," said the producer, dropping into his easy-chair. "Oh, so sorry, you fellows. Take a seat, will you? Well, you look tired and a bit played out. I'll ring for refreshments, and we can talk while you're eating and drinking. You came in like a whirlwind, and it put me off my manners. Well, as I was saying, they snapped my

head off when I asked the question. I heard some hurried whispering. Then a rasping voice said: 'I'm coming round to see you.' Cigarettes there, you know. Well, I expect we'll have a bevy of detectives here in a few minutes. Wonder what's the trouble?"

"Professional jealousy—that made 'em short and snappy, sir," said Denny. "They don't like Sharman Shrewd, I expect."

The clouds left Raynley's brow, and he laughed heartily.

"Do you joke over everything, young Burdett?" he asked.

"He'd joke and say sarcastic things, particularly nasty things to me, sir," broke in Sandy, "if he were bound down in a chair and a fizzling bomb were placed under him."

"Well, it's a gift I envy you, Burdett," said the producer. "I've known a joke to save a situation many a time. I remember once when I was in South America—"

And Raynley launched into a yarn. He broke off after a while.

"Hallo! What in thunder is that rumput?" he said.

Raynley sprang to his feet as two thickest men, with heavy features and straight mouths, pushed into the room past the manservant.

"You say nobody went out. That's all we want with you at the moment," one of the detectives—for there was no mistaking their calling—was saying to the servant. "Ha! You the man who phoned just now, sir? Well, we want to ask you a few questions."

"What do you mean by blustering in here in this way?" said Raynley. "I rang up the Yard, and asked a civil question, and someone went off at the deep end. I have a report to make that may or may not be useful to you. Hence, clear away the table, and the young gentlemen would like coffee. Now, you two, don't breathe so hard, for I'm no criminal; but perhaps I can put you on to one."

Raynley at once told the detective the story of the raids to destroy the films, nodding towards the chums when he mentioned their part in it. He handed the fragments Bob had snatched from the ashes to the detective. The men examined the film through magnifying-glasses. Then they looked at each other.

"The very place," said one.

"Ay, window-cleaner. I'd like to see his face. Got a scrap with his face on it? Here's one with him heaving his leg over the window-sill. It's so confoundedly small, though."

"Must have been taken at the time."

"The very minute. I suspected the window-cleaning blind."

"So did I."

"Tell us the old, old story," breathed Denny to Bob and Sandy, and Raynley turned his head away to hide a smile.

"This is very valuable to us, sir," said one of the detectives, turning to Raynley. "You must forgive us for being so officious just now. But, as a matter of fact, some very valuable plans were stolen yesterday from an upper office of Fernley's Evaporators, Limited, Grosvenor Square, quite near Victoria. We have kept it secret, so far, so when you rang up and asked us if any crime had been committed at Victoria yesterday—well, you can't blame us for jumping to a conclusion."

"Sharman Shrewd wouldn't," grinned Raynley; and the two detectives laughed heartily.

For all their contempt of the great detective of the screen, they were very

fond of going to see his adventures when they could have an evening off.

"Well, Mr. Raynley, sir, do you think you could have these scraps of film thrown on the screen for us? We'd perhaps be able to recognise the criminal then. For we feel convinced that the theory we had all along is correct—that a man posing as a window-cleaner committed the theft while all the staff of Fernley's Evaporators, Limited, were out to see the procession. As luck would have it, your camera-man took the picture of the crowds below just as the criminal committed the theft, under the guise of window-cleaning. He must have discovered that he had been filmed, hence his attempts to destroy the evidence of a photograph of him absolutely in the act. If we could see this on the screen—"

"We'll motor round to Long Acre right away, to our test bioscope and screen," said Raynley. He rang the bell. "Bence, tell Claythorpe to go round to the garage for the car. Only a very short run."

Bence disappeared, after a deferential inclination of the head. Raynley turned round to the chums.

"Like to come, boys," he said. "You're entitled to see the last of the drama, anyway, if nobody else is."

"We'll get there if we have to walk on our hands," said Denny. "I haven't been to the pictures for a long while now, too."

Raynley looked askance at Denny in amusement, and led the way out.

The party were soon round at Long Acre, poor old battered Ermytrude having been left all forlorn beside the kerb outside Raynley's house. Denny told Raynley that his neighbours would think he had a millionaire visiting him, with his car waiting outside.

Once inside the Jewel Film Service building, Raynley led the way to the testing-room. The screen was small, but it would suffice.

In the darkness, while Raynley fumbled about with the bioscope, the detectives and the chums looked over towards the dim outline of the white screen. At last the arc-lights began to crackle and splutter, and Raynley grunted with satisfaction.

"Thought I could manage the jolly old thing," he said. "Never done it before, but I've seen the operator do it often, of course."

The pure beam from the bioscope shone out and threw its glaring white patch on to the screen. Raynley took the fragments of film, and slipped one in place. The picture thrown on to the screen, after a slight adjustment, was clear-cut and brilliant—perfect.

There were the crowds in the foreground. In the background they could see buildings, which all recognised as those near Grosvenor Square. A window-cleaner's ladder was propped against the wall up a narrow by-street, full in view. On the top was a man, his leg half-way through the window. His face was invisible.

The detectives emitted exclamations of satisfaction.

"Fernley's place!" one muttered. "The 'window-cleaner' at the very window. Let us have the other views, sir—quick! Is there one showing the man's face turned towards us?"

"This is the one you want, I think," said Raynley, taking out the first and slipping in another fragment.

The same scene was shown, but with different crowds, and the 'window-cleaner' was shown leaning out of the room, facing the camera, his thin, hatchet face bearing an expression of great alarm.

"Bert Sheen!" gasped the detectives together.

"The ferrety-faced man!" gasped the chums.

And Raynley said: "That brute who fought with us upstairs!"

The detectives, chuckling in their satisfaction, saw the other fragments one after another. Most of the pieces would be no evidence, save for the presence of the ladder. But that one piece showing Bert Sheen, the notorious crook, red-handed on the job, would convict the man—if they could lay hands on Bert Sheen!

The detectives asked for a phone, and Raynley led them to his own office, switched on the lights, and one of the men got on to the Yard.

"Phone Reading and see if they caught any of those men who raided the picture-palace there—the Bijou Picture Palace," he ordered.

Before long the reply came through. Scotland Yard could manage quick trunk-calls, if no one else could.

"Yes," cried the detective, after he had taken the message, turning to his companions, "they've bagged the lot. The police at Wokingham intercepted the car—a blue one—on information given. They're in the lock-up at Wokingham now. We'll have to get off there, Sims. By the way, they say that the battered car and the men who aided the manager at Reading got clear away. That was you, young gentlemen, of course?"

Denny looked the picture of innocent surprise.

"Why, what on earth did they want us for?" he asked.

The detective laughed.

"I'm too keen a man to be sucked in with a remark like that, young man," he said. "You can't be in the thick of a housebreaking job and the burning of a valuable film without the police wanting to have a talk with you. However, you'll be all right. You did the best thing, after all, in coming straight to Mr. Raynley. Now, sir, with your permission, we'll scuttle off. I dare say

you'll be wanted as witnesses, for Sheen was a crook we've been wanting to convict for a long while. Good-night!"

The detectives left, and the chums and Raynley sauntered in their wake. Raynley locked up his premises, and they all four clambered into his beautiful car—the same car which had been the means of their first meeting on the Great North Road.

"Any more trouble with the mag, sir?" asked Bob.

"No—and I have a confession to make. She went so spankily, Harkley, that I have left your bit of paper against the contact-breaker what-do-you-call-it. I haven't told my chauffeur about it yet. I wonder if he'll discover the thing?"

The chums joined in the laugh.

"Come round to my place, boys," said Raynley heartily. "I'll put you up for the night, and I'll have Ermytrude taken round to the garage where I keep my car."

"Och, I think we'll take her round ourselves, sir!" said Sandy, with his usual grin. "I fancy Ermytrude wouldn't obey anyone but us."

"Besides, I don't want that engine spoilt," said Bob. "Your chauffeur might race it too much. When you've got a good engine going to your satisfaction, handle it yourself, is my motto."

"So you've really got a good engine?" questioned Raynley.

"You can't draw me, sir," said Bob. "I wouldn't say a word against Ermytrude for anything!"

"No, not for great, big lumps of toffee, even!" echoed Denny.

The plans were recovered for Fernley's Evaporators, Ltd., and the latest invention of Fernley's for refining sugar put the firm in the front of all other firms of its kind.

Bert Sheen got what he deserved, and Denny was only snapped at twice during the trial for making his remarks in the witness-box in such a way that all in court laughed. The chums met Fernley, and he insisted on their accepting a good reward for their services to the firm.

Mr. Raynley had to stand the loss of his film; but Denny told him not to worry about a miserable little thing like that when he had just discovered him and his comrades and Ermytrude.

"If you can act as well as you can joke, Burdett, you'll do well in my comic film," said Raynley. "We'll be getting down to Surrey in a day or two for the scenes where you and Ermytrude will be required. In the meantime, lodge somewhere handy, will you?"

The chums did. They could now, in a good, comfortable hotel. Ermytrude was safely housed in the best garage near at hand—a paradise for motor-cars.

The evening before they were due to start for the Surrey hills, Denny accosted his chums.

"Comrades, we are made men!" he said. "Chaplin pales to insignificance, and doubtless is at this moment shivering in his shoes and biting lumps out of the mantelpiece in his rage at the news of our entry into screen-land. Let us dine right royally, to the glory of our past and coming adventures—and by 'our' I include our lady-love, Ermytrude!"

THE END.

(There will be another rattling yarn of the three staunch chums and Ermytrude soon. Meanwhile, make sure you read "A RECORD RACE!" another splendid tale of Sid Morris, stable boy—in next week's GEM!)

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THE SECRET OF THE GALLEONS!



By ROLAND SPENCER.

(Author of our Recent Success: "Tom of the Ajax.")

CHARACTERS IN THE STORY.

DON ALONZO GUADIANA DE LA MANCHA, a Spaniard and financier of the expedition aboard the salvage boat *Result*. **SARKY MARLINE**, a trustworthy, bow-legged old seaman in command of the *Result*.

DAN DERRICK, a cheery youth, and son of Captain Derrick—known as "Dare-Devil" Derrick—a rugged sea captain of some sixty-five years.

BRIAN CARR, a chum of Dan's, and son of "Amphibious" Carr; inventor of a patent diving-dress which Brian in his research work had perfected.

Their unscrupulous rival, **MORVENO**, known as the "Rat," a round-shouldered, beady-eyed Mexican half-breed.

Steered by the trusty hands of Sarky Marline, the salvage boat *Result* sets out on its great voyage in quest of sunken Spanish treasure. Reaching Thiribeach, Brian Carr and Dan Derrick, garbed in their patent diving-dresses, take the first plunge into the depths of the mighty ocean, where they locate

the *Maria de Castellon*, an old Spanish galleon, in whose lazaret hold lies hidden fabulous wealth. The chums find themselves up against great odds, for their are rivals in the quest, a rascally set of rogues under the leadership of Morveno, commonly known as the Rat. Brian gets captured, but, thanks to the hard hitting of Sarky Marline, he is able to gain his freedom. Further gruelling fights on the sea bottom follow, but the cool courage displayed by the chums is rewarded with the first fruits of victory. Morveno is determined to lay hands on the second of the galleons, however, and he cunningly makes a midnight raid upon the *Result*, under the screen of which the *Golden Gain* weighs anchor and steams away.

"They've stolen a march on us," said Sarky Marline, the next morning; "but we needn't worry, 'cause this 'ere rough weather we're undergoin' is against all salvage work. Who's next at the wheel?"

When the *Result* reached Islay, sure and enough the *Golden Gain* was already there.

(Now read on.)

On the Track of Gurdley!

SARKY MARLINE had stated that, even if the gale died down at once—and it wouldn't for three or four days more—there would be too much motion in the water about Rathlin Island for a day or two to allow any salvage operations to be started.

Thus, the two salvage ships had the prospect of at least a four days' rest at Port Ellen. Although Dan and Brian were anxious to begin diving operations again—for they were well worked up in the adventure, and though the romance and excitement of finding those ancient ships had gripped them—they were compelled to admit that it was all for the best.

An exchange of prisoners was made at the first opportunity, to the satisfaction of all concerned. Then Dan and Brian made the most of their time by going ashore.

"So this is a Highland town?" said Dan, looking round. "Blest if I see much difference from ordinary places!"

"No; it's just a quiet, clean, neat, conventional little place," replied Brian.

"I was expecting to hear Gaelic on everybody's tongue!" grumbled Dan. "I half-thought we'd see wild-looking clansmen in kilts, and so on!"

Brian laughed.

"Less here, it seems, than in other places not so out-of-the-way. Still—"

An old man with a crooked walking-stick in his hand and a tartan muffler round his neck turned at the young diver's words. He looked at the chums quizzically.

"Ah heard your words, young sir," he said. "Ye're come to Isluh for a holiday, maybe?"

"Something after that style, sir," replied Brian.

"Eh, but ye'll no see the kilt worn much in Isluh. There was a time when the kilt was forbidden in the Highlands, to try to break up the clans. That was when the Scottish Jacobites were so active. And the Isles have been slower in goin' back to the national dress than those on the main-

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land. Why, mon, I could direct ye to places out near Bowmore where the people canna talk English. They're Scots to the backbone, but 'tis the trousers they wear. Maybe ye're tourin' the Western Isles, laddy?"

"Well, we shall get up to the Outer Hebrides with a bit of luck some time, I expect," replied Brian.

"Ah've toured the lot. A braw place to broaden the mind an' breathe God's fresh air at its freshest. I saw ye keekin' about the noo. Can I no direct ye onywhere?"

"We want the post-office," said Dan.

"Och, ay, it's the post-officee they all want firrst. Send Isluh to the mainland on wee bit postcairs. Turnn to the left up yonder an' ye'll see it facin' ye. Good-day to ye, sirs!"

The chums bade the old gentleman good-day and made straight for the post-office.

"I want to send this letter off to dad," said Dan. "Also I'll send a picture-card or two. The poor old chap will be chafing like a ship in dock, cooped up there in hospital. He's as mad about this adventure as the rest of us. I must keep him well posted up."

They entered the post-office and stood in a niche, writing. Suddenly Brian gripped Dan's forearm and signalled to the lad to be quiet.

"The Rat's just come in like a tornado, and he's writing out a wire in the next niche," breathed young Carr in Dan's ear. "He hasn't seen us. Keep low."

The chums bent over the desk, and soon the Rat took the fluttering slip of paper over to the counter. He paid the amount stated by the clerk, then flung out of the office.

The clerk looked at his retreating figure with a slight grimace, then began to send off the wire.

Dan and Brian whisked round into the alcove the Rat had left. Brian very carefully stripped off the top telegraph form from the pad on the desk. He looked at the paper sideways.

"Gee whiz, Dan!" said the young diver excitedly. "You can read the impression. It's addressed to Gurdley. I'd almost forgotten about Gurdley—"

"So had I. Can you read the address?"

"Quite plainly. Here, I'll pencil over the impression."

Carefully, Brian got to work. Soon he had pencilled in the dents made by Morveno's pencil—decided dents, for the Rat had dashed off his wire with a heavy hand. This is what the chums read:

"TO GURDLEY, 12, COMYN'S TCE, CAMDEN TOWN.
STRAKE RIB TRANSOM STEM WARNING.
"MORVENO."

"Gee, in code! But we've got Gurdley's address. What was it that man Sarky shot on the beach at Thirlbeach said? 'Gurdley's the jocular vein of the enterprise,' wasn't it?"

Brian nodded.
"Ay, and he said, 'draw a knife across that and you settle the Rat and Rayne and all of them.' Gurdley's the financier of the expedition. Crumbe, if we could only settle Gurdley, somehow, we'd cook the Rat's goose for him! Without money, he can do nothing. And here are we, with the treasure of the first galleon already in Government hands! Things are looking bright, Danny. Drop your letter and cards into the box and I'll get off the Don's wire. Then we'll have off back to the Result again with this bit of news."

Guadiana became greatly excited when he saw that the chums had obtained Gurdley's address.

"We can't tap him on the head or anything like that," said the Castilian, nervously fiddling about with the telegraph form, "but we can find out who he is, what he is, and so on. And it may be nothing to his advantage. Perhaps his name is not Gurdley. There's something wrong about a man of money who keeps secret and backs such doubtful schemes as the Rat's. The police may be glad to know of him. I must at once write to my agent—no, I'll wire: 'Have 12, Comyn's Terrace, Camden Town, watched.' He'll settle Gurdley, if he can, for he's going to draw big fat fees from me if we get all the treasure, and he's a thoroughly reliable man."

All agreed that nothing could be done but despatch the fresh wire. Dan and Brian took it to the post office. They bought newspapers on the way back, and were greatly interested to read the front-page articles about their adventure. The headlines of one paper ran: "ROMANCE, ADVENTURE, and FABULOUS FORTUNE." There was a frightful picture of a Spanish galleon lying on rock under water with impossible fish playing about the wreck, and divers poking about here and there. Special correspondents who had "just been talking to some of the divers" wrote glowing articles of the adventures of the divers in the "wavy deeps." "Fleet Street imagination's running a bit wild, what!" laughed Brian.

"You're right," said Dan. "But it's our own fault. We've refused them all information. Here's one paper says that the Result and the Golden Gain are co-operating in the search for treasure. I'll bet that little bit was supplied by the Rat. Well, all this will make some nice light reading while we're here. I must read this one: 'THE DIVING DRESS OF WONDER'—that's good, Brian, for your business interests in your patent; 'Armada Treasure Raised'—some of it, anyway; 'The Conquerors of the Deep Find Fabulous Wealth'—h'm, pretty long shot that. Hallo, here's the boat!"

The men had already got hold of newspapers, and they were guffawing in groups here and there on the deck. A few hours slipped by in merriment, reading of their own adventures according to the disappointed reporters who had come down for interviews. Then Dan and Brian went ashore again for any telegrams that might have arrived for them.

There was one—from Benson, Guadiana's legal adviser and agent. That wire read:

"COME TO LONDON IMMEDIATELY IF POSSIBLE.
URGENT."

"BENSON."

The Castilian stroked his shrewd chin with a forefinger as he read the wire.

"Well, we're to be cooped up here for a few days, so I'll take a run down. Would you and Dan like to come, too? While I am engaged on legal matters, or whatever it is, you two can go and investigate No. 12, Comyn's Terrace."

"Ma hairt's in the Highlands, señor," said Brian, "but business calls us to the land of the Sassenach. We're ready, and we'll have to look alive, for the packet Pioneer is about to start from the landing-place. She'll make the homeward trip to the mainland because she'll be running with the wind. But she won't come back, so her skipper was saying, till the gale breaks."

"Then pack up at once. Marline, keep the boat handy to land us right aboard the packet. You'll be in charge here till we return, and must act according to your discretion. Look alive, boys!"

Before long the chums were standing with Guadiana on the deck of the packet boat, waving a good-bye to Sarky Marline

as he stood propping up the varnished teak wheelhouse of the Result with his shoulder.

Just as the little steamer felt the lift of the first of the rough water, someone approached the three from behind.

"Good-evenin'!" sounded a mocking voice. "Business calls us all down to Lannon, I see—"

Guadiana and the chums wheeled with swift exclamations of surprise to face the speaker, and the Rat bowed low. But the mocking gleam in his eyes gave place to a sudden flash of bitterest hatred—an animal-like expression of cruel ferocity.

At No. 12, Comyn's Terrace!

"YOU—you, Morveno, you scoundrel!" gasped Guadiana, who had gone white to the lips. "You are dogging our footsteps—you murderous dog—"

"Not so fast, Don!" snarled the half-breed, holding up his brown, skinny hand. "I might say the same t'ing of you. But I warn you—look out! I ain't goin' to let Thirlbeach repeat itself, be sure o' that! Can we talk a leetle business—"

But Guadiana and the chums had turned disdainfully on their heels, leaving the Rat bent forward, leaning on his stick, his big, crooked mouth opened in his croaking laugh, yellow fang showing—the very picture of evil in expression, posture, everything.

Guadiana was trembling when Brian pulled them all to a halt on the other side of the steamer.

"We'll keep out of his vile presence, señor," said the young diver.

"My boys, you don't know him yet. I do! I am afraid! He is up to some fresh fiendishness. We must be careful or we shall be trapped. He will go to any lengths—"

"Well to me he's a downright mystery," said Dan. "My dad said, watch him, but never fear him. He who fears is doomed. I could crack him across my knee, the reptile! Why this emotion when he is near, señor—"

"Boy, boy, you don't understand. Pray heaven you never will. His cunning and callous cruelty are more than a match for all the strongest arms in Christendom. He is—he is—we must be very, very careful. It frightens me—his being aboard—"

"Gentlemen, below, if you please!"

The captain of the packet passed along the decks, warning all to the cabin, for the companionway was to be closed and secured since there was every prospect of the decks being swept by heavy seas on the short passage over to Gigha and West Tarbert.

Guadiana and the chums found themselves sitting opposite to the Rat in the stuffy little saloon. With round shoulders hunched up, head bent forward, and bony hands resting on the long stick he carried, Morveno watched the three like a snake watching a rabbit.

In the paddle-steamer in the Firth of Clyde, the Rat hovered near the three, his beady eyes glinting and his humped back bent in its usual sinister manner as he huddled into his long cloak.

In the train to Glasgow they managed to dodge him, and travel in a third-class compartment full of trippers returning to Glasgow after a day on the Firth. At the Central Station, Glasgow, they caught one glimpse of the curious long cloak amongst the crowds beside the south-going express, the engine of which was hissing and steaming as if in impatience to start.

Was the Rat following them? If so, what was his motive? Must they be prepared for foul play, or did the man speak the truth when he intimated that it was a surprise to him to see Guadiana making for the mainland?

The mainland? He said London!

A quick exclamation of renewed alarm escaped Dan at the thought. How did the Rat know they were going to London? The boy voiced his thought, and that set the Castilian trembling again.

"Bah, it must have been a chance shot," said Brian. "Anyhow, we must keep a sharp lookout—travel with other passengers, and so on, and then I don't see what the cunning brute can do."

"Something will happen before this little jaunt is over, boys," averred the Spaniard. "Mark my words, something will happen. I only wish I'd waited to send off a wire to ask Benson to confirm his request for me to go to town. I'd like to know if Benson did send that wire. We may be blundering into a trap."

But it turned out that Benson had sent the wire, right enough. Someone was contesting Guadiana's right to the sole use of the information he had recovered from the old galleon, Maria de Castellon de la Plana. Benson held that it was an agent of Gurdley's. They would appeal to the



With pistols prodding in the small of their backs, Brian and Dan were forced into the room. As their wild eyes looked round, their hearts missed a beat, for there, sitting in a chair with his shoulders humped up like the wings of a vulture was the Rat, his eyes gleaming.

Admiralty. The treasure could not be considered spoils of war after that long passage of time.

While the wrangling was going on between Guadiana and the person who was making trouble, appointments kept at the Admiralty, and so on, Dan and Brian were left to themselves.

They went to the hospital where old Captain Derrick lay helpless. The old man was doing well, and his fever-bright eyes shone with excitement as Dan told him the story of the cruise, as far as it had gone.

"Keep you t' wind'ard o' the Rat, boys!" said Captain Derrick. "And do your best to find out who this here Gurdley is. To upset a band o' pirates, scuttle their leader. Then you've got 'em on toast."

The chums were not allowed to talk to Dan's father for very long. And when they emerged from the hospital, by common consent their steps took them towards a tube station for Camden Town.

Wonderingly, they searched out Comyn's Terrace, and found that No. 12 was a small grocer's shop. Was that telegram a hoax? What could this miserable little grocer's shop have to do with the secret of the galleons?

Fully expecting the proprietor, a round-faced, ruddy-complected man of about middle age, to be quite ignorant of Gurdley or any of his band, Dan and Brian entered and bade the grocer a cheery good-afternoon.

"Do you know Mr. Gurdley?" asked Brian bluntly.

"Mr. Gurdley, sir? Why, he's the gennelman who has 'is letters and telegrams delivered 'ere—"

"A wire came for him the day before yesterday, I believe?"

"Ay, an' he called for it. I saw one. Funny, meanin' less names—"

"I take it," said Dan, "that you are an honest grocer carrying on an honest business—"

The man frowned.

"Of course," he said. "Who questions my honesty?"

"Well, if you want to keep clear of trouble, we can tell you how. This Gurdley. What's he like?"

The grocer began to stammer and fuss about.

"I'd no idea—" he said, jerking out his unfinished sentences.

"Funny, I thought it—I'd often wondered—Will ye step into my little parlour, sirs? I'd like to hear more. My reputation—"

Dan and Brian, feeling that all was going to work out well, followed the grocer into his "little parlour." The

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man motioned to them to be seated, shut the two doors, and turned attentively to Dan and Brian.

"This Mr. Gurdley," he said. "I never liked the look o' him. He's a tall man. Pays me well to 'ave 'is correspondence addressed 'ere."

Dan was watching the man's face closely. The watery-blue eyes of the grocer blinked uncomfortably, which was natural enough, but Dan surprised a fleeting gleam of eagerness in them—a quick look towards the door behind where he and Brian sat.

A creak sounded. Dan swung round, and lurched forward with a swift exclamation of alarm.

Brian leapt to his feet, too, and swung round to face the rear. He was just in time to see the swish of a sand-bag which descended on to Dan's head with a dull thud.

The bag was wielded by a brutal-looking rough of the hooligan type. Another stood beside this man, both framed in the door, which had been silently opened.

Brian sprang forward with a cry of rage; but the innocent-looking grocer had raised a chair on high, and he brought it crashing down on Brian's shoulders.

The young diver emitted a choking cry, and lurched forward right into the arms of one of the roughs. A heavy blow with a huge clenched fist settled matters in favour of the ruffians, and Dan and Brian, senseless, were dragged through the doorway, and bundled down a flight of stairs to the store below.

The trapdoor above the stairs crashed over with a bang, the padlock hasp was clicked over, and the padlock put in place. Dan and Brian, senseless, were prisoners.

The chums soon came round from the cowardly blows that had been delivered. They sat up, and blinked round. Weak daylight filtered down through the thick glass of the small pavement light above.

"Well, we've done it!" growled Dan. "It was all a plant!"

"Ay," replied Brian, "we're well in the soup. But they're mugs. We can still yell, and be heard outside."

"Then let's get on with it before they come back to gag us."

Dan opened his mouth to shout, but Brian silenced him with a gesture. A fumbling was heard at the trapdoor above. Brian motioned to Dan to creep near the trap and grapple with whoever it was that was going to descend. But the ruffians were taking no risks. They descended behind revolvers, and kept Brian and Dan at their distance.

Four roughs made their appearance. The chums were searched and relieved of all papers. Then they were ordered

to pass through a solid-looking door at the end of the store. They could do nothing but obey.

They groped into the dark hole, Dan first with his hands held out in front of him. The boy started back with a cry as a white face appeared, showed up by the trickle of light through the open door. He collided with Brian, just as the door behind banged and heavy bolts were shot.

"There's someone here," cried Dan. "Look out, Brian, although he's only a boy!"

"I saw him," gasped Brian, awed. "And it was Tony Rayne. Tony, where are you? What's the trouble?"

The reply to Brian's questions was a sob of joy, and the young diver felt weak hands gripping his arms.

"I've—I've been a prisoner here for days and days," gasped the boy weakly, "and I'm starving!"

Captives!

TONY RAYNE!

Brian felt for the youngster's shoulders, then slid his hands under the boy's arms.

"Bear a hand here, Dan," said Brian. "The kid's collapsing. Got any matches?"

"No; those swabs took 'em away when they ran their dirty hands through my pockets. But I can feel some sort of cloth stuff down here. These are the rags he slept on, I expect."

Brian lifted Tony in his arms with ease, and took the boy in the direction from which Dan's voice came. Dan groped for Brian's arm, and guided the young diver with his burden to the spot where he had felt the rags. Soon Tony was lying on the improvised bed, still and silent, but breathing gently.

"Poor kid!" said Brian. "He's as weak as a rat! But he'll regain consciousness in a minute, I expect. We'd best rub his hands, I suppose. Feel if his head's comfortable, Dan!"

"He's as comfortable as possible in this foul hole!" said Dan. "Great Scott! What brutes they are! I shouldn't have thought Rayne would let his son be treated like this!"

Tony stirred.

"I—I—Oh, it's real!" he gasped weakly. "Thank Heaven, Brian! I've dreamed about your coming all the time! It has been one long, terrible night here!"

"All right, youngster! You just lie quietly. We'll help you all we can now—"

"I—I heard what your friend said just now. My father is unscrupulous, I know. But, believe me, he doesn't know I'm in this plight! Is that Dan? You told me about him, you'll remember, at Sker House."

"Yes; I'm Dan, kid!" replied young Derrick. "And you can trust Brian and me to do all we can. But you realise we are prisoners the same as you. I dare say we'll get the same treatment as you've had—"

"Did—did Morveno catch you?"

"I suppose so, the brute! He followed us to London—"

Tony uttered a startled cry. The chums felt the boy raise himself on his elbows.

"Did my father come, too?"

"No; he's still on the Golden Gai!"

Tony's breathing quickened to short, panting breaths.

"Brian—Brian!" cried the boy wildly. "He will kill you—he will! He tortures! Oh, it is to my father's lasting shame that ever he joined forces with the Rat! Is—there any secret which the Rat could get out of you?"

"No, sonny," said Brian, feeling for the boy's hand; "none that he can get, but plenty he'd like to get!"

Tony clung to Brian.

"And my father is not by! My father's hand is a restraint to the Rat's vile methods, Brian! Without him, he'll force you to roar out your secrets in frightful agony. I know it! I know it! Is—there no hope of escape?"

"Haven't felt round yet. But it seems not."

"There isn't! I know every crack and crevice in the place! And the door's of double thickness with felt in between. I've yelled myself hoarse. Oh, Brian, I'm afraid—afraid for you and Dan Derrick!"

"Don't worry, Tony!" said Brian calmly. "Things are pretty bad. But we won't meet trouble half-way—"

"My father's not really bad, Brian! He will never hold with torture—"

"I'm sure of it!" cut in Dan. "We've met your father many times, Tony! Of course, he is our enemy, or rival, which you will; but he saved Brian's life once, on the bottom, when, if he'd left us alone, he could easily have secured all the treasure of the first galleon. But that would have meant Brian's death. As it was, we did him after all in getting the treasure!"

Tony clutched at Dan's words like a drowning man clutching at a straw.

"Thank you, Mr. Derrick, for telling me that. My father's my father, and until quite recently he was just a great big

pal. We weren't very well off, but we were quite happy. Then Morveno came with his secrets and his plottings. And my father met a man called Gurdley—"

"Hold hard, Tony!" said Dan. "First of all, please call me Dan. Secondly, remember that we're out to beat your father—not your father particularly, of course, but the schemes he is taking part in. So anything you may say, of course, may be helping us against your father."

"I don't care!" cried Tony wildly. "I wouldn't say a word if my father was harming nobody. But I gather that there is a scheme to wrest the secrets about some treasure from a Spaniard—Guadiana, Morveno called him. It is robbery! Then there's that diving-suit. My father is a thief—a thief, whichever way you look at it!"

"Well, not exactly a thief in the usual sense of the term, perhaps," said Dan, "for he flaunts about in the diving-dress saying he is sorry he was compelled to 'borrow' it forcibly. Neither we nor your father's party can appeal to the police because of the loss of time that would entail. It's a downright funny sort of business right through, Tony—sort of all's fair in securing galleon treasure, you know!"

"It's—it's jolly good of you to say that—er—Dan!" replied Tony.

The boy was going to say more when steps sounded, dull and muffled, right above the cellar.

"They're coming down," said the youngster. "The walls of this place are very thick. The door is of double thickness, with felt between, to prevent sound from travelling far. Those dull footfalls are being made not three feet above our heads. It has been built for a prison, I believe. This'll be the man with the bread."

The heavy bolts the other side of the door were drawn back with a dull, grating sound. The door itself was loose, but tremendously strong. It could be shaken, but not broken. The chums afterwards learnt why it was loose.

As the weak filter of daylight pierced the gloom of that foul prison, Dan and Brian, standing on the defensive with wildly beating hearts and clenched fists, saw three men peer in. The men were armed, and one ordered the chums roughly to "step outside." He warned Tony to keep within the prison.

Unable to help themselves in any way, Dan and Brian had to obey. They were roughly handled by the men, and their arms were bound behind them. They were gagged and led upstairs.

The house was a dingy, old-fashioned place, the lower part being the shop, with a tenement behind in which the grocer lived. The place was dirty everywhere, and Dan and Brian were led up a creaking, carpetless stairway, past the grocer's quarters, and to an inner room furnished with double doors of green baize. The walls of this room were extraordinarily thick, and there were signs that the place had been converted from an ordinary inner room to a sound-proof apartment.

With pistols prodding the chums in the small of the back, the youngsters were forced into the room. As their wild eyes looked round the artificially lit place their hearts missed a beat, for there, sitting in a chair with his shoulders humped up like the wings of a vulture, was the Rat, his evil, yellow, parchment-like face and his beady, glittering eyes seeming more sinister than ever.

At the mercy of the rascally Rat, Brian Carr and Dan Derrick bravely await their fate.

(There are a thousand-and-one thrills in next week's grand instalment of this powerful serial, chums, so make sure of reading it by ordering your GEM well in advance. Next week's issue being a bumper one is bound to sell like hot cakes.)

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"GRUNDY'S CHANCE!"

(Continued from page 17.)

fortunate for him. For the exasperated cricketers collared G. A. Grundy of the Shell on all sides, and bumped him in the grass, and bumped him again, and bumped him many times, and rolled him, and ragged him, and finally kicked him off the field with innumerable and powerful kicking. The New House crowd roared with laughter as Grundy, getting loose at last, sprinted for the House, with half the School House team in hot pursuit. To judge by appearances, Grundy had had enough—but the School House fellows did

not seem to think so—and even after Grundy had locked himself up in Study No. 3, enraged cricketers prowled round his door and howled bloodthirsty threats through the keyhole.

Grundy's chance had come—and gone!

After that House match, he resolutely, determinedly, and definitely turned down St. Jim's cricket. He told Tom Merry, regretfully but firmly, that he would never play for the House again, even if Tom Merry came to him and begged on his bended knees.

Grundy apparently expected that to happen sooner or later. But Grundy often expected things that never came to pass, and this was one more of them.

THE END.

(Another splendid yarn of Tom Merry & Co. in next week's GEM, chums. Note the title: "GRUNDY GOING STRONG!" by Martin Clifford. It is a story no "Gemite" should miss!)

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