

"GRUNDY THE ARTIST!"

This week's Rollicking Story of
Tom Merry & Co.—inside.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

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The GEM 2^D

LIBRARY
of
SCHOOL AND SPORTING STORIES



A SHOCK IN STORE FOR THE SCHOOLBOY "GENIUS!"

(A tense moment in the magnificent school story of the chums of St. Jim's—inside.)



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.

THE NEW SERIAL!

LAST week I made reference to the extra-special story I have in hand which is to follow the present series of Gan Waga stories. I said then that this new serial dealt with the Death Ray—the invention that set the whole world talking not so very long ago. Well, the whole world will break into talk again when this GEM serial makes its appearance, for not only will Gemites be able to read this thrilling narrative in their favourite paper, but they will also be able to visit their local cinema and see on the "sheet" all that they have read in print. How's that? Wait a bit, my lads—there's something else; there's a competition, a very simple affair which you will all be able to enter, and which is based upon this splendid story. That means Gemites will have two chances of bagging a splendid prize, for the solution of the competition is to be found in the story appearing in the GEM, and also from the pictures, etc., shown on the screen at every cinema where this wonder story of thrills is to be shown. But more of this anon. My loyal chums had better keep a very sharp eye on this Chat so that they can start in with this excellent story and the fascinating competition, not forgetting also the visit to the local cinema showing the film, the first week these combined treats are released. 'Nuff said!

FROM AUSTRALIA.

I have just read with great interest a fine letter from a chum in New South Wales, Australia. He informs me that at time of writing—his letter was written on January 13th—the temperature "down under" had reached 102.3. Phew! He says that Sydney was gasping and sweltering in the heat. What a contrast we can present with the temperature of England at that time? I believe I was shivering with the cold on that particular day. Well, well! One can get warm if one is cold, but it's a deuce of a job to get cool with the temperature at 102.3. My chum then goes on to talk about the coming Test matches. He says that according to the newspaper scribes England is unduly pessimistic as to the result of these cricket matches. But I don't think we are. It'll be a series of tussles, and we like tussles, and we also like the "best man" to win. If we win—well, I'll ring off there. But if we lose we shall at least be able to accept defeat in the right spirit. See you later, "Cornstalk."

A MAP OF ST. JIM'S.

Readers, just lately, have been asking me for a map of St. Jim's, explaining that it would be "just fine" to follow the movements of Tom Merry & Co. with a map of the school buildings, etc., in front of them. If I receive any more requests dealing with a St. Jim's map I shall have to see what can be done.

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME!

"RIVALS AND CHUMS!"

By Martin Clifford.

A magnificent story of Tom Merry & Co., recounting the strenuous tussle between New House and School House in the yearly Sports' Tournament. Don't miss it!

SPECIAL "ROWING" SUPPLEMENT.

By Tom Merry & Co., who have been burning the midnight oil, preparing this issue of their fine little paper, the "St. Jim's News."

"THE WELL OF WEALTH!"

A topping complete story by Sidney Drew, featuring Gan Waga & Co., and another jolly jingle from the pen of our St. Jim's Rhymester. Make sure of these treats, chums, by ordering your copy of the GEM early. Chin, chin!

Your Editor.

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TUCK HAMPER AND MONEY PRIZES AWARDED FOR WIN.

All Efforts in this Competition should be Addressed to: "My Readers Own Corner," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4

SOUTHPORT SCORES!

STRANGE, BUT TRUE!

A sergeant was telling his squad how to fire a gun. "Now, my lad," he said to one man, "if you fire a gun, where does the bullet leave it?" "Why," came the dreamy reply, "in my hands, of course!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to R. Williams, 92, Bisphan Road, Southport.

WHERE IGNORANCE IS BLISS!

Benevolent old gentleman (to street musician): "Do you always play by ear, my man?" Corner Player: "Yes, sir—either 'ere or in the 'Igh Street!'—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss Mavis Terrell, 24, McKinley Avenue, Malvern, Victoria, Australia.

DID HE MEAN IT?

An irate old father, lecturing one of his sons about some misdeed, brought in the old boast: "When I was a boy my father would have thrashed me soundly for such a thing." "H'm!" chimed in Willie, somewhat cheekily. "Nice sort of father you must have had!" "What?" thundered the strict parent. "You impudent rascal! I'd a better father than you ever had!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Arnold Ostick, 17, Dewhurst Street, Armley, Leeds.

A GOOD DEAL!

Mr. Slowpay: "I want these trousers resealed, my man; you know I sit a good deal." Tailor: "Certainly, sir. And if you'll bring the bill in I sent you six months ago I'll receipt that, too! You know, I've stood a good deal!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. Glenswick, 71, Gordon Road, Ealing, W. 5.

A LAME YARN!

Headkeeper of a large hunting ground (to tramp whom he meets coming along): "Oh! And I thought you hadn't been poaching. Then what's this 'ere rabbit doing in your coat-pocket?" Tramp: "Really, I don't know, unless it crawled in and got suffocated while I was lying asleep under the hedge!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. T. Bullen, 10, South Street, Guildford, Surrey.

AN IRISH YARN!

An Irishman, working on the top of a roof, was hauling in a length of rope. He had been occupied thus for a few minutes, but still no end came in sight. "Begorrah!" he exclaimed suddenly. "Sure some spalpeen must have cut the end off!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Smeeden, 38, Collier's Water Lane, Thornton Heath, Surrey.

"NECKS," PLEASE!

Lowther: "Hallo, old chap! Do you know the latest things in collars?" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy: "Wathah not, dear boy. Whatevah are they?" Lowther (with a smile): "Necks!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Arthur Arrow-smith, 21, Plantation Row, Ebbw Vale, Mon.

TUCK HAMPER COUPON.

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No attempt will be considered unless accompanied by one of these Coupons.

A GREAT DISCOVERY! From time to time George Alfred Grundy has "discovered" himself to be a born footballer, a born cricketer, a born ventriloquist, etc. According to his studymates, what he has never discovered is that he's a born idiot! He now blossoms out as—



GRUNDY THE ARTIST!

A Rollicking Story of your old favourites Tom Merry & Co., featuring George Alfred Grundy, the burly "genius" of the Shell, in a new role.

BY
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER I. The Amateur Carpenter!

CRASH!

"What the thump—oh, my hat! Look out!"

"Great Scott! What—Yaroooooh!"

Jack Blake's voice ended in a terrific howl.

He had ample cause to howl.

The falling of a good-sized hammer on to one's cranium from a height, and quite unexpectedly, was enough to make any fellow howl.

Jack Blake, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, did howl. It all happened in a flash.

Blake & Co., with the Terrible Three, were idly sauntering in the old quadrangle when it happened.

They were discussing footer at the time, and such things as "bolts from the blue" were farthest from their thoughts.

Yet one came—in the form of a hefty hammer!

There was a sudden crash of splintering glass above their heads, and as they looked up in sudden alarm a shower of glass fell about them, tinkling on the grass and on the gravel-path along which they were walking.

And with the glass came the hammer.

It came whizzing through the air, and it struck Jack Blake a fearful clump on the cranium.

Luckily—very luckily indeed—only the wooden haft struck Jack Blake, or that junior's career might have been cut short with painful suddenness. As it was, the haft struck him but a glancing blow, and his cap softened the blow somewhat.

Yet it hurt—as Jack Blake's fearful howl testified.

"Yooooop!"

"Bai Jove!"

"What—what—what—"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Tom Merry jumped to the aid of Jack Blake as that luckless junior sat on the path and rubbed at his singing head.

"Wow!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, helping Tom Merry to raise Blake to his feet. "Are you hurt, deah boy?"

"Hurt!" hooted Jack Blake. "Of course I'm hurt! Can't you see I'm hurt! Ow! Ow-yow! What was it? Was it a thunderbolt?"

Tom Merry grinned. Jack Blake was hurt; but he was not apparently seriously hurt. Tom looked up, and then he understood.

From a window of the School House above their heads a pane of glass—or most of it—was missing.

"It was a hammer, Blake. There it is, on the grass," said the captain of the Shell cheerfully. "Some careless dummy must have bunged it through the window!"

"It's the window of Grundy's study, I fancy!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "Wonder what the ass was up to? Club-swinging with a hammer, I expect. Jolly lucky nobody was hurt!"

"Hurt!" shrieked Jack Blake. "Aren't I hurt? I'll—I'll smash that careless dummy for this! I'll Grundy him! Might have been worse, eh?"

"Yes, it might have hit me, you know!" explained Lowther. "As it is—Hullo, there's Grundy!"

There sounded the raising of a window-sash, and then the head and shoulders of George Alfred Grundy came into view.

Grundy's rugged features were red, and his face glistened in the spring sunlight with perspiration.

"Hallo, you kids!" he bawled down to them. "Seen anything of a hammer?"

Jack Blake shook a furious fist up at him.

"Hammer! I'll give you hammer, you dangerous maniac!" he yelled. "I'll hammer you to a jelly when I get up to you!"

"Eh? Look here! I want no cheek, kid!" yelled Grundy crossly. "I asked you kids a civil question, and I expect a civil answer! Have you seen my hammer? It slipped out of my hand just now and bashed through the window. Just hunt round for it, will you, and then bring it up at once if you find it!"

"You—you—you—"

"Don't stand there gassing!" bawled Grundy. "Look for that hammer, can't you? It went—Oh, there it is on the dashed grass! Stop that silly dancing, Blake, and bring it up, will you?"

Jack Blake spluttered with wrath.

"Bring it up—yes, I'll bring it up!" he shouted ferociously. "And I'll see how you like a few clumps with it, you—you clumsy owl! Your rotten hammer hit me on the head, you dangerous maniac! It might easily have brained me!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" called back Grundy carelessly. "How the thump could it brain you when you don't possess any brains? Anyway, you're wasting my dashed time!"

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Bring that hammer up here, and stop grousing about nothing, kid! You shouldn't have been so careless as to get in the way of it! Back up!"

And Grundy vanished from the window, evidently taking it for granted that Blake would obey his mighty command and bring up his hammer.

And Blake did obey him—at least, he took up the hammer.

He snatched it up from the grass and then he rushed for the School House doorway, fairly spluttering with wrath. It was clear from the expression on his face that he was not taking the hammer upstairs to oblige Grundy, however.

In a chuckling crowd, the rest of the juniors followed Jack Blake. Certainly the matter was serious enough from their point of view as well as from Blake's. The hammer might easily have done serious harm, to say nothing of the falling glass. Yet Grundy was Grundy, and they could not help seeing the funny side of the incident. Had they been hurt, like Blake, they might possibly have seen another side.

They were scarcely a yard behind Blake when he reached the door of Grundy's study, and sent the door flying inwards with a tremendous kick.

But instead of rushing into the study, Blake then stopped dead on the threshold, and Tom Merry & Co. did likewise.

Study No. 3 was a sight!

The carpet was covered with lengths of wood, scraps of wood, sawdust in plenty, and scattered nails and carpenter's tools. The table had been shoved to one corner of the room, and on it were piled the fire-irons, a coal-scuttle, the fender, the hearthrug, several chairs, and a pile of books, not to mention sundry other articles.

In the midst of this scene stood Grundy. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and he was covered almost with sawdust, even to his hair and glistening features. One hand was bandaged with a blood-stained handkerchief. In the other was a saw.

It was a busy scene, and the juniors blinked at it.

Grundy looked up irritably. From his expression—and his bandaged fingers—he was not finding carpentry either a soothing or a painless pastime.

"Oh, here you are!" growled Grundy. "Blessed if I couldn't have run down and brought it up myself quicker! Shove it down and clear out! I'm busy."

"You—you're busy, are you?" said Blake, taking a deep breath. "Too busy to apologise for hiffing a chap on the head with a hammer, eh?"

"Don't talk rot!" sniffed Grundy. "Might have been killed by the row you're making! What's a blessed knock on the head with a hammer, anyhow?"

"I'll show you!" hissed the exasperated Blake.

And he rushed at Grundy. Grundy yelled.

"Here, mind my—What the thump—"

Crack!

"Yoooooop!"

Grundy howled fiendishly as Blake brought the haft of the hammer down on his head with a crack.

"Now you know what it's like, you burbling maniac!" gasped Blake. "And here's another one for luck!"

Crack!

Again George Alfred yelled in great astonishment and pain. He staggered back, and sat down on the carpet with a hearty bump.

He was up again in a flash, however, with a still louder yelp of pain—having sat down on a nail which happened to have its business end uppermost.

He was hurt fore and aft, so to speak, and he went for Jack Blake with a bellow of wrath.

"I'll smash you for that!" he roared. "Why, you—you cheeky cad! I'll wallop you to a frazzle! I'll—I'll—"

Crash!

"Whoooooop!"

Again Grundy went crashing down, having tripped over a framework of wood on the carpet in his headlong rush at Blake. It was a queer-looking affair, something resembling a big kite—pointed at one end and wide at the other, with strips of wood nailed across at intervals. At all events, Grundy tripped over this and came a cropper.

In a flash Blake had seen his chance and taken it. He jumped on Grundy's back, and, sitting astride, he grasped Grundy's head and rammed his heated features into the carpet.

"Ha ha, ha!" roared the onlookers.

But Grundy did not laugh. He gasped and spluttered furiously, squirming frantically in his efforts to unseat his unwanted rider.

He was an exceedingly strong youth, and at last he succeeded. Blake rolled over, and Grundy was on him in a flash. They rolled over and over, clasped in close embrace.

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and as they rolled they picked up shavings and sawdust and nails from the carpet with their clothes.

"Go it, Blake!" bawled Herries.

"What price the new carpet-sweeper!" chuckled Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Over and over rolled the struggling figures, sundry yelps amid the gasps and grunts telling when one of the combatants had picked up a stray nail with his person. The fight was terrific now, and Tom Merry hurriedly closed the door. It opened the next second, however, and two Shell fellows rushed in. They were Wilkins and Gunn, Grundy's study mates.

"Great Scott!" gasped Gunn.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Wilkins. "What—what—well, upon my word!"

CHAPTER 2.

The Why and Wherefore!

WILKINS and Gunn gazed at the scene, aghast.

The struggling figures did not interest them much—they were quite used to the sight of George Alfred Grundy fighting. Their chum and study-mate was always more or less in the wars.

The state of the study did interest them, however. In fact, the state of it made them blink in dumbfounded amazement.

"Oh, the—the burbling lunatic!" breathed Wilkins. "The—the polly, raving Bolshy!"

"M-m-m-my bookshelves!" gasped Gunn. "He—he—smashed my bookshelves up!"

For another instant the two juniors stared at the scene, and then they both rushed at the struggling forms on the carpet.

"Smash him!" roared Gunn. "My dashed bookshelves!"

Wilkins did not reply; he just piled in. In a flash there were four juniors instead of two rolling about on the carpet. Naturally enough, Jack Blake imagined Wilkins and Gunn had come to the rescue of Grundy—which was quite a mistake. Grundy did not stop to imagine anything. He put hit out right and left.

"Bai Jove! Better chip in, you fellows!" remarked Arthur Augustus, with a chuckle. "Old Grundy will be killed between them!"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

And Tom Merry and the others piled in. There was a brief, whirling struggle on the carpet, and then George Alfred found himself pinned face downwards with four of the juniors seated on him.

This time he did not succeed in releasing himself—the odds were too great. He just gasped and panted and bellowed breathlessly.

"Hold him down—hold the madman down!" gasped Wilkins. "He's wrecked the blessed study; he must be mad! Hold him!"

"Lemme gerrup!" roared Grundy. "I'll smash you for this, Wilky, and you too, Gunny! Why can't you help a fellow in your own study? Yah! Rotten traitors!"

"Yes, we'll help you!" panted Gunn wrathfully. "We'll help you to the biggest hiding you've ever had for this! What about my bookshelves? You've smashed them up!"

"Because I wanted the wood, of course!" roared Grundy. "You rotters! Lemme gerrup, and I'll explain!"

"You'll explain as you are!" snorted Wilkins. "If you don't, we'll tap you on the napper with this chunk of wood—like that."

Tap!

"Whocop!" roared Grundy.

"That's to be going on with!" snapped Wilkins. "Now, you maniac, what's this game? Why is our study in this state?"

"Ow! Yow-wow! I'll—I'll smash—"

Tap!

"Yooooop! Stoppit! Lemme gerrup!" raved Grundy, struggling furiously.

"Make it pax, and stop kicking up a shine, then?"

"I won't! Ow! I'll smash you for this! I'll spifficate you, Wilkins! Yoooooop!"

Grundy's furious voice ended in another yell as Wilkins playfully tapped his head with the chunk of wood—a piece of mahogany from his own bookshelves. Grundy ceased to struggle then. His head was singing, and he had scarcely a scrap of breath left in his body.

"Oh, you rotters!" he gasped. "I'll make you sit up for this another time—you see if I don't! Can't a fellow do a bit of carpentry without all this? Ow! Oh, crumbs! Rotters!"

"Carpentry—eh?" chuckled Monty Lowther. "We thought he was smashing the happy home up!"

"Yas, wathah! Gwundy is weally the limit, you know!"

"Can't leave the ass for an hour without something like

this happening!" groaned Wilkins. "What started it, Merry?"

"He started it, of course!" said Tom Merry, grinning. "We were walking in the quad outside, and suddenly a blessed hammer came flying through the window. It biffed old Blake on the napper, and jolly nearly stunned him."

"Jolly nearly did do!" grunted Jack Blake, rubbing his head ruefully. "The silly dummy ought not to be at large!" "Haven't I told you it was an accident, blow you!" gasped Grundy, glaring up. "How could I help the blessed thing flying out of my hand?"

"That's a smashed window for the dummy to pay for, anyway," grinned Herries.

"It's no laughing matter," raved Gunn, glowering down at Grundy. "What about my bookshelves? Grundy, you burbling rotter, what did you break my dashed shelves up for?"

"Because I had to have the wood, of course!" snorted George Alfred. "How the thump could I make an easel without timber, fathead?"

"A—a whatter?"

"An easel, of course! Can't you see it's an easel?" snorted Grundy witheringly. "Are you blind?"

The juniors blinked at the extraordinary framework of wood on the carpet. Whatever it did resemble it certainly did not resemble an easel.

"Great pip!" gasped Digby. "I thought it was an aeroplane he was making!"

"I thought it was a wheelbarrow myself," grinned Lowther.

"Rot!" snorted George Alfred. "Don't talk rubbish! I tell you it wanted some making—"

"I expect it would," agreed Lowther. "Easel's aren't so 'easily' made, you know."

Having made that remarkable pun, Lowther waited for the laughter. It did not come. Wilkins and Gunn were glaring speechlessly at the great George Alfred. Grundy glared back at them.

"I see what it is!" he said bitterly. "You're thundering well jealous of my abilities as a carpenter. It's always the same. You don't recognise good work when you see it. Fancy kicking up a fuss about a paltry old row of bookshelves! Well, I don't mind. Ability never was recognised in this dashed study! Well, I'm going to show you I can do something else as well as carpentry. You wait, and you'll get a surprise!"

"You—you raving chump!" gasped Gunn. "You—you've smashed my bookshelves up to make a blessed easel!"

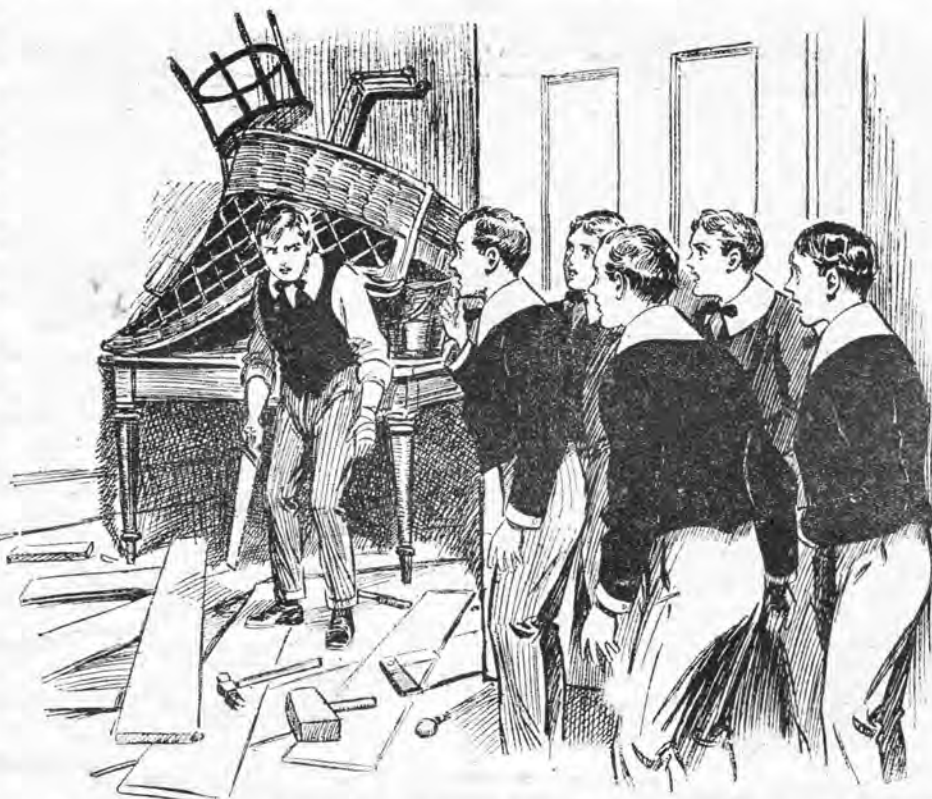
"Yes. Just you lemme gerrup and get on with the job. I've wasted quite enough time. I'm going to make St. Jim's sit up and take notice. I've got a surprise in store for all you chaps. Just you wait!"

"And we've got a surprise in store for you, Grundy!" hissed Cuthbert Gunn, in sulphurous accents. "But we aren't going to keep you waiting for it. Just hold the raving chump, you chaps. We're going to teach him better than to smash other fellows' property up like this. Hold him!"

"Yaps, wathah! Gwunday certainly does wequiah a lesson, Gunn."

"What-ho!"

And Tom Merry held Grundy willingly enough. All of them had suffered somewhat from Grundy's useful fists during that brief, whirling struggle, and they were quite ready to



Jack Blake & Co. stopped dead on the threshold of Study No. 3 and stared, for the carpet was covered with lengths of wood, sawdust in plenty, and scattered nails and carpenter's tools. And in the midst of this scene stood Grundy. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and he was covered with sawdust. One hand was bandaged, while in the other he held a saw. (See Chapter 1.)

hold Grundy. They did more than hold him. They helped Wilkins and Gunn to roll Grundy over and over in the sawdust and shavings, despite that worthy's howls and struggles. When they stopped at last there was little sawdust or shavings on the floor—it was all over Grundy. Then, scraping the scattered nails together in a heap, Wilkins carefully stuffed handfuls down the back of Grundy's neck, between his collar and skin—a painful and chilly process for Grundy.

Grundy fairly roared with anguish and wrath.

"There!" said Gunn at length breathlessly. "Now sling the rotter out, you chaps. Perhaps that'll teach the awful idiot to respect other people's property in future. Out with him!"

"Ow! Oh crumbs! Rotters!" gasped Grundy.

That was all he could say at the moment in his frantic state of breathlessness. But he was far from being subdued yet, and as the juniors yanked him up he broke suddenly free with a terrific wrench, and the next moment another whirling combat was raging in Study No. 3.

But it could have only one end—against nine of them even the mighty Grundy stood not a ghost of a chance. It ended when Grundy went flying out of the study to fall like a sack of potatoes in the passage without.

Even then Grundy was not finished. He jumped up and came rushing back—only to be sent flying out of the study again. And this time he stayed out. Grundy had had enough. Ignoring the grinning faces around him, and the chuckles, he picked himself up and tottered away, feeling himself tenderly all over, and groaning dismally.

That evening Wilkins and Gunn had tea in Study No. 10 with the Terrible Three. To remain in Study No. 3 to await Grundy's return just then was more than Wilkins and Gunn were prepared to do. And, taking pity on their hapless plight, Tom Merry had invited them to tea in Study No. 10, where there was safety in numbers, and where even George Alfred Grundy dare not venture to exact vengeance.

CHAPTER 3. The Latest!

BANG, bang, bang! Crash! Wilkins and Gunn almost leaped out of their skins. They were seated alone in their study, having just started their prep. Neither of them looked happy at all. They had sought sanctuary in Study No. 10 for tea, but

teatime was over now, and they had been obliged to return to their studies for prep. And though the Terrible Three had promised to keep their ears open for sounds of trouble from Study No. 3, Wilkins and Gunn were both in a state of nervous apprehension nevertheless.

Grundy would be in a fearful way—that much was certain. It was only by means of "whoppings" that the somewhat high-handed George Alfred managed to keep his luckless chums and study-mates from rebelling against his majestic rule. But they had rebelled now, and they had laid sacrilegious hands on their august leader. A "whopping" was the least they could expect from Grundy.

So Wilkins and Gunn had entered their study in fear and trembling, so, to speak, and their relief had been great on finding that apartment empty. Certainly Grundy had been there—the room had been tidied a little, and the tea-things—from Grundy's tea—were still on the table. Hoping fervently that Grundy would remain absent, his chums had cleared the crockery away and started prep.

They felt that if they could only keep away from Grundy until bedtime they would be all right. By that time Grundy—whose anger quickly evaporated, and who very quickly "came round"—would doubtless have forgotten and forgiven.

Yet they were feeling nervous and apprehensive now. So that it was no wonder perhaps that they almost leaped out of their respective skins when that sudden banging came to the door, followed instantly by a crash as the door flew back.

It was Grundy right enough.

And Grundy was carrying something. Wilkins blinked as they saw what it was. It was a large wooden easel—evidently one taken from a class-room.

Grundy carried it into the study quickly, and leaning it against the wall, he quickly closed the door again.

"Good!" he breathed. "I managed that nicely, you fellows. Luckily there were no masters or prefects about. I asked Linton if I could borrow it, and he got quite waxy—refused point-blank, in fact. Meanness, of course—or jealousy; I'm blessed if I know which. Anyhow, I've managed it."

And with a grunt of satisfaction George Alfred started to fix the easel up.

His chums watched him blankly. They had fully expected Grundy to drop the easel on finding them there, and rush at them with whirling fists. Instead of which, Grundy smiled at them quite cheerily, apparently in the best of good humours. He had seemingly forgotten all about the little trouble of an hour or two ago.

Wilkins and Gunn were astounded—they felt they never would understand the great George Alfred. But they were relieved—intensely relieved.

"You—you've managed it, Grundy," stammered Wilkins. "Oh, good! I—we're so glad, old man! But—but what have you managed—"

"This easel, of course!" said Grundy, looking round. "Now, I shall want you fellows to keep quiet this evening, or else clear out."

"Shall you, old chap?"

"Yes. I don't want another rumpus like this afternoon," said Grundy loftily. "I've decided to overlook it—to overlook your rotten conduct in backing those rotters up against me."

"Have you?"

"Oh—oh, good!"

"But don't let it occur again," said Grundy. "The fact is I've come to the conclusion that I can afford to overlook the frailties and silly, childish conduct of ordinary folk. I ought not to have lost my poise and dignity this afternoon; I ought to have treated you fellows with the serene disregard and lofty contempt genius should show to the common rabble and even mediocrity. Genius should live on a lofty plane—above the childish squabbles and piffing thoughtlessness of the common herd!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"That's what I should have done," said Grundy, nodding. "I see it now. I shan't make that mistake again. Now, you kids can stay in here if you'll be quiet. You can watch me work if you like. But no talking, mind! Work of this nature requires intense and prolonged concentration."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Gunn faintly. "D-dud—did you get all that out of a book, Grundy?"

"What's it mean, anyway?" asked Wilkins, in astonishment. "What's this new game you've taken up, Grundy? What on earth do you want with an easel, anyhow?"

Grundy looked round at that.

"I thought you fellows knew," he said in surprise. "The fact is I've discovered something to-day—something I never knew before. I never even suspected it. I always knew, of course, that I had the artistic temperament. But I never guessed until to-day that I was cut out to be a great artist."

"A—what?"

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"Oh, great pip!"

"A great artist!" repeated Grundy, nodding genially. "It was a lucky thing that that art critic fellow came to St. Jim's to-day. If the Head hadn't brought him round to see our work I should never have known what I had in me. I might have lived and died without the world knowing they'd had a genius in their midst, you know. Well, it's lucky I've found it out now, isn't it?"

Wilkins and Gunn looked at Grundy, and then they looked at each other. But they said nothing; they weren't in case they opened their mouths to give vent to a roar of laughter.

They understood Grundy's queer behaviour now—they understood why he wanted an easel. He had suddenly discovered he was a born artist—just as on occasions in the past he had discovered in turn that he was a born singer, a born comedian, a born musician, a born journalist, a born hypnotist, a born ventriloquist, and many, many more things too numerous to mention. Grundy was always discovering he was something new and startling. The only thing he never had discovered, and never would probably, was that he was a born idiot—a fact which was a constant matter of surprise to St. Jim's, and his two chums especially.

They blinked at him now, restraining their mirth with praiseworthy fortitude.

Grundy took their silence for admiration.

"It's queer, isn't it, what little things bring about great results," he rattled on cheerily. "I didn't like that greasy-looking art critic at first when he came this morning. But I realise now that he's quite a decent chap, and that he knows what he's talking about—knows his job, you know. You remember this morning, chaps; he picked up that sketch I was doing during drawing lesson. The Head asked him to have a look at our work. Well, he said it was wonderful, didn't he?"

"He—he was pulling your leg, you ass!" snorted Gunn, unable to restrain his emotion. "He was being sarcastic, of course. Even the Head and Linton laughed at that awful thing you'd drawn."

Grundy's face flushed, and then he regained control and smiled—pityingly. He could afford to smile at a criticism from a fellow like Gunn.

"Rot!" he smiled. "My dear man, you can't come that sort of thing on me, Gunny—I'm above it. Manton—that's the chap's name—was quite serious; he meant it. I knew he did, though you poor fools pretended he didn't—jealousy or sheer idiocy, I suppose. Anyway, I saw Manton in the quad afterwards."

"You did?"

"Yes," smiled Grundy. "We had quite a long chat. He's not a bad sort, though just a bit nosy and curious about things at St. Jim's. Still, he told me the truth. He said my work showed real genius, and that I ought to go a long way, if nobody stopped me. Well, I'm not going to allow anyone to stop me. I don't care a scrap for jealousy, or criticism, or envy, or anybody or anything. Genius goes its own way. That's me!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"That's why I wanted an easel," resumed Grundy. "I shall get a real one from Wayland to-morrow, and some paints and brushes and things. But I don't want to lose time; I want to get down to it. After all, genius means hard work as well as infinite patience. You've heard that?"

"Ha, ha—I mean, yes! Oh, yes!" choked Wilkins. "And are you starting to-night, Grundy?"

"Right now! I've borrowed this easel, and I've borrowed these paints and brushes and a palette from Kildare. He fancies himself a bit of an artist, you know," said Grundy disdainfully. "Tarring a blessed fence is more in his line."

"Does Kildare know you've got those things?" gasped Gunn.

"Eh? No! Why should he?" asked Grundy. "Think I'm the fellow to lower my dignity by asking favours of a fellow like Kildare? Rot! He ought to be jolly proud of the opportunity to lend me the things. He'll be bragging about having known me and lent me brushes and things one day. You see!"

And with that Grundy finished fixing up the easel, and crossed to a chair. On the chair was a large case. The case was open, showing tubes of paints, brushes, and a palette. Grundy started to squeeze paint from the various tubes on to the palette. He did it with a generous hand, almost emptying each tube. Then he picked up a large square of artist's prepared board, and fixed it on the easel.

"Great Scott!" breathed Wilkins. "Does that board belong to Kildare, too?"

Grundy nodded.

"I found it in his room," he said calmly. "I shall pay him for the use of it, of course. In any case it's a thundering pity to let that blundering dummy spoil a good board."

It'll do to practise on until I get some real canvases. See? I can't quite make up my mind whether to take up water-colours, or oils. I shall be good at both, of course. But it's best to stick to one line in Art. I shall practise with both until I discover just which suits my style best."

"S-sh-shall you? Oh, my hat!"

"Yes, There's another thing I've got to find out, too. I've got to discover whether my strong point is landscape, or seascape, or portrait-painting," explained Grundy. "Matter of fact I'm rather keen to do a full-size portrait of the Head in oils, and present it to the school!"

"Oh!"

"Just think of it," said Grundy enthusiastically. "Think of the honour to St. Jim's when I'm known and famous! Future generations of fellows here will be able to point it out to their parents, and say: 'That was painted by Grundy—he was once a boy here, you know!' I thought of the idea just now, and it quite took me by storm. What do you fellows think about it?"

Wilkins and Gunn did not tell him what they thought about it. Had they done so even Grundy's new-found "poise and lofty dignity" would scarcely have been strong enough to prevent ructions in Study No. 3 there and then. As it was, Wilkins could not resist saying something.

"Splendid, old man!" he gasped. "Simply ripping! I always knew you were a genius at painting noses red, and eyes black. But I never even suspected you were such a born idiot—I mean, artist! Are you going to start the Head's portrait now?"

"I'm thinking of tackling him to-morrow about it," said Grundy carelessly, having quite failed to catch the full drift of Wilkins' remarks. "I'm just going to get my hand in to-night with a landscape—I shall want a canvas for the Head's portrait, of course. Now, where's that charcoal?"

Grundy rummaged in the paintbox and produced a piece of charcoal. With this he started to sketch on the board.

"Just a little thing—an idea for a picture that occurred to me a few moments ago," he explained over his shoulder. "'The Rhyl by Moonlight!' I'm going to call it. Not necessary to do much sketching in, you know. The brush is the thing."

And Grundy sketched away vigorously and swiftly. He stood back at last, and viewed his work with half-closed eyes.

"I fancy that will do," he remarked. "Now for the real thing! You fellows just watch how I put the paint on."

Grundy picked up the palette and the brushes. Selecting a brush, he dipped it in various blobs of paint and started to work in real earnest. Wilkins and Gunn watched him.

"But what is it?" demanded Wilkins. "That lot of scribbling on the board—a jig-saw puzzle?"

"Don't talk rot, George Wilkins! Can't you see? It's what I told you—'The Rhyl by Moonlight!'"

"Oh, my hat! But what's that thing in the corner—that queer shaped thing like a bladder of lard that you're dabbing the paint on now?"

"That's the moon, of course," said Grundy witheringly. "Can't you see? You've heard of a wan moon? Well, this is a wan moon!"

"Well I suppose it can't be two moons, so it must be one," said Gunn, purposely mistaking the word. "But you never see the moon hanging from a tree, Grundy."

"Eh? Don't be an ass! That's a cloud, dummy!"

"Great Scott! I thought it was a tree, being green," said Gunn. "Great pip! If that's the Rhyl under one moon, I wonder what on earth it will look like under two moons. Can you think, Wilky?"

"I said 'wan moon,' you blithering dummy!" snorted Grundy. "Haven't you ever heard of a wan moon? It means—"

Grundy did not explain what it meant, for at that moment a hasty step sounded outside, and the door flew open, catching the support of the easel as it did so. It did not send the easel over, though it nearly did, but it sent the board over, and it fell over Grundy's face, smothering it with paint of various hues.

Grundy staggered back gasping. Then he sighted whom the newcomer was. It was Eric Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's. And Kildare was looking wrathful. Grundy stepped back and laid the palette on a chair. The look in Kildare's eye rather startled him, and he prepared for trouble.

The trouble soon came. As his eyes took in the scene, Kildare fairly gasped with wrath.

"Well—well, upon my word!" he breathed. "You—you cheeky little sweep! I heard you'd been seen coming out of my study with a board, but I never expected this. You—you daring, impudent rascal! My paints; my brushes; my board; even my dashed palette! Well, of all the nerve! You—you—"

Words failed Kildare. But actions did not fail him. He made a rush at Grundy, and that enthusiastic genius jumped

back, raising his hands in defence as he did so. Unfortunately, there was a brush, covered with paint, in his right hand. As the hand came up the brush did likewise, smothering Kildare's mouth and face with red paint.

Kildare's rush came to an abrupt termination for the time being. He staggered back, spluttering and gasping frantically. His face looked an extraordinary sight—almost as like a futuristic picture as Grundy's did.

"Oh, my hat! That's done it!" breathed Gunn.

It had. Only stopping to wipe some of the paint from his lips, Eric Kildare came on again with a rush. Fortunately, Grundy had dropped the brush now, but he was game enough. He struggled furiously—even Kildare did not awe the great George Alfred just then.

But, powerful and game as he was, George Alfred was no match for the athletic skipper of St. Jim's—nothing like a match.

There was a brief, whirling struggle, and then Grundy found himself—how he never knew—sprawling across the table top, with a grasp like a vice upon him.

"A fives-bat—sharp!" gasped Kildare.

Wilkins and Gunn understood. They jumped to obey. In any case, it was never wise to disobey Kildare. Wilkins found the fives-bat, and he handed it with a grin to the skipper.

What happened next was painfully clear to Grundy.

Kildare brought the fives-bat into play with terrific vim.

Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack!

Kildare put all he knew into each swipe, and Grundy's bowls rang far and wide. The door flew open, revealing a crowd of startled faces.

"Bai Jove! Grundy again!"

"Great pip! He's at it again!"

In Grundy's view it was Kildare who was "at it."

He fairly howled as Kildare made the dust fly from his trousers.

There came a sudden interruption, however. The grinning crowd round the doorway parted suddenly, and into the room marched Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell.

Unfortunately, he did not notice the back leg of the easel, and he suffered for the omission.

The easel had already had one shock, and it was not in a fit state of support to stand another. As Mr. Linton tripped over the support, the whole thing collapsed on top of him.

The easel caught him a glancing blow on the shoulder, and as he sat down under the impact the master gave a yelp.

"Oh, my hat!"

There was a sudden gasp of consternation. Kildare saw what had happened, and, releasing the howling George Alfred, he jumped to help the master up.

Gasping, Mr. Linton staggered to his feet with Kildare's aid. With Kildare's aid he staggered to a chair and sat down. Unfortunately, it was the chair on which Grundy had placed the paint-smothered palette!

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Cuthbert Gunn. "Now for trouble!"

Both Wilkins and Gunn had been about to shout a warning, but it was too late now, and they decided to let Mr. Linton discover matters for himself.

"Ow! Ow-ow!" gasped the master. "Kildare, I am hurt most severely. What—what has happened? Is—is Grundy responsible for this—this disgraceful disturbance?"

"I'm afraid so, sir," said Kildare, breathing rather heavily. "The young rascal had the astounding impudence to take my paints and painting materials from my study without permission. I was just punishing him for it."

"Bless my soul! He certainly deserves to be punished, Kildare. Did he actually make your face in that state, Kildare?" asked the master, turning a thunderous glance on Grundy.

"That was more of an accident than anything else, sir," said Kildare, rubbing at his face with a handkerchief.

"It is fortunate for Grundy that it was," said Mr. Linton grimly. "The boy is more trouble than all the rest of my form put together. He asked me if he could borrow the form-room easel, and I refused the request most definitely. He has, apparently, defied me and taken it without permission. This is the result. I—I have been grievously hurt, Kildare. Despite the fact that you have already punished him, I shall also punish him. Grundy!"

"Yes, sir," gasped Grundy.

"Follow me!" rapped the Shell master, rising to his feet. "I intend to punish you most severely for this escapade. Follow me!"

And Mr. Linton started for the door—taking the palette with him, the paint upon it sticking to his gown. But as he reached the doorway the palette fell off and dropped to the floor. The master heard it drop, and looked behind him.

He saw the paint-covered palette on the floor, and then his eyes beheld his paint-smothered gown.

His eyes almost goggled from his head.

"G-good gracious!" he gasped. "Grundy, you depraved young rascal! You have dared to play a rascally trick upon your Form master!"

"Look here, sir—" began Grundy warmly.

"Not another word!" thundered Mr. Linton. "It is perfectly plain to me that you placed this disgusting mess on that chair in order that I, or some other unsuspecting victim, should sit down upon it. It is a childish, disgusting trick worthy of your feeble mentality, Grundy. I will teach you that such buffoonery is not looked upon with favour in this school. Follow me!"

And, holding the paint-covered gown away from his person, Mr. Linton marched away in high dudgeon towards his study.

Grundy followed, glaring at the grinning faces of the juniors. The Shell master's study door closed upon him. And scarcely had it done so when a loud sound of beating, followed by yells of pain, floated out into the passage, proving that Mr. Linton had not even given the hapless Grundy the chance to deny having played a trick with the palette, which was certainly hard lines on Grundy.

The "genius" of the Shell did no more painting that evening. His ambitious excursions into the realms of Art had received a serious check. Wilkins and Gunn took Kildare's things back to his study, and then they told the story to Tom Merry and the rest of the juniors—a story that filled all who heard it with hilarious laughter. It was too bad of Wilkins and Gunn, considering that Grundy was their pal and study-mate. But Wilkins and Gunn could not help it. The thought of Grundy's ambitious programme, and his sublime confidence in his ability to carry it out seemed to them too rich for words. The story was soon all over the School House, and it made the house roar. It also made juniors very curious—curious to know if Grundy meant to keep it up. Certainly he had had little encouragement to do so as yet. But they knew Grundy—George Alfred was a stickler.

CHAPTER 4.

A Shopping Expedition!

"HERE we are, chaps!"

George Alfred Grundy was the speaker, and as he spoke he came to a halt outside a shop-window in Wayland.

It was the following afternoon after classes. All that day Grundy had been very gloomy and preoccupied—possibly still sore at the previous evening's fiasco; possibly because every fellow in the Lower School had made a point of chipping him about his new ambition. At all events, it had scarcely been a happy day, so far, for Grundy. He had already had several fights with various fellows who had gone just a bit too far for Grundy's "poise and dignity" with their chipping, and Grundy was looking and feeling a trifle battered and sore.

Not once that day had Grundy referred to his artistic ambitions to his chums. Yet, though Wilkins and Gunn hoped for the best, they were not at all certain that he had actually given up his idea of becoming a great artist. They knew their Grundy.

And now, as Grundy paused in Wayland High Street with that remark, they knew that he had not given up his idea at all.

For the shop Grundy had stopped outside was Framley's, the artists' colourman and picture dealer.

That afternoon Grundy had fairly rushed his chums out of the Form-room. They understood why when Grundy made the suggestion that they should go over to Wayland and have a really tip-top, slap-up tea at Bland's, returning in time for call-over.

It was a suggestion that appealed strongly to Wilkins and Gunn. Bland's was a very decent place, and George Alfred Grundy, for all his many faults, was a generous fellow who had plenty of cash, and who always did such things well.

Wilkins and Gunn had jumped at the suggestion, and having duly praised Grundy for his splendid idea, they had started off without delay for Wayland.

It had never occurred to them that Grundy had some ulterior motive in wishing to go to Wayland.

But now they knew that he had. The tea at Bland's was just a side-line, so to speak. He had suggested that simply because he knew his chums would be scarcely likely to accompany him just to visit Framley's, the artists' colourman.

"Here we are, chaps," repeated Grundy, looking eagerly into the shop-window. "You fellows just wait outside while I select the things I want. I want an easel, of course, and I want a few canvases, as well as paints and brushes. I shall want you fellows to carry some of the things. I mustn't forget turps and stuff like that, either. I've got a list here somewhere."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 945.

And Grundy fumbled in his pocket and produced a sheet of paper with a list of the things he wished to purchase on it.

Wilkins and Gunn glared at him as he scanned it over eagerly.

"Well, you rotten fraud, Grundy!" grunted Wilkins in disgust. "So this is why you wanted us to come to Wayland?"

"Eh? Of course!" said Grundy, staring. "I told you fellows yesterday that I was coming to Wayland for the things to-day. I want you fellows to help me carry the things. See?"

"Oh, blow you and your things!" growled Gunn. "Who wants to be yanking blessed easels and canvases about?"

"I don't," said Grundy calmly. "The fact is, I'm quite aware that it's beneath my dignity to carry parcels. I don't intend to carry them. I've got my position and reputation to think of. People will soon be keeping an eye on me as a coming man in the world of art. I must think of that. I brought you fellows along to carry the parcels and things. See?"

Wilkins and Gunn did see. They looked at their leader as if they would have liked nothing better than to wipe up the pavement with him on the spot.

But such a course was quite beyond their powers, two to one as they were. They had tried it on only too many times with painful results to themselves. Grundy was a handful, there was no doubt about that. Whatever sort of an ass he was with brushes and paint, he was certainly a useful man with his big fists.

"Oh, all right!" grunted Wilkins. "Let's have tea first, though, Grundy. We can come along for the things afterwards."

"We can do nothing of the sort," said Grundy sharply. "Think I'm going to risk the dashed shop being closed before we come back? Not likely! We're getting these things first. Then, if we've time, we'll go and have tea."

"If—if we've time?" muttered Gunn.

"Yes. It may take me some time to make a selection of the things I want."

"But what about tea?"

"Blow tea! Who wants tea? Think a fellow like me bothers about tea? Bah! You fellows make a chap like me sick," said Grundy bitterly. "Think of nothing but grub. No soul above your dashed physical needs. No soul for the beauties of art and nature. No longings for higher things—for culture and intellectual and artistic pursuits. Nothing but grub. Bah!"

"You burbling chump!"

"That's enough, George Wilkins. I don't wish to lose my dignity and poise, but any more cheek from you, and I'll mop the pavement up with your dashed chivvy. So mind your eyes, both of you!"

With that George Alfred marched into the shop. He left his chums looking at each other dismally. It was no good kicking against the pricks. Grundy had to have his head. After all, it was only a matter of waiting for tea a bit longer. Whether they missed call-over or not, Wilkins and Gunn were determined to have that tea now they had come. In any case, there was plenty of time.

So Wilkins and Gunn manfully restrained their impatience and hunger, and waited for Grundy. It was quite a long wait—as they had expected. But he came out at last. He was loaded up with parcels and packages.

There was a long parcel, evidently a folding easel; there was a large, oblong, flat parcel, evidently containing canvases; and there was a handsome, polished steel case, evidently containing paints, brushes, palette, and the artist's usual paraphernalia. From Grundy's pockets bulged other parcels.

"Here we are, chaps," said Grundy cheerily. "I've got practically everything I want for the present. He's ordering me another score or so of canvases. I've got three or four to be going on with. You can take the easel and canvases, Gunn, and Wilkins can carry the rest of the things. Here you are!"

Wilkins and Gunn breathed hard, but they took the things in silence. Grundy even took the smaller packages from his pockets and handed them over for his chums to carry. But even then his chums did not kick. They were thinking about tea.

"Now let's get on," said Grundy. "I'm thundering keen to get going, I might tell you. You fellows don't realise what it is to have the artistic temperament. It—it's like a fire that consumes you—with enthusiasm, you know. Come on!"

Grundy, looking very pleased with himself, started to march away. Wilkins and Gunn eyed each other significantly.

"Here, where the thump are you off to?" yelled Wilkins.

"That's not the way to Bland's, fathead!" roared Gunn.

"Who's going to Bland's?" asked Grundy, looking round.

"That's off, you fellows. I'm sorry, but there it is. We're going straight home now."

"Wha-at?"

"The fact is, you fellows," explained Grundy, "all my money's gone. I never expected those things would come to so much. As it is, I will owe Framley a couple of bob or so. Come on! Don't stand there staring like a couple of boiled owls. Get a move on!"

"Well, you—you—" Words failed George Wilkins. Cuthbert Gunn stood and stared transfixed at Grundy's cheerful, rugged features. Evidently the matter of tea at Bland's was a small matter to Grundy—a trifle light as air, as it were. But it wasn't to Wilkins and Gunn.

"Well, you—you blithering idiot!" howled Wilkins, getting it out at last. "You—you've brought us to Wayland just to carry back your dashed rubbish, you footling ass!"

"And now there's no tea!" hooted Gunn. "You ought to be put under restraint, you burbling lunatic! Paint—bah! You couldn't paint a brick wall without drowning yourself in the paint! If you think we're going to yank these things back for you, you're jolly well mistaken!"

"Let me down, would you?" he bellowed. "I'll show you what's what! Wilky, you rotter, come back!"

Wilkins came back slowly, his face glum. He could easily have got away, but he was not the sort to leave Grundy in the lurch. All ideas of tackling Grundy and rescuing Gunn vanished as he saw the wrathful gleam in Grundy's eyes.

He looked dolefully at Gunn, and Gunn—with one eye on Grundy's big fist—nodded hopelessly. Wilkins picked up his share of the packages.

"Yes, you'd better," said Grundy darkly. "Nice pair of pals, aren't you? Going to let me down, I suppose? Now, Gunny, up you get, and get hold of the rest of the stuff. Any more nonsense, mind, and I'll whop the pair of you. Now come on!"

In silence Wilkins and Gunn took charge of Grundy's things and followed that great man as he led the way to the station. They were inwardly seething with wrath, and they would cheerfully have slain Grundy on the spot—had they dared to tackle him. They reached the station, and there Grundy paused with rather an annoyed look on his face.



St Jim's Jingles!



No. 28—GERALD CUTTS, OF THE FIFTH FORM

A DASHING swell is Gerald Cutts,
Of Brummel a descendant;
He is the nuttiest of the "Nuts."

His raiment is resplendent.
He gives himself majestic airs
As through the quad he's strutting;
His lofty and superior stares
Are meant to be most cutting.

With worldly wealth he's well endowed,

His pockets gaily jingle;
With Gilmore and the "doggish" crowd

He always loves to mingle.
To "paint the town red" is his aim,
To cause some new sensation,
Which neither will enhance his name
Nor yet his reputation.

When stars are shining overhead,
And midnight storms are howling;
When all his schoolmates are abed,
Then Cutts begins his prowling.
Down to the village inn he goes
To seek his recreation;
Lucky for him no master knows
His nightly destination.



The Dandy of the Fifth.

He owns a speedy motor-bike,
Which causes great commotion;
It often crashes in a dyke.
Then Cutts needs lint and lotion.
He thinks the roads were made for him,
For his conceit is chronic;
He jeopardises life and limb,
His progress is cyclonic.

He domineers the smaller fry,
And keeps them in subjection;
In fact, when Gerald Cutts is nigh
They walk with circumspection.
But when he goes a step too far
We promptly stop the scandal;
And Cutts receives a painful jar,
Which serves him right, the Vandal.

St. Jim's would be a cleaner place
If Cutts had marching orders;
Few bigger blackguards we can trace
Within its bounds and borders.
A swaggering bully, base and bad,
We hate his brag and bluster;
He'll always be pronounced a cad
Wherever boys may muster.

NEXT WEEK:—ERNEST LEVISON, OF THE FOURTH.

"Jolly mistaken!" shouted Wilkins recklessly. "You can go to pot, you blithering, footling dud! Blow you, and blow your rotten, silly games!"

With that Wilkins threw his packages on the pavement. Gunn promptly did likewise. They started to walk away.

But they did not get far. Grundy had heard their remarks in dumbfounded and shocked amazement. It was mutiny—stark and staring mutiny. He could scarcely believe his ears or his eyes. But as his rebellious study-mates started to walk away he woke up to the reality of the situation, and he went after them like an enraged bull.

"Try those games on me, will you?" he roared. "Why, I'll smash you, you cheeky cads!"

Too late Wilkins and Gunn realised their danger, and started to run. Grundy was upon them before they had taken four strides even, and he hooked a hefty hand in Gunn's collar and brought him down with a crash. Then he shoved a big fist under Gunn's nose.

He seemed to have forgotten for once the necessity for dignity and poise in a fellow of genius.

"Blow it!" he said. "Have either of you dummies got any cash?"

Both Wilkins and Gunn shook their heads. They looked a bit startled.

"I haven't a penny, and I know Gunny hasn't," said Wilkins, in sudden alarm. "Why, you don't?"

"It's rather a nuisance!" said Grundy, frowning. "You see, I only took single tickets for us when we came. I haven't a penny, either. It means we shall have to walk back, I suppose."

"Wha-a-at?"

Wilkins and Gunn blinked at him. It was the last straw. "You—you mean to say you didn't get return tickets?"

gasped Wilkins.

"No. Nuisance, isn't it? It's going to delay my night's work. Blow it!"

And Grundy frowned again. His chums stared at him speechlessly. It was, indeed, the last straw. Waiting for Grundy outside Framley's had tired them, but they had con-

soiled themselves with the thought of the rest and gorgeous feed to come.

Now there was no rest and no feed. And they were tired and hungry. Before them lay the prospect of a weary tramp back to St. Jim's—carrying Grundy's rubbish.

It was too much for Wilkins and Gunn.

In that moment they quite lost their terror of the great Grundy. They gave each other one meaning look, and then they went for their burly study-mate.

It was a ferocious rush.

The easel clumped on Grundy's devoted head, and that "genius" howled in sheer surprise and pain. The easel was followed by the package of canvases, which also thumped on Grundy's head.

Grundy yelled again and sat down with a bump on the muddy pavement.

As he sat there Wilkins and Gunn showered the rest of the packages over his head, and took to their heels.

Grundy jumped up with a bellow of wrath and went after them like a raging bull.

He would never have caught them, however, but for a bit of bad luck that overtook Cuthbert Gunn.

Scarcely had that luckless youth gone a dozen yards when he stumbled over a stone, and went down headlong. Grundy tripped over him and sprawled over him with a gasping yell.

The heavy fall shook practically every bit of breath out of both of them, but Grundy was the first to recover himself.

He scrambled up, turning back his cuffs as he did so. His face was red with wrath. As Gunn scrambled up, gasping, George Alfred gave a roar and went for him with a rush. At the same moment, seeing Gunn's hapless plight, Wilkins came bravely to the rescue—really roused to it this time.

The next moment a terrific combat was raging in the quiet station yard.

It was very rarely that Wilkins and Gunn dared to face their high-handed leader; but they faced him now, and they put their heart and soul into the business.

Grundy nearly had his hands full—nearly, but not quite!

Desperate and determined as they were, Wilkins and Gunn soon found that they had bitten off more than they could comfortably masticate, so to speak.

For several wild and whirling moments the combat raged. A few gleeful urchins who had collected on the scene cheered the combatants on with yells of encouragement that were impartial. Their one desire was to see the fight go on as long as possible.

Before it had been in progress many moments, however, Wilkins' and Gunn's one desire was to end it quickly.

Grundy was doing his best to bring that about also.

He succeeded at last.

There was a sudden crash as Wilkins went down; and he stayed down, hugging his nose. The next moment Cuthbert Gunn had joined him on the hard cobbles. The two juniors lay there, gasping and groaning.

Grundy glared down at them. He was looking a trifle the worse for wear, but he was triumphant—as he usually was.

"There!" he panted. "Perhaps that will teach you silly dummies a lesson! I didn't want to use physical violence, but you asked for it—you forced me to it. Now come and pick those dashed things up, sharp! And let's have no more of this!"

"Wow!"

"Grough!"

Wilkins and Gunn groaned and obeyed—there was nothing else for it. They tottered back to where the packages were lying and started to pick them up. Then they followed Grundy meekly as he started on the long tramp to St. Jim's. There was no more thought of mutiny then. Wilkins and Gunn, for the time being, at all events, had had enough.

CHAPTER 5.

A Luckless Meeting!

"HALLO! What have we here?"

Gordon Gay of Rylcombe Grammar School asked the question cheerfully, as he jumped off the stile in Rylcombe Lane.

"Looks like three tramps," said Frank Monk carelessly. "Never mind 'em! Seems to me that Tom Merry and his pals aren't coming back this way, after all."

"My hat!" said Gordon Gay suddenly. "I never thought of that. They'd guess we would be waiting for 'em, of course. They must have gone back from the village through Rylcombe woods by the footpath."

"That's it!"

"What a rotten sell!" remarked Monk, in disgust.

"No, it isn't!" snapped Harry Wootton, staring along the lane. "Those chaps aren't tramps; I believe it is Merry, Lowther, and Manners, after all!"

The five Grammar School youths stared hard along the lane. Towards them three figures were ambling—seemingly

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weary and footsore by their gait. And two out of the three appeared to be loaded up with parcels. At first sight they certainly did look like tramps.

Now, however, a more careful scrutiny revealed that they were not tramps, but fellows wearing St. Jim's caps.

"Oh, good!" murmured Gordon Gay. "We'll teach dear old Merry and his merry pals to bung turnips at us! We'll!"

"But it isn't Merry's gang," said Harry Wootton, whose eyes were very keen. "It's that awful chump Grundy!"

"And Wilkins and Gunn, I bet!" grinned Tadpole.

"Well, all the more fun if it is!" grinned Gordon Gay. "Better look out for old Grundy's fists, all the same. His point-fives are not to be sneezed at, I can tell you! Dear old George Alfred! The one and only Grundy! This will be a pleasant meeting for us. Into the hedge, chaps!"

"What-ho!"

The five Grammarians shinned over the stile and hid behind a hedge, chuckling gleefully. There was always a certain amount of warfare waged between St. Jim's and the Grammar School, and just at the moment Gordon Gay & Co. were feeling particularly sore against their hereditary rivals, the "saints."

It had happened scarcely fifteen minutes ago. While strolling along the lane Cripps, in his carriers' cart, had overtaken the Grammarians. And as the cart passed them three well-known forms seated in it had risen to their feet.

Even as the Grammarians recognised them as Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Manners, a shower of small turnips had come whizzing from the cart and had rattled about the heads of the astonished and angry Grammarians.

Naturally enough, Gordon Gay & Co. had given furious chase, but to no avail. Cripps had obviously been "tipped" by the Terrible Three, for he whipped up his old horse, and the cart had rapidly bowled away out of sight in the direction of Rylcombe.

It left the Grammarians rubbing their bumps—where the turnips had found billets—and raging. But reflection had told them that Tom Merry and his chums would return sooner or later, and now they were waiting for them. And they had just come to the conclusion that their quarry had given them the slip by returning via the path through the woods, when Grundy, Wilkins and Gunn hove in sight.

The sight of these three youths quite took the edge off the Grammarians' disappointment at missing the Terrible Three, and they determined to take their vengeance out of Grundy & Co. After all, as Gordon Gay had said, Grundy himself would provide more fun. He was likely to provide more excitement, too.

The figures of the weary trio came nearer. Grundy was looking grim and firm, but his chums looked very unhappy and weary indeed.

Grundy was speaking as they came up the lane.

"Don't talk rot, George Wilkins!" he was saying wistfully. "Think I haven't eyes in my head? How could there be any fellows ahead when I didn't see them?"

"I tell you I saw them plainly somewhere about here!" said Wilkins angrily, staring into the hedge on either side of him. "They sneaked into the hedge here somewhere—four or five of them."

"I thought I saw somebody, too," said Gunn.

"Rot! Bunkum! Bosh! You're seeing things, George Wilkins!" sneered Grundy. "You're like a pair of nerry old women! Bah! I wonder how I stick you fellows as I do; I suppose it's sheer generosity on my part—the careless tolerance of genius. I'm fed-up to the chin with your grousing and grumbling! Making a dashed fuss like this over a blessed walk of four miles or so!"

"If you had to carry these things—" hooted Gunn.

"Rot! What the thump do you think I'd want with you footling asses if I couldn't make use of you? Why—Oh crumbs!"

"Look out!" yelled Wilkins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy's gasp came too late, as did Wilkins' wild yell of warning. The Grammarians came from the shelter of the hedge with a rush and surrounded them, roaring with laughter. Grundy's remarks had entertained them.

"Collar them!" roared Gordon Gay. "Ha, ha, ha! The careless tolerance of genius! Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Grammarians roared. They grabbed Wilkins and Gunn, who made no effort whatever to protect themselves. They were too weary, for one thing, and they knew it was useless against such odds, for another.

But not so Grundy.

There was nothing of the tolerant genius about Grundy the next moment.

Even as Gordon Gay ceased speaking his big fist clumped home on Gay's nose, and Gay howled and went down in the dust. The next instant Frank Monk—likewise with a wild howl—had joined him there.



"Grundy!" thundered Mr. Linton. "Follow me!" The Shell master started for the door—taking the palette with him, the paint upon it sticking to his gown. But as he reached the doorway the palette fell off and dropped to the floor. Mr. Linton heard it drop, and looked behind him. "G-good gracious!" he gasped. "Grundy, you young rascal!"

(See Chapter 3.)

"Come on!" roared Grundy defiantly. "Wilkins, Gunn, you footling funks, come on! Back me up! Take that, you Grammarian cad!"

Biff!

"Yoooooop!"

Harry Wootton took it—on the point of his chin—and bit the dust in his turn. But all three of the fallen Grammarians were up in a flash, and the next moment a wild and whirling "scrap" was in progress.

It was something like Samson and the Philistines over again.

Grundy knew as much about boxing as a tabby cat, but he made up for his lack of knowledge in that respect by a remarkable skill he had in hitting his opponent often and hard, regardless of the punishment he himself received.

The way he "piled in" to the Grammarians was a sight to see.

But it could not last—the odds were too great.

Just as Wilkins and Gunn were thinking of piling in themselves—having come to the conclusion that there was the ghost of a chance, after all—Grundy went down with a crash and with Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, and Tadpole on top of him.

He stayed down. Gasping and panting and breathing terrific threats, he sprawled in the dust, with the three Grammarians sitting on him.

"Hold him!" panted Gay. "My hat! Tie the dangerous chump up, you chaps! Phew! What a handful!"

"Lemme gerrup and I'll smash you all to little bits!" roared Grundy. "Wilkins, Gunn—Yoooooop!"

Grundy's roar ended in a yelp as Gay tapped his head on the ground.

"Silence, variet!" he gasped. "Tie him up quickly, chaps!"

"Yes, rather!"

They tore string from the parcels and tied Grundy up. It was not an easy job. But it was done at last. The fuming genius lay and glowered up at his captors in helpless wrath.

"Now the other two," grinned Gordon Gay, dabbing a streaming nose cheerfully. "Then we'll see what they've

got in those parcels. If it's grub, we confiscate it, of course. The spoils of war, you know!"

"Hear, hear!"

Hoping that the packages contained grub, the Grammarians started to tear them open. Grundy glared.

"You dare to touch those things," he shrieked frantically, "and I'll spifficate the lot of you! Oh, won't I just whop the lot of you for this! Let that dashed easel alone, Gay!"

"Great Scott! It is an easel!" remarked Gay in surprise. "What the thump does old Grundy want with an easel?"

"And paints!" grinned Frank Monk, opening the other parcel. "Look here!"

"And canvases!" chuckled Wootton major. "Great pip! They're walking studios!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay's eyes gleamed mischievously as he saw the contents of the various packages.

In addition to bumps where the turnips had struck them, the Grammarians now had other bumps and bruises where Grundy's fists had smitten them hard. They naturally were feeling keener than ever to deal with Grundy.

"Stick them up against the stile!" chuckled Gay. "I've got a wheeze, chaps! I'm not much good at painting from life, but I'm anxious to try my fist at painting on life. I'm going to try my hand on Grundy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you dare to touch my paints!" howled Grundy. "You dare—Mum-mmmmm!"

Grundy's eloquence was stopped by a tube of paint that was rammed into his mouth. He spluttered and gasped and spluttered until he got rid of the tube.

"That's just a hint of what you'll get if you start making any sort of a row," said Gordon Gay cheerfully. "Now we'll get to work!"

He grabbed the nice clean new palette and squeezed blobs of paint from various tubes on to it. Then he picked up a brush and started to paint Grundy's wriggling, working features. Every time Grundy ventured to open his mouth Gay shoved the brush of paint into it.

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Grundy gave it up at last. He remained quiet, with clenched teeth, and fuming inwardly. Gordon Gay painted his cheeks yellow, his nose red, his chin black, and gave him two circles of blue paint round each eye.

The result was surprising to say the least of it.

Grundy looked a sight for men and little fishes.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay & Co. roared with laughter. Monk and Wootton felt they could improve on Gay's handiwork, and they grabbed brushes, and started to put their own original ideas into practice by painting the faces of Wilkins and Gunn.

Like Grundy, Wilkins had started to protest at first, but he soon relapsed into grim silence—not liking the taste of paint any more than Grundy did!

It was done at last, and Gordon Gay & Co. stood back and roared at the result of their handiwork.

"Ow! Oh, you awful rotters!" gasped George Wilkins. "We—we'll pay you out for this!"

But Gay & Co. hadn't finished yet by any means. They turned the three Saints' trousers up to the knees, and they turned their jackets and caps inside out. Then, by means of a length of strong cord that had been round the easel, they tied Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn together by the necks with a yard or so of cord between them.

This done, they tied the easel—unfolded now—on to Grundy's broad back, and fastened one of the canvases to the top just over Grundy's head. On it they had written the following in red paint:

"THE THREE SAINTS.

AN ORIGINAL PAINTING.

BY

GORDON GAY!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Grammarians. "What a masterpiece!"

"Now turn them loose!" chuckled Gordon Gay. "This is where we smile, you St. Jim's bounders!"

The hapless St. Jim's juniors were turned loose. The cords round their ankles were loosened to allow them to hobble along, and then Grundy was told to lead the way towards St. Jim's. Grundy refused, with a bellow of defiance. But by means of pins gently applied to his bare calves the Grammarians persuaded him to move at last.

There was another roar of laughter from the hilarious Grammarians as Grundy led the way with his dismal and unhappy chums trailing behind him. There was no question of their refusing. Grundy went, and, being tied by the cord to his neck, Wilkins and Gunn had to go also.

They tramped away miserably, and the Grammarians followed, yelling with laughter. A sudden idea to improve their looks occurred to Gordon Gay, and he ran back for the canvases.

With his pocket-knife, he ripped a big hole in the centre of each of the three canvases, and rammed one over Grundy's head, another over Wilkins' head, and the other over the head of Cuthbert Gunn, making them look somewhat like Chinese prisoners, for the framework of the canvases rested on the shoulders of the hapless three.

If they had looked funny before they looked funnier still now.

Grundy, by this time, was almost hysterical with helpless wrath and dismay. The loss of his precious property was a serious matter enough—to Grundy. It was not so serious a matter to Wilkins and Gunn. They only thought of their hapless plight.

The Grammarians kept their victims remorselessly on the move, and when St. Jim's hove in sight along the lane Gordon Gay & Co. treated them to one last bowl of laughter, and vanished through the trees lining the roadway. They did not care to venture any closer to St. Jim's in the circumstances.

It was a dismal homecoming to Grundy & Co.

Not wanting to stay in the lane, they had nothing else to do but to hobble home, and hope devoutly that some kind friend would release them before entering the quad.

But their luck was out. They met not a soul in the lane, and when they hobbled up to the gateway at last it was to find at least a dozen fellows chatting there.

Among them were Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co., and they stared as if transfixed at the hapless three as they trailed up to the gates and hobbled through into the quad.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, adjusting his monocle more firmly into his eye in order to view the strange sight. "What—what is this wediculous sight, dear boys? Bai Jove!"

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"It's Grundy!" yelled Trimble. "He, he, he! I say, you fellows, just come and squint at Grundy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Such a dismal, extraordinary sight did the three Shell fellows make that the juniors could not help yelling with laughter.

"Never mind standing there yapping, you dashed idiots!" howled George Alfred Grundy. "Cut us loose, can't you? Oh, won't I just smash those Grammarian rotters for this?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So the Grammarians did it?" laughed Tom Merry. "Oh, my hat! You've had to pay for what we did, then. We gave them the slip by coming back through the woods. Oh, my hat!"

There was a rush of fellows from far and near to see the strange sight. Wilkins and Gunn groaned in deep bitterness of spirit.

"Let us loose, for pity's sake, Merry!" groaned Wilkins. "Oh, great pip! This is awful!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With his pocket-knife Tom Merry kindly cut the bonds of the luckless Wilkins and Gunn, and he was just about to cut Grundy's legs free, after cutting the cord round his wrists, when something happened.

Wilkins and Gunn did what they had been longing to do for the past hour.

They made a blind rush at Grundy, and that astonished youth went over with a howl and a crash.

"Now, you potty, dotty lunatic!" yelled Wilkins furiously. "You've put us through it this afternoon with your silly rot, and now we mean to put you through it! Stand away, Merry!"

Tom Merry jumped away. Wilkins and Gunn looked simply ferocious, and he was glad to jump away. The next moment Grundy scarcely knew what was happening to him.

Wilkins and Gunn were fed-up, to use a very mild term. They had had a terrible evening, and the Grammarians' little joke had proved the last straw for them. They blamed Grundy even for that. They did not stop to consider whether Grundy was a bit too much for them to handle. They just handled him.

Grundy's hands were free, but his legs were still tied. And this hampered him considerably. At all events, on this occasion Wilkins and Gunn had it all their own way.

They banged the yelling genius with his easel, and then they rolled him over and over and bumped him again and again. Grundy, in his astonished bewilderment, scarcely knew where he was or what was happening to him. He seemed helpless to defend himself. The three canvases were rammed over his head, and then Wilkins and Gunn rammed tube after tube of paint down his neck, and squeezed several of the tubes that were left over his hair and rubbed it in. Then they poured the bottle of turps and the bottle of linseed-oil over his devoted head to finish up with.

The hapless Grundy was a terrible sight by this time. But Wilkins and Gunn did not stay to view their handiwork. They bolted after that, only anxious to get out of sight of the crowd who were almost helpless with laughter.

Wilkins and Gunn vanished into the School House, and Grundy sat up dazedly and blinked about him. He was gasping and panting as if for a wager.

"Ow-ow-ow!" he gasped. "M-mum-my hat! What—what's happened? Ow-ow-ow! Grunnugh! Oh—oh crumbs! Ow! Well—grooooh!—upon my word! Those—those rotters! I—I—Where are they? Ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy staggered to his feet and blinked about him dazedly. But he saw no sign of his faithless chums. He started to stride towards the School House—forgetting his legs were still tied—and he went down again with a thump.

"Hold on, Grundy!" gasped Tom Merry, who was nearly weeping with laughter.

He cut Grundy's legs free, and Grundy, after glaring at the laughing crowd, tottered away towards the School House, groaning and limping. For once he made no effort to scatter the yelling onlookers. Like Wilkins and Gunn, Grundy was "fed-up." He had had more than enough for the time being, and his spirits were at zero.

It had certainly not been a successful shopping expedition.

CHAPTER 6.

Thwarted Genius!

WILKINS and Gunn spent more than an hour in the bath-room scrubbing frantically in a desperate attempt to get the paint off their features. And when they left that particular bath-room at last they heard Grundy still scrubbing away in the bath-room next door. Grundy had a great deal more cleaning to get through than his chums.

Wilkins and Gunn were very unhappy indeed. They had

had no tea at all—having missed tea in hall—and they were afraid to visit Study No. 3 to get any. Now the excitement was over they wondered how they had had the courage to tackle Grundy as they had done, and they were looking forward with dismal apprehension to meeting that youth.

There would be terrific trouble for them, without a doubt.

They gave their study a wide berth until prep time, and then, as on the previous day, they approached it in fear and trembling, but with the somewhat comforting reflection that Tom Merry & Co. were within earshot to render aid, if necessary.

Wilkins went first, and he pushed the door open cautiously, ready to bolt back at the first sign of trouble.

But no trouble came. Grundy was in the study certainly, and Wilkins and Gunn fairly blinked as they saw him.

He was very busy. He had his folding easel and painting materials out—at least, he had out what was left of them. Tom Merry had generously collected them from the quad and brought them up to him. On the easel was the canvas which Gordon Gay had written upon, and which was undamaged. In Grundy's hand was a brush, and in his other hand was his palette. He was busy daubing paint on to the canvas when his chums looked cautiously in.

To put it mildly, Wilkins and Gunn were staggered at the sight. To see Grundy calmly painting after all that had happened quite took their breath away. They had imagined that George Alfred—for all his doggedness—would have had enough of painting and art for one day.

Apparently, he hadn't, however.

As they stood and stared, Grundy looked round and saw them. He gave them one long, reproachful glare, and then he went on with his painting again.

It was certainly surprising, and it was reassuring.

Wilkins looked at Gunn, and then he led the way into the study—still ready to make a blind rush for the door if danger threatened.

But Grundy took not the slightest notice of them.

In silence, Wilkins and Gunn got out their books and started their prep—or pretended to do so. As a matter of fact, they could not keep their eyes off Grundy. The way he was daubing paint on the canvas was entertaining, to say the least of it. He might have been tarring a fence or blackleading a grate.

They were fascinated at the sight. Moreover, they were exceedingly curious to know what it was he was painting. It certainly resembled neither a landscape, a seascape, or a portrait, though Gunn, whose eyes were keen, fancied he detected the shape of a head amid the conglomeration of colours on the canvas.

Dab, dab, dab! Flop, flop, flop!

Grundy wielded the paint-brush vigorously. As in everything else, George Alfred was very generous with the paint. For some minutes the only sounds in the study were the flopping and dabbing of the brushes and the rattling of the easel under the onslaught. It was plain to Wilkins and Gunn that Grundy intended to treat them with icy contempt and disdain as befitting a genius.

But at last Wilkins could stand it no longer. He was burning to know what Grundy was supposed to be painting.

"Grundy, old man," he began hesitatingly, "I wish you'd let us see some of your work, old chap. It looks ripping from here!"

"Tophole!" said Gunn.

Wilkins' crafty intention was to please Grundy, and put him in a good humour right away. It was always a very simple matter indeed to "butter-up" George Alfred. It succeeded now. Grundy had intended never to speak to his chums again. He had intended to ignore their existence completely.

But he was glad when Wilkins spoke. As a matter of fact, he was longing to ask them what they thought of his work. But pride had kept him silent.

Now Wilkins had actually saved him from having to lower his dignity by "climbing down." Not only that, he had spoken words of praise—words which were backed up by Gunn also.

Grundy forgot his wrongs and his heart warmed towards his study-mates.

He looked round at them with a satisfied grunt.

"So you think that, do you?" he said modestly. "Well, I fancy it isn't so bad myself. Of course it isn't quite finished yet. It just wants a bit of touching up. Some fellows would take weeks doing a portrait like this."

"A—a portrait?" murmured Gunn. "Oh, my only—Ahem! Ah! Exactly, Grundy, old man! Months, I should think!"

"Years, in fact!" added Wilkins.

"Well, I suppose you chaps are right there," said Grundy patronisingly. "I've done this in less than an hour. What do you fellows think about that?"

"Great!" said Wilkins enthusiastically.

"Wonderful!" agreed Gunn, winking at his chum. "I'm

blessed if I know how you do it, old man. I suppose it just comes."

"That's just it," said Grundy, quite genial now. "It just comes; no good trying to force inspiration, you know. Even genius strikes a snag now and again. Another time I might have spent weeks on this, and then not got it quite as I've got it now. I fancy the Head will be pleased with this."

"The—the Head!" gasped Wilkins.

"The—the Head!" gasped Gunn, forgetting himself. "Is that the—the Head?"

Grundy frowned and looked hard at Gunn.

"Look here," he said warmly. "Are you fellows blind, or what? Can't you thumping well see it's the Head?"

"Oh! Ah! Yes; quite so!" said Gunn hurriedly, stepping nearer, and peering at the conglomeration of paint.

"It—it sort of dazed my eyes at first—the light, I suppose. I see it now, of course. Splendid, old chap—simply splendid!"

"A perfect likeness," said Wilkins, adding, under his breath, "of an explosion! It beats me how you do it, old chap!" he added aloud.

"Beats me hollow!" agreed Gunn admiringly. "If—if we'd only realised what a genius you actually were, old man, that affair this afternoon would never have happened."

Grundy frowned slightly.

"Oh, well, I think I can afford to overlook that," he said loftily. "It's lucky all my paints weren't mucked up, though. I've got enough to be going on with, as I bought a good stock of everything. I shall have to get some more canvases to-morrow, of course. It might have been worse. I've finished the Head's portrait, anyway," he added, smiling at the canvas. "I sha'n't need a canvas for the rest of my night's labours. And that's where I shall need the help of you fellows."

"Oh!" Wilkins and Gunn looked uneasy.

"It's like this," explained Grundy, as they stared at him. "I'm not at all satisfied with those dashed portraits in the governors' board-room. You know them—those rotten full-length portraits of blessed old boys, and thumping past headmasters. To an artistic fellow like me they're a constant source of irritation. There isn't a single one that's worth the frame they're stuck in. They're utter rubbish—hideous monstrosities!"

"But—but they're all good ones, painted by well-known artists!" stammered Gunn.

"Rot! They're hideous! They're not Art at all! I wouldn't have had the nerve to put my name to one of them," said Grundy disdainfully. "There isn't one of them that I couldn't make passable, though, with a few skilful strokes of the brush. I've just been looking at them. I was thinking of asking the Head to get rid of the whole lot, and let me replace them with works of my own. But it struck me he might think it cheek."

"He—he might!" agreed Wilkins, with a gasp.

"That's just what I thought, Wilky. He doesn't know what I can do," explained Grundy. "I've got a better idea. I'm not going to say anything to the Head at all. I'm just going to alter them on my own with a few strokes of my brush. I could make the lot masterpieces in a few minutes. Then I'll ask him to look at them and tell me what he thinks. If he's anything but a born idiot he'll see the difference at once, and he'll acknowledge that the hand of a master has been at work—like that painter chap Murillo and his slave, you know. See?"

"I'll just run along to the Head's study with this portrait now," said Grundy briskly, taking down the canvas from the easel. "I shall just slip it on his desk and let him find it there. I sha'n't make known who the artist is until I've done this other little job. He'll get a surprise—what?"

"No—no doubt about that."

"I'm doing him a thumping big honour if he only knew it," said Grundy. "I sha'n't suggest where he shall hang it, but I hope he hangs it in Big Hall and not in his study. I'd like all the fellows to be able to look at it at any time when they wish. It'll be an inspiration to them to hitch their wagons to a star, as that chap Napoleon said."

Wilkins and Gunn said nothing; they just gazed at the complacent George Alfred. Curiously enough they were both wondering the same thing—what Grundy was doing outside a home for idiots.

Luckily Grundy did not guess their thoughts.

"You fellows wait here while I run along with this," he said, covering the portrait over gently with a piece of brown paper. "Then I shall want you two to keep cave outside the board-room, while I correct the errors of outline and colouring, etc., in those rotten portraits."

With that, Grundy hurried from the room. His chums

(Continued on page 16.)

THE St. Jim's News



EDITORIAL!

By
Tom Merry.



SPRING SPORTS!

By
Dick Brooke.

SPRING is here—the season of smiles and sunshine and spring-cleaning—the happy time when birds do sing "Hey-ding-a-ding-ding!" Though, personally, I've never yet heard a bird sing like a telephone-bell! But perhaps they used to in Shakespeare's time.

Being an editor, I am only too painfully aware of the fact that spring has arrived. I do not need to go prim-rosing in Rylcombe Woods to be aware of it. I do not need to glance from my study window at the old elms in the quad, which are dressed in their new leaves. I do not even need to look at the calendar!

The first harbinger of spring, to me, was Skimpole of the Shell. Skimmy sent along a spring poem, about two hundred stanzas long, entitled, "An Ode to a Blooming Crocus." It was a terrible perpetration, and it started something like this:

"When the breath of dawn awoke us,
Forth we went to view the crocus."

Those two lines were sufficient for me! I instructed my "sub," Monty Lowther, to return the poem to its author, with regrets that it was several miles too long for publication. On the back of the rejection-slip Monty wrote the following:

"If with merriment you'd choke us,
Send more stanzas to a crocus!"

Skimmy, however, sent no more poetic effusions—for which I was truly thankful!

But Skimpole isn't the only spring poet at St. Jim's. Other brains and pens were busy, and a shower of spring sonnets descended upon my hapless head. They fell as thick and fast as "autumnal leaves that strew the brooks in Vallombrosa."

It's a curious thing, but fellows who are quite sane and normal during the other seasons of the year, suddenly burst into poetry when spring comes. Before me, on my desk, are odes to daffodils, and violets, and crocuses, and nearly all the flowers that bloom in the spring, tra-la-lal! Of course, I have had to reject the whole hotch-potch of them. This is a schoolboy journal, not a flower-garden!

"Where are the songs of spring?" inquires Kents. In my wastepaper basket, most of 'em. And the remainder, I suppose, are being inflicted upon other unhappy editors, who have done nothing to warrant such scurvy treatment.

Apart from the spring poet nuisance, however, spring is a ripping season, for it brings the outdoor sports in its train—cross-country running, and cycling, and boating, and all the other delights of the great out-of-doors.

In a few weeks' time we shall be having the great annual sports tournament between School House and New House; and already the rival athletes have started to go into training. School House generally manage to bag the honours; which is only "wight and pwopah," as Gussy would say. But there are some mighty sportsmen in the New House, and Figgins, Redfern & Co. will make us fight every inch of the way. I shall hope, in due course, to publish a special number dealing with the strenuous inter-House tussles on running-track and river.

TOM MERRY.

Supplement 1.

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A'S for the ANGLER who sits by the Rhyl;
He started this morning—he's sitting there still!
B's for the BOATRACE, a stern Spartan tussle,
So "Row, brothers, row!" and exert every muscle!

C is for CYCLING, so spring-clean your jigger,
And pedal down byways with vim and with vigour!

D is for DRAUGHTS, by the Common-room fire,
I much prefer pastimes that make you perspire!

E is for EXERCISE—games of all kinds,
To strengthen our muscles, while resting our minds.

F is for FOOTER, both Rugger and Soccer;
The chap who won't play it is clean off his rocker!

G is for GOLF, among bracken and gorse,
The masters all play as a matter of "course"!

H is for HOCKEY, a popular game,
Unless you are languid, or lazy, or lame!

I's for the IDLE, the slackers like Racke,
Who seldom are seen upon river or track.

J is for JUMPING, high into the air,
A feat which is truly a "spring-time" affair!

K is for KIT-CAT, an old-fashioned game,
Which seems, in late years, to have fallen from fame.

L is for LEAP-FROG, enjoyed by the fags;
It's good for their bodies, but ruins their "bags"!

M is for MARBLES, a juvenile game;
The mighty Sixth-Formers would find it most tame!

N is for NAP, which is barred at St. Jim's;
Yet Racke & Co. play it—'tis one of their whims.

O's for the OBSTACLE-RACE—it's immense!
Some flounder and fall at the very first fence!

P is for PUNTING—it's just like a dream,
To laze on the cushions when gliding downstream!

Q's for the QUADRANGLE, sunny and bright,
Where punting a football's our greatest delight.

R is for RUNNING, beloved by the nimble,
But hated by overfed slackers like Trimble!

S is for SCULLING, which strengthens the limbs
Of hardy young sportsmen who hail from St. Jim's!

T is for TENNIS, most topping of sports,
With Arthur Augustus as King of the Courts!

U's for the UMPIRE in any dispute;
When he gives his decision the players are mute.

V is for VAULTING—a run and a leap,
Then "over the top," to descend in a heap!

W's for WRESTLING, with arms interlocked;
A jolly good pastime, except for the crooked!

X is for NYSTUS—a sort of a gym
Greek athletes once used for their exploits of vim.

Y is for YACHTING, upon the 'blue seas;
We must wait till the yac for pleasures like these!

Z is the ZEAL which we always display
When pitching whole-heartedly into the fray!



SPRING — CLEANING for KNOX!

By
Wally D'Arcy.

KNOX of the Sixth wanted his study spring-cleaned. Being an obliging sort of fellow, I said I would devote the next half-holiday to the task. Being also a long-suffering fag, who had received more kicks than pence while in the service of Knox, I determined to spring-clean his study very thoroughly—so thoroughly, in fact, that he wouldn't recognise the place when he saw it afterwards!

When Wednesday came Knox went off for the afternoon. His parting words to me were:

"Go ahead with the spring-cleaning, young D'Arcy. I shall expect my study to look a different place when I come back!"

"All serene, Knox," I said. "I promise you it shall look very different!"

When Knox had gone I enlisted the help of my two faithful henchmen, Curly Gibson and Jameson. We put on our shabbiest suits and some leather aprons and got busy.

The arrangement was that I was to sweep the chimney and Gibson was to whitewash the ceiling, while Jameson just portered around and "tidied up" generally.

There was no sweep's broom available,

but a map-pole served as a substitute. Knox has often called me a cheeky young sweep, and I meant to live up to my reputation. Thrusting the map-pole up the chimney, I poked and prodded, and a black avalanche of soot came tumbling down into the fireplace and started to spread over the study in a cloud.

A professional chimney-sweep always has the furniture covered with newspapers before starting operations, but I couldn't bother about such petty details.

Meanwhile, Curly Gibson, perched on a pair of steps, was giving the ceiling a generous coat of whitewash, and Jameson, who was standing underneath, got a generous baptism of it, into the bargain!

For some moments it simply snowed whitewash, and Jameson was converted into a sort of snow man. In striking contrast, I was as black as a nigger minstrel. Jameson blinked at me through the whitewash, and I blinked at Jameson through the soot, and we both howled with merriment.

"You look awfully white, old man!" I gurgled. "Feeling queer?"

"And you're looking black!" chuckled Jameson. "Are you in a temper?"

"No; but I reckon Knox will be when he sees the results of our labours!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox's study was already showing

startling signs of having been "spring-cleaned." Whitewash and soot were everywhere—on the carpet, on the table, on the chairs, and on the pictures. In fact, we had given the study a new colour scheme—of black and white!

Knox had said that he would expect his study to look a very different place when he came back, and what right had we, a trio of humble fags, to disappoint him?

I continued to scour the chimney until it was clear of soot, and Curly Gibson continued with his slap-dashing until the whitewash pail was empty. Meanwhile, Jameson had been "tidying up," but instead of making order out of chaos he had made chaos out of order! The furniture was all heaped together in a disorderly pile, and it really began to look as if Knox's study had been raided by the Vandals! There were pools of whitewash on the floor, and a swarm of sooty specks hung in the air.

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" gasped Curly Gibson, getting down from his perch and surveying the scene. "What will Knox say?"

"We sha'n't be here to listen to his few kind words and to receive his friendly pats on the back," I replied. "In fact, I think we'd better skedaddle now, while the going's good."

We scuttled away to the nearest bailiroom to remove the traces of our toil.

Knox came in an hour later, and when he saw the state of his study he had about half-a-dozen fits rolled into one, and then started out in search of the spring-cleaners armed with a cricket-stump. But we were jolly careful to give Knox a wide berth for the rest of the day; and on the following day he had to have his study spring-cleaned to remove the effects of the previous spring-cleaning!

Kildare got to hear of the matter, but he had no sympathy for Knox. He told him that if he wasn't such a tyrant to the fags such things would never happen. Which is quite true.



WHEN EASTER COMES!

How a few St. Jim's celebrities
intend to spend their Holidays.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY:

Eastah comes but once a yah, deah boys, an' when it comes it's up to us to make the most of it. Personally, I should like to pop across to New York, in ordah to studey the latest styles in Amewican suits. Just as Pawis is supposed to be the centre of feminine fashions, so New York is supposed to be the most up-to-date place for male clobber. Can't you just pictuhal me stwuttin' down Bwoadway in a pair of baggy Amewican bags, an' a perfectly cut coat, an' a toppah made for a millionaire? I wathah think I should make a gweat sensation in New York, deah boys; in fact, I should fairly set the place alight, bai Jove! (Then you'd be arrested for arson.—Ep.)

BAGGY TRIMBLE:

I shall try to get round my pater—not an easy matter, bekawse of his circumferense!—to take me over to Parris for Easter. I can speak French fewently, so I shouldn't be like a stranger in a strange land. If I saw the notice outside a shop, "Ici on parle Anglaise," I should know it meant, "Finest ice-cream sold here," and I should trot inside! But what I should enjoy most would be the meals at the hotel. They know how to feed you in France! The Englishman is content with a mizerable four-course dinner—soop, ontray, joint, and sweet—but in Parris every meal consists of about twenty courses! Monty Lowther says that frogs and snails are inclooded in the menu, but that's all tommy-rot. Fried frogs and stewed snails went out of fashion long ago! If only I can persuade the pater to take me to Parris for Easter, I shall come back to St. Jim's with some flesh on these frail limbs of mine!

AUBREY RACKF:

If all goes well, I shall be dashing across to the Riviera for Easter with a few swagger

pats, and we hope to spend several enjoyable days gambolling at Monte Carlo.

(Gambolling outside the Casino, or gambolling inside it?—Ep.)

HERBERT SKIMPOLE:

I am hoping to take a trip to Colney Hatch this Easter, in order to see the place where Professor Balmcyrumptet, my favourite author, lived and died. It should be a most interesting and enjoyable experience.

(Mind they don't detain you there as an inmate, Skimpy!—Ed.)

MR. HORACE RATCLIFF (unofficial):

Being a confirmed pessimist, who looks only on the dark side of life, I shall spend the Easter holiday grouching on the moors!

PATRICK REILLY:

Shure an' begorrah, I shall spend me Easter holidays intoirally in that little bit of heaven across the water. Kildare of the Sixth is also spending Easter in Ould Oireland, and we shall travel together as far as Dublin.

FATTY WYNN:

I have been trying to persuade Figgins and Kerr to come home with me for Easter to my little native village of Llanfair-ymaestegogyscoed, but for some reason or other the very name of the place seems to have put them off! What does the name of a place matter so long as they feed you well while you are staying there? Anyway, I'd rather spend Easter in the Land of Leeks than in the Land of Cakes, even though the latter sounds more appetising!

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GRUNDY THE ARTIST!

(Continued

from

page 13.)

looked at each other. They were too overcome with emotion to speak for a while. Then Wilkins exploded.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That started Gunny off, and the two of them roared. They were still roaring when Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Manners came along the passage. They stared curiously at Wilkins and Gunny. They had been expecting for the last hour to hear Wilkins and Gunny roaring in a different manner.

"Hallo! What's the giddy joke?" exclaimed Tom.

"Grundy!" choked Wilkins.

"Yes; but he always was a joke. What the—"

"Tell him, Gunny!" gasped Wilkins. "I can't—I shall burst if I do! Ha, ha, ha!"

Cuthbert Gunn controlled himself with an effort, and told what Grundy had done, and was about to do. Tom Merry whistled long and loud—too alarmed to laugh.

"Pshaw! You—you mean to say the silly dummy is going to play tricks with those portraits?" he gasped, in horror. "Why, they're worth hundreds of quids, I should think! They're paintings that have been bequeathed to the school at various times. Oh, my giddy aunt! We must stop the awful ass!"

"I know. But we've scrapped with the awful idiot enough for one day," grumbled Wilkins ruefully. "I'm leaving him alone. He ought to be stopped, though. He's heading for the high jump with a rush!"

"Leave him to us, then," said Tom Merry grimly. "I'll get Blake and his lot on the job, too. Is he coming back here?"

"Yes. He's taken the—the awful thing he's painted to the Head's study. You fellows should just see it. The Head will have a dozen fits when he sets eyes on it. And when Grundy tells him it's actually supposed to be a portrait of himself, he'll either expire or make Grundy expire!"

"Oh, my hat! Come on, you fellows!" gasped Tom Merry.

He rushed away to the Fourth studies, and his chums followed, both of them grinning. They saw the funny side of Tom didn't.

In a few moments Tom was explaining the trouble to the astounded chums of the Fourth.

Blake, Herries, D'Arcy and Digby listened, and then they yelled with laughter.

"It's funny enough, I know," said Tom Merry. "But it's also jolly serious. If those portraits are ruined it means a loss for the school, chaps. Besides, we must save even that born idiot from getting himself sacked. Come and help us, for goodness' sake! We could handle him ourselves, but it'll be easier and safer with a crowd."

"Ha, ha! All right, we'll come," was Blake's laughing reply. "Come on, chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove! That fellow Gwunday is the limit, you know!"

There was a rush from the study, led by Tom Merry. The juniors soon reached Grundy's study, only to find it empty. There was no sign of Grundy or his study-mates. Tom Merry gave just one glance inside, and then he started off again with a rush for the board-room.

This was almost as sacred an apartment as the Head's study, and as he reached the door Tom Merry hesitated. While he hesitated a voice came from the room—Grundy's voice.

"Don't talk rot, George Wilkins. Think I don't know what I'm doing? Rot! Clear out, the pair of you, then, and don't try to put me off my stroke."

"But you'll be sacked, you fool!" shrieked Wilkins. "The Head—"

"Rot! Don't I keep telling you that the Head will be jolly glad and proud when he sees what I've done! What—"

ever else the Head is, he isn't a jealous sort, and he'll have to admit I've given these portraits the touch of a master hand they needed."

"But—but—"

"Dry up!" roared Grundy in great exasperation. "If you grab at me like that, Cuthbert Gunn, I'll dot you in the eye with this brush! Now keep quiet and watch. It needs a steady hand and a cool head for this job."

There was the sound of a chair creaking, and Tom Merry waited to hear no more. He dashed into the room with his chums at his heels.

They found Grundy standing on a chair. In one hand he held his palette and in the other a paint-brush. He was just reaching up to dab a blob of paint on the face of one of the portraits which were in huge, gilt frames.

Tom reached him at the same moment that Wilkins and Gunn wrenched frantically at his arm, and the next moment Grundy went flying off the chair as Tom charged desperately.

There was a fearful crash and a still more fearful howl as Grundy went over with the chair, and with Wilkins. Gunn and Tom Merry sprawling over him.

"Collar him!" panted Tom. "Collar the silly fool, for goodness' sake!"

In a flash Blake and the others were on the spot, and there followed a whirling struggle.

"Leggo, you jealous rotters!" roared Grundy. "Why, I'll smash you to little bits, Tom Merry! Ow! Blake, you cad—Yarrah!"

Grundy roared as his paint-brush was jabbed into his face. He struggled frantically and furiously.

"Boys!"

It was a deep, scandalised voice from the doorway, but the struggling boys did not hear it. They were too busy trying to hold Grundy.

"Leggo!" roared Grundy furiously. "I tell you I'm going to touch up those dashed portraits, and you won't stop me, you jealous rotters! If you stop me now I shall do it some other time! Leggo! I'll jolly well—Yoooop!"

Grundy wailed frantically as Tom Merry banged his head on the floor. He stopped struggling then, and in the lull that followed the juniors heard the familiar voice of their headmaster.

"Boys! How—how dare you! Bless my soul! This—is this beyond all reason! Boys!"

The boys jumped up from Grundy as if they had been suddenly electrified. The Head strode into the room, his brow thunderous. He blinked at the scene in astounded anger.

He gave a sudden jump as he saw the paint-brush still clutched in Grundy's hand, and the palette lying on the floor. Dr. Holmes' eyes nearly started from his head.

"Boys! Grundy!" he thundered. "Is it possible—can it be possible that you seriously meant what you said a moment ago—that you proposed to interfere with—with those portraits?"

Grundy staggered to his feet. He was angry—very angry—but he saw no reason why he should deny what he had yelled out a moment ago, and which the Head had obviously overheard. He was not a fibber, and in any case he fancied he could easily make the Head see reason.

"It's quite true, sir," he panted breathlessly, glaring round at the horrified juniors. "I was just going to put those portraits right, when these asses—I mean, these fellows—stopped me."

"You—you were going to do what?" stuttered the Head.

"I was just going to touch those portraits up," said Grundy modestly. "You see, I've discovered I'm a born artist, sir. I've discovered my life work at last. I wasn't going to disclose my secret yet. I was going to alter those portraits and let you find out for yourself that a master hand had been at work on them."

"Grundy!"

"It's like this, sir," said Grundy. "These awful portraits have offended my artistic eye for a long time now. The colouring's wrong, the outlines are wrong; the figures are out of per-perspective and proportion; everything about 'em's wrong. I was going to put them right with a few deft strokes of my brush."

"Grundy!" gasped the Head. "Boy—"

"But these fellows chipped in and stopped me," went on Grundy, looking reproachfully and pityingly at the juniors. "I hope you'll forgive them, sir. After all, they don't realise what—"

Grundy paused, struck by something in the Head's eye. It was a glint that usually struck terror into the hearts of wrongdoers. It rather startled Grundy now.

"Grundy!" gasped the Head in a terrible voice. "You—you utterly absurd and wicked boy! You are the most obtuse and troublesome boy I have ever had under my charge! I—I can scarcely believe it possible that you would be so incredibly foolish and wicked as to dare to touch those valuable portraits! I—I—"

Words failed the Head for the moment, but he soon recovered himself and went on, controlling his voice with an effort.

"I have just been to my study," he went on, with icy calmness. "I found on my desk a canvas daubed with paint—a hideous and abominable perpetration. I was on my way to speak with Mr. Railton in regard to it. Are you the wretched individual who has dared to place such a scandalous and hideous monstrosity on my desk, Grundy?"

Grundy almost fainted. This was scarcely the praise or gratitude he had expected. It was really too much!

"I—I placed a portrait on your desk, of course, sir," he said faintly. "But—"

"You insolent, impudent boy!"

"Oh, really, sir!" remonstrated Grundy indignantly. "That's a bit thick, isn't it? Nobody can deny that it's a speaking likeness of you, sir!"

"A—speaking likeness of me!" gasped the Head. "Bless my soul! This—is this too much! You—you dare to suggest that—that that hideous daub of paint is a—speaking likeness of me, Grundy? You insolent young rascal! I have never been so insulted in my life by any boy! I—I—"

Again words failed the Head. He glowered at the astonished George Alfred, and then he pointed to the door with a finger which trembled with the wrath that held him.

"Go!" he gasped. "Go to my study at once! I—I will deal with you there, Grundy!"

"But—but, sir—"

"Go!"

It was almost a bellow. Grundy went. Without a second glance at the staring, alarmed juniors, the Head followed him grimly. The juniors trooped out of the board-room in scared silence. Arthur Augustus broke it.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Isn't Grundy the limit? I'm afraid he's for it, dear boys."

And the "dear boys" agreed with Arthur Augustus there. But even if any of them had felt any doubts on the point the weird sounds of woe that floated out from the Head's study some moments later soon settled them. Grundy was undoubtedly "getting it." And though all the juniors agreed that Grundy had fairly asked for it, they felt very sorry for him for all that. Their sorrow did not help the hapless Grundy much. He was scarcely seen by anyone again until bedtime, and when he was seen he was limping, and he looked very subdued indeed.

There was no cause for wonder at that circumstance, for Grundy had spent a very exciting day. But whether he was cured as well as subdued still remained to be seen.

CHAPTER 7.

With Canvas and Easel!

"IT'S Wednesday to-day," remarked George Wilkins after dinner the next day. "What are we going to do with ourselves, Grundy, old man?"

Grundy grunted. Since the previous day's adventures Grundy had been very grumpy and very "short" with his chums. He felt they had let him down badly, and he was not inclined to be very genial with them.

But Wilkins and Gunn were keenly anxious for him to be genial. They were both in that unfortunate state known as "stoney," and as Grundy had received a remittance of a fiver from his uncle that same morning they were very eager indeed to be on more friendly terms with him.

Had Grundy not received that remittance just then Wilkins and Gunn would not have, without a doubt, asked that question at all. They would have given Grundy a wide berth and cleared off somewhere on their own for the afternoon—especially as he was in a grumpy mood.

But that fiver made all the difference.

Grundy was in a grumpy mood, however, and his study-mates found it difficult to make him genial. They had even asked him to paint something for them to hang up in the study, but Grundy had only looked at them suspiciously.

He grunted now as Wilkins asked the question.

"You fellows can go and eat coke for all I care," he snapped. "I've got something better on this afternoon than fooling about with kids' games. I'm going out painting, if you want to know."

Wilkins and Gunn were not surprised at that reply—they had expected it. They had wondered the night before whether Grundy had had enough of his new craze. But, having heard him early that morning ordering a fresh supply of canvases from Wayland, they realised that Grundy had by no means had enough.

"I've got an idea, Grundy," said Wilkins enthusiastically. "As a matter of fact, I was going to suggest that you should come out painting this afternoon. Now, what about taking a boat and a picnic basket up the river? You could bring

your easel and things and paint while we take it easy. How's that?"

Grundy fairly beamed. He had not expected such enthusiasm from his chums.

"That's not a bad idea, Wilky," he admitted, nodding. "It's mild weather, though it's a bit early for a picnic. Still, we'll do it. Jove! I'm jolly glad you thought of that, Wilky. Yes, we'll do it. You chaps can be getting the grab while I get my painting tackle ready. Luckily, Frankley's sent my canvases by return—jolly decent of them, I thought. Back up!"

"Yes, rather!"

Wilkins and Gunn winked at each other as Grundy generously handed them a couple of Treasury notes. Then they left the study. It did not take them long to make their purchases, and by the time they had a basket packed Grundy was ready with his easel and painting materials. On the best of terms now, Grundy and Co. walked down to the boat-house, Grundy with his easel and tackle strapped on his broad back, and Wilkins and Gunn carrying the picnic basket.

The river was shining under the spring sun, and quite a lot of fellows were getting boats out. Grundy & Co. were soon afloat, and, with Grundy steering, Wilkins and Gunn sent the boat along at an easy, comfortable pace. They stopped about a couple of miles up river, and pulled the boat into the bank.

The spot they had chosen was a green meadow, sloping gently down to the water's edge. Just above the rising ground showed the red roofs and chimneys of a farm, with trees rising beyond, the bend of the river showing like a streak of silver alongside.

"Just the very spot," said Grundy with satisfaction. "I'll make a jolly good picture out of this. You fellows can keep out of the way and leave me to it. To do good work intense concentration is required."

Wilkins and Gunn were only too thankful to keep out of the way—especially of Grundy's voice. All the way up the river Grundy had been expounding his theories of Art, and Grundy's chums were already weary of the subject. But they had borne it manfully, knowing they would get their reward when it was time to open the picnic-basket.

But it was too early for tea yet, and Wilkins and Gunn spread a macintosh down on the grass, and sprawled at ease while Grundy put up his easel and got his paints out.

It was a peaceful scene, and three youths who were strolling along the towing-path stopped to look at it. They wore Grammar School caps, and had they only seen them Grundy & Co. would have at once recognised Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, and Harry Wootton, and would have sensed danger at once also.

But Wilkins and Gunn had a copy of the "Magnet" between them, and they were too engrossed in the paper to notice the Grammarians, while Grundy was concentrating on his painting.

"Just look at the dear man," murmured Gordon Gay. "Isn't he a dream? Look at the way he's dabbling the paint on—like a chap whitewashing a ceiling! I've heard the silly duffer fancy himself a born art—My hat! They've got a picnic-basket!"

"Jove! So they have!"

The Grammarians' eyes glistened at sight of the basket, and Gordon Gay chuckled.

"I've got an idea, you fellows," he said. "What about collaring that basket?"

"No fear!" said Harry Wootton. "There's three of them, and Grundy's a handful for two of us—more, in fact! Let sleeping dogs lie!"

"But I tell you—" began Gordon Gay, and then his jaw dropped, and his eyes seemed to be riveted on something that was happening in the next meadow. Monk and Wootton followed their leader's gaze.

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" breathed Monk.

There in the meadow adjoining the one in which Grundy was blissfully painting, was a large, fierce-looking goat. The animal had obviously broken loose from its tethering-rope, for a portion of it trailed behind it as it raced, with lowered head, straight towards Grundy and his easel.

"Ye gods!" whooped Gordon Gay, recovering from his astonishment. "Billy's broken loose!"

"And that as Grundy is for it!" chuckled Wootton.

Gordon Gay started.

"What a bit of luck for us!" he murmured. "That hamper's as good as ours. Don't tell you chaps"—as Monk and Wootton were about to give Grundy a warning. "We'll lift that thumping hamper while Grundy's busy with Billy, the goat!"

"Poor old Grundy!" said Gordon Gay, with a grin. "This is where we smile."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Come on! Sharp's the word!"

The Grammarians rushed back along the inside of the hedge, leaving the goat to carry out his part of the scheme. And the billy-goat carried out his work well.

So deep in concentration was Grundy that, not until the goat was a few yards away did he hear anything. Then suddenly he looked round, leaping to his feet with a wild yell as he did so.

Wilkins and Gunn, startled by the yell, leaped up just in time to see the goat charge with lowered head at Grundy.

Crash!

For a brief moment the goat, the easel, and Grundy were mixed up in a whirling sort of catherine-wheel, and then the dishevelled form of Grundy emerged from the melee and dashed headlong for the boat.

With Grundy's painting jammed over his horns, the goat gave a sort of grunt and went after him. Grundy had almost reached the boat when the goat caught him up, and what happened next Grundy only guessed afterwards.

Biff!

Like a shot from a cannon, Grundy flew through the air, and, missing the boat by inches, he went into the river with a terrific splash.

The goat slithered down the slight slope, and stopped his headlong rush within a foot of the river. Then, without another glance at Grundy, who was floundering and yelling in four feet of water, he turned and went full tilt for Wilkins and Gunn, who had just rushed up to see what had happened to Grundy.

These juniors wished they had bolted and saved themselves instead the next moment, as they raced away, with the goat charging at their heels.

Never had Wilkins and Gunn moved so swiftly in their lives before as they tore up the meadow with the goat after them.

And as they went, Gordon Gay & Co. emerged from behind the hedge, and, racing along the towing-path, they snatched up the basket and rushed it to the boat.

Just as they reached it Grundy was climbing up the bank, and at sight of them he gasped and hesitated. The hesitation was fatal.

Gordon Gay pushed his head back gently, and Grundy vanished into the river again, with a wild howl of rage—a howl that ended in a spluttering gurgle.

Roaring with laughter, the triumphant Grammarians dropped the basket into the boat and jumped in after it. Then, as Frank Wootton pushed off, Gay and Monk picked up the sculls and started to pull away. Before the hapless Grundy had scrambled out of the river again the boat had vanished round the bend, and their yells of laughter died away.

"Ow! Gug-gug-gug!" gasped Grundy. "Oh, my hat! Oh, the rotters! Phew! Oh crumbs!"

In a state of mind that bordered on frenzy the luckless Grundy staggered up the bank, and looked about him—ready to dive back into the river at sight of the terrible billy-goat.

But there was no sign of the goat or of Grundy's chums, Wilkins and Gunn.

"Oh, my only hat!" panted Grundy, squeezing the water out of his trousers and jacket. "Oh, those beastly Grammarians have done us again! Oh—oh crumbs! Ow-ow!"

Gasping and groaning, Grundy stood and glared about him, but not for long. Though a mild enough day, the river was chilly, and Grundy began to shiver. His chums had gone, the boat had gone, and the picnic-basket, with the grub inside, had gone, and Grundy decided he had better go also unless he wanted to catch his death of cold.

So Grundy gathered together his painting materials—luckily the easel had escaped damage by a miracle—and, leaving the torn canvas where it lay, Grundy folded up his

easel and closed his paint-box, and, like the Arabs of old, he silently stole away.

His first experience of outdoor painting—like his first experiences of indoor painting—had not been a success. It was more than enough to kill outright the new-born ambition and enthusiasm of any ordinary fellow. But George Alfred Grundy was no ordinary fellow.

The loss of the picnic-basket was nothing to him. He was only disgusted because his afternoon's painting had been hopelessly "mucked up," and his face was glum as he trotted homewards.

But it brightened a trifle as a figure came in sight along the towing-path. It was that of a tall, well-dressed man, with rather angular features, clean-shaven, and with deep-set black eyes.

He stopped as he recognised Grundy, and gave him a cheery nod.

"Been sketching, my young friend?" he inquired.

Grundy stopped. He did not quite like the "my young friend," but he overlooked the "cheek," as he reflected that this was Mr. Manton, the Art Critic, and the only person who had really praised his work sincerely, and who had, in fact, been the prime cause of Grundy "discovering" himself to be an artistic genius.

Such an important fellow was certainly worth cultivating, and, even at the risk of a chill, Grundy was ready to renew the acquaintance.

"Yes, I've been painting, at least," he said. "But a blessed goat butted me into the river and smashed my canvas to ribbons."

"Dear, dear!" said Mr. Manton sympathetically. "Hard lines, my young friend. I see you are wet through. You must not allow such little setbacks to discourage you, however. We who have the artistic temperament have our trials, like anyone else."

"I'm not going to let anything discourage me," said Grundy doggedly. "Not likely. I—I suppose you haven't mentioned your opinion of my work to—the Head yet, sir?"

Mr. Manton coughed behind his hand, and shook his head.

"I have not yet had an opportunity, my boy," he said blandly. "I am, however, seeing Dr. Holmes in the morning at nine. He is kindly allowing me to take a photograph of the Rembrandt in his study for an article I am contributing to the Press."

"Oh, that thing!" said Grundy disdainfully. "Blessed if I could ever understand why they make such a fuss about that silly Rembrandt, or whatever it is. I never saw such a smudge in all my life. Why, I could paint a better picture with a far-brush on a brick wall!"

"Possibly so—possibly so," agreed Mr. Manton, shaking his head. "Yet I understand the painting is worth a great deal of money—many thousands, in fact."

"I wouldn't give twopence for it!"

"Doubtless not," said Mr. Manton, smiling. "Yet it is valuable, nevertheless. It is a matter of wonder to me that Dr. Holmes does not keep it safe under lock and key, instead of allowing it to hang in his study. He is not afraid of burglars, evidently. Ha, ha!"

"It would take a jolly good burglar to break into the School House, for that matter," grinned Grundy. "The Head doesn't take any risks, I can tell you."

"Yes; but I guess you young rascals get in and out at night easily enough!" laughed Mr. Manton, poking Grundy playfully with his stick. "I know we had wags and means when I was at school. Ha, ha, ha! What about a rope of twisted sheets from the dormitory, eh?"

"Oh, that's an ancient wheeze!" grinned Grundy. "We have a better dodge than that—though I myself don't approve of breaking bounds at night."

"Got a key of a side-door—what?"

"No. Easier than that! There's a box-room window with a catch broken," grinned Grundy. "All a chap has to do is to raise the window and slip out on to the leads of an outbuilding, and drop down into the quad below. Easy as eating pie!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Manton. "I can see you youngsters have learned a bit since my schooldays. Well, I mustn't keep you standing any longer in your wet things. Good-bye, my young friend!"

"Good-bye, sir!" called Grundy; and he set off on his homeward way again.

"Not a bad chap, though he is a bit posy," mused Grundy, as he trotted along. "He knows what he's talking about, anyway. My hat!"

A sudden idea seemed to strike Grundy, and his eyes gleamed.

"Great pip!" he breathed. "I'll do it, blessed if I don't! The Head can't blind himself to my ability when that chap proves what I'm worth. I'll do it! By Jove, I'm glad I met that chap!"

And Grundy hurried on to St. Jim's in high glee.

A Star of the Circus!

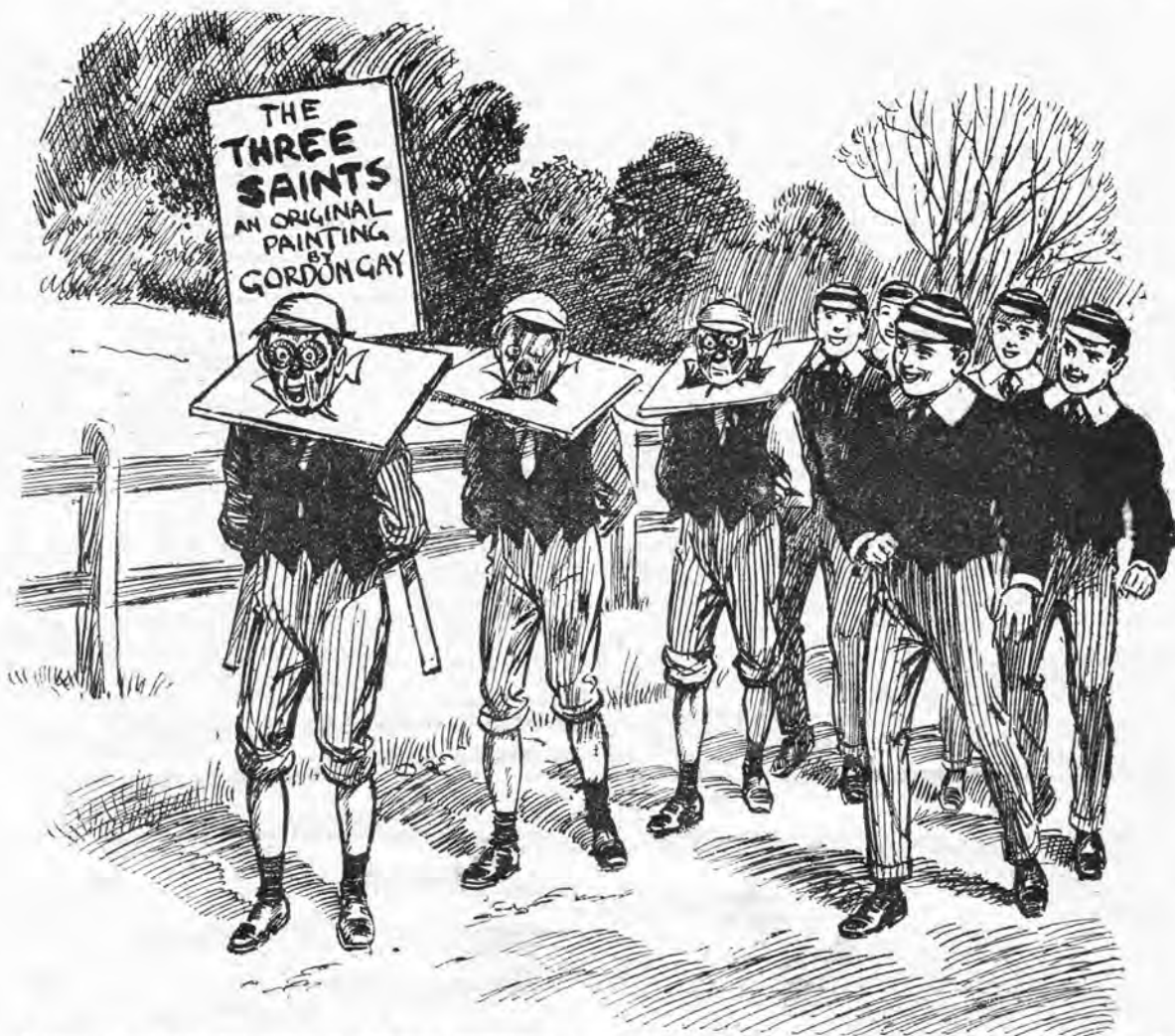


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A sudden idea to improve Grundy & Co.'s looks occurred to Gordon Gay. With his pocket-knife he ripped a big hole in the centre of each of the three canvases, and rammed one over Grundy's head, another over Wilkins' head, and the other over the head of Cuthbert Gunn, making them look something like Chinese prisoners. (See Chapter 5.)

CHAPTER 8.

Grundy's Great Idea!

"CHEERIO, Grundy, old fellow! You got home all right then?"

George Wilkins asked Grundy that question as he came breezily into Study No. 3 some time later that evening. Behind Wilkins was Cuthbert Gunn, and, to Grundy's astonishment, both of them were smiling cheerily. Wilkins' voice was cheery, also.

It was quite a surprise to Grundy. He had expected to see his chums come crawling in, limping and groaning and bewailing the ruined afternoon and the "mucked up" picnic.

Instead of which Wilkins and Gunn looked quite well fed and cheerful.

They certainly did not look like fellows who had had no tea and who had been butted about a meadow by a ferocious billy-goat. Grundy was rather disappointed.

"Yes, I got home all right," grunted Grundy. "But what about you fellows? What happened? Didn't that dashed goat catch you?"

"Not a bit of it!" grinned Gunn. "We saw to that. He chased us across two fields, and then the silly goat got his napper stuck in a thick hedge, and couldn't get his horns out. Jolly lucky for us, too!"

"Oh!" said Grundy. "But what did you do then?" Wilkins chuckled.

"We hooked it back to where we'd left the boat. We found it gone, of course, and the basket, too. We both heard those silly Grammarians laughing, and we guessed they'd done it. Any-old-how, we found the boat and the grub gone, and we were just shouting for you when a boat came round the bend, with Merry and Blake and their pals

in it. And they'd got our boat tied behind, and those giddy Grammarian rotters were tied up in it. They'd got our picnic-basket back, too. Wasn't it lucky?"

Grundy said nothing—he couldn't.

"It was a pity you went, Grundy," grinned Gunn. "You see, Merry's lot had met Gay's lot, and they spotted it was a St. Jim's boat and guessed something was wrong. Anyway, they boarded it, and, after a scrap, they tied up Gay & Co. and pulled on down to us. So we got our basket back, and put the Grammarians through the mill. Wasn't it lucky?"

"Yes—oh, yes!" gasped Grundy, with an effort. "So—so you had the picnic after all?"

"Yes, rather! Pity you weren't there, Grundy—especially as you'd paid for it. Still you'll be glad to know it was ripping! There was enough for us and Merry's crowd, too. And afterwards, after Gay and his pals had watched us scoff the grub, we ducked them in the river, and then we turned their clobber inside out; and after tying their arms and legs together we turned 'em loose. So we paid 'em back for what they did to us, Grundy—what?"

Grundy scowled. It was certainly no little comfort to know that. But he felt it was scarcely fair, for all that. Why couldn't Wilkins and Gunn have been butted by the silly goat into the river, as he had been? It was just like his dashed luck!

Wilkins and Gunn noted his scowl, and they exchanged a sly wink. They had rather expected Grundy wouldn't be pleased at the news, and they felt it wise to pacify him.

"Never mind, old chap," said Wilkins. "We'll have another picnic next week, if your cash lasts out. Now, how's the painting going? Aren't you doing any to-night? What about a portrait of Linton next?"

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Grundy softened a little.

"The fact is, you fellows," he said airily, "I'm not doing a stroke this evening. I'm keeping my nervous energy for to-night. I've got rather a stiffish task before me. When you chaps are snoring in bed I shall be up and doing—burning the midnight oil, you know. You've heard those lines of the poet—about the chaps who, while their comrades slept, were toiling upwards through the night? Well, that's me! I shall be toiling upwards through the night."

"Phew! Going to peg out, then? You seem pretty certain where you're going to, anyway!"

"Don't talk rot, George Wilkins! You know jolly well what I mean. I shall be working practically all night, I expect. It all depends on inspiration."

"But what for?" gasped Wilkins. "What sort of work, you ask?"

"Painting, of course," said Grundy calmly. "The fact is, you chaps, I've had a ripping brain-wave. You know that chap Manton?"

"Yes. Sneaky blighter, I think!"

"Rot! He's a splendid chap! Well, he's visiting the head in the morning again. He's going to photograph that blessed old daub of a Rembrandt. It's to be published with an article in the Press, or something. Anyway, he's coming at nine o'clock. He thinks he's going to photograph that Rembrandt. Well, he's not going to photograph it!"

"What the—?"

"He won't do it," resumed Grundy, with a grin, "simply because it won't be there. In its place I shall shove a copy—one I shall do myself. I shall make it better than the original, of course—without the errors and blunders of the original. Well, what will happen?"

"Blessed if I know!" gasped Gunny, staring blankly at the ingenious Grundy. "You'll either get the boot or prison, or both. I'm blessed if I can think of anything else, unless it's a flogging as well!"

Grundy gave him a glare.

"Don't talk piffle, Gunny!" he snorted. "Well, what will happen in the morning? Don't you see? Manton will praise the picture sky-high—my picture, you know—and then he'll photograph it, and it'll be in the papers. Then I drop my bombshell. I reveal the real Rembrandt which I've hidden, and show myself to the world as the fellow who painted the one everybody's praising. See? What do you think about that for a wheeze?"

Wilkins and Gunn did not say all they thought of it—they dare not. They had far too much respect for Grundy's lists.

"Well, upon my word!" said Wilkins faintly. "You—mean to say you'd dare to touch the Head's Rembrandt? Why, you'd be sacked, if you harmed that—sacked and mobbed, and probably shoved in chokey, you blithering idiot! It's the property of the school—the most precious thing the school possesses."

"Rot! What about me?"

"What—what about you? Oh crumbs! Oh, you—you—"

"That's enough!" snapped Grundy, getting to his feet. "I rather expected you fellows would try to squash the idea," he added bitterly. "Jealousy again. Well, I mean to go on my way regardless. I'm going now to try to get the measurements of the canvas of the Rembrandt. I think I've got one that will just about fit the frame."

And with that Grundy marched out, before his staggered chums could think of stopping him. But he was not long away, and when he came back he was nuzzing his hands in anguish.

"Did you get the measurements?" inquired Gunn.

"Ow! Ow, ow! No! The Head came in and caught me just as I was about to take 'em," groaned Grundy. "Oh, the awful fathead! He caned me just because I refused to tell him what I was doing there. Ow-ow! Well, I'll heap coals of fire on his head after this. He'll wish he hadn't lammed me some day, though I suppose he'll be bragging some day at having had the honour of laming me. Anyway, we'll see."

"Then—then you mean to really do it?" almost shrieked Wilkins.

"Eh? What the thump are you shouting at, Wilky? Of course I shall do it! Now shut up, and let me visualise the rotten picture."

And Grundy lay back in the armchair and closed his eyes—apparently to "visualise." Wilkins and Gunn looked at him, and then they looked at each other. With a hopeless gesture Gunny touched his forehead significantly, and Wilkins nodded glumly. But though they obeyed Grundy, and shut up, they had already agreed between themselves that, whatever happened, Grundy should not toil upwards through the night. Despite Grundy's many faults, his chums were genuinely fond of him, and they did not wish to see him sacked, or flogged, or put in "chokey."

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CHAPTER 9.

"Toiling Upwards!"

WHEN the Shell went up to bed that night it was noticed that Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn were looking very thoughtful. As a matter of fact, Wilkins and Gunn had decided it far the best not to divulge Grundy's intention to anyone. After all, Grundy was their chum, and they naturally did not wish it to be known what a really hopeless idiot Grundy was.

They had an idea also that Grundy might possibly be mobbed by the juniors for even dreaming of laying sacrilegious hands on the St. Jim's treasure—for it was looked upon as a treasure even by the juniors who privately thought it an awful daub. It was perhaps a pity that Wilkins and Gunn did keep it to themselves in one way, though as things happened, it turned out for the best.

Wilkins had gone to bed with the full and sincere intention of keeping awake. Grundy had also gone to bed with that intention. But whereas Grundy did keep awake, Wilkins and Gunn did not.

They had had a very strenuous day, and they were tired, and they had not Grundy's burning enthusiasm to keep them awake.

At all events, Wilkins was asleep before he knew it, and scarcely had he dropped off when Gunn did likewise.

It was sad, but there it was.

Grundy smiled as he heard their soft breathing.

He had rather suspected that they would have the astounded cheek to try to prevent him carrying out his noble and inspiring idea. Indeed, Grundy had thought of a plan to checkmate them did they do so. He had intended to lead his chums up to a top box-room, and leading them to suppose he was inside, to lock them in there until his toiling was ended.

But now he grinned as he heard them breathing gently. Strategy would not be necessary, after all. Grundy was very glad, for it was a saving of precious time.

For some time longer Grundy waited, and then he slipped silently out of bed and started to dress, placing rubber-soled slippers on his rather large feet.

He was soon dressed, and, tiptoeing to the door, he peered out into the passage, listening intently.

All was dark and silent. St. Jim's was asleep, excepting for Grundy.

Grundy made his way downstairs, feeling his way in the darkness. He got his paints, palette, and brushes from his study first.

He was never once at a loss, and he reached the Head's study safely, and found, to his great relief, that the door was not locked.

Grundy opened it quietly and stepped inside, closing it just as quietly after him. Then he got busy.

Placing his palette, paints, and brushes on a chair, he took from his pocket a couple of pieces of candle, and stuck each by the wax on to the leather seats of two chairs he placed just below the Rembrandt, which hung in the corner just beyond the big bookcase.

Then, shading the light from the candles with sheets of paper from the Head's desk, Grundy began to get down to the task in real earnest.

He first took the picture down—it was fairly heavy, but Grundy was strong, and managed it easily. Then, taking a pair of pliers from his pocket, he started to remove the canvas framework from the gilt frame itself.

It was done at last, and leaning the rather dingy-looking Rembrandt against the wall, Grundy propped his own clean canvas up, and grabbed his palette and brushes, and set to work.

Dab, dab, dab! Flop, flop, flop!

The sound of the brush dabbing against the canvas was rather eerie in the quiet room. But Grundy did not notice that, nor did he notice discomfort of anything else. He was keyed up to concert pitch, and his heart warmed within him as he worked and mused over the stories he had read of the early struggles of famous artists.

It was not exactly burning the midnight oil; but it was burning the midnight candle, and there wasn't any difference really. He was also toiling upwards in the night—or so he imagined.

Dab, dab, dab, dab!

Grundy painted away until his eyes ached, his head swam, and his fingers were sore. But he stuck it heroically, fortified by his inspiring reflections and the thought of the reward to come.

He heard one o'clock, and then two o'clock chime from the ancient clock-tower; and then at last he gave a sigh and laid down his brushes and palette.

His labours were almost ended. The picture was finished—or, at least, the canvas was covered with paint—it simply groaned under a load of paint.

"Good!" breathed Grundy. "I never really thought I could manage it; but I've done it."

He looked at his handiwork in the candle-light, and from his face he was satisfied with what he saw. Had anyone else seen it they would have marvelled at the sublime belief Grundy cherished that his remarkable performance in any way resembled Rembrandt's masterpiece. But Grundy did see the resemblance—such is the power of self-deception!

He gazed and gazed at the extraordinary series of mountains and hills and valleys of paint on his canvas; and then he painted his name in the corner, and it was done!

It now had to be placed in the frame, and, to his great joy, it fitted almost to a nicety. True, Grundy's sleeve made rather a mess as he was getting it in the frame, but Grundy did not trouble even to smooth it over. He secured the canvas in the frame, and hung it up, trembling with eager excitement.

By this time Grundy was beginning to feel the strain of his hours of toil. He was almost too sleepy to put his paints and brushes and palette and palette-knife in the case. But he finished clearing up at last—though he didn't trouble to clean up the paint from the carpet—and then he picked up the despised Rembrandt.

It was just at that moment that Grundy heard a sound in the passage without. It was only a slight sound, but it made Grundy start.

He listened a second; and then, feeling sure he was not mistaken, he shoved the Rembrandt under the base of the book-case and sprang for the shelter of an easy-chair.

Having already blown out the candles and thrown them on the almost dead fire, the room was now in darkness, and Grundy could see nothing.

But he heard the door open softly; and then, as he peered into the blackness, with heart thumping, he saw a dim shadow enter the room silently.

Had Grundy fancied the unknown might be Wilkins, or Gunn, he realised now that it wasn't. It was the form of a man—a tall man.

Was it Railton? It could scarcely be Railton! Then who was it—who was the mysterious individual who crept into the room with the stealth of a cat?

Grundy's heart was beating painfully now. He knew it was not Railton now, and he had an uneasy feeling that it was nobody belonging to St. Jim's.

Then quite suddenly a white light from an electric torch swept cautiously round the room. It went round once, and then it was switched off abruptly.

But in one fleeting flash it had showed up the unknown's face, and as he saw it Grundy could have yelled with astonishment.

For it was the angular face and dark, sunken eyes of Mr. Manton, the art critic.

The man's eyes were glittering like a snake's, and Grundy was quite shocked at the hard expression in them.

What did it mean?

The man's movements puzzled Grundy still more the next moment. Having switched off the light, he crossed cautiously to the window and raised the blind gently and noiselessly. Then after fumbling for some moments at the window, he softly raised the lower sash.

Then he muttered a sigh of relief and crossed over to the corner where the Rembrandt had hung and where Grundy's "copy" was hanging now.

Grundy could see him quite clearly now. There was a certain amount of moonlight, and by the light of this Mr. Manton softly placed a chair beneath the picture, and, standing upon it, he lifted the picture—if it could be called that—down.

He placed it carefully on the table face downwards, and it was just at that moment that hurried footfalls sounded in the passage without once again.

Mr. Manton muttered an oath. And what he did next took Grundy's breath away completely for the moment.

He whipped out a knife, and, though he could only have seen the bare outline of the canvas in the frame, he ran the blade of the knife swiftly round the bare canvas.

R-r-r-r-rip!

The knife must have been sharp as a razor, for it was done in a moment. The canvas itself was cut clean away



Tom Merry dashed into the Board room with his chums at his heels. There was Grundy standing on a chair before a large portrait. His brush was poised in his hand ready to "improve" the masterpiece hanging on the wall. "Oh, you ass!" roared Tom Merry. "Don't let him ruin that picture. Collar him, you chaps!" (See Chapter 6.)

from the wooden frame it was nailed over, and in a flash the man had rolled it up and leaped for the window.

Then Grundy woke up. He gave a wild howl of rage and leaped after him.

He saw it all now! Manton—the mean scoundrel—must have guessed he meant to change the paintings, and he had actually come to steal his precious copy he had painted!

That was how Grundy looked at it—then!

That Manton had come to steal the real Rembrandt never even occurred to the powerful brain of George Alfred Grundy.

The thought of losing his precious work—what he had spent hours upon—filled Grundy with the wildest indignation, and he went after Manton like an enraged bull.

For his pains he got a jab from the man's fist that sent him crashing into the fireplace, and at that instant another person entered the room—with a rush this time. He was followed instantly by another.

It was Wilkins and Gunn. Wilkins had awakened suddenly, and he had remembered Grundy at once. Finding him gone, he had swiftly roused Gunn, and the pair had fairly flown downstairs, terrified at the thought of being too late.

They were too late, as it happened.

They rushed inside just in time to see a man's vague form vanish over the sill and to hear the rustle of ivy outside, followed by the thud of someone dropping on the gravel below. But as they rushed to the window and looked out they saw nothing.

"Great pip!" panted Wilkins. "What—what's it mean, Gunn? That—that wasn't old— Oh, my hat!"

From the fireplace a figure staggered upright, holding on to the table. It was Grundy—they saw that at once.

"Help! After the scoundrel, you silly owls!" he roared, obviously not very much injured. "After that scoundrel Manton—quick! He's got my painting!"

And Grundy rushed past his startled chums towards the dim light of the window.

"Come back!" gasped Gunn, in great alarm.

"Leggo!" roared Grundy. "Lemme go after the villain! Don't you realise what he's got, you silly fools?"

(Continued on page 27.)

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THERE'S NOTHING A BLACK LIKES MORE THAN A GOOD TUCK-IN, BUT EVEN A FEAST LOSES ITS ATTRACTION FOR THE NATIVES WHEN GAN WAGA & CO., UNINVITED, TURN UP AT THE CEREMONY IN "FANCY COSTUME."



A Mirth-Provoking Story
of Gan Waga & Co.,
Chronicled by
SIDNEY DREW.

CHAPTER 1. "Howlers!"

"SOME people," said Lieutenant Carswith, casting an envious eye round the saloon, "are born lucky." The lieutenant, who was in command of his British Majesty's small gunboat *Drudge*, was so sun-tanned that he looked as if he had made a mistake, and used a cake of blacklead to wash with instead of soap.

An electric fan, driving a current of air across a slab of ice, made the saloon deliciously cool, though on deck the sun was fierce enough to cook a dish of eggs and rashers. The lieutenant helped himself to more iced champagne.

"Are you just having a cruise round, or have you something special on?" asked Midshipman Hilton.

"It's about a rotten old Malay junk," said the lieutenant. "The muddlers managed to run in ashore about ten days ago, and, of course, the blacks looted her. The Malays swear they're British subjects, though I don't believe a word of it. That's not the point, anyhow, for looting isn't allowed. I suppose I shall have to burn the village and give the fleas a roasting time of it. That's really no punishment at all, but a kind action."

"Any chance of a scrap, sir?" inquired Master David Ap Rees.

"Not much," answered the lieutenant. "You mustn't shoot any of them. I want to round up a score of the men and take 'em back to work on the new road they're making. And then they're not worth their grub. One decent navy would do as much in a day as ten of them, for they're a soft, lazy crowd. A single Teleli is as good as a regiment of the coast niggers."

"I've heard about them," said Val. "They don't come down to the coast often."

"Not often, but I was told they made a raid on a village last week and went off with a boy. It's their big feast this full moon, and they'll kill a lot of pigs and have a rare feast. I don't care to mention what they may do to the boy, but I'd sooner have my job than his. It's almost impossible to get at the beggars, for at the first hint of trouble they dodge back into the bush and the hills. And it's a wilderness of a bush, the one part of the earth that hasn't been properly explored."

The lieutenant accepted a cigar with a grunt of thanks.

"And you lucky barges are just joy-cruising in this floating palace, eh?"

"Not altogether," said Val, "and I don't see that there need be any secret about it to you. I fancy the chief—Mr. Ferrers Lord, of course—has come to some arrangement with

the Government. I know it's about platinum, and I believe it's also about oil."

"Where?"

"Back there in the peaks," said Val. "We've got our plane, which has just been repaired after a smash."

"Do you mean up on the two peaks we call Bess and Bob?"

"I didn't know you called them Bess and Bob," said Val. "We'd just come through when the old bus went rocky, and we had to hop out with the parachute. We got down safely, and found the bus adrift later on."

"I've never been up there, but I'll give you a tip," said the lieutenant. "It's up there that the Teleli hold their big annual jamboree, and that's due at full moon. They've made the place taboo, which means a warning off, and any nigger who got wandering about would be clobbered and speared or sacrificed, and eaten afterwards. My interpreter, Whisky Face, was telling me about it. He says there's a big cave up there the blacks call the Cavern of Ghosts. That's where the Teleli hold their big feast. If you could believe old Whisky Face, which I don't altogether, things happen up there that aren't nice to mention or think about. So you're going that way? Take my advice, and postpone your visit for a week."

Just then Rupert Thurston and Prince Ching Lung, who had been ashore in the launch, came in and gave Lieutenant Carswith a hearty welcome.

"We've just heard that the Teleli have a big feast on in the mountains," said Dave. "The lieutenant advises us to keep away till it's over. They've put on a taboo against everybody except their own tribe. To break a taboo is a sort of crime, isn't it?"

"The blacks would rather cut their own throats than do it," said Rupert Thurston. "This jamboree is a bit unfortunate."

"To be held in the Cavern of Ghosts," said Val. "A jolly sort of name that, and it sounds nice and creepy. And I should like to see a real jamboree. Who cares an empty sardine-tin for their silly taboo? I'd just love to go and see it."

"You might find it too exciting if they spotted you," said the lieutenant. "If you like, you can have a palaver with Whisky Face. He's an old liar, like the rest of them, so only believe some of it. Stay to lunch, Mr. Thurston? Sure. I was only waiting to be asked."

A signal to the sun-blistered gunboat brought a midshipman, the chief engineer, and the interpreter. Whisky Face was so old that he looked as if he had been buried and dug up again. His face looked like a withered apple with cotton wool stuck round it, and his body was a sort of brown parch-

ment bag filled with bones. He had no teeth at all, but his little black eyes were very bright.

Val and Dave took possession of Whisky Face and presented him with a two-shilling piece and a lump of plug tobacco.

"Oh, yes, tuans," said the old Malay, "long ago I saw the great jamboree of the Teleli in the Cavern of Ghosts. Ah! There were many sacrifices and much feasting. Black fella eat black fella plenty in those good old days. I a prisoner, but I lucky to get fever bad, and no good to eat, so I am spare."

"But what do they do, Whisky Face?" inquired Dave.

"Make big feast to man in the moon," replied the interpreter. "When he put him yellow face round the peaks he shine on the stone altar of the moon. Then they kill prisoners and many pigs, beat tom-toms, dance the moon-dance, and eat and drink plenty. And the ghosts come out and dance with them, for the cavern full of ghosts."

"Oh, tell us a few more," said Dave. "Did you see any of the ghosts?"

"No, but I heard their cries and wails," said the old man. "I am not a dirty Teleli, but a Malay. Only a Teleli see the ghosts of the Teleli dead. Other eyes are blind to them, but they were there, tuans. I heard their bones rattle as they danced the death-dance in the darkness, and their moans and their wailing. And terror took me and gave me power, though I shook with fever, and I fled."

Mr. Barry O'Rooney, who had been listening to these remarks, indulged in a grin.

"Bedad, he's a fine, handsome bhoys, and he can tell a good tale," he said. "Phwat d'ye mane you heard bones rattlin'?"

"I am very old, tuans, but my memory for that is young," said the interpreter. "There were many fires in the Cavern of Ghosts that night, but it was in the glare beyond those fires that the ghosts danced and wailed. The cavern to-day is deserted and silent, but to-morrow, when the Teleli feast, the dead will awaken from their sleep and dance. I know it, for I was there."

At lunch the subject of the Teleli and their jamboree cropped up again.

"I wish their feast wasn't booked for this week," said Prince Ching Lung. "We've got an appointment up there and we can't postpone it, for we must sail on Thursday. The instructions are direct from the chief, Mr. Ferrers Lord, and we must carry them out."

"Don't do any shooting," said Lieutenant Carswith, "for I don't want the very unpleasant job of arresting you. Nigger shooting never commences here, for it's always the close season. But you may not be going near the cavern, if such a thing exists."

"It does exist, and that's exactly where we have to go," said Ching Lung.

"And you can't wait a week till the shemuzzle is over?" "Not a minute beyond Thursday at noon," said the prince. "We have to collect sample of rock and shale. I have a plan of the big cave and know just where to go and what to bring away."

"Rather nasty," said the lieutenant. "The Teleli are a fairly strong tribe and they'll be spiteful if you smash their taboo. None of the women attend the jamboree, and no boys under sixteen. I guess they can raise a crowd six or seven hundred strong. I'd help if I could, but I'm booked for other work. They're really an outlaw mob, but if you hurt any of them they'll soon send a deputation to the Government House squealing for justice."

"A row is the very last thing on earth we're looking for," said Rupert Thurston; "but we must visit that cave."

"Then, as their show doesn't start till to-morrow, we'd better go to-day, sir," said Val. "I don't know whether Whisky Face is to be relied on, but he told us that the Teleli started to trek up the mountains days ago. It's a slow job, for they have to take up so many live pigs. They never enter the cavern until moonrise on the night of the feast."

"Whisky Face would tell you anything, Mr. Hilton," said the lieutenant. "All the facts are that the Teleli go up the peaks at this time of year and have a dance and an enormous feed of roast pork and yams, and something a lot nastier if they can get it. And as sure as a gun if you bust their taboo the black beggars will fight. It's not my business to criticise the Government, but in my humble opinion you can be a lot too kind to these chaps. I dare say it would cost a lot of money, but if I had my way, I'd round up the whole tribe and put them road-making and bush-clearing. But there you are. I'm only the boss of a little gunboat and I have to do what I'm told to do."

An hour later they parted with their visitors, and the gunboat hooked up her anchor and ran down the coast.

"If we went to the cave now couldn't we get the stuff we want and clear out before the blacks arrive, sir?" Val asked Ching Lung.

"It's impossible, old son. To get all we want will take the best part of a day," said the prince. "We have instructions to pack up on Thursday by wireless from the chief. If you hadn't had that accident with the plane we'd have had the goods on board, but, of course, I'm not blaming you for something you couldn't help. Teleli or no Teleli, we must visit the cave. They tell me the bus is as good as ever, so you and Dave can give her a trial spin while I do a little thinking."

"Right, sir," said Val. "I wish we could stay another week, for I'm getting to like this old sun-baked place."

"Perhaps," said the prince; "but don't forget, Val, that when the chief tells us to pack up he means us to pack up."

"I've found out that, sir," said Val. "Where's Dave? Hi, Dave! We're going to take the bus out whatever, look you. Are you coming?"

"Going up with you is like joining a suicide club, but I'll chance it," said Dave. "I expect you'll smash her again. What's become of the ballast? Where's that fat and oily Eskimo? I've not seen him all day, so I expect he's melted into a few grease spots."

"He's hiding down in the cold-room," said Val. "Never mind Gan Waga. We'll only buzz round the yacht for about twenty minutes."

Ching Lung sat down in a deck-chair and smoked a cigarette. Suddenly he caught sight of the tall, bony figure of the carpenter.

"Mr. Toggle!"

Joe, the carpenter, turned and saluted.

"Mr. Toggle," said Ching Lung, "you'll find it cooler under the awning here. Sit down, please. Could you make a noise like ghosts?"

"Not having tried, I'm not quite sure that I could, sir," replied the carpenter. "I can make a lot of things, but that's a bit of a novelty."

"I fancy you could with a bit of tutoring," said the prince. "I want horrid howls and wails. You can make 'em with a cardboard box and a piece of string rubbed with resin. Fix up half a dozen of them, Joe, please, large and small, and each with a different note. You've seen the things, I mean, haven't you? When you rub your fingers along the string the lovely melody starts, like a dog with a sore throat howling at the moon. They'll pass for ghosts, and when you've done that come to me again."

The carpenter saluted and went down to his workshop, quite understanding what he had to do. Mr. Benjamin Maddock and Mr. Thomas Prout were watching the plane launch itself upwards from the quiet surface of the blue sea. Against the protecting shelter of the barrier reef the surf was breaking, but inside where the Lord of the Deep lay there was scarcely a ripple on the water.

Ching Lung slept in the heat, and Felix, Val's big cat, slumbered peacefully under the prince's chair. Then the aeroplane came back to her moorings, and David Ap Rees and Val Hilton climbed aboard.

"Wow! Look at 'em!" said Dave. "All playing shut-eye!"

Except for the men on watch, everybody seemed to be asleep. In various chairs, their noses playing various tunes, reposed the prince, Robert Thurston, Thomas Prout, Benjamin Maddock, and Barry O'Rooney. And the very air seemed to shiver with heat.

"I'm going to join the merry party, look you," said Val, bringing forward a chair, "for shut-eye seems to be the best game to play till the temperature drops a bit. Gee! I can feel the deck red-hot through the soles of my shoes. What a beast of a chap the bo'sun is for snoring! If you were a pal, Dave, goodness indeed, you'd cork him up. Aren't you going to have forty winks?"

"Not likely, you born-tired crush. I'm going to see my pal Joe," said Dave. "I'm finishing a bit of carpentry."

Joe was a wonderfully quick worker. Some half-hour later David Ap Rees came on deck wearing a broad grin. He had an object in his hand like an elongated drum with a parchment top, from which hung a piece of string well coated with resin.

Dave paused amongst the weary sleepers and pulled his thumb and finger sharply down the string. Words cannot describe the abominable, ear-splitting, murderous howl that awful instrument emitted. Felix, the cat, started awake, his fur bristling and his eyes wild. At the second note the cat spat furiously and bolted below. There was no more sleep. Ching Lung, Rupert Thurston, Maddock, Prout, and Barry O'Rooney leapt to their feet, and so did Val.

"Zee-urr-ow-ooz-uzz-whoosh-oooo!" said Joe's musical masterpiece. "Zoo-eeeh-garrrrh-zoo!"

When he saw a deck-chair hurled by Val Hilton coming in his direction and a stream of soda-water fired by Ching Lung caught him in the eye, Master David Ap Rees left.

CHAPTER 2.

Fixing Up the Show I

WHEN the sea breeze came in cool and refreshing, the twin peaks, Bess and Bob, wore crimson caps where the sun, sinking red, touched them. Down in the wireless-room the chief operator had been busy. Joe had completed his half-dozen howlers, and when two or three of them were played together the noise was horrible enough to turn anyone but a deaf man into a crazy idiot.

Val and Dave were enormously inquisitive, and Ching Lung was good enough to explain.

"It's that nuisance of a jamboree," he said. "We want that ghost cave all to ourselves to-morrow, and we can't have it nice and peaceful unless we shift the Teleli out. If they like ghosts or expect ghosts they can have lots of them, and then some more. We'll make 'em howl. That gadget is going to be worked from the yacht. We'll take a wireless set and a loud speaker over. I'm sorry our date should have clashed with the jamboree, but unfortunately we can't wait."

"It's a fine stunt, and it ought to scare 'em into forty fits," grinned Val. "But how are we to know they've cleared out?"

"We shall be there to witness the merry event," said Ching Lung. "You don't know everything about anything yet, my son, for we still have a few surprises up our sleeves. With a bit of luck we ought to be able to bust their bean-feast considerably. If the howlers won't do it, we'll leave Gau Waga behind to sing them a few bars, and Gau's voice ought to put the lid on it."

"Especially if he gives them a cornet solo on top of it," said Dave. "This sounds a top-hole stunt if it doesn't come unstuck."

"The slang you use, look you, is vile, Dave," said Val. "And what, indeed, think you, will unstuck the top-hole stunt, Taffy?"

"Only that we were warned not to believe half what old Whisky Face told us. He told us that the Teleli never enter the cave till the night of the full moon. I've wangled that out to be to-morrow about nine-forty p.m. If that's only a yarn, and the beggars are already in possession, the stunt is badly unstuck now, and it will take a lot of paste and glue to make it stick."

"You old greaser, you're always imagining something nasty," said Val.

"You're wrong, old bean. I just weigh things up and measure the chances before barging in like a bull at a gate. And if the Teleli have arrived we can't make our ghosts squeak, so that's that. It will have to be a new stunt or nothing."

Maddock piloted the 'plane. They knew that the Teleli would not climb the peaks from the seaward side. As Dave and Val had cruised over the land a good deal the blacks must have seen and heard her frequently, so that a glimpse of her or the noise of her propellers would not arouse any suspicion. The passengers were Dave and Val, Ching Lung, Joe and Barry O'Rooney.

The bo'sun knew the landing place, and so did Barry O'Rooney, a patch of level ground covered with fine grass. Eight hundred feet above them towered the twin peaks, each snow-capped, but only thinly.

"Nothing stirring below," said the prince, "though there might be, for that jungle could hide an army of blacks. Stand by the plane, Maddock, and if the coast is clear we'll give you a chi-ike and you can barge back home. You'll have plenty of time before the light goes."

"Bags of it, souze me," said Maddock. "If this is the way they come to the cave they've not showed up yet. Nice bit of grass this, and never the sign of a footprint on it. All the same, there may be another way in, so be wary, for there's the danger mark."

Though the grass appeared to be untrodden, someone had been there recently. A billet of wood roughly carved into some wild semblance of a human face, was fastened to a stick pushed into the ground. The face was coloured red and green.

"Bedad, the paint on the ould image is scarcely dry," said Barry O'Rooney. "and Oi can smell the fresh paint on it."

"Anything but cheerful," said the prince. "Don't touch their taboo mark, Barry. There may be nobody here after all."

"A pretty bit of work," said Val, "rather like Mr. O'Rooney, but better looking. Please, sir, Dave would like to know what to do if a crazy Teleli comes for him bald-headed with a full-sized spear and a yard or two of knobby club. If we can't shoot—"

"If one comes for you, you kiss him, my lad," said Dave. "That ought to kill him quick enough and save a cartridge."

At which Mr. Benjamin Maddock and Mr. Barry O'Rooney exchanged winks. And, though nigger shooting

was strictly prohibited by the laws of New Guinea, Ching Lung drew an automatic pistol.

Maddock watched them go down the slope. A narrow path led down to the mouth of the cavern. It was a dangerous path, too, with boulders and bushes on either side, behind which a man could lurk and use a long spear with deadly effect. The carpenter came last carrying the wireless apparatus on his shoulder.

"It seems to be all O.K.," said Ching Lung. "Nobody seems to have been along here for ages, only one can't be sure for those black fellows can wriggle along without disturbing a single leaf. The chap who put the taboo up may not have crossed the line. Here's the place, boys, and I hope we shall find nobody home."

There was a totem pole in front of the mouth of the cavern, representing some goggle-eyed idol with a red nose and a grinning array of oyster-shell teeth. The prince went in, cautious and alert. There was a hole in the wall of the cavern showing a jagged patch of sky, but further in the thickening gloom lay deep and mysterious. The light that came in rested on a flat altar of stone, with two more totem poles behind it, and the great eyes of the idols gleamed glassily and fixedly down at the altar.

The floor of the cavern was of firm sand, flattened down by the tread of many feet and blackened by the ashes of many fires. They could not make out the roof, except for the dull glimmer of a stalactite here and there.

"Nobody here," said the prince. "Give Maddock that chi-ike, Val. It will be dark sooner than he thinks."

Val hailed the bo'sun, and presently they heard the 'plane go roaring away.

"We shall have to fix up some sort of a rake and rub out our footprints, boys; but that will do later on," said Ching Lung. "Keep along near the side where it's dark. This is a big place, so look out for holes and bumps."

They all carried flash-lamps except Joe, who had plenty to carry. When the Teleli visited the cavern it was unlikely that they went in very far, as the blacks are not fond of dark places, and especially a place they imagined to be inhabited by ghosts and spooks. It was filled with echoes, too, for when Val gave a whistle the sound was repeated a dozen times.

"Wheels within wheels," cried Dave. "Here's another cave. Wow! And it isn't a new discovery. Somebody has left a pick and hammer."

"We have to get some specimens of ore out of this corner," said the prince. "The pick and hammer belong to the yacht. This seems to be a likely spot, Joe. How about your aerials? The niggers would never spot them in a thousand years, and we could work the loud speaker from the mouth of the cave. And if by any misfortune it came to a fight we'd be well sheltered."

"It will do fine, sir," said Joe.

"And, bedad, wid lave Oi think Oi'll go back and kape an oie on the path," said Barry O'Rooney. "Ut would spoil the thrick av some black haythen came along and caught us at work. Av Oi can't shoot, is there any rule about strangling him?"

"You help Joe, Barry, and I'll watch the path," said Ching Lung. "Tell the yacht we're all merry and bright, Val."

Val unslung a leather case and took out the little instrument it contained. He had learned the Morse code thoroughly. As he tapped he watched the dial of the instrument. Presently the brass pointer began to move to and fro on the dial.

"Right!" he said. "I've told Sparks we found nobody at home. Presently I'll ask him to give us a tune on the howlers."

"It's a bit of a staggerer you can talk to the yacht with that little contraption through great chunks of rock," said Dave.

"Sure, tell Sparks to ax Maddock to bring along the tin o' baccy Oi left on the table in the glue-pot, sir," said Barry.

The message was dispatched, and then Dave went to the entrance of the cavern of ghosts. Ching Lung was sweeping the lower slopes with his field-glasses.

"Nothing seems to be stirring," he said. "All the better for us, Dave. If we thought they wouldn't come until to-morrow we'd start getting the ore and stuff, but it's all so jolly uncertain. If they're coming they must be on the way, for it's no joke to hike a lot of dead pigs up here, and they're sure to give themselves plenty of time."

"And they may not come at all, sir. I say, you've heard that a boy is missing from one of the villages, and they think the Teleli have kidnapped him? How about a close season for shooting niggers, then, if they started to carve him up on that beastly altar there as a sacrifice to their silly old Moon God!"

"I don't like to think of anything quite so unpleasant, old son," said Ching Lung. "Most likely the Government regulations would get badly smashed. Take the glasses and have



Out of the shadows came the ghosts, hideous apparitions of bone, with the heads of monsters. The terrified blacks took to their heels on the instant, falling and treading on each other in their anxiety to get out of the cavern. (See page 28.)

a good stare round. It's the edge of the bush you want to watch. If they'll keep away for another hour, then let 'em all come!"

Dave could see nothing that moved—neither man, bird, nor beast. The breeze had died down; but at that altitude the air was deliciously cool and fresh. Joe had very little to do, and aided by Barry O'Rooney he did it rapidly and thoroughly.

"Now, if you please, sir," he said to Val, "you might ask Sparks to give us a call."

A few minutes later the loud-speaker began to emit queer snorts and grunts. The carpenter made a few quick adjustments, and then a voice that sounded like the voice of a very hoarse giant began to roar at them.

"Hallo!" thundered the voice. "Hallo, hallo! Can you hear me?"

"Hear you? Oh, my stars!" said Val. "Throttle it down, for the sake of Mike, Mr. Toggle! He's trying to blow our heads clean off!"

A few more adjustments, and they recognised the wireless operator's voice, and on his little instrument Val wirelessly the O.K.

"The plane is just going off, sir," said the operator. "Like to hear the howlers, sir, or a bit of a song from Mr. Gan Waga?"

"We give yo' the howlers, old dears," said the voice of the Eskimo. "Holds tightness and keep yo' hairs on, fo' yo' gets an earful in a minute. I play ever so soft and lows. This is the littlest chap."

Then came a wail—and such a wail. It went sobbing and whispering through the cavern.

"That spook has a bad toothache!" grinned Val. "He's in horrible pain, poor chap. Oh, murder and melons! Help!"

Gan Waga had switched on to the big howler. The

volume of hideous, discordant sound that came from the loud-speaker nearly knocked Val down. Barry O'Rooney retreated, shuddering. The noise, booming and re-echoing through the hollow cave, brought in Dave and the prince. Then Gan treated them to a weird and melancholy moaning that only a ghost with a most agonising stomach-ache could have produced. After that he gave them a mixture; and Joe, out of mercy, cut him out.

"Glorious stuff!" chuckled Dave. "Ha, ha, ha, ha! A few doses like that—or only one dose—and they'll hop it and chase themselves off the map! Hyenas aren't in it!"

"It's just the cursedness of things in general, son," said Ching Lung. "The Teleli have been welcome to this cave since the year dot every day in the year. We only want it at present for about one day, and that turns out to be the very day they want it. Somebody has got to quit—and I don't think it is going to be our party. By the time we've fixed up our show we'll be ready to give the Teleli all the ghosts they want for the next half century."

CHAPTER 3.

Before Supper and After.

THE aeroplane made its second trip to the hollow between the twin peaks. It discharged Gan Waga and Rupert Thurston, sundry mattresses and sacks, and things that were eatable and drinkable. Joe had been busy erecting a little electric device which showed a red light in the smaller cave the moment anything heavier than a rabbit crossed the threshold of the main cavern.

"No sign of the feasters yet, Ching?" asked Thurston. "Only a new taboo stick, or an old one freshly painted," said the prince. "Perhaps it's all moonshine, instead of moon-dancing."

"I don't think it is. A canoe came out to us with fruit and fish for sale, and the fellow who owned it told me the Teleli were on trek to their big jamboree. I got it that our lieutenant friend was wrong in his figures. There are two lots of Teleli. Our lot don't run to more than a hundred and fifty strong, grown-up men and warriors. The other tribe, who might run to five hundred, never attend this jamboree. That's comforting to know, Ching, for if your ghost noises and ghosts fail to do the expected terrifying, we'll be quite satisfied with a hundred and fifty to tackle. They're coming right enough."

"Hear, hear!" said Midshipman Hilton and Mr. David Ap'Rees with one voice.

The bo'sun sighed. It was his duty to take the plane back to the yacht.

"Souse me, some people are lucky and some aren't!" he said. "I wish you could work it for the Teleli to eat Gan Waga before you turned on the ghost stuff. You're going to do the dirty on the poor, ignorant heathens, and it would be only honest and fair to let them grill and eat the Eskimo for a start. Nobody would miss him, and everybody would be pleased, even the niggers; for as they sometimes eat worms they're easily satisfied."

"Yo' get homes, old bean!" said Gan Waga. "I hope yo' falls out of the bus. Tell my old Tommy Prents to slap yo' hardness and put yo' to beds! I'm a ghost—and yo' can't grill and eat ghosts, silly!"

"And the fattest ghost on earth, souse me!" growled the bo'sun. "A sort of two-ton hobgoblin, you are! Good-night, sirs!"

"Good-night, bo'sun!"

Maddock climbed back into the pilot's seat, and the plane taxied across the smooth grass and took the air. The moon had not risen, but the dusk was beginning to close down and a cold, heavy dew was falling. Joe raked over the sand at the mouth of the cave to wipe out their footprints. With the heavy dew the grass would soon right itself, and even the marks left by the tyres of the plane would be obliterated quickly.

Ching Lung stood beside the stone altar. It was gloomy, but he was clearly visible.

"Can you see me, Val?" he asked. "Can you see me, Dave?"

"As plain as a pikestaff, sir," said Dave.

"As plain as fifty pikestuffs, sir!" added Val.

The next instant the prince had gone. There was something visible to the staring eyes of the astonished youngsters, a little darker than the dusk, but scarcely visible. The thin, ghostly thing seemed to lift itself to the level of the altar. And then, standing on the altar, Ching Lung reappeared.

"U's witchcraft!" said Barry O'Rooney, with a grin. "And, bedad, it's a foine trick to know when the police are after you."

Val and Dave were not listening to Barry. They had run forward to the prince, and were examining the long, hooded cloak with which he had covered himself.

"Clever camouflage," said Ching Lung. "The chief and Hal Honour put their heads together and invented that. It's a sort of paint they dress the cloth with. Wonderful stuff, for it's practically invisible in a much stronger light than this. And you didn't forget the other stuff, Joe?"

"I've brought the luminous paint, sir," answered the carpenter. "If you don't mind moving back, gentlemen, I'll rake up. Those niggers will spot a fresh footprint quick enough by torchlight and smell a rat."

Joe's rake was a branch of a tree tied crossways to another branch. They all moved back to the inner cave, where an electric torch tied bulb downwards to a stalactite hanging from the roof gave them all the light they required. The smaller cave was perfectly dry, and not cold. They spread out the mattresses and made themselves comfortable.

"I don't think any of the beggars will wander in as far as this," said Val. "We're thirty-five yards from the place they lighted the nearest fire, and they've plenty of room for their jamboree without coming too near the ghosts."

"Bedad, they won't come here, sir!" said Barry O'Rooney. "Joe showed me another taboo mark, and that's a good twenty yards ahead of us. Or, at last, it won't be the rank and file who'll pass a taboo mark, but some of their old medicine-men who play the tricks may."

"That's the danger," said Val. "Old Whisky Face swore to us that he heard the ghosts moaning and wailing in the darkness, and heard their bones rattle as they danced the death-dance. That may be pure sham, but if Whisky Face did hear it, we can be jolly sure that the priest made the row."

"Do, my lad, and I'll make the Teleli a present of you

for supper," said Ching Lung. "You fat ignoramus, they'd smell that miles away."

The prince spoke to Gan Waga, who had just taken a cigar out of his pocket. Gan Waga stared at him in dismay.

"What! Not allowedness to smoke, Chingy?"

"You are not allowedness to smoke," said the prince. "You're a ghost, and ghosts are strictly forbidden to smoke. Did you ever see a ghost skulking round a graveyard with a cigar or a clay pipe in its mouth? My dear Gan, the thing isn't done. It's shocking bad manners."

"Then I fed-ups being a ghost, Chingy," said Gan Waga. "Any fathead can have the job for me. I'm going homes."

"Try it, and you'll bump a few times before you get to the bottom of the mountain, Fat," said Val. "Buck up, and do without your old cigar. You'll make the record ghost, the fattest and finest one on earth. What about faking up? How long will your paint shine, Mr. Toggle?"

"For a good month, sir," said Joe.

He rose, and opened a sack, and tumbled out certain properties belonging to the yacht's little theatre. There were cardboard heads of bulls, and bears, and lions, and a number of plain black smocks. Another sack contained the hooded cloaks of invisibility. Joe prised off the lid of the tin of luminous paint, and seized a brush.

"If they want skeletons, they're easy, and don't require much artistic skill," he said. "Slip that smock on, Barry, and I'll fix you."

It was quick work. With a few bold strokes of the brush Joe painted rib-bones, leg-bones, arm-bones, and shoulder-blades on the black cloth. The paint was highly luminous, and showed up eerily against the black background. Then the carpenter bonneted Barry with the cardboard head of a bear, and put a lick of paint round the eye sockets and edges of the ears, and a dab on the snout.

Barry muffled himself in the cloak, and went out into the gloom of the big cavern, and was lost to sight. When he threw off the cloak he was something to make one's hair stand on end, especially when he switched on the electric light with which the mask was fitted, and red flames streamed from his nostrils and grinning jaws.

"Ho, ho, hoo! I never saw old Barry look morer handsome," chuckled Gan Waga. "I wishes he keeps like that all the times. When yo' not ables to see his real faces and figures he quite a handsome chap. Chingy. He, he, he! Don't alter yo'self, for the love of Mike, Barry. Yo' justs too beautifuls for nothings."

"Don't make such a row," said Ching Lung, touching Val on the arm. "Sorry to tread on your sand, Joe, but it's time to look out."

It was dark now, but much lighter outside the great cavern than in it. A wide patch of silver in the sky showed where the moon was rising. As the prince and Val looked down the slope to the dark mass of jungle and bush red lights began to twinkle.

"Here the beggars come," said Ching Lung. "A sort of torchlight procession, by the style of it. All the better. If they'll only pass the taboo mark, and come into the cave, we may get the job over to-night, instead of having to wait here another twenty-four hours."

"There's a tidy crowd of them, sir," said Val. "I can count over thirty torches. The chaps who are humping the luggage can't carry torches as well, so there must be a crush. They won't be here for another hour unless they have a vanguard who don't carry lights."

"The only vanguard will be the medicine-men," said Ching Lung. "At any rate the others won't dare to pass the taboo until the medicine-men take it off. Let's hope they have plenty of pigs, for if there's lots of stuff to eat they may start the jamboree earlier."

Ching Lung and Val went back and reported.

"Hang one of those cloaks up in front in case they do come this way with their torches," said Rupert Thurston.

They remained waiting and listening. Suddenly the red lamp glowed out and they heard voices. Val and Dave wriggled under the cloak, and saw the cavern red with the glare of torches. Behind the torch-bearers came natives carrying dead pigs slung on poles, bundles wrapped in matting, and piles of firewood. The pigs were laid out in rows, and they began to lay the fires round the altar.

There were just over a hundred of them, bigger men than the ordinary coast niggers, and uglier, which is not saying much for the beauty of the coast blacks. Their mats of piled-up hair were decorated with feathers, and they were wearing all their finery in the shape of necklaces and dogs' teeth, and bracelets, ear-rings, and nose-rings of mother-of-pearl.

"The pretty dears don't seem to have any weapons, Dave," whispered Val. "I can't see a single spear or club."

"If the cave is taboo, I guess they're not allowed to bring any weapons into it, but have to leave 'em outside," muttered Dave. "All those torches don't make much of a chine in this great vault, but the fires will throw the light a good way back. You can't see any prisoner, can you? I hope it's all my eye about the nigger kid they're supposed to have kidnapped."

The smaller cave was so much in the dark that the others crept out to see what was going on. The torch-bearers ranged up beside the altar in two lines, and a gentleman climbed on to it to say a few words. His face was painted vermilion, blue, and white, and he had one yellow leg and one white one. His personal ornaments, in addition to his paint, consisted of a necklace of skulls and a fur muff round each ankle. Evidently the taboo with regard to weapons did not refer to him, for he gripped a large, knobby club.

The watchers from the smaller cave could hear his cracked voice, but they could not understand a word of what he said. He jumped about, making his necklace rattle, and banged the altar with his club. He was simply telling the Teleli that they had so many yams and mealies and pigs that it would gladden the heart of the ghosts to see they were so flourishing.

"It is sad, my children," said the medicine-man, thinking of happier times, "that at our feast we must only eat pigs and yams and mealies, but the foolish white men forbid us to take prisoners and eat them. And the white men are very strong and I am very wise. I have fought the white men, and they are great fools, and seem to like to be killed, for if you kill many still more will come. And having much meat, my people, let us show the ghosts that we are prosperous. Another day must pass before it is the real feast of the moon, but with so many pigs, why should we wait? To-night is a night of joy, and the ghosts will be silent and forget their lamentations. Wait for the coming of Yellow Face."

Then the old rogue shouldered his club and looked upwards at the jagged hole in the wall. It was edged with silvery light. Five minutes passed, and then the rim of the moon showed round it as thin as a silver knife-blade. Mad howls broke from the throats of the Teleli, and then the blazing torches were thrust into the heaps of firewood, and the medicine-man performed a weird and wonderful dance.

"A remarkably good egg, Rupert," said Ching Lung. "The shemuzzle is not starting according to programme, but earlier."

The fires flared up with tremendous crackling, and volumes of smoke rolled towards the roof of the Cavern of Ghosts, making the stalactites gleam. The party from the Lord of the Deep were not afraid of being discovered, in spite of the brightening glare. They were too far back for that. There was a great cutting up of pigs and chanting of tuneless songs as the cooks got to work.

"We'll let 'em have their grub, for they've come a long way to eat it," said Ching Lung. "After that we'll talk to them."

While the provender was cooking, the Teleli, to the noisy beating of tom-toms and bamboo drums, enlivened the proceedings with a dance. It was evidently a war-dance, for they brought in their long spears and pretended to attack one another in a most ferocious way, but nobody got hurt. More torches were lighted and stuck about in the sand, and an odour of roast pork, some of it not of the nicest or freshest, began to pervade the cave.

At last they squatted down to the feast like ravenous wolves and gorged and gorged.

"My stars! Let me get out of it!" said Val, in disgust. "If I see any more of it I shall turn sick. Talk about jackals or cormorants! If ever the chef serves up roast pork again I shall murder him! There's one beggar with a whole leg to himself, and he's tearing chunks out of it with his teeth, the brute! He's made me feel quite queer!"

"Sorry I forgot my smelling-salts, old man," grinned Dave, "and I don't know what to give you to do you good. Gosh! How they can wolf it! If they don't die of indigestion they deserve to!"

Though the Teleli were terrific eaters, they had luckily not learned how to make intoxicating drink, and the importation and sale of it to the blacks was strictly forbidden under heavy penalties.

"Bedad, they won't fill their insides for a good hour yet," said Barry O'Rooney, glancing at his watch, "and then they'll slape till breakfast-time, and then up again and at the grub! Ate, darlints, ate, fer nt's precious little slape you'll get! And av you come back here to breakfast or ever at all the most surprised man in New Guinea will be meself."

The moon was shining fully on the altar, where the hideous old medicine-man squatted devouring roast-pork. Then one by one the warriors began to sigh and grunt and give in. More fuel was thrown on the fires, and the men lay down on the sand.

"They're getting whacked," reported Dave. "The old

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"GRUNDY, THE ARTIST!"

(Continued from page 21.)

But Grundy's loyal chums refused to let go; they had no intention of allowing their chum to risk breaking his neck just in a mad attempt to recover his own painting. Had it been the real painting it might have been different. But Grundy had said it was his, and that was enough for them.

The next moment a wild and whirling struggle was in progress in the sacred sanctum of the headmaster of St. Jim's.

It did not last long. There came a rush of feet in the passage; and then, as the door flew back, the electric light flashed up.

In the doorway stood Kildare, with Darrell behind him, and as they stood there Mr. Railton, followed by Dr. Holmes, in a state of great agitation, came hurrying up.

They blinked at the three struggling forms on the floor.

"What—what—Grundy!" almost shouted Mr. Railton. "Stop! Stop fighting this instant! Bless my soul!"

It was certainly a surprising sight.

The Head followed Mr. Railton into the room, and only then did Grundy cease to struggle. He staggered to his feet, and his chums did likewise, looking scared out of their wits.

Grundy had done it now. It was all up!

"Grundy—Wilkins—Gunn!" gasped Dr. Holmes. "Whatever can this—this amazing affair mean? Why, the window is open, and the burglar alarm is disconnected! How is that? It was in good order yesterday. I was showing it to a visitor, Mr. Manton."

"It's no good asking or doing anything now!" growled Grundy bitterly. "The scoundrel's gone! You're too late! If these asses had only let me go, I should have stood a chance of catching him!"

"Grundy," thundered Dr. Holmes, "explain yourself at once! Explain, without delay, what this extraordinary commotion means! What—Good heavens!"

The Head almost fainted with sheer horror as he saw the empty frame that had once held the precious Rembrandt.

"The Rembrandt gone!" he stammered. "Grundy, who—what—"

"He's gone, of course!" growled Grundy savagely, seemingly forgetful of whom he was addressing. "No good asking about him now. He's gone, and he's taken my painting!"

"Who—whose gone?" almost shrieked the exasperated and agitated Head. "Who has gone, you foolish boy?"

"Manton—that chap Manton!" grunted Grundy. "I never really liked the look of the chap, though I think he knew his job. He must have known it, for he's gone off with my picture. I heard a car roar away a couple of secs ago, so it's no good running after the rotter, sir."

Dr. Holmes gasped and panted. He looked for the moment as if he was going to rush at Grundy and shake him.

"Tell me!" he choked. "Tell me, Grundy, you—you foolish dolt! Where is my Rembrandt, the famous old master that was bequeathed to this school, and which is of great value, as you must know? Where is it? Do you mean to tell me that—that Mr. Manton has actually stolen it? Good heavens!"

"No, he hasn't, sir!" snorted Grundy bitterly. "But he's taken mine—"

"Then where is the Rembrandt?" It was almost a bellow.

"Under the bookcase there!" said Grundy sullenly.

"Wha-a-at?"

The Head rushed towards the bookcase. Mr. Railton rushed towards it. Both excited and apprehensive gentlemen fumbled beneath it, and then they brought forth the precious Rembrandt.

Dr. Holmes looked as if he could weep in sheer relief and joy.

"So—so it is here—taken from its frame, but safe!" he exclaimed, with deep thankfulness. "This—this is a most amazing and astounding affair! Grundy, I cannot make head or tail of your statements. I demand that, here and now, you explain all you know of this astonishing affair. At once, sir!"

He told the story of his great plan, and as they listened, his hearers burst into a roar of laughter. Even the Head could not contain himself.

"Grundy," he gasped at last, wiping his eyes and raising a hand for silence, "your—your actions—your extraordinary conduct has been most wicked—most reprehensible! I—I really do not know what to say to

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"GRUNDY THE ARTIST!"

(Continued from page 27.)

you. I do not think I have ever met with a boy so incredibly stupid. But I will deal with the matter more fully in the morning. You appear to have acted in—in what might possibly be called good faith, and you have undoubtedly been the means of preventing the theft of the Rembrandt.

"Manton is undoubtedly a clever rascal who has obtained an introduction by means of forged testimonials and references. By your most extraordinary action, however, you have frustrated his evil designs, and I will certainly take these facts into consideration when dealing with you in the morning. I should, however, seriously advise you, my boy, to take up some other—er—hobby than painting. I do not think you are—er—cut out for an artist. I do not wish to be unkind, but, really, I would strongly advise you to moderate your ambitions a little in future. You may go!"

Grundy gaped like a stranded fish.

It was the last straw.

"Well!" he gasped. "Well, upon my word!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy's ejaculation was received with a perfect howl of laughter, and the juniors were still laughing when they dispersed to go up to their dormitories.

The next day Dr. Holmes had a long talk with Grundy. It was rather a lecture. For even Dr. Holmes felt sorry for Grundy. It was really a very fortunate thing that Dr. Holmes did feel sorry for him, or Grundy might, as Lowther expressed it, "have got it where the chicken got the chopper."

But that lecture was quite enough for Grundy. And it cured him. That same day he lit the study fire with his easel and palette and brushes; the paints—or most of them—he squeezed down the respective necks of Racke, Crooke, and Mellich when he caught them chalking the words "Grundy the Artist!" on his study door. And that finished Grundy's artistic career—in the realms of painting, at all events!

Mr. Manton was never seen or heard of again. Lowther said it was no wonder. He said any normal man would drown or shoot himself when he discovered what he had run away with. Fortunately, however, George Alfred Grundy did not hear him say it.

THE END.

(Martin Clifford contributes a magnificent sporting story for next week, entitled: "RIVALS and CHUMS!" Make sure you read it, chums.)

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"THE CAVERN OF GHOSTS!"

(Continued from page 27.)

hunks with the skull necklace is so full that he's rolled off the altar. A few of the long-distance merchants, the champion eaters of the tribe, are sticking it out, but they can't last much longer. What an orgy! The black brutes might not have had a square meal for years. They're so glutted that the whole bunch of them couldn't put up a fight to whack a pet kitten."

"Av they can't fight they'll have to run," grinned Barry O'Rooney. "Bedad, it's enough to make any ghost get up and howl! And it's isn't only these haythen niggers who have mighty big twists when it comes to the grab stakes. Oi knew a man in Ballybunion who was axed av he could ate a leg of mutton, and bet a sovereign he couldn't. He said he'd come back in a couple of hours and tell av he'd take the bet. Back he comes sure enough, ates the mutton, and wins the bet. They wanted to know why he didn't take the bet at wance, and he said he wasn't sure that he could ate a leg of mutton, so he went home and throied, and found he could."

The prince crawled out to investigate things, and soon backed into the smaller cave once more.

"Now you can get out your paint-pot, Joe," he said; "and we'll soon shift this crush. Is your watch right, Val?"

"To the second, I think, sir."

"Then get through to Sparks and tell him he can tune up his band in a quarter of an hour."

Hidden by their cloaks, they slipped out of the cave into the deeper gloom and waited for the melody.

And it came. The Cavern of Ghosts was filled with wails and sobs and shrieks. Like one man the terrified blacks rose to their feet and glared into the shadows with rolling eyes. And then the big howler got in its special top note—a note of excruciating horror, like the shrieking of a fiend—and out of shadows came the ghosts—hideous apparitions of bone with the heads of monsters, their eyeballs agleam.

The Telch left, their yells almost beating Joe's big howler. They fell over each other, and trod on each other, then they got outside and bolted down the mountain slope for their very lives to seek the shelter of the bush.

"Och, the ungrateful bastards, not to lave us a lock of hair!" grinned Barry O'Rooney. "Not a thing to remember them by except a lot of lean and scraggy pork!"

THE END.

(Look out for another of these amusing yarns by Sidney Drew next week, entitled: "THE WELL OF WEALTH!" It's absolutely topping.)



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