

The GEM

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EVERY
WEDNESDAY.



The Return Of "Captain" Grundy!

(A laughable scene from this week's
splendid school story of Tom Merry &
Co. at St. Jim's.)

A LONG COMPLETE STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO., OF ST. JIM'S—

HE THOUGHT HE

The chance of a lifetime! That is how George Alfred Grundy regards his opportunity to show what he can do as captain of the Lower School at St. Jim's. With a week to prove that it's the job he should have had from the very beginning, Grundy gets busy from the word "Go!" What happens makes one of the most screamingly funny stories Martin Clifford has ever penned!

CHAPTER 1.

Homage!

"HERE he comes!"
"All hail to the
Mighty Chief!"
"Down on your
knees, varlets!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
There was a laugh in Big Hall at St. Jim's.

Quite a crowd of fellows were there—Fourth-Formers, Shell fellows, and Third Form fags. Many were grinning, some were chuckling, and most were laughing.

George Alfred Grundy frowned as he marched into Hall.

Somehow, fellows generally did smile, or grin, or chuckle even, when Grundy of the Shell either did or said anything. Grundy was a fellow who always managed to find a lot to say and a lot to do, and usually it caused entertainment amongst his schoolfellows.

On this occasion, Grundy merely marched into Hall. Yet the fellows were obviously entertained. True, he strutted, and his rugged features wore a look of great and majestic importance. Possibly this accounted for it.

At all events, the fellows seemed amused.

In a general way, Grundy never appeared to notice that his actions, or remarks, caused any amusement; he was blissfully ignorant of the fact. On this occasion, however, he could not fail, dense as he was in the ordinary way, to see that he was the cause of the general amusement. All eyes were turned upon him. There was no doubting it!

He frowned.

For a brief moment he hesitated, as if considering the wisdom of stopping to reprove such unseemly and disrespectful levity. Then, deciding, apparently, against such a proceeding, he strode to the notice-board, and pinned thereon a sheet of exercise paper.

There was an immediate rush to see it.

Grundy himself was nearly bowled over and submerged in the rush.

"Here, stand back, you young idiots!" he snorted. "No crowding there! Order! You'll all get a chance to see it in turn, you young asses!"

"Young asses, eh?" said Blake of the Fourth. "My only hat! We might be Third Form fags to hear him!"

"Order!" called Lowther, with great gravity. "Didn't you hear our noble skipper? No unseemly crowding in his presence. Order!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you wait your cheeky nose punched, Lowther—"

"Certainly, old chap! To have my nose punched by Captain Grundy would be an honour. Go ahead!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy breathed hard. Had he been able to get near enough to Lowther at that moment he would undoubtedly have punched Lowther's nose hard. Grundy was a great man at punching noses. But he could scarcely move in the scrum round the notice-board, much less reach Lowther.

"You—you wait, you cheeky young rotter!" he gasped, glaring at Lowther. "Now, you fellows, stop that pushing! I won't have it! Blake—Manners—you hear me! You'll all get your chance—"

"We can't wait, mighty captain!" called Herries. "Read it out, old chap!"

"No, don't read it out, Grundy!" begged Cardew, from the fringe of the crowd. "I want to see your spelling."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The reference to Grundy's spelling raised a laugh. In the Form-room it was notorious, though Grundy himself never would admit there was anything the matter with it. If Mr. Linton said he had spelled a word wrong, then that just showed how much Mr. Linton knew about spelling!

The crowd surged and swayed round Grundy and the notice-board, and Grundy spluttered and gave his orders in vain. But at last even the languid Cardew got his chance to see the notice—and the spelling—without having to exert himself overmuch.

It was a brief notice, and very much to the point. It made some fellows gasp wrathfully, and others laugh.

—WITH GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY IN THE LIMELIGHT!

WAS CAPTAIN!

by
MARTIN CLIFFORD



amusedly. The notice was in Grundy's own, sprawling hand—and spelling—and went as follows:

"NOTISS!

"All boys in the Shell and Fourth Forms are required to report to G. A. GRUNDY, footer captain, for a SPESHUL compulsory footer practiss immediately after diner to-day. These spesul practiss will be held daily in future, and any boy failing to turn up will be suitably punished accordingly by G. A. GRUNDY, footer captain.

(Signed)

G. A. GRUNDY,
Junior Captain of School House.
Junior Captain of Footer.
Junior Captain of St. Jim's."

"M-mum my hat!" murmured Cardew. "Phew! He's started!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The—the nerry, footling boulder!" spluttered Gore, who was one of those who failed to see the joke. "What the thump does he take us for? I'm not jolly well turning up, for one!"

"Nor I!" said Racke. "Like his cheek!"

"Oh, aren't you?" said Grundy, looking decidedly grim. "Well, I expected some measure of opposition. I'm prepared for it. The chap who fails to turn up gets a licking from me—an official licking from his skipper. Got that?"

"Look here, Grundy!" said Racke, looking very uneasy. "You can't ride rough-shod over fellows like that! You may be skipper, but you can't rule the roost by bullying."

"Bullying?" ejaculated Grundy. "Well, I'm hanged! Ain't I skipper?" he hooted. "And ain't my orders to be obeyed?"

"Certainly, old chap!" interposed Lowther, eyeing Racke & Co. with pretended severity. "I'm surprised at you, Racke! Grundy's our skipper, and it's up to us to back him up. I shall turn up to practice, at all events."

"Bai Jove! Weally, Lowthah, I see no weason why we should," objected Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass in surprise on the humorist of the Shell. "If Gwundy starts to thwow his weight about like this—"

"You shut up, D'Arcy!" snapped Grundy. "Lowther's agreed to back me up—he knows better than to refuse! I'm none too keen to have a tailor's dummy on the field, but—"

"Bai Jove! Gwunday, you—"

"Shut up! But discipline must be maintained. For that reason every fellow must turn up. You must turn up, D'Arcy. If you don't you'll have me to deal with. That's a warning!" ended Grundy; and having dealt with Arthur Augustus, Grundy turned and faced the grinning crowd, looking very grim and business-like.

"Now, you fellows!" he began, clearing his voice noisily. "I was going to call a meeting of the Lower School to hear my programme now I'm skipper. As you all appear to be here there's no need for that. I'm going to say what I've got to say here and now."

"Hear, hear!"

Cheers!

"Go it, Grundy! Silence for the mighty chief!" called Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy frowned. He was in deadly earnest, burning with enthusiasm, in fact. He did not quite like the general air of levity and hilarity.

"Blessed if I can see what there is to cackle at!" he snorted, glaring at Lowther, especially.

"This meeting's not a joke, as you'll jolly soon find out if you try any funny games, Lowther. I'm in earnest—deadly earnest! You kids know what I am!"

"A born idiot!" suggested a voice.

"You know what I am!" repeated Grundy, doggedly deciding to ignore the frivolous interrupter. "I'm now the junior skipper of St. Jim's—a position I should have held by rights long ago."

"Bai Jove!"

"Only personal jealousy and persistent obstinacy on the part of those responsible have kept me out until now," said Grundy indignantly. "Now, however, my chance has come. Tom Merry has resigned. He has seen the writing on the wall," proceeded Grundy eloquently, "and has resigned before he was kicked out. The Lower School has lost a footling fumbler, and has gained an efficient and capable skipper at last."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove! I do believe he means himself, you fellows!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He resigned, and refused to consider his decision," went on Grundy, glaring round at the grinning faces. "That's about the only sensible thing I've known Tom Merry do. Well, you know what happened then. Railton got fed-up with the business, and he asked for six candidates for the job—six fellows to take on the job of skipper in turn, each chap being given a week in which to show what he could do. It was a rotten idea!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Piffing!"

"Well, six fellows gave their names in," said Grundy, with withering scorn. "Myself and five hopeless duds!"

"Making a total of six hopeless duds!" murmured Blake.

"You shut up, Blake! Well, matters looked like being serious," said Grundy. "Fancy hopeless duds like D'Arcy, and Skimpole, and Tompkins, and Mellish, and Fatty Wynn, being in such a position of responsibility as junior skipper! Pretty serious, I can tell you. But luckily I stepped in and saved the situation."

"Bai Jove! Weally, Gwundy—"

"Silence! You shut up, D'Arcy! As I say, luckily, I saved the situation by getting Railton to let me take first turn as skipper. I start my duties to-day."

"But why is that luckily?" asked Herries. "Blessed if I can see it. More like a tragedy to me."

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"Can't you see?" bawled Grundy witheringly. "I shall make such a success of my week that it won't be necessary for the duds to take their turn. Railton will make me permanent junior skipper, and cancel D'Arcy and the rest of the hopeless duds."

"Oh, hai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Modesty, thy name is Grundy!" chuckled Lowther.

"That's what's going to happen now!" said Grundy confidently. "But I shall need backing up—loyal support! The fellow who refuses his loyal support will get an official thrashing from me. I mean to rule with an iron hand—ruthless efficiency is my motto! You fellows have heard about that chap Mussolini who saved Russia from ruin—"

"Russia—oh, my hat!"

"Sure you don't mean Italy, Grundy?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

"No, I don't. You shut up, Lumley—think I don't know what I'm talking about?" snapped Grundy. "Interrupt again and you'll get a thick ear! Well, as I was saying, look at Mussolini, the chap who changed Russia from chaos and ruin to efficiency and prosperity. Well, I'm going to work on the same lines. I'm the Mussolini of St. Jim's."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"I'm going to rule with an iron hand!" said Grundy, raising his voice to an enthusiastic bawl. "Anybody who dares to dispute my authority will get it in the neck—hard! I'm going to make things hum all round. And this," added Grundy, pointing to his "Notiss," "is the beginning. I'm going to work hard myself and I'm jolly well going to see everybody else does the same."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Grundy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" bawled Grundy, his rugged features red with excited enthusiasm. "I haven't finished yet! I'm glad you fellows realise you've got an efficient skipper at last. If you fellows will back me up—"

"We will!" roared Lowther. "Back Grundy up, chaps! Up with him! Give him our loyal support."

"Yes, rather!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—" bawled Grundy. "Hold on, you—"

But Grundy's excited protests went unheeded. The crowd surged towards Grundy amid an uproar of cheers and laughter. That the cheers were decidedly ironical, Grundy seemed to be blissfully ignorant, and he flushed with pleasure as eager hands grasped him and raised him on high. Much as he wanted to continue with his "programme," he could not help feeling delighted at such a spontaneous expression of his popularity.

Amidst laughter and cheers he was raised shoulder high. Immediately his bearers crumpled up, and he descended to the floor with a mighty bump and a howl.

But he was grasped again at once and raised aloft for the second time. Then the triumphant procession surged round the hall. Monty Lowther, the biggest practical joker of the Shell, seemed to be in charge of the triumphant march—a fact that should have made Grundy less satisfied with the proceedings.

Grundy, however, as yet, was taking matters quite seriously. He beamed round him on the sea of grinning faces. After circumnavigating the hall, the procession swept to the doorway. Here the procession jammed, and a fearful howl came from Grundy as he was brought up against the doorpost, his head catching it a fearful crack.

Then, on again with a rush, along the passages, swept the procession, making for the quad. On the School House steps, Grundy's bearers again had an accident, and Grundy came down with a bump and rolled down the steps to the accompaniment of fiendish yells.

He was instantly grabbed again, however, and the crowd surged on, making—greatly to Grundy's surprise, for the fountain.

"Here," gasped Grundy, looking a trifle puzzled now. "Where the dickens—"

"He can stand on the edge of the basin and make his speech from there," said Lowther, shouting to make himself heard above the hilarious uproar. "Up with him!"

"Yes, rather!"

Grundy was hoisted up with a rush and a swing. "Look here—Oh, all right!" he gasped, his waving feet resting on the edge of the fountain-basin. "Now, you fellows—here—yoooop!"

Splash!

It happened in a flash.

As Grundy raised his voice to go on with his speech, his legs were neatly swept from under him and he descended with a splash in a sitting posture in the fountain.

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There was plenty of water there, and it was cold. Grundy gave a wild howl.

"Yarrooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Water spouted up around him, and more than one of his bearers got a splashing. But they did not seem to mind—they roared with laughter at the sight of the junior captain of St. Jim's floundering in the basin.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "That's how we're going to back you up, Grundy darling! Perhaps that will damp your burning ardour a bit and take some of the swank and conceit out of you, old chap."

"You—you—you—" spluttered Grundy. "Oh, won't I just smash you for this, you—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Mussolini!"

"You howling rotters!" bawled Grundy. "Why, I'll smash you—I'll break every bone in your bodies! I'll—I'll—"

"Hark to the strong, silent dictator!" exclaimed Lowther. "See him waving the iron fist. I think—hallo! There goes the dinner-bell. Better be going!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The hilarious crowd scattered, roaring with laughter. It was just as well they did so, for Grundy was already clambering, drenched and raging, from the fountain-basin, and from his looks he obviously intended to bring his iron fist into vigorous use. Where the use of his massive fists were concerned, George Alfred Grundy was certainly very efficient. So, wisely, they fled.

CHAPTER 2.

Footer Practice I

"TOO bad!" said Tom Merry smiling.

"Not at all!" said Lowther, with a chuckle. "If ever a fellow begs and implores to have his giddy leg pulled, dear old Grundy does. The dictator of St. Jim's, eh? Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Even Tom Merry could not help laughing.

"It's too bad, though," he went on again. "Old Grundy's been given a week to show what he can do as skipper, and he should have his chance. He's more than a bit of an ass, but—"

"My dear man," said Lowther grimly, "if we gave Grundy his head he'd lead us a dog's life—out of a sense of duty, of course. But for his own sake he needs to be pulled up a bit. He needs the conceit and swank taken out of him a bit, and he needs to be shown that high-handed and iron-fisted methods won't do for St. Jim's. It's Grundy's own fault if he takes such a long time to learn a lesson. But we'll have to keep on ragging the dear man until he does."

"Well, I suppose you're right, Monty!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Still," he added, becoming suddenly serious, "I'm afraid this idea of Railton's will about muck up the footer and everything else. Railton must have been absolutely potty to allow duds like Grundy, and Skimpole, and Tompkins to take a turn as skipper—even for a week each. It won't do sport any good!"

"Well, you can soon put an end to it, Tommy!" said Manners soberly. "All you need do is to withdraw your resignation. The fellows will be only too glad to have you back. They think you've been treated badly, and—"

"I'm not withdrawing. In any case, I suppose it's too late now," said Tom grimly. "Railton's appointed those hopeless duds as skipper in turn, and he won't swallow his pride and cancel it. Anyway, I mean to take a rest for a bit and give someone else a chance. I didn't expect this sort of thing, certainly, or I might not have resigned. I imagined that Blake, or Levison, or Talbot, or some other responsible chap in the Lower School would put up for the captaincy. They could do the job as well as I can."

"I'm not so jolly sure of that," said Manners bluntly. "In any case, they've all refused point-blank. They mean to stand out and force you to take on the captaincy again, Tom. They're all determined to force you to stand again for the job."

"I know that!" said Tom Merry, setting his lips hard. "But they're going to be disappointed. I've been slanged by the beaks and I've been slanged before all the fellows by Kildare. I'm fed up, and I'm standing out to give someone else the chance to do better if he can. The only thing I'm sorry about is that these footling asses may muck up the footer."

"They won't last long enough to do that," grinned Lowther. "I bet old Grundy doesn't last his week out, anyway. But hadn't we better be getting down to the giddy footer practice?"

Tom Merry stared at him.

"You ass, Monty. You don't mean to say you're going to obey that idiot's orders?" he ejaculated. "The fellow's potty to expect chaps to turn out and play footer immediately after dinner every day."

"I know—I fully agree, old chap!" grinned Lowther. "But Grundy must have our support. I've been round the chaps persuading them to back him up by turning up for the practice. Come on!"

"But—but—"

"Come on!" said Lowther, with a chuckle. "You used to expect fellows to obey you when you were skipper, Tommy; you ought to obey Grundy now he's skipper, old chap."

"Up with him!" With a rush and a swing George Alfred Grundy was hoisted up, his waving feet resting on the edge of the fountain basin. "Now, you fellows," he began. "Here—Yoooooop!" Splash! As Grundy raised his voice to go on with his speech his legs were neatly swept from under him and he descended with a splash in a sitting posture in the fountain. "Yaroooooh!" (See Chapter 1.)



"H'm. Well, that's so, I suppose!" said Tom, and he followed, though he eyed Lowther's grinning face curiously.

A stream of Lower School fellows were already making for the footer field—apparently to obey Grundy's extraordinary orders. The Terrible Three joined in the stream, Lowther and Manners grinning. Curiously enough all the rest of the fellows seemed to be sharing the joke.

"Some little game on, I suppose!" laughed Tom. "I can't see all these fellows turning up just to please Grundy's silly whim."

"Shush!" murmured Lowther. "Here's the great man now! My hat! He's changed already."

Grundy had changed into footer boots, shorts, and vest, and he looked very businesslike. He grunted as the Terrible Three came up.

"Oh, you have turned up, then, Tom Merry!" he said grimly. "I was afraid you'd think yourself too important a chap to obey the man who's taken your job."

"Not at all!" smiled Tom. "Here I am, old chap!"

"You're not in footer togs!" snapped Grundy. "I've just been speaking to these footling duffers over the same thing."

"No time left for the game before classes if we stopped to change, old man!"

"I changed, haven't I?" snorted Grundy, glaring about him. "I did think you'd have set a better example, Tom Merry. Well, I'll overlook it this time, but in future

every fellow must turn up suitably dressed for footer. Wilkins!"

"Yes, captng!" answered Wilkins, in a meek voice that brought chuckles from the grinning crowd.

"Make a note of the fellows here who're missing—I mean," corrected Grundy hastily, "the fellows who're not here and should be. I see Trimble's missing, and Racke and his slacking pals. Put their names down, and order them to report to me for punishment after afternoon classes."

"Oh yes, captng! Certainly, sir!"

"I'll teach the slackers better than to ignore my orders,"

snapped Grundy. "There's no time now to go and rout 'em out, but I'll show 'em I mean to go on as I've started. No half measures about me! No footling indecision and weakness! This afternoon I mean to show you kids just how a skipper should—"

"Have we come here to listen to Grundy wagging his chin?" asked Lowther, who seemed anxious to get to work. "If so, we may as well get some chairs and forms from the pavilion."

"You shut up, Lowther!"

"Bai Jove! Isn't old Gwunday a polite skippah, you—"

"Shut up, D'Arcy—not so much dashed jaw!" snorted Grundy. "We're wasting time. Now, Tom Merry, I'll allow you to skipper one side, and I'll skipper the other. Wake up—let's pick sides, for goodness' sake! Blessed if I ever had to deal with such chin-wagging duffers!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry chuckled, and between them they started to pick sides for the brief and impromptu match. The task was soon accomplished, and, having won the toss, George Alfred Grundy chose his end. Blake, the centre-forward of Tom Merry's eleven, kicked off.

The ball left his foot like a shell from a cannon. Swooping upwards it caught Grundy neatly under his chin, lifted him off his feet, and deposited him on his back.

Thump!

"Good shot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was the beginning of the "match," and the beginning of quite a series of unfortunate "accidents" of which Grundy was the victim.

As Grundy scrambled up, covered in mud and red in the face, Lowther charged him fairly and squarely, and sent him sprawling in the mud again.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Really, it seemed as if the crowd of Lower School fellows were looking upon Grundy's "speshul" practice as a huge joke. All of them were laughing, and all of them seemed to concentrate their entire attention upon George Alfred Grundy.

As he sprawled in the mud the muddy ball whizzed from somewhere and caught him a fearful clump under his right ear, and Grundy rolled over again, feeling as if an earthquake had happened, at the very least.

"Yarrooooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"On the ball!"

"Play up, Grundy!"

"Go it, chaps!"

"Look here, you—you—"

Grundy scrambled up again, spluttering furiously. At the back of his mind was a dim, vague suspicion that that last biff from the ball had been no accident—that it had been done on purpose. He began to wonder if the whole thing was not a conspiracy against him the next moment, for before he had reached his feet, the ball struck him fairly in the chest.

Thump!

Bump!

"Ow!"

Grundy sat down violently, practically all the wind punched from him. As he sat there, gasping and spluttering, all the footballers converged upon him in a wild rush.

"On the ball!"

"Well stopped, Grundy!"

"Play up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop! Here—what—yow! Oh, my hat! Yoooooop!"

Grundy's furious bellowing became muffled as he almost disappeared from sight in the ensuing scramble for the ball. The fellows seemed to be under the impression that they were playing rugger—the scene certainly resembled a rugger "scrum" during the next few, whirling minutes.

Grundy was not visible for some little time, but from beneath the struggling scrum his bellowing voice, muffled but furious, could be heard above the laughter.

"Help! Gerrup, you footling rotters! Why, I'll—I'll smash you all to little bits for this, you—you see if I—Yow-ow—don't! Help! Oh crikey!"

The scrum heaved and broke asunder. Grundy, covered from head to foot in mud, his crimson features patchy with mud, crawled out. He looked a wreck, and undoubtedly he felt one.

"Rotters!" he spluttered. "Beastly cads! You're doing this on purpose. Why, I'll—I'll—"

Catching sight of Lowther's grinning face he scrambled up, exhausted as he was, and made a blind rush at him.

Unfortunately for Grundy, Lowther happened to have the ball at his toes just then, and Grundy fairly ran into it as Lowther kicked.

Biff!

Once again Grundy sat down hard amidst a yell of laughter. The next moment Grundy had a vague sort of idea that the air was full of flying footballs. But it was only the same ball—Grundy's own team and their opponents scrambling eagerly for turns at taking pot-shots at Grundy!

Each time it rebounded from the yelling, bellowing George Alfred someone else sent it in again. At last Grundy could stand it no longer. Once again he scrambled up, and this time instead of making a blind and furious rush at the yelling juniors he turned tail and bolted.

"On the ball!"

"Go it!"

"Good old dictator!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy vanished off the field, and with his going the compulsory footer practice ceased forthwith. The two pick-up teams strolled off the field laughing. The practice had been very brief, but very exciting—especially for the new junior skipper.

"Wathah too bad, you know," remarked Arthur Augustus, with a chuckle as he wiped his eyes. "Still, let us twust it will teach Grundy a lesson."

"Not it!" said Wilkins scornfully. "It takes more than that to teach that born idiot anything! Still, it may make him see what an utter ass he is!"

"If it doesn't teach him a lesson then we'll have to try other methods!" grinned Monty Lowther. "It's been well worth turning out for, anyway, chaps!"

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"Yes, rather!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the crowd returned to St. Jim's feeling quite satisfied. The entertainment had been quite worth the trouble, and there was even the possibility that the little "rag" had taught the over-officious and over-zealous new captain that high-handed methods were not popular in the Lower School, and that a dictator was not wanted at St. Jim's!

CHAPTER 3.

A Moving Job!

GRUNDY was not seen again until the fellows filed into the Shell Form-room as the bell rang for afternoon classes. As a matter of fact, Grundy had little time for anything else save a good wash and a change. Even then, Grundy only just scraped into the Form-room in time.

This was just as well, for he was undoubtedly in a homicidal frame of mind. Had there been time there would certainly have been trouble. Grundy had threatened to "smash" the whole of the Lower School for the fiasco on the footer field, and he would undoubtedly have made an attempt to carry his threat into effect had not afternoon school interfered.

Fortunately, by the time afternoon lessons ended, his royal rage had subsided somewhat, and so the Lower School escaped the wholesale thrashing. His study-mates, Wilkins and Gunn, had rather a rough time with him certainly, though neither had taken an active part in the ragging on the footer field. Towards the end of tea, however, Grundy began to calm down a little, and he even became genial at last.

"I've been thinking, you kids!" he remarked, as the meal ended.

"Oh!" gasped Wilkins. "H-have you, old chap!"

"You—you don't say!" added Gunn.

From the expressions on his chums' faces, they were clearly staggered at the news; apparently thinking was a new departure on Grundy's part. Fortunately, Grundy was not in a critical mood or he might have taken exception to the astonishment of his study-mates.

"Yes," he went on thoughtfully. "I've been thinking, you chaps. This study's a rotten study!"

"Oh, is it?" snorted Wilkins.

"It may be good enough for you kids!" proceeded Grundy, ignoring the astonished glares of his study-mates. "But it's not good enough for a fellow in my position. You've heard of the divine right of kings? Well, as junior captain of St. Jim's I consider I've a right to the best study in the School House, Shell or Fourth. The best study's Tom Merry's study—No. 10. Everyone knows that!"

"They do!" agreed Wilkins, exchanging a wink with Gunn.

"As Tom Merry's no longer junior skipper!" went on Grundy. "He's got no right to have the best study. You fellows agree with me there?"

"Ahem!"

"It doesn't matter if you don't!" said Grundy. "Your opinion never was worth much. Still, as you fellows are my study-mates I thought it as well to mention the fact that you've got to shift from this study—this evening, I expect. This study cramps my style in every way—too poky for one thing. I'm moving into No. 10 this evening. You fellows can start shifting your things as soon as the tea-things have been moved."

"Phew! Have you asked Tom Merry, Grundy?"

"Eh! Of course not!"

"Or—or Linton?"

"Not yet! I'm just going to see Linton now," said Grundy, rising from the tea table. "You chaps can get busy right away."

"Oh, my hat!"

Grundy marched out. Wilkins and Gunn stared at each other.

"Well, the—the burbling idiot!" gasped Gunn. "As if Tom Merry and his pals are likely to give up their study just to please him! The—the born idiot!"

"He's all that and more!" agreed Wilkins. "Phew! I can see trouble ahead with that ass as skipper. Look here, let's clear away the crockery, sharp, and get out of the way. We'll go for a stroll until lock-up! If Grundy's going to start any scrapping with Study No. 10 then he can do it alone. I'm off!"

"Good wheeze!" said Gunn. "I'm with you!"

Grundy's faithless henchmen hurriedly cleared away the crockery and then they grabbed their caps and made themselves scarce. They had no desire to be embroiled in trouble with the Terrible Three!

Meanwhile, Grundy had seen Mr. Linton, and when he emerged from the Shell master's study he was looking very satisfied. He walked straight to Study No. 10, and, kicking open the door, strode in.

The Terrible Three were at tea, and with them were Blake and his chums of the Fourth. They stared at Grundy.

"Didn't they teach you to knock at a door before walking in, at the place you came from?" inquired Manners.

"Bosh! I've no time for such rot!" snorted Grundy.

"I want a few words with Tom Merry—the rest of you can clear—sharp!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Hold on—perhaps you'd better stay, though!" added Grundy, as an after-thought. "You may be wanted to help with the moving."

"The—the whatter?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Moving!" bawled Grundy. "Don't I speak plainly enough, Tom Merry? Blessed if you aren't deaf. You want living up a bit, kid!"

"K-kid?" echoed Tom faintly.

"That's it! You know I'm junior skipper, Merry?"

"Yes. They should know it in the South Sea Isles by this time, I should think!"

"I don't want any silly cheek!" snorted Grundy frowning. "I asked you a question, Merry. You know I'm junior skipper of St. Jim's now. It's the job I should have had ages ago. Still, I've got it now and I mean to keep

"Into this study?" ejaculated Manners.

"Yes. Providing I can get your approval to the change!" explained Grundy, with a sniff. "Linton insisted upon that! Nice thing if a skipper's got to go round begging favours from the rank and file—though it's what I'm entitled to, not a dashed favour. In any case I'm not asking you kids."

"Good!"

"You'll clear out this evening," went on Grundy. "If you don't I mean to persuade you to go—with these!" And Grundy showed a useful pair of fists. "Get that?"

"Bai Jove!"

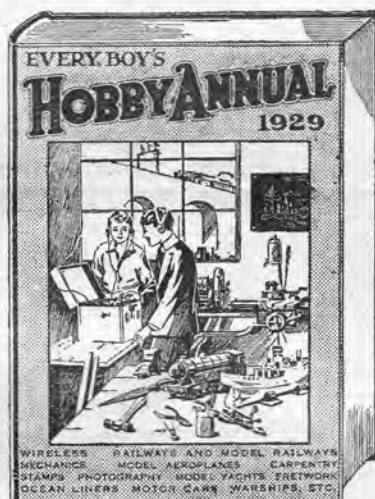
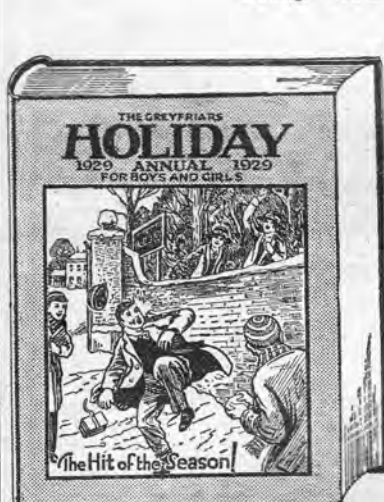
"You—you cheeky bouncer!" gasped Tom Merry, almost overcome by Grundy's sheer impudence. "Give our study up, eh—our study, to that footling idiot! Well, of all the nerve!"

"You refuse to give it up willingly, then?" inquired Grundy. "Right! I'll give you just one minute, my lads!"

"And we'll give you less, you cheeky owl!" hooted Tom Merry wrathfully. "I'm fed up with your cheek, Grundy! Come on, chaps—help me chuck this born idiot out on his silly neck! The lessons he's had already weren't enough! His head's swelled more than ever, it seems!"

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it—by sheer merit; by sheer hard work, efficiency and the force of personality."

"Bai Jove!"

"Well, that's all by the way," said Grundy. "The point is, that as skipper, I have extra responsibilities."

"That's so!" agreed Tom.

"Sometimes deputations come to see me; fellows are always coming to see me to settle some point or other—or will be doing. A skipper's job means extra work."

"That's so, too!" assented Tom, smiling.

"Very well! As you admit that, you also admit that a skipper should have every aid he can get, and he also requires more elbow room than the ordinary fellow. I mean that he should have, and is entitled to the best and most roomy study available."

"Oh! I—I see what you're driving at!" said Tom Merry, with an amused laugh. "You mean you think you ought to have this study now you're skipper, Grundy?"

"Just that! I'm glad you've the sense to see it," said Grundy, with heavy sarcasm. "This study's the biggest and best study in the Shell or Fourth. As junior captain I claim it from to-day for my own use."

"D-do you?"

"Yes. I'll give you this evening to clear your things out, though!" said Grundy generously. "But mind, this is your last evening here! You can shift your blessed furniture and things into Nobody's Study until mine have been shifted here. I've seen Linton about it. He's given me permission to move."

"Hold on!" said Lowther, giving Tom Merry a wink. "No good kicking against authority like that, Tommy. After all, Grundy's official skipper. You can't get away from that, Tommy."

"Good for you, Lowther!" said Grundy, with condescending approval. "You've got a bit of sense, I see. Tom Merry would have some too if he'd realise it's no good kicking against my authority."

"You born idiot—"

"I'm surprised at you, Tommy!" said Lowther, frowning with disapproval at Tom Merry. "Haven't you held his position of authority yourself? It's up to you to obey Grundy's orders. What is it you wish us to do, Grundy?"

Grundy gave Tom Merry a grim look.

"I've told Tom Merry once," he snapped. "He's to clear out of here, bag and baggage this evening."

"Well, that's easily done!" said Lowther, nodding. "Anything else, old man?"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Lowthah, I am surprised—"

"You dry up, Gussy!" said Lowther severely. "Let our captain answer me. Is there anything else we can do, Grundy?"

"Well, yes, there is!" said Grundy. "I've got to be busy this evening—drawing up a schedule of my duties for each day. I shall have no time to superintend the move, or help Wilkins and Gunn either. You fellows can help them after you've shifted your own stuff into Nobody's

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Study. I'll do my schedule in the library. It's quiet there and a chap can concentrate. That chap—"

"Consider it done!" said Lowther, looking at the rest of the tea-party in No. 10. "You fellows are willing, I suppose, to help move Grundy's furniture?"

"Well, yes—I am for one!" said Blake solemnly. "Must back our skipper up."

"Weally, Blake—" began the astonished Gussy.

"You ring off, Gussy!" said Digby, who had "tumbled" to Lowther's little game. "I'm on for another."

"Well, I suppose we might as well all help!" said Manners, with pretended reluctance. "Tom, old chap, don't take it hard! No good kicking against authority, you know! Grundy's captain now, and we must back our skipper—even to the extent of breaking up the happy home. Perhaps Grundy will allow some of us to play in a match sometime if we back him up in this."

"Well, I might!" said Grundy loftily. "We'll see how your form improves all round. Well, can I reply on that, Merry, or have I to use my authority!"

"Oh, all right!" said Tom. "I suppose I'll have to give way."

"Good! That's settled, then!" said Grundy, with great satisfaction. "I must say I scarcely expected so easy a—but never mind that now. Good! Don't hurry your tea, you fellows—plenty of time, so long as you're out this evening. Well, I'm a busy man now and must be off."

With a cool, patronising nod, Grundy strode out briskly, slamming the door after him. The chums of the School House looked at each other and then they doubled up and yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, isn't he a cough-drop?" gurgled Lowther, wiping tears from his eyes. "Notice that bit about a busy man now. Oh, crumbs!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, who was looking very mystified. "Pway what is the joke, deah boys? You don't weally mean that you are pwepared to give up this studay to that fearful ass?"

"Not likely!" chuckled Tom Merry. "I was waxy until I spotted Lowther had some little game on. What is it, Monty, you ass? If ever a fellow deserves to have his silly leg pulled, that born idiot does!"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Jack Blake. "My hat! If we had him in the Fourth we'd make mincemeat of the duffer!"

"Then—then you were onlay pullin' the duffah's leg, Lowthah?" said Arthur Augustus, chuckling. "Pway what is the game?"

"It isn't a game," said Lowther. "We promised to help move Grundy's furniture, and we're going to keep our word. Grundy wants us to move it into here. Well, we'll do more than that, I vote. We'll bring it here, open the window and chuck it all out into the quad. If that doesn't teach the born duffer a lesson, it ought to do."

"No need to do that!" remarked Blake reflectively. "Why not chuck it through his own window?"

"Good wheeze!" grinned Digby. "Just fancy his face when he comes here and finds his stuff has vanished! His expression will be worth a guinea a box! Let's do it!"

"Well, it would be rather a lark!" said Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "If the silly chump isn't pulled up he'll be getting unbearable. He'll be leading everybody a fine old dance. Yes, let's go and see how the land lies."

"Yaas, wathah!" The feahful ass does weally need another lesson, deah boys."

All the juniors were settled upon that point. Grundy, certainly, was over-reaching himself in more ways than one—he was getting, as Blake put it, "top-heavy." His elevation to the high post of skipper of the Lower School had turned his head—never very steady, so to speak. It was necessary, in his own interests as well as those of the public at large, to check his high-handed career. Great man as he was—in his own estimation, at all events—he could not be allowed to ride rough-shod over everyone.

With one accord the seven chums left the tea-table and went along to Grundy's study. To their satisfaction it was empty.

"Good!" said Tom Merry, with great satisfaction. "We didn't want trouble with Wilkins and Gunn—they're not born idiots like Grundy! We'll leave their stuff alone as far as possible. Now shut the door and let's get busy, chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors got busy without delay. Lowther cut off and fetched a rope from the box-room, while the window was opened wide and a start made on the "moving." In the view of Tom Merry & Co. it was vitally necessary to show Grundy, without further ado, that he could not be allowed to act as he liked. Grundy was a fellow who never confessed that he was beaten, and they knew they would have no

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peace over the matter of his claim to Study No. 10 unless they dealt with him promptly and drastically.

It was not a long "moving" job. One by one the chairs were lowered through the window into the quad below. The chairs were followed by books wrapped up in the carpet, then the fire-irons and various other articles, including even the coal-scuttle. Very soon the bushes and gravel path below the window began to resemble the front of a second-hand dealer's shop.

"Now the pictures!" murmured Lowther. "Mustn't do any damage, of course! Better leave those photographs of Wilkins, and that group of Gunny's. We've no quarrel with those chaps. In fact, I'm dashed sorry for 'em. It must be awful to be in the same study with a chap like Grundy. Hallo, here's Grundy's best silk topper. Out with it!"

"What-ho!"

The work went on apace, the juniors warming up to the job now. The pictures were taken from the walls and added to the rapidly growing pile below. All Grundy's belongings, and most of the study furniture belonged to the great George Alfred, had been handed through the window now, and Tom Merry eyed the heavy couch and large easy-chair rather doubtfully.

"What's to be done with them?" he asked. "Pity we couldn't make a really thorough job of the moving and please Grundy. Still, we can manage to get both into Nobody's Study, I think."

"Right-ho!"

Willing hands made light work, and working with a will the amateur removers soon had the couch carried out and shoved into Nobody's Study, which was an unused study at the end of the Shell passage. The chair followed it more easily.

"There, that's done!" said Tom Merry, with satisfaction. "We've done our good turn for the day, chaps. We've obeyed our skipper—at least, we've kept our word to move his things. It's a good job you didn't actually promise to move them into our study, Lowther."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

Feeling very satisfied with the result of their labours, Tom Merry & Co. closed the door of Grundy's almost empty study and returned to No. 10. There was a surprise in store for the new junior skipper of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 4.

Trouble!

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY, captain of the Lower School at St. Jim's, left the library feeling very satisfied indeed. Things appeared to be going fairly well for the first day of his captaincy. Certainly the special footer practice had been rather a fiasco, but it was early in the week yet, and he had expected strong opposition to begin with. They had pulled his leg—even Grundy was obliged to admit that to himself—but he'd see it didn't happen again.

On the other hand he had easily overcome the feeble opposition of Tom Merry & Co. over the matter of giving up their study—a success he had not expected to win at all easily. Yet he had won! His powerful personality and firm, unyielding methods were having their due results. With fellows like Tom Merry & Co. conquered, then the rest was easy. He would soon have the rest of the Lower School eating out of his hand.

So Grundy reflected as he strode from the library. He had made good progress with his schedule, and he had also written out a notice that gave him a deal of satisfaction.

The notice Grundy carried in his hand as he made his way briskly to Big Hall. Several fellows were standing about chatting, and they stared with great interest as Grundy crossed to the board and pinned his notice up, frowning as he saw that his previous notice had disappeared.

"My hat!" he exclaimed, looking about him grimly. "Who's dared to take my notice down?"

"Perhaps the Head?" suggested Cardew, who was chatting near with Levison and Clive. "Jealousy, you know, old bean! He may not want a Mussolini at St. Jim's to boost him out of his job, Grundy! Go an' tackle him, skipper!"

"Don't talk rot!" snorted Grundy. "I don't believe the Head would touch the thing. It's some cheeky kid, I expect. If I find out who it is I'll smash him. The Head's got no reason to be afraid of me—I'm not after his job at all!"

"Go hon!"

"If you cackle at me, Levison—"

"Perish the thought!" said Levison, becoming serious. "Hallo, what's the notice, Grundy? Phew!"

As he read the new notice Levison whistled. It read as follows:

"NOTISS!"

"To-morrow morning, and every morning until further notice from G. A. Grundy, captain, the St. Jim's Junior team, with reserves, will accompany G. A. Grundy, at five o'clock, for an early morning run before breakfast in order to keep fit. No excuses will be accepted, and members of the team who fail to turn up will be ruthlessly dropped from the eleven."

(Signed) G. A. Grundy, captain,
Junior Captain of St. Jim's.
Junior Captain of School House.
Junior Captain of Games."

"Dear me!" murmured Cardew, keeping a straight face with some difficulty. "Now that's what I call a good idea, Grundy, dear man! Congrats! Now don't look like that,

"My dear man, an' why not? It would add interest to the run—no end of interest! Of course you, as the best runner in the School House, if not the whole school, would have to be the hare! That's most necessary! Growin' a man like you was in front would add spice to the task—sort of put the hounds on their mettle. Don't you think so, Sidney and Ernie?"

"You silly ass—"

"You burbling chump—"

"Dear me!" said Cardew, turning in some disappointment to Grundy. "Ernest and Sidney do not, apparently, approve of my suggestion!"

"They'll jolly well have to if I say so!" snapped Grundy, frowning reflectively. "Well, there's something in your suggestion, Cardew. I must say you show sense sometimes—though you aren't much more than a lazy slacker and a good-for-nothing dandy!"

"Thanks, dear man! Praise from you is praise indeed! But think my suggestion over, Grundy. I shall be pleased to turn out if it's a paper-chase with you as hare, old chap. An ordinary run so bright and early in the mornin' even, would bore me stiff. It wouldn't appeal to the other fellows, either. A paper-chase is just the thing for a cold morning. Without an objective, like the hare, the run would prove rather boring. Don't you think so, Grundy? It will just give you the chance to show what you can do, too, old bean!"

"Well, I jolly well believe you're right, Cardew!" said Grundy, his eyes gleaming with sudden enthusiasm. "Yes,



"Tumble up, you lazy slackers!" roared George Alfred Grundy, his voice awakening every fellow in the Shell dormitory. "I'll jolly soon have you out of that!" To prove it, Grundy stripped the bedclothes from Wilkins' bed. Then he grabbed George Wilkins by the leg and brought him out of bed with a bump! "Yaroooh!" (See Chapter 5.)

Ernie. You're a member of the team, I know. But just think of the joy of springing out of bed before five on a cold winter's morning to go for a run with Grundy! Splendid!"

"Good scheme—what?" smiled Grundy.

"Rippin', old bean! Masterly, in fact! I can see the team fairly jumpin' at the chance of that early mornin' run, y'know!"

"I thought you'd be the last to approve, Cardew!" said Grundy staring. "Knowing what a hopeless slacker you are I expected you'd have been the first to want to dodge it!"

"Eh?" It was Cardew's turn to stare. "But, my dear man, I'm not in the jolly old team!"

"I know you're not!" said Grundy smiling; "but I've decided to include you in my list of possible reserves, see? You're not much good, really—too unreliable! Still, you can play when you want to, after a fashion! Anyway, you're down and I'm glad you approve of my scheme for keeping the team and reserves fit."

"M-my hat!" murmured Cardew, eyeing Grundy ruefully. "My dear Sidney, it is no laughin' matter. How was I to know that Grundy included me in his scheme when I approved it? Still, I do approve it!"

"You—you do!" almost yelled Levison.

"Quite! Only I suggest Grundy makes one alteration! Instead of making it just an ordinary run, I suggest our respected and noble skipper makes it a sort of paper-chase."

"A paper-chase?" snorted Grundy. "Rot!"

it's a good idea. When I romp home miles ahead of the hounds the fellows will see the sort of skipper they've got. It's bound to add lustre to my prestige."

"Your—your whatter?"

"Prestige!" said Grundy. "That means my—my dignity and importance, you know."

"Oh!" gasped Levison. "I—I see!"

"Well, thanks for that suggestion about the paper-chase, Cardew—though I should have thought of it myself before morning," said Grundy loftily. "No need to alter the notice—I'll explain personally to the fellows."

Nodding patronisingly to Cardew, Grundy strode away. The more he thought about Cardew's suggestion the more he liked it. Of course! As the hare he would certainly get far more of the limelight—and subsequent glory when he returned miles ahead of the hounds!

Levison and Clive stared after him half-smilingly, half-blankly. Then they turned and looked at the smiling Cardew.

"You—you silly ass!" said Levison bluntly, half-laughing. "I suppose you were pulling the idiot's leg as usual, Cardew?"

"Not at all, old man! I really do want him to take the paper-chase idea up."

"Wha-at? But you'd be the very last fellow to get out of bed to go, Cardew!"

"I may get out of bed!" said Cardew yawning. "In fact I will if the other fellows will. We must be up to

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see Grundy off. If we don't, Grundy himself may not go."

"Eh? What the thump! Look here, Cardew, what's the game?"

"My dear man, how dense you are," yawned Cardew. "If dear old Grundy wants to go scootin' round the giddy countryside at five in the mornin' why not let him? In fact, I'm quite willin' to get up and see him off. But that's as far as I mean to go. After seein' dear old Grundy off, we slip back to bed again—see?"

"Ha ha, ha!" roared Clive. "I see! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I admire your perspicacity, Sidney!" said Cardew. "Well, we'll pass the word round to the fellows interested. Now what about goin' and seein' if anythin's goin' on in Tom Merry's study. A little bird told me there might be some entertainment there shortly—when Grundy arrives as far as there. Come on."

And Cardew led the way to Study No. 10 in the Shell passage. Before reaching it they found Grundy standing in the doorway of his own study. He was looking quite pleased, but a trifle puzzled.

"The—silly chumps!" he said, in response to an inquiry from Cardew. "The—the duffers! They've left some things of Wilky's and Gunn's still here. Still, they've done jolly well to get things moved out so quickly. I'll go along and see how they've fixed up my stuff. Blessed if I can understand why they haven't shifted their own stuff into here yet from Nobody's Study. That's their own look-out, though."

"What's the matter, Grundy?" gasped Levison, staring blankly into the practically empty study. "Where the dickens is your furniture?"

"In No. 10 Study!" explained Grundy airily. "As skipper of the Lower School I'm entitled to the best study and I've claimed it. Tom Merry didn't like it at first, but he jolly soon climbed down. In fact he's even helped Wilky and Gunny to shift my stuff there."

"Phew!"

"Dear man!" murmured Cardew admiringly. "You're no end of a captain, Grundy! But where are their props and sticks? If a humble admirer might inquire—"

"In Nobody's Study, I suppose!" said Grundy carelessly. "I ordered them to take their stuff there until mine was all moved into No. 10. Well, I'll run along and see if everything is fixed up all right. If they've damaged anything there'll be trouble."

Grundy strode away towards No. 10 and kicked the door open in his usual masterly manner. He almost collapsed as he looked into the study.

The Terrible Three were there, and so were Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy. They were seated round the fire, cheerily eating baked chestnuts and chatting. They smiled round as they sighted Grundy's blank face.

"Why—what—what—" Grundy's voice trailed away.

"Come in, old chap!" said Lowther genially. "We're highly honoured at a visit from our respected lord and master. All hail to Grundy! Down on your knees, varlets! Do homage to Captain Grundy, the dictator of St. Jim's! Sound the loud timbrels! Beat the big drum!"

Grundy fairly glowered into the study. Seven cheery faces looked at him.

"Come in!" invited Tom Merry smiling. "Don't stand there so nervous and shy, Grundy! Have a baked chestnut, old chap."

"You—you—you—" Grundy spluttered helplessly, as he glared at Tom Merry & Co.

"Anything the matter, skipper?" asked Blake.

"Matter!" spluttered Grundy, waving his arms in great excitement. "What's happened to them, you idiots? Have you taken the stuff to the wrong study, or something? My study's empty, and you said you'd move the things into here for me."

"Quite a mistake, old chap! We merely said we'd help to move 'em; we didn't say we'd move 'em in here, though. You see, Grundy, this is our study," said Tom Merry blandly. "Kindly close the door quietly as you go out, old chap!"

"Why, you—you—you—"

Grundy spluttered helplessly, and then, the sudden thought entered his mighty brain that his things might have been shoved in Nobody's Study. He rushed away, sending Cardew, Levison, and Clive to right and left as he departed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Sidney Clive. "Where are his things, you fellows? Have you really cleared his study?"

"Yes, dear man!" said Blake cheerily. "We must obey our skipper, you know. He claimed this study, and ordered us to move his things—or to help to move them. We can't help it if he jumped to the conclusion that we meant we'd bring them here, can we?"

"Ha, ha! But where are Grundy's things?"

"Well," said Tom Merry reflectively, "they might still be in the quad, where we chuck'd them, or they might

not. You never know! Hailo, what's Grundy bellowing about now. Let's go and see."

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

Cardew, Levison, and Clive rushed away, laughing, and Tom Merry and his chums followed. They found Grundy staring into Nobody's Study, his rugged features crimson with wrath. From other studies fellows were emerging to see what the trouble was about.

"Oh, you—you rotters!" gasped Grundy, glaring at Tom Merry & Co. "Look here, what's this mean? I told you to take the stuff into No. 10, you born idiots! What's my couch and chair doing in here, blow you!"

"Looks to me as if they're just doing nothing," said Tom Merry, eyeing the couch and chair reflectively. "But what did you expect, Grundy? You didn't expect them to be sitting reading a book, or playing draughts. Couches and chairs don't do these things."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you rotters!" hooted Grundy, almost tearing his hair. "This is a rotten trick—you never really meant to carry out my orders."

"Go hon!"

"You—you—where are the rest of my things?" shrieked Grundy.

"Perhaps the hire-purchase man has called for them?" suggested Lowther gravely. "You never—hallo, here's Wilky and Gunn. Ask them, old chap!"

Wilkins and Gunn came rushing along the passage in a state of excitement and wrath. They even grabbed hold of the startled Grundy in their excitement.

"You—you born idiot!" spluttered Wilkins.

"You—you footling, raving madman!" choked Gunn.

"What the dickens are our things doing down in the quad—chairs, carpet, crocks, and everything, you born duffer! What's it mean, blow you?"

"More of your foolery!" shouted Wilkins. "I'm fed up with this. What's the furniture doing in the quad, Grundy, you fool!"

"Wha-at? In the where?" stuttered Grundy.

"In the quad, you ass! Go an' look, blow you!"

Grundy fairly tore himself free. He rushed into his own study, and flung up the window. Then he glared outwards and downwards. What he saw nearly made him fall out of the window.

There was a laughing, astonished crowd down in the quad, and they were swarming round a pile of furniture and effects—to use the technical expression. Grundy recognised it in a flash. The pile was his furniture, undoubtedly.

"Oh!" gasped Grundy. "Oh, the rotters! The awful cads!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Breaking up the happy home, Grundy?"

"Go it, old chap! Chuck some more out!"

From below came a yell of laughter and various suggestions and catcalls, as the crowd sighted Grundy's furious face at the window. But they did not see it for long. Wheeling round suddenly, Grundy rushed across his study, almost bowling over Tom Merry and the crowd there.

He pulled up, dancing with rage.

"You—you howling rotters!" he hooted, shaking a huge fist at the laughing Tom Merry & Co. "This is your doing, you cads! This is a rotten joke! You never intended to change studies!"

"Ha, ha, ha! True, O mighty king!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You—you—you—"

Grundy, apparently, found difficulty in expressing himself suitably in words, so he fell back upon action—swift and cyclonic action. He rushed at the almost hysterical japers, hitting out right and left with his huge fists.

"Look out!"

"Bai Jove. Collah him, deah boys!"

But it was easier said than done. Grundy was a handful at any time. Just now, in his present raving state, he was more than a handful.

Bellowing at the top of his voice, he laid about him with terrific vim. Seven to one as it was, it took Tom Merry & Co. all their time to hold him—especially as they were almost helpless with laughter.

But Grundy was taking it very seriously indeed, and he very soon gave the rest cause to take him seriously. A punch from Grundy's fist was no joke, and soon yells took the place of laughter.

The uproar was at its height when the rustle of a gown was heard, and Mr. Railton came bustling up, his face angry and scandalised.

"What—what—Grundy, Merry, Blake—boys, how dare you? Stop! Cease this hooliganism at once! Stop!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

The struggle ceased. Grundy certainly would have gone on, but the Housemaster grasped him by the coat collar and shook him.

"Grundy—foolish boy! What does this mean?" thundered Mr. Railton. "I was just coming to see you. Have you taken leave of your senses, boy? While strolling in the quadrangle just now I came upon a heap of furniture. I understand it is from your study, and— Bless my soul!" went on the Housemaster, gazing into Grundy's study in amazement. "Your study is empty, Grundy. What—what does—"

Mr. Railton looked at Grundy in quite a startled manner. He obviously imagined that that unfortunate youth had taken leave of his senses.

"It—it isn't my fault!" raved Grundy, glaring about him wildly. "My furniture—all my sticks and things have been chucked out into the quad, sir! Wouldn't you be mad, sir?"

"Good gracious! Then—then you did not do it yourself, Grundy?"

"Of course not, sir! Think I'm a fool?" stuttered Grundy, almost beside himself. "It was—was—"

Grundy paused. Even in his towering wrath he would not sneak. He pulled himself up just in time.

Mr. Railton looked at the dishevelled Tom Merry & Co.

"What does this mean, Merry?" he snapped. "Am I to understand that some of you boys are responsible for this?"

"Ahem!" Tom Merry coughed. He saw it was quite useless to hide the truth. "It—it was like this, sir—"

"Did you have a hand in moving Grundy's study furniture into the quadrangle, Merry?" snapped Mr. Railton.

"Y—yes, sir! It—it was only a joke, sir!"

"A—a joke! Absurd! Why did you do such an extraordinary thing, Merry? I—I am astounded! Why—"

"Only a little joke, sir!" gasped Tom, going red. "You— you see, sir, Grundy thinks that because he's now the junior captain that he ought to have our study—No. 10. He—he ordered us to move our things out, and to help to move his things into Study No. 10. We—we rather objected, sir! So—so for a joke we just moved his things out like—like that."

"Just a joke, sir!" said Blake meekly.

"Yaas, wathah! Gwunday fairly asked for it, sir!"

"Why, you—you cheeky young—"

"Silence! That will do, I think, Grundy!" snapped Mr. Railton, his mouth twitching a little. "I—I think I understand—quite! You have obviously been a little too officious, Grundy."

"Sir!" gasped Grundy.

(Continued on next page.)



Again, chums, our cheery old Oracle invites you to dip into the fount of knowledge.

Q. What is a bandeau?

A. The ribbon or other material with which a woman binds her hair. The bandeau is much used by women tennis players, and was first made popular by the famous Mlle. Lenglen.

Q. Where is Unter den Linden?

A. A schoolboy who signs himself "Lowest in the Shell," informs me he has been reading a history of the Great War in which there was mentioned something about Unter den Linden. This, my young friend, is the principal street in Berlin, and one of the most famous thoroughfares in the world. The actual translation is "under the limes," and the street is so called from the rows of lime trees in it. By the way, I hope you will soon be getting a lift in your Form—that is, unless you are hanging on to the lowest place in class to be near the hot-water pipes when winter comes.

Q. What is a hookah?

A. This, Walter Smythe, of Darlington, is a kind of smoking pipe—the Arabic word is *huggah*—with a long flexible tube, and the smoke is drawn through cool water in a vase to which the tube and the bowl of the pipe are attached. This is supposed to clear the smoke of impurities and render it cool to the tongue. Smoking a hookah sometimes sounds like letting water out of a bath, and for this reason it is also called a "hubble-bubble." In Turkey it is used on ceremonial occasions



The smoking pipe of the East—a hookah.

and passed round a circle of guests. Once in Constantinople I was a guest on one of these occasions and afterwards had severe pains under the belt—though whether this was the fault of the hookah or an overdose of sweet sherbet which was handed round, I could never quite be sure.

Q. What is lobscouse?

A. A sailor's dish of meat stewed with vegetables and ship's biscuits.

Q. What is a caracal?

A. I was glad to get your letter, "New Reader," but sorry to hear your Form-



A caracal—to be found in Arabia and Persia—is quite a nice pet to make, as the Oracle will tell you.

master was so severe as to give you two hundred lines to copy out of the "Harmsworth Natural History" merely because you said that a caracal was a kind of small boat used by the ancient Britons. What a pity you did not start taking in the Gem a week or two earlier, for you would then have seen in my column that the kind of boat you were thinking of is really called a coracle. A caracal is a different thing altogether—a foxy-coloured cat with long ears and a long tail, not unlike a lynx in appearance. It is by no means a common wild animal, but it is found occasionally in various parts of the East—in Arabia, Persia, Africa and India. It is chiefly noted for its great activity, and is credited with being able to leap five or six feet into the air and capture fast-flying birds on the wing. The caracal is quite easily

tamed, and in some parts of India it used to be an amusement to loose a couple of these animals among a flock of pigeons feeding on the ground. Sometimes the caracals would strike down as many as ten pigeons each before the remainder could escape.

Q. Who was Alma Mater?

A. Nobody in reality, so far as I know, "Proper for Knowledge." It is a Latin expression meaning "foster-mother," and is generally applied to a university, college or other institution. Thus if you have been to Oxford, Sandhurst, or Borsal, you may refer to your particular seat of learning as your Alma Mater.

Q. What is a groynes?

A. This, Freddy Dawe, of Acton, is a kind of heavy fence of timber, sometimes made more solid with concrete, set on a beach and running out into the sea. At Palm Beach, Coogee, Southend-on-Sea, and other health resorts of the world, I have often heard this mis-called a breakwater. Actually, the object of a groyne is not so much in itself to break the force of the waves as to collect sand and shingle about it, thus building up the beach and stopping the sea from encroaching.

Q. What is a mugwump?

A. Oh fie, Paddy O'Riorty! that you should have "knocked the head off the spalpeen, booted him in the ribs and thrown him into one of the Lakes of Killarney," and merely because he called you a mugwump! This was unfriendly, Paddy. Then you go on to tell me that when he called you a mugwump, you retorted in kind by telling him he also was a tomfool, idiot, frabjous ass, scatter-brained spalpeen, looby, numskull, dunder-pate, addlewit, burbling boob, grassgreen hick, and a jobbernowl. But really, Paddy, there was no need for you to have exercised your native wit to find what you consider synonyms for his remark, nor for that matter exercised your fists and feet on his person. Though neither of you appear to know it, the real meaning of "mugwump" is a great man. It is derived from a native word *mugguomp* which literally means "great chief."



A groyne—what you've all seen at the seaside.

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"You are taking your duties as junior captain much too seriously, Grundy!" said Mr. Railton grimly. "Knowing you as I do, I rather feared that this sort of thing might happen."

"But—but, sir—"

"You certainly had no right to order these boys to give up their study to you, Grundy!" said Mr. Railton sternly. "You are a very foolish boy at times, I fear. You are inclined to be too autocratic, and to have a much greater opinion of your importance than your position and abilities justify."

"Oh, I say, sir—"

"However, you should not have gone to such lengths, Merry! I am surprised at you. All the boys who took part in this—this idiotic joke will do me three hundred lines. They will also help Grundy to move his things back into this study again."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"As the originator, apparently, of the disturbance in the first place, Grundy, you will also do me three hundred lines,"

went on the Housemaster grimly. "And kindly remember, if you wish to complete your week of office as junior captain, to refrain from making use of your authority in order to further your own personal ends. That will do."

With that crushing reprimand, Mr. Railton strode away. Grundy stared after him, almost choking with indignation.

"Well!" he articulated at last. "Well, upon my word! To—to further my personal ends, eh? Did you ever? Of all the rotten injustice! Why, I'll—I'll—"

"Better not!" advised Tom Merry, as Grundy seemed about to attack again. "You'll lose your giddy job if you do! Better take it quietly, old chap, and we'll help you get your study put to rights. Come on, chaps! Can't be helped! Let's get down to the job."

"Yaas, wathah! Pway make the best of it, Gwunday! You asked for it, you know."

"And so did we!" grinned Blake.

There was no doubting that. Even Grundy saw the wisdom of taking it quietly after that. He did not want to lose his job—far from it. So, with feelings too deep for words, and looks that nearly sent the onlookers into hysterics, Grundy strode into his own study to superintend the hauling up of his furniture. Working with a will, Tom Merry & Co. soon had the things put back into Grundy's study again to Grundy's satisfaction. Nor did they mind the job at all. Grundy's expressions entertained them while working, and they had the satisfaction of knowing that they had quite cured the junior captain of St. Jim's of any further designs on Study No. 10. And they were right. They had!

CHAPTER 5.

Bright and Early!

"**T**UMBLE up!" "Grooogh! Shurrup! Go to sleep!" "Tumble up!" roared George Alfred Grundy, his voice wakening every fellow in the Shell dormitory. "I'll jolly soon have you out of that, you lazy slackers! I'll show you I mean business!"

To prove it, Grundy stripped the bedclothes from Wilkins' THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,074.

bed. Then he grabbed George Wilkins by the leg and brought him out of bed with a bump.

"Yarrooogh!"

Wilkins howled as the back of his head cracked on the linoleum.

"Yow! You—you raving maniac, Grundy—"

"Get a move on!" snorted Grundy, who had already changed into running attire. "It's gone five o'clock already. I ordered every member of the footer team, with reserves, to be out of bed at five. It's not quite light yet, but it jolly soon will be. Up you get, chaps!"

"Phew! He means it, then!"

"The—the born idiot!"

"Of course I mean it!" hooted Grundy, his rugged face showing eager enthusiasm in the light from the candle on his washstand. "You all saw the notice—you all know my orders! This morning we start going into strict training. I'm standing no nonsense, I might tell you! Any chap who hangs back gets a licking from me. I mean to run my team on strict lines of ruthless efficiency; no slacking; I won't

allow it. Wilkins, run along to the Fourth Form dormitory and shift out the chaps there. Tell 'em I'll come and shift them out if they slack."

"Oh crumbs!"

"My hat!"

Every fellow was sitting up in bed by this time. And all were grinning. They remembered now, of course. It was early morning—though not very bright as yet. Moreover, it was decidedly chilly. Turning out of bed at such an early hour was not a cheerful prospect.

None the less, now they remembered, Tom Merry, and all the Shell members of the footer team, turned out. Grundy had to be given his head. He also had to have his lesson—another lesson! Lessons somehow never seemed to do Grundy any good, but there was always hope that another one might.

"You've asked Railton's permission?" asked Tom Merry, smiling.

"No; but I've asked Linton!" snapped Grundy. "He said he saw no reason why we should not go for an early morning run if we wished to do so. That was good enough for me."

"A paper-chase, of course?" said Lowther.

"Yes; that was Cardew's idea, though, of course, I should have thought of it," said Grundy modestly. "It'll add interest to the run—"

see? Of course, I shan't go far—just round by Rylcombe and back across the fields—about an hour's run, perhaps more. I might tell you fellows that I mean to go all out, and that you'll have to do likewise if you want to catch even a glimpse of me."

"Good!"

"Splendid!"

"Get a move on!" snapped Grundy. "Hallo, there are those Fourth chaps! Pity there was no time to warn Figgins and Fatty Wynn and the rest of the New House chaps. Still, they can join us to-morrow morning."

"Ready?" asked Cardew, coming into the dormitory with a little crowd of figures in running attire at his heels. "I see you are, Grundy. Good! Got the scent?"

"All ready in my study," said Grundy. "I'll get it as we go down! Come on!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The grinning crowd filed out in single file after the great George Alfred. A chorus of chuckles sounded from the Shell dormitory as they left it.

"Slackers!" snorted Grundy. "They think it funny, I

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supposed. I've a jolly good mind to make every fellow in the Shell and Fourth come, whether they're in the team or not."

"I should!" said Cardew gravely. "Insist upon it, old chap! Why shouldn't they—I ask you?"

The bag of scent was got from Grundy's study; and arriving in the quadrangle at length, Grundy turned to the little crowd of early birds.

"Now, I'll get off at once!" he snapped. "I did think we might have two hares, but the trouble is that another fellow might keep me back—there isn't another fellow in the Lower School can touch me at running. I don't want to be bothered with a dud to hold me back. All I want is three minutes, mind; then you can start. Three minutes—you understand, you men?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Quite, old chap!"

"Cheerio, old sport, and good luck!"

Grundy nodded, and with that he trotted off, his bag of scent rising and falling on his broad back as he lumbered away. The crowd of "hounds" watched him with grinning faces until his form was swallowed up in the gloom of the early morning. And then they doubled up and choked and gurgled with subdued laughter.

"Oh, this is rich!" gurgled Lowther. "Good for you, Cardew!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quite worth turnin' out so bright and early for, isn't it?" yawned Cardew. "Well, I'm going back to finish my beauty sleep out, now the entertainment is over for the time bein'. I expect we'll be up and about when dear old Grundy returns. What a life!"

Cardew went back into the House, and the crowd followed his example.

There was no little hilarity in both the Shell and Fourth dormitories while the early birds changed back into their pyjamas, and climbed back into bed.

Some of the fellows went to sleep again, but some didn't, and long before rising-bell clanged out, they were dressed and down at the gates—waiting for Grundy's return.

They were soon joined by others when rising-bell clanged out, until nearly the whole of the Fourth and Shell were gathered round the gates—waiting for Grundy.

"Here he comes!"

There was a sudden shout as a distant figure appeared in sight along the deserted Rylcombe Lane.

It was Grundy right enough; he came ambling along, and by the look of him he was absolutely played out. There was a cheer as he came staggering up to the gates.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Grundy!"

"Grundy's first home!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy collapsed just inside the gateway, panting and dusty, and exhausted.

"Ow!" he panted. "I'm done—played out; I'm whacked to the world! It was a—groooh!—gruelling run, and no mistake! None of the hounds home, of course?"

"You're first back, Grundy!" said George Gore, glancing back along the lane. "Nobody else in sight, old chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy looked puzzled at the shout of laughter. He was not surprised at the cheers—he had expected them.

"Good!" he gasped, sitting up, streaming with perspiration. "It was a ripping run I can tell you. I'm drenched, through, though; I fell into that beastly ditch in Farmer Chubb's meadow. Still, as I'm first home—Why, wha-a-at—M-mum-my hat!"

Grundy's voice trailed off. His eyes had suddenly fallen upon the grinning face of Tom Merry. From Tom Merry's face they travelled to Lowther's, Manners', Levison's, and quite a lot of faces belonging to his team—the fellows whom he fondly imagined were trailing wearily across field and meadow picking up his "scent."

He nearly fainted, so great was the shock at sight of those grinning faces.

The extraordinary expression on his heated, muddy face sent the crowd into fits of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"M-mum-my hat!" gabbled Grundy, staring at the grinning faces in stupefied amazement. "I'm not first home, then? What the dickens—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here!" gasped Grundy, scrambling to his feet in great excitement and indignation. "You can't have followed my scent, you rotters! You must have dodged back somehow, or you couldn't have got here and changed before me. Why, you rotters! Why, every man Jack of you is back! Mum-my-hat!"

A sudden, dreadful suspicion seemed to strike Grundy as he glared round at the laughing, almost hysterical crowd.

"Oh!" he panted, his eyes fixed desperately on Tom Merry's laughing face. "You—you rotters! I—I don't believe you awful cads followed me at all! You—you've been pulling my leg all the time. Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was all spoof!" panted Grundy.

"Go hon!"

"You—you—you—" Grundy spluttered helplessly. "Oh, you—you rotters! You never followed me at all. I see it all now. Tom Merry, you awful rotter, how far did you follow on my trail?"

"You really want to know, old chap?"

"Yes. You—you—"

"Well, lemme see!" said Tom. "We left the dormitory and followed you downstairs, didn't we? Then we followed you to the quad. Then, after seeing you off, we naturally went back to bed. That's right, isn't it, you fellows?"

"Ha, ha! Quite right!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy stood, his face working with overpowering wrath as the full realisation of how he had been spoofed dawned upon his mighty brain. He, the junior captain of St. Jim's, captain of footer, and skipper of the School House—monarch of all he surveyed in the Lower School—had been done brown; his august leg had been pulled! His orders, his commands had been disregarded—more, they had been treated with hilarious scorn and contempt. The traitorous footballers had merely seen him off, and then they had gone back to bed.

The whole Lower School were roaring at it, and soon the whole Upper School would be roaring.

"Oh, you—you—you—you—" Words failed Grundy. As on numerous other occasions, he fell back upon action. There was a shout as he charged like a mad bull at the laughing juniors.

"Look out!"

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"Oh, bai Jove! Wun, deah boys—he looks feahfully dangewous!"

There was no doubting the fact—Grundy did look extremely dangerous, and every fellow took care that Grundy did not get within reach of him.

Roaring with laughter, they scattered and fled. Grundy, almost beside himself with wrath, gave it up at last, and went indoors to change, while the Lower School, still laughing, went in to breakfast. Another scheme of the new junior skipper of St. Jim's had come unstuck!

CHAPTER 6.

Wanted—A Fag!

"IT'S a ripping idea!" said Grundy enthusiastically.

"It's a perfectly footling idea!" said Wilkins.

"If you call my ideas footling, George Wilkins—"

"They're worse than footling!" said Wilkins recklessly. "They're perfectly idiotic!"

"This one certainly is, Grundy!" said Cuthbert Gunn wearily. "For goodness' sake chuck it! What the dickens do you want with a fag? Chaps in the Shell don't have fags."

"Bosh!"

"But look here—"

"Rubbish!"

"But listen—"

"Piffle!" snorted Grundy, banging his fist down on the table to emphasise his words. "I tell you I'm going to engage a fag—perhaps two. A fellow in my position should have a fag to wait on him!"

"But Shell fellows aren't allowed to fag—"

"Bosh! In my case it is different! Aren't I the junior skipper of St. Jim's?" snorted Grundy in great indignation. "You fellows seem to be continually overlooking my position in the school! You forget that a fellow with my responsibilities has no time to deal with details—to be bothered with jobs of a domestic nature. I must have a fag, or a couple of fags!"

"My hat! You'd better not start smoking here, Grundy!" said Gunn, with a wink at Wilkins. "You'll soon have Railton down on you—"

"You idiot!" snorted Grundy. "I don't mean that sort of fag—"

"You'll only land yourself in trouble, whichever sort you mean!" broke in Wilkins warmly. "The trouble with you, Grundy, is that you can't take advice. We warned you about that silly paper-chase affair—we told you you'd only make a fool of yourself!"

"Why, you cheeky owl—" spluttered Grundy, half rising.

"Wilky's right!" snorted Cuthbert Gunn. "You're simply asking for trouble all the time, Grundy. Look at that trouble over Study No. 10, too. That wouldn't have happened if you'd listened to us."

"Rot! That was entirely the fault of you chaps!"

"Wha-at?"

"Of course it was!" said Grundy warmly. "You let me down—let the enemy in at the gates. If you'd been on the spot instead of sneaking away those rotters wouldn't have been able to shift the furniture and stuff at all. It was all your fault from beginning to end. Think yourselves lucky I didn't biff you both for it!"

"Well, my hat!"

"But I'm not done yet," said Grundy, his square jaw setting. "I'm used to jealousy, and envy, and opposition. I shall go on with my programme. I've got a good many ideas to put into force yet—reforms that'll make the fellows stare. Before I've finished every fellow in the Lower School will realise my genius and ability—just as they now do the genius and ability of that Russian chap, Mussolini."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I realise that I've got a fight before me," admitted Grundy. "I've got to make the fellows see first what I'm made of. Until now I've never had a real chance to show the stuff that's in me. The fellows don't know me. At present they think me an idiot to—"

"That just shows they do know you, Grundy!" said Gunn incautiously. "Proof positive, in fact!"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Wilkins.

"Look here!" began Grundy, wrinkling his brows in an effort to grasp the point of Gunn's remarks. "If—if that's meant for cheek—"

"Not at all, old chap—just plain, homely truth!" said Wilkins. "Anyway, if you mean to go looking for trouble among the fags now, you can count us out. We're keeping clear of it. Come on, Gunny!"

Wilkins marched out, followed by the grinning Gunn.

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Grundy snorted.

"The cheeky rotters!" he muttered, frowning. "Nice pals I must say! Well, I can do without their support. Now about this fag question! I'll show 'em what's what!"

Seating himself at the table, Grundy drew pen and ink and paper towards him and commenced to scribble. He soon finished, and marching out, he pinned the notice he had written on the study door.

He had just done so when Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther came strolling along the passage from No. 10.

"Hallo," grinned Tom, sighting the paper. "Another notice from our respected skipper, chaps! What's it about, Grundy?"

"Nothing that interests you rotters!" grunted Grundy,



who was in a far from amiable frame of mind after the paper-chase fiasco of the morning. "Anyway, you can see, can't you?"

"Certainly, old chap!" said Tom soothingly. "Only when you scribble anything it's usually difficult to tell whether it's meant for writing or drawing."

"Footling idiot!" snorted Grundy, and he went into his study, banging the door after him.

Tom Merry and his chums read the notice. It was interesting, after all. It ran:

"NOTICE!

FAGG WANTED!

"G. A. Grundy, Junior Captain of St. Jim's, is in urgent need of a fagg. Only fags willing and eager to work hard need apply. Good salary paid to suitable candidates. Apply to Captain G. A. Grundy, Study No. 3, Shell passage.

(Signed) G. A. GRUNDY,

Junior Captain of St. Jim's.
Junior Captain of School House.
Junior Games and Sports Captain."

"Well, I'm blowed!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "The—cheek of that chap! Fancy having the cheek to want a fag—that ass!"

"Good wages paid, though!" said Lowther, shaking his head reflectively. "It sounds good! Don't forget that old Grundy's a wealthy chap, and gives stunning feeds. A fag who got that job would be in clover."

"He'd need an undertaker in a week, though!" said Manners, with a chuckle. "Grundy's rather hard to please, and he's too fond of using his boot on fags. He's got what he calls a short-way with fags."

"Well, it's worth risking that!" said Lowther. "I'm after the job, anyway. Here goes."

"Well—well, I'm blowed!" George Alfred Grundy gasped with amazement and wrath as a swarm of Third Form fags fought their way into the room. "Here, you inky little rotters, get out of this!" "Look here, Grundy—" "I'm the man, old chap! I'll—" Crash! A little table on which stood Grundy's precious gramophone went crashing over. "Get out!" shrieked Grundy, almost tearing his hair. (See Chapter 6.)



Opening the door, Lowther calmly walked inside. He bowed low to Grundy.

"Please I've come, sir!" he said meekly. "You want a fag, I see. I've got a good character and can give good references. If you'll give me a trial I'll do my best to give satisfaction, Grundy."

Grundy glared at him, and then at the grinning two in the doorway.

"You—you cheeky ass! Get out! If you dare to try to pull my leg—"

"You're advertising for a fag, aren't you?" inquired Lowther. "I'm able-bodied, and quite capable of looking after a weak-minded lunatic. I can see to the folding up of your strait-waistcoats, and I can clean out this padded cell, and—oh, crumbs!"

Crash!

A bulky volume just missed Lowther's head as he jumped for the door. Obviously Lowther had not got the job.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three departed from the vicinity of No. 3 Study in great haste, for Grundy himself appeared in the doorway. He looked ferocious.

"Well, he's improving, anyway!" chuckled Tom Merry. "He's evidently got more sense than to expect Third Form kids to fag for him for nothing. It's a wonder he didn't try to get fags by more high-handed methods—the iron fist, you know."

"Yes, he's improving!" grinned Manners. "I bet he has a swarm of fags round his ears, soon—if only bent on pulling his leg. I fancy—hallo, here's young Wally. Seen the notice on Grundy's door, Wally?"

Wally D'Arcy, of the Third Form, stopped and stared. "Eh? What notice?" he sniffed. "Think I want to see any of that footling duffer's notices? Yah!"

And the leader of the Third walked on. None the less he stopped to have a look at the notice on Grundy's door—out of sheer curiosity. He read it and then he chuckled and rushed off to impart the news of Grundy's requirements in the faggery.

"Now we'll soon see if any of the fags want the job!" grinned Lowther. "Hold on!"

The Terrible Three hung about the passage curious to know what would happen when the Third-Formers heard the news that Grundy was in need of paid fags. Other fellows came along, read the notice, and also waited, in grinning expectation.

They had not long to wait. There was a sudden rush of feet in the passage, and at least a dozen Third Form fags, all more or less inky and untidy, came scudding along towards Grundy's study. Wally D'Arcy, and his chums, Curly Gibson, Jameson, Reggie Manners, Levison minor, were foremost amongst them. They were followed by other fags in twos and threes and in groups until the passage outside Grundy's study swarmed with inky fags.

"I thought as much!" chuckled Lowther. "Either they're out to pull Grundy's leg, or else the promise of a good salary attracts them. My hat! What a row!"

The Terrible Three moved nearer to Grundy's study, just as the door flew open and the crowd began to swarm in, yelling for Grundy.

"I was here first, Grundy—stop shoving, you duffers!"

"Yah! I'll punch your nose, Jameson! I say, Grundy, old chap—"

"I'm your man, Grundy! Here, I was first, young Piggott—"

"Yah! Look here, Grundy—"

The crowd swayed and fought its way into Grundy's study. Before the great George Alfred realised what was happening that sacred apartment was full to overflowing, and he found himself surrounded by eager and excited applicants for the post of fag to the junior skipper of St. Jim's.

"Well—well, I'm blowed!" gasped Grundy, the moment he recovered from his amazement. "What the thump's this game mean? Here, you inky rotters, get out of this!"

"Look here, Grundy—"

"I'm the man, old chap. I'll—"

"Get out!" roared Grundy, going red in the face. "Why, you—you cheeky little sweeps! Invading my dashed study like this! Outside—outside before I get my dashed boot to work! Well, I'm—"

Crash!

Something went with a crash—it was the glass in the doors of the bookcase—under the pressure of the eager crowd. A little table on which stood Grundy's precious gramophone went crashing over scarcely a second later.

"Get out!" shrieked Grundy, almost raving. "Great Scott! What in thunder—"

"Yah! What about the job, Grundy?" hooted Wally D'Arcy. "Didn't you advertise for a fag? Well, here we are! Good salary paid, you said! What about it?"

Wally D'Arcy's indignant question was echoed by a score of voices, all shouting at once. The din in Study No. 3 was deafening. From out in the passage came a howl of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy almost tore his hair. He had anticipated applicants for the position, but he had not quite anticipated such eagerness as this.

Whether it was a "rag" by the cheeky fags, he had no means of knowing. But from the fact that already several fights were in progress in the study he deemed that it was not. In their eager anxiety to get the job, the fags were jealous of each other, and naturally they fought to get near to Grundy. On the other hand, the whole thing might be a rag, and the little "scraps" pre-arranged.

Which ever way it was, George Alfred Grundy was not the fellow to put up with such an outrage—an outrage to his personal dignity and an insult to his position.

"You—you little fiends!" he shrieked, grabbing up the ruler from the table, over which ink was flowing freely. "Why, I'll—I'll show you! Out you go, you little sweeps! Out you go!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Yarrooogh!"

"Ow! Yow! Oh, my hat! Look out!"

Whack, whack, whack!

Only three more whacks did Grundy get in with the ruler, and then the fags seemed to wake up to the fact that Grundy was attacking them.

"Well, I'm blowed!" yelled young Wally D'Arcy.

"Advertises for fags and then goes for 'em with a ruler.

It's a swindle, chaps! Go for him!"

"Smash him—he's nearly brained me!"

"Down with him—down with the swanky idiot!"

"Yah! Mop him up, chaps!"

"Look here—" roared Grundy. "Look—why—Oh, crikey! Yooooooh!"

Grundy vanished from sight beneath a waving, struggling sea of fags. His yells became muffled and frantic. Internal strife had ceased amongst the fags, and they all seemed to concentrate upon the person of George Alfred Grundy.

Possibly, like Wally D'Arcy, they appeared to believe that it was a swindle—that Grundy had got them there for nothing, or just to whack them with a ruler. At all events they proceeded to show Grundy what they thought about him.

Out in the passage, Tom Merry & Co. and the rest of the onlookers attracted by the uproar were almost in hysterics. What was going on in the study few could see, but all could hear—they could not fail to hear. And above the crashings and bangings and excited shouts of the fags came a muffled bellowing from Grundy.

"Oh!" gasped Tom Merry weakly, leaning against Jack Blake for support. "Grundy will be the death of me yet. I suppose we ought to go in and rescue him, but—Ha, ha, ha! I can't move for laughing!"

"Same here!"

"Yaas wathah! Weally, old Grundy is a coughdwoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the disturbance did not last much longer. Just as Tom Merry & Co. were about to interfere there sounded a final terrific bellowing in Grundy's frantic voice, and then the fags came streaming from the study, all of them dishevelled and many hugging damaged noses and eyes.

The last to stream out were Wally D'Arcy & Co., and they were roaring with laughter as they scudded away after the others at top speed.

"M-my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "I hope they haven't killed old Grundy between them. Phew! He's still alive!"

Grundy was certainly alive. As they crowded round the study door and stared in, Grundy struggled to a sitting position on the floor. He was gasping and panting like a cheap, wheezy gramophone.

Like the room, he was a wreck!

His collar was gone, and so had his tie. His jacket was torn up the back, and his waistcoat was minus most of its buttons. His nose looked red and swollen, and his face was covered with mingled red and black ink. It streamed down from his hair and dropped from his chin. His hair itself was dishevelled, and it looked as if it had been rubbed in cinders as well as anointed with ink and gum.

The room itself was in a terrible state—it looked as if it had been struck by a cyclone.

"Ow!" gasped Grundy. "Ow-ow-yow! Grooooooh! Oh, crumbs! The little cads! The infernal little sweets! Ow! I'll—I'll smash 'em to little bits for this! I'll—I'll make mincemeat of the young rotters! Ow! Grooooooh!"

"Still want a fag, Grundy?" asked Lowther, poking his head round the doorway.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wreck as he was, and exhausted as he was, Lowther's simple question proved far too much for Grundy. He leaped to his feet and made a furious rush at the laughing crowd in the doorway.

They fled. They did not wait to hear Grundy's answer to the question. In a couple of seconds the passage was deserted. Grundy looked positively dangerous just then, and nobody wanted to meet him face to face. After raging along the passage, trying door after door and finding all locked, however, Grundy gave up all ideas of vengeance for the time being, and went along instead to seek the nearest bathroom. But before he went he tore down the notice advertising for a fag. Evidently he had had enough, if not too much, of those cheery young gentlemen.

CHAPTER 7. Nothing Doing!

"I'M sorry, Merry!"

Grundy spoke firmly. If he was sorry, however, he did not look it. His face was flushed, and his eyes gleamed. Never before had George Alfred Grundy had the pleasant and important task of making up the team list for a match, and he was undoubtedly finding

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great joy and satisfaction in it. He looked neither sorry nor concerned as he looked into Study No. 10 and told Tom Merry that he was sorry.

"Eh? Sorry?" exclaimed Tom Merry, looking up from the copy of the "Modern Boy" he was reading. "What the dickens are you sorry about now, Grundy—about that face of yours? If so you can count on my sympathy, too."

"And mine!" said Manners. "It must be an awful affliction to have to carry a face like that about with you, Grundy."

"The only comfort that I can offer at present," said Monty Lowther gravely, "is that you'll be able to grow whiskers to hide it when you grow up, old chap. Think of that possibility, Grundy, and try to bear up bravely until then."

"He might wear a mask, though!" suggested Manners, thoughtfully. "Have you ever thought of doing that, Grundy? I don't charge you anything for the suggestion, by the way."

Grundy came into the study, and snorted. For once he was not looking for trouble, and he refused to be drawn.

"You can drop that silly rot!" he said, with withering scorn. "I've no time to listen to funny remarks from you or anyone else, Merry. I've just been making up the list for to-morrow's match with Langdale, Merry."

"Good, old chap! But what is there to be sorry about in that!"

"I'm sorry because I've been obliged to drop you out, Merry!" said Grundy calmly.

"Oh!"

"You're surprised, what?" said Grundy. "Knocked in a heap, eh? You'd thought your reign as skipper of the team was going on for ever, what?"

"Not at all!" said Tom, rather grimly. "Only I did think it barely possible that you still had sense enough left to leave the team just as it was, Grundy. Apparently I was wrong."

"You—you've dropped Tom Merry?" gasped Lowther. "The best man in the team?"

"I've dropped Tom Merry—yes!" assented Grundy.

"Then you can jolly well drop me, too!" snorted Lowther.

"And me!" added Manners warmly.

"I've done so already," smiled Grundy. "I never even thought of including you two in my list of possibles. As for Tom Merry—well, I've given his claims every thoughtful consideration. I've come to the conclusion we wanted fresh blood in the team. It's struck me that Tom Merry, though I admit he can play after a fashion, would not play well under me."

"What? If you jolly well suggest, Grundy—"

"I'm suggesting nothing!" said Grundy calmly. "I know you'd do your best, Merry. But it stands to reason that after being the cock of the walk you'd not play well under another's leadership. At all events, I'm dropping you. I'm sorry!"

"Blow your silly sorrow!" said Tom Merry, frowning. "I might have expected this, Grundy, but I hoped for the sake of the footer that you wouldn't fool about with the team for to-morrow's match. It's the first important match of the season, and we can't afford to carry any duds, or lose our best men."

"If—if you suggest that I'm a dud, Merry—" spluttered Grundy.

"I don't only suggest it, I say you are one!" said Tom coolly. "Now, if you've really made your mind up about it—"

"I jolly well have!" snorted Grundy.

"Then kindly get out of this study—your voice worries me!" said Tom. "Good-bye!"

"Look here—"

"Rats!"

Grundy snorted and marched out. As a matter of fact, he had been rather uneasy about dropping Tom Merry, and he was very glad to end the interview so easily. In the passage he ran into Levison.

"Hallo! Made the list out for to-morrow yet, Grundy?" said Levison. "Time it was up!"

"Yes, I have. You're playing, Levison!" said Grundy, with magnificent and lofty condescension. "You're playing outside-left."

"Good! Tom Merry skipper, of course!"

"Eh? Certainly not!" said Grundy, staring. "I'm skipper, you silly ass! What the thump do you take me for?"

"A born idiot!" said Levison frankly. "Where are you shoving old Tommy, then?"

"He's not on my list at all!" said Grundy, with a snort. "I'm trying fresh blood, Levison. Tom Merry's a back number! He's dropped!"

"Oh, is he?" said Levison. "Then you can drop me, too! I'm not taking part in a comic match with you as chief comedian! That's flat! You can go and eat coke, Grundy!"

Levison marched away, snorting. He felt insulted at being asked to play under a skipper like Grundy.

"Well!" choked Grundy, staring after him blankly. "Well, I'm—I'm dashed! Cheek! Oh, all right! I'll jolly soon find someone to take his dashed place! Cheek!"

Grundy, in high dudgeon now, marched to Study No. 6 in the Fourth. He looked in and found the whole family there—Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy.

"Hallo, here's our comic captain!" said Blake affably.

"Cheerio! Come in, Grundy!"

"No time!" snapped Grundy. "I've just looked in to tell you I shall want you for the match to-morrow, Blake."

"Good!" said Blake. "You've more sense than I gave you credit for, after all, Grundy."

"What about me?" said Herries and Digby together.

"Nothing about you," said Grundy. "I want footballers, not dummies!"

"You—you cheeky idiot—"

"But I shall want you, D'Arcy," said Grundy patronisingly. "You're not much good, but I'll admit you've got speed. I shall want speed on my right wing. You're down."

"Good man, Gwunday!" said Arthur Augustus, with satisfaction. "I weally feathed, you know, that you would twy to weawwange the whole team and wuin it."

"Eh? Look here—"

"I weally twust, howevah, that you yourself are not play-in', deah boy," said Arthur Augustus anxiously. "I do not wish to be unkind, but weally—"

"Me?" snorted Grundy. "Me, not playing! You block-head!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You born idiot!" snorted Grundy. "Of course I'm playing! Ain't I skipper?"

"Then—then you're taking Tom Merry's place at centre-forward—going to skipper the team?" gasped Blake. "You ass! He'll not do so well anywhere else, you dummy! If you move him—"

"I've already moved him—shifted him out of the team altogether, of course!" said Grundy warmly. "I want new blood—Tom Merry's a back number! He's not on the list at all!"

"Isn't he?" snorted Blake. "Then you can knock my name off, too, Grundy. I'm not playing under a circus performer like you, old chap! I'm either playing under Tom Merry, or not at all. So put that in your silly pipe and smoke it!"

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

"Bai Jove! You certainly will be jiggered if you chuck Tom Mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "You can also cwoff my name, Gwunday! You can also go and eat coke, deah boy!"

"Look here—"

"Outside!"

Grundy came into the study, his rugged features red and wrathful. He was amazed and angry. But he was also rather disturbed. If all the fellows were going to do this sort of thing, where would his team be. Already he had lost three of them. Such insubordination and mutiny must be nipped in the bud without delay—he must show that he was not the sort of fellow to be played about with like this!

He turned back his sleeves, and looked pugnacious. "So that's it, is it?" he said. "You're going to let me down, are you? We'll see about that! A licking here and now may just stay the rot—teach the rest a lesson!"

"Bai Jove! Gwunday—"

"Put your fists up!" roared Grundy. "For the last time—are you playing under my captaincy, or not, Blake and D'Arcy?"

"Not!"

"Wathah not, Gwunday, you sillay ass!"

"Then here goes!" bawled Grundy.

And he rushed at Blake and Arthur Augustus.

His intention was quite simple. He intended to lick them soundly and knock their insubordinate heads together until they howled and agreed to play. That was his intention. Unfortunately for Grundy, however, it was not carried out.

In the grasp of four pairs of hands he was swept off his feet and he descended on the carpet with a terrific bump.

"Yoooooooooop!"

"There!" gasped Jack Blake, after the process had been repeated three times. "That will teach you not to come the heavy hand in this study. Now sling him out, chaps! There are no recruits for Grundy's team in this study. One—two—three—"

Bump!

"Yarroooooooooogh!"

Grundy landed in the passage like a sack of coke. The door of Study No. 6 closed. Grundy sat and gasped, then he jumped up and assaulted the door in a great rage. But it

was locked, and he wandered on, with feelings that were really too deep for words.

He next called at Study No. 5, and interviewed Dick Julian, Kerruish, Reilly, and Hammond. Getting rather desperate now, he offered each a place in the team. The quartet in Study No. 5 jumped at the chance—until they heard that Tom Merry was dropped, and that Grundy himself was to skipper the team. Immediately they one and all declined the honour without thanks. Only the remembrance of what had happened to him in Study No. 6 prevented Grundy from becoming violent again.

"It's a dashed conspiracy!" snorted Grundy, in great wrath. "But I'll show 'em—I'll show 'em it takes more than this to beat me! By James, yes!"

Feeling not a little dispirited, Grundy went back to the Shell passage, and called upon Study No. 11 there. But the moment Grundy mentioned the present composition of his team, Noble, Dane, and Glyn declined the doubtful honour. And the very same thing happened in No. 9, and the rest of the studies he visited.

Still undaunted, however, Grundy went across to the New House. Unfortunately, before he even mentioned the object of his visit, he was unwise enough to call Figgins & Co. "New House kids." That did it. Grundy was frog-marched out of Piggy's study, along the passage, and down the stairs. He went out of the New House hallway with a dozen boots to help him.

Having picked himself up, Grundy, very dispirited now, looked at his list. All of his team had been crossed off with the single exception of George Wilkins—Grundy not having included Cuthbert Gunn in his list of possibles. Grundy made his way back to his own study, limping a little and looking very much the worse for wear. He found Wilkins and Gunn seated at prep.

"Oh, here you are!" snorted Grundy, obviously in a very bad temper indeed. "Where the thump have you been to, Wilky? I've been hunting for you!"

"Sorry, old man!" said Wilkins humbly. "In future I won't move without asking your permission, skipper. May I get up and get my Latin die now, Grundy?"

Gunn chuckled, and Grundy glowered.

"That's cheek!" he said after a moment's reflection. "I'm not in the mood to stand any cheek, I might tell you. Chuck it—take my advice and chuck it!"

(Continued on next page.)

ATHLETES

TRAIN ON IT



There is half a cup
of English full cream
milk in every

**CADBURY
BIG MILK
BAR 2^D**



"The Latin dic, you mean?" said Wilkins, staring.
 "No!" bellowed Grundy. "Look here, I've just had a few rather staggering shocks, you fellows," he added, a trifle more subdued. "I'm fairly knocked of a heap! You'll scarcely believe what I'm going to say, but it's a fact. D'you know how many names are left on my list for to-morrow's match?"

"How many?" asked Wilkins, winking stealthily at Gunn.

"One!" said Grundy, with terrific emphasis. "One! Would you believe it? I've been round the blessed place, absolutely hawking blessed places in the team. And—and nobody wants them. It—it's astounding!"

"You—you don't say!" said Gunn, who, like Wilkins, had already heard about it. "Hard lines, old chap!"

"It's unbelievable!" said Grundy, as though he were still hardly able to credit his senses. "Only thing I can think is that the whole thing's a rotten conspiracy. Jealousy and envy, as usual! Well, I'm not beaten yet! And I'm not jolly well going to give in. That's settled!"

"I should, old chap, if I were you," said Wilkins, rather cautiously. "The fellows won't have Tom Merry dropped! And—and— Well, they won't play under you, old chap!"

"Look here—"
 "Jealousy and envy, of course!" Wilkins hastened to add. "You'll have to give in, though, if you want to get a team up!"

"Will I?" bawled Grundy, crashing his fist on the table. "I'm hanged if I will! Am I the sort of fellow to bow down before the rabble? Not me! I'm going ahead—I've settled on my line of action, and nothing shall turn me aside. I'm the skipper and what I say goes!"

"But look here, old chap—"

"Rot! I'll beat 'em yet!" vowed Grundy. "There's as good fish in the sea as ever came out, Wilky. There's a foot talent at St. Jim's that's never had a chance to show itself yet. Look at me—been here all this time and never had my chance until now. Fancy that! Well, I'm going to get up a new team—fresh blood entirely with the exception of you, Wilky. You're not much good—no good at all, in fact! But as I'm skipping the team it isn't so necessary to have brilliant players. All you'll have to do is to back me up as far as your feeble capabilities will permit."

"Oh!" gasped Wilkins. "Is that all?"
 "Yes! You're down, Wilky! I'm putting you among the backs; you'll do least damage there."

Wilkins blinked. As he was one of the best men in the regular School House junior team, he naturally did not like such remarks—even from Grundy!

"Oh!" he gasped. "Will I? And—and you think I'm playing in your silly team, do you?"

"Eh? Of course! Aren't I telling you—"
 "Then you can go to pot!" snorted Wilkins. "You can jolly well cross off my name, Grundy—right now. I wouldn't be found dead in any team skippered by a born idiot like you, that's flat!"

Grundy said nothing for some moments. He just looked at Wilkins. Then, with a rather terrifying deliberation he took off his jacket and started to roll back his cuffs. This operation performed, he stepped to the door, turned the key in the lock, and then he advanced on the startled Wilkins.

"So you refuse to play in my team, do you, George Wilkins?" he said, with terrific grimace.

"Y-y-es!" mumbled Wilkins, with a helpless glance at Gunn. "You—you s-sus-see—"

"Then I'm going to wallop you until you decide to change your silly, cheeky mind!" roared Grundy. "Put your fists up—"

"Look here—"
 "Yes or no?" bellowed Grundy. "Am I to leave you on my list or not?"

Wilkins groaned; but there was no help for it. Together Grundy's study-mates might have overcome their redoubtable leader, but in the process they would undoubtedly get badly battered. Neither wanted that—even to overcome Grundy.

"Oh, all—right!" growled Wilkins sullenly. "I suppose I shall have to let you put my name down."

"That's good enough, then!" said Grundy, seating himself at the table as he put on his jacket again. "Now you chaps be quiet for a bit. I'm going to make out another list."

With that, Grundy set to work with his usual vigour and enthusiasm, his past reverses forgotten. He had one name down to begin with, in addition to his own—that of George Wilkins. Unfortunately he did not see the wink George Wilkins exchanged with Cuthbert Gunn. Wilkins had given Grundy permission to put his name down, but that didn't mean that Wilkins intended to play—far from it. So far, the junior skipper of St. Jim's only had one man willing to play in the match on the morrow—and that man was George Alfred Grundy!

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CHAPTER 8.

Cardew's Wheeze!

"ROTTER!" said Tom Merry dismally.
 "Beastly!" agreed Manners. "Well, it was only to be expected. You were an awful ass to resign, Tommy!"

Tom Merry's lips set obstinately.
 "I don't see it!" he said. "I still believe that a change will do good. There's still a chance that these idiots will jolly soon make one of our good men take my job over. I never expected Talbot and Blake and the rest of them to take this attitude. But it's done now—Grundy's skipper. But it's a pity about the footer. Grundy's bound to take a footling team of duffers over to Langdale. Let's go and see if the born idiot's got the list out yet."

"Good wheeze!"
 "I'm jolly curious to see that list!" grinned Lowther. "I believe Grundy's got a few shocks in store. I've heard that he's even asked that smoky rotter, Racke, to play."

"It's true enough," said Manners grimly. "He's asked Crooke, too—and, I believe, old Tompkins!"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Tom Merry.
 The Terrible Three hurried along to the Hall. Dinner was just over, and as it was the day of the match, they were not surprised at finding a swarm of excited fellows congregated round the notice-board. Since classes had ended, a constant stream of fellows had been going to Grundy's study demanding to know when the list was going to be put up. But until the very last minute before dinner-bell rang the list had not made its appearance on the board. It was known that Grundy was locked in his study and refused to satisfy the popular clamour for news on the subject.

It was common knowledge, however, that Grundy had been touting for players in the most surprising places—even slackers and loafers like Racke & Co., and amiable duffers like Clarence York Tompkins, having been asked to play by him.

In fact, all agreed that there was little else for Grundy to do—unless he acceded to the general demand to allow Tom Merry to skipper the match. As he was junior captain, the fellows were prepared to allow Grundy to play himself. But they were not ready to allow him to be skipper of the team and to drop Tom Merry. And knowing Grundy's obstinate nature, they scarcely expected him to climb down and agree to that demand.

As Tom Merry & Co. hurried into Hall now, they soon discovered that Grundy hadn't climbed down. Round the board were a host of fellows, most of them angry, but many grinning and chuckling.

"Mellish in goal!" Cardew was reading out coolly.
 "And dear old Clarence York Tompkins outside-right. And—and— Oh, my Sunday topper! What price our dear friend, Aubrey Racke, as centre-half?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Well, what's the matter with it?" snorted Racke, who was standing on the fringe of the crowd. "That's a jolly good team! I'm going to show you rotters that you're not the only fellows who can play footer by long chalks!"

"And Crooke's down!" whistled Manners. "Oh, great pip! Jever see such a team! Grundy, Mellish, Tompkins, Gore—well, I did think Gore had more sense—Racke, Crooke, Robinson, Wyatt, Wilkins—"

"Poor old Wilkins!" murmured Lowther, shaking his head.

"I expect Grundy's hammered him into agreeing to play."

"Has he?" grinned Cuthbert Gunn. "Wait and see! I'm down, too!"

This was true enough—Cuthbert Gunn's name was also down. At his wits' end to find enough players to make a team, Grundy had again tried the press-gang methods that he fondly imagined had succeeded so well in Wilkins' case.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Blake. "I'm sorry for you two, I must say, Gunny!"

"You've no need to be, old chap!" said Cuthbert Gunn coolly. "We've allowed Grundy to put our names down, certainly. You can lead a horse to the water, you know, but you can't always make him drink."

With that cryptic remark, Gunn linked arms with Wilkins, and the two strolled away, chuckling. It was as well they did so, for scarcely a second afterwards Grundy himself, looking very important and business-like, came striding along.

"Oh, here you are, Racke, and you, Crooke! Where are the rest of my team? Racke, cut along and get the fellows together. Soon be time for us to start off. Where's Gore and the others? Buck up—no slacking!"

There was a chuckle, and Grundy glared about him.

"Just looking at your team, Grundy!" said Lowther. "Is that the team you're taking over to Langdale?"

"Yes."

"Taking anyone else over with you?"

"No—only two reserves, Lucas and Lennox! Why?"
 "Aren't you taking a shorthand reporter?" ejaculated Lowther.

"Eh? What the thump for? There'll be a local reporter there, probably!" said Grundy.

"I don't mean to report the match," said Lowther. "I mean, to keep count on the goals as Mellish lets 'em through. He'll be kept busy, and will need something swifter than longhand, old chap."

"Rot! Don't talk rubbish!" snorted Grundy.

He marched away, a chorus of chuckles following him. Racke and Crooke walked after him, scowling back at the laughing juniors. Both Racke and Crooke were born

Langdale, I believe, and Darrell says he's the end of a sweat!"

"My hat!"

Tom Merry guessed he was wanted in his capacity of junior skipper, but a glance round showed him that Grundy had gone, and he realised the matter was urgent.

Without another thought, Tom rushed off to the telephone in the prefects' room. Cardew followed more leisurely. He was very curious indeed. Tom's chums stayed chatting with Blake & Co., who just came up then.

Outside the prefects' room Cardew waited. He heard Tom's voice within speaking on the phone. Presently he heard the receiver banged down, and then Tom Merry

"Let me go, you silly ass!" gasped Tom Merry, as Ralph Reckness Cardew gripped his arm. "Why the dickens—here—what—oh!" Without warning, Cardew suddenly grabbed him with both hands and with a powerful swing sent him staggering backwards into the prefects' room. Then, as Tom Merry sprawled on the floor inside, Cardew coolly banged the door shut and turned the key in the lock.

Click! (See Chapter 8.)



slackers, and they were never keen on footer—far from it. But the chance of being able to write home and say they'd played for the St. Jim's junior team was too good to be missed.

The fellows dispersed, most of them looking upon the affair as a great joke. But Tom Merry & Co. were looking grim.

"We've scarcely played Langdale at all before," said Tom Merry glumly. "I was looking forward no end to meeting them this season. They're a jolly good team, I believe. It's—it's rotten and humiliating to think those born duffers will be showing the school up there. They'll be licked by about twenty goals, at least, I should think."

"Thirty, my dear man!" yawned Cardew, joining the chums of the School House. "I've a good mind to run over to Langdale myself. It's bound to be no end entertaining, seein' the ball bein' put through and wonderin' how many times they'll do it before close of play. By the way, you're wanted on the phone, Tommy."

"Eh? Me?" said Tom.

"Yes—just seen Darrell as you strolled off, dear man. He says you may use the phone in the prefects' giddy sanctuary. Trot off, old bean—sharp! It's a fellow from

fairly came rushing out—nearly sending Cardew flying, for at the moment Cardew was doing something to the key in the lock.

"Hallo! Steady, old bean!" said Cardew, catching Tom firmly by the arm. "What's the giddy trouble—why this breathless haste, dear man?"

"Quick!" panted Tom. "Are those fellows gone yet—the team, I mean? I've got to stop them somehow! The Langdale skipper's just been ringing up. The river close to the school has overflowed its banks and flooded their footer fields. The game can't be played there. They tried to get me on the phone before lessons this morning, but couldn't get through—lines broken down by floods or something. Anyway, I've got to stop Grundy's lot!"

"Hold on!" smiled Cardew coolly, holding Tom back. "They want us to cancel this match, eh?"

"No, they want us to play them here—in fact, they're risking and are starting at once. I've told them it'll be all right—there wasn't time to get Grundy to the phone. They wanted to get their train at Langdale. Quick! Before Grundy's lot starts!"

"But, my dear Thomas—"

"Let me go, you silly ass!" gasped Tom. "Why the dickens—Here—what—oh!"

The next moment Tom Merry got the surprise of his life. Without warning, Cardew suddenly grabbed him with both hands, and with a powerful and unexpected swing sent him staggering backwards into the prefects' room. Then as Tom Merry sprawled on the floor inside, Cardew coolly banged the door shut, slipped the key in the lock and turned it.

Click!

Tom Merry was a prisoner in the prefects' room.

"Rather lucky I just managed to get the key before dear old Thomas rushed out!" mused Cardew, as he shoved the key in his pocket. "Now we'll go and see dear old Grundy off. Hark! There goes the giddy charabanc, if I'm not mistaken!"

"Cardew, you idiot, open this door!"

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

Inside the prefects' room, Tom Merry, almost beside himself with wrath and sheer amazement, was banging on the door and shouting. Cardew smiled, and strolled off with his hands in his pockets.

The prefects' room was at the end of a rather long passage, and it was unlikely it would be visited by anyone on a fine half-holiday. In any case, Cardew had the key in his pocket, and he knew it would take time for anyone to find another to fit the lock. At the end of the passage Cardew paused and glanced through the open passage window into the quadrangle. He was just in time to see Grundy and his men swarming aboard the motor-charabanc at the gates. Most of them were looking somewhat self-conscious, while Racke, Crooke, and Gore were scowling. They, at least, knew they were booked for a terrific licking at the hands of Langdale.

"Dear men!" murmured Cardew smiling. "Never mind, they'll have a joy-ride after all!"

He watched until the lumbering motor began to move away amidst sarcastic yells, cat-calls and ironical laughter from the swarm at the gates who had gathered to see the team off. Then Cardew, as the charabanc vanished down Rylcombe Lane, left his position at the window and went downstairs and out into the quad—a little more hastily now.

He met Lowther, Manners, and Blake & Co. returning from the gates with broad grins on their faces.

"Cheerio, dear men!" greeted Cardew. "Has the team gone?"

"Yes—gone like lambs to the slaughter!" chuckled Lowther.

"Good! Then I think we'd better begin to hustle round and get the regular team together," said Cardew calmly. "Hallo, there's dear old Ernest and Sidney goin' out through the gates on their jiggers. Stop them someone—tell them Langdale will be here soon, and their services are required—at least I expect dear old Tommy will want Levison!"

"Bai Jove! What—"

"Langdale—are you potty, Cardew?" gasped Blake. "What the dickens—"

"Not at all," said Cardew blandly. "Never more sensible in my life, old chap! You see there's been a change in the programme. While Grundy and his team are speeding cheerfully towards Langdale, the Langdale team are cheerfully speeding here. In the absence of Grundy's team we can do nothing less than to play them with our regular team. See?"

"Bai Jove! Weally, I don't see at all Cardew?"

"Don't try," advised Cardew gravely. "You'll strain your intellect, old chap! Just take my word for it and trot round and get the regular team together. Meanwhile I'll trot upstairs an' let dear old dutiful Thomas out of the prefects' room."

With that Cardew hurried away smiling.

Blake stared after him, and then a broad grin came over his face.

"Phew!" he gasped. "I—I think I see the wheeze! Good old Cardew! That must have been a message from the Langdale skipper for Tom Merry—I heard Darrell asking for Tommy just now. My hat! Get a move on, chaps—let's rally the fellows together. There's something in this!"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Lowther gleefully. "I think I can guess what Cardew's done. He's locked Tommy in the prefects' room until Grundy and his gang of duds have gone! Ha, ha, ha!"

But Blake was already racing away—he had just sighted Talbot making his way rather glumly out through the gates, and he went after him like the wind.

Meanwhile Cardew had strolled up to the prefects' room. He smiled at the sound of angry thumps and yells reached his ears. A moment later he was opening the door calmly.

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Tom Merry rushed out, his face red. He was breathless.

"Oh, you—you idiot, Cardew!" he stuttered. "What's this footling game? What the thump d'you mean by it? Has the dashed team gone?"

"Grundy's team has—yes," said Cardew easily. "But Blake and the other chaps are just rounding up your men, Thomas. Now don't get excited, old bean! Just think of what I've saved St. Jim's from—a lickin' that would have ranked for terms."

"Oh!" gasped Tom Merry; he understood now. "Oh, you—you fathead, Cardew! I was going to give you the licking of your life for this. But—but—"

"You won't now?" smiled Cardew. "Dear man! I know how dutiful you are—at all costs you would have done the right and proper thing and called Grundy back. But, alas, I am not quite so dutiful! Grundy and his merry men have gone—on a joy-ride! They'll arrive at Langdale to find the team have gone to St. Jim's. As the Langdale team are comin' by train they won't meet, fortunately. So—well, if you're sensible, Thomas, Langdale will meet a team worthy of their mettle, and St. Jim's will be saved from becoming a giddy laughin' stock!"

"Oh!" gasped Tom. He stared for a brief moment uncertainly at the smiling Cardew, and then he burst into a roar—he could not help it. "You—you awful spoofer, Cardew! Still, well, you're right, I suppose! For the sake of St. Jim's I'll get my old team together and we'll play Langdale when they arrive—and blow Grundy!"

"Good man!" said Cardew approvingly. "Hallo, here's friend Blake."

Blake, followed by Arthur Augustus, Herries, Digby, and half-a-dozen members of Tom Merry's old team came rushing up, delighted grins on their faces.

"All serene, Tommy!" chuckled Blake. "Has Cardew told you the wheeze?"

"Yes," grinned Tom. "I felt like punching his head at first, but—"

"My hat! Why, he's saved St. Jim's from the most humiliating licking we could ever have had," snorted Herries. "Good for you, Cardew! You're a bit of an ass at times, but you've played up well this time."

"Thanks, dear man!" said Cardew gravely. "Praise from you is praise indeed! But what about the rest of the team?"

"I think they're all at hand," laughed Blake. "Talbot's busy rounding them up! It's for Tom Merry to settle on the team, though!"

"I'll soon do that," said Tom Merry. "I—I suppose I ought really to consult Kildare or someone about this. But—I don't think I will."

"I should jolly well think not!"

"Wathah not! I twust, Tom Mewwy, that I shall have my old place in the team, deah boy?"

"Your giddy trust is not misplaced," said Tom cheerily, his face bright now. "I'll just run over the team, and meanwhile you chaps can be spreading the news about. The Langdale men have started by this time, and they should be here in less than half an hour. It's only just beyond Abbotsford, you know! Buck up!"

"Yaas wathah!"

The juniors broke up, the members of the team who were present hurrying away to change, whilst the rest went to spread the glad news abroad. Few of the Lower School had gone out of the gates, for it was early as yet, and very soon a swarm of fellows, amidst cheers and laughter, were making their way for Little Side. The new, strange development caused general hilarity and satisfaction, and the fellows roared as they thought of Grundy, speeding towards Langdale—and the surprise in store for him there.

In less than half an hour the Langdale team arrived at the gates, and Tom Merry was leading his men out on to the field amidst a roar of cheers. Then a hush settled on the ground as the whistle shrilled out. The game had started!

CHAPTER 9.

On the Warpath I

"HERE we are!"

"Good!"

A feeble cheer went up from Grundy and his team as the St. Jim's charabanc drew up before the gates of Langdale School.

Grundy stood up in the vehicle and glanced rather loftily about him. Grundy was looking, very pleased and satisfied indeed. Few of his men were, however. Tompkins and many of the amiable duffers were looking rather apprehensive—they wondered what was before them. Racke, Crooke, and Gore did not wonder—they knew. They knew perfectly well that they were booked for a terrific licking. They had only agreed to join Grundy's team because of

Struggling and kicking in vain, George Alfred Grundy, the junior captain of St. Jim's, was frogs-marched from the footer ground to the pavilion. There he was tied securely to one of the posts at the rear of the building. Leaving him there roaring with rage, the laughing spectators then returned to watch the end of the match. (See Chapter 10.)



the glory attached thereto, and of the chance afforded them of writing home to say they had been "selected" to play for St. Jim's in an important match. Of the actual football and the possibilities, they cared little. Gore, possibly, felt a trifle ashamed at the thought of letting St. Jim's down; Racke and Crooke never even gave that aspect of the matter a thought—nor would they have troubled had they thought about it.

But Grundy was in high feather—though just a bit disappointed that nobody seemed to be turning out to greet them. As a rule a visiting team was politely cheered on their arrival at a friendly school. Yet—so far, their arrival did not seem even to have been noticed.

As Grundy stared about him, rather impatiently, a youth came though the school gates—obviously a senior. He stopped and stared at the crowded charabanc.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, staring as he recognised the St. Jim's colours. "What on earth are you fellows doing here?"

"Eh? What are we doing here?" echoed Grundy, staring in his turn. "We've come to play your men, of course! Where's Trent, your junior skipper?"

"Gone to St. Jim's, of course!" said the senior. "I say, kids, there's a mistake somewhere. I understood that Trent had telephoned to St. Jim's and it was arranged that the match should be played there."

"Wha-a-at?" gasped Grundy.

"The river here overflowed its banks last night," said the senior. "I expect you saw the state of the fields round here as you came along. Our footer fields are flooded a foot deep and more in water. Our junior team started for St. Jim's some time ago—I saw them start off myself. It's queer!"

It certainly was queer—to Grundy and his startled men. Grundy himself was absolutely flabbergasted.

"You—you mean to say that Trent and his men have gone to St. Jim's?" he stuttered.

"Yes."

"And—and that Trent rang St. Jim's up on the phone and arranged to play us at our place?" babbled Grundy.

"Yes—I know for a fact he did," said the Langdale senior skipper—for it was he. "He rang up a kid named Merry—the junior skipper there."

"What?" yelled Grundy, in a tone that made the Langdale captain jump. "Why, I'm the junior skipper of St. Jim's—me! My name's Grundy! Merry's a back-number—he's lost the job! Well, I'm blown! Cheek! Why, it's worse than cheek!" said Grundy, suddenly getting excited as he

imagined he saw it all. "Oh, the—the rotter—the fearful cad! I heard someone saying he was wanted on the phone some time before we started. He knew—and he let us start out! Oh, the cad!"

"The cad!" said Racke furiously. "That's it! He wanted your team out of the way, Grundy, so that his own could play the Langdale chaps!"

"Better hurry back!" said the Langdale captain, eyeing the furious faces of the St. Jim's juniors curiously. "You may get back in time to play them after all!"

"Play them!" hooted Grundy, waving his arms wildly in his excitement. "Yes, we'll play them and we'll jolly well make mincemeat of those cads if they do try to play in our places. That—that cad, Tom Merry! Oh, the rotten sweep!"

The Langdale skipper shrugged his shoulders and with a curt nod he walked away. Apparently he did not feel inclined to stay to discuss the matter with a crowd of excited, scowling "kids" like Grundy & Co. He had his dignity to consider.

But Grundy and his men scarcely saw him go. Grundy danced with rage.

"Quick!" he bellowed to the driver of the charabanc. "Get a move on, you idiot! Back to St. Jim's at top speed! Look lively! Oh, my hat! This—this is the outside limit! I'll smash Tom Merry to smithereens for this, you see if I don't."

"No wonder the rotters were laughing when we started out!" said Racke, biting his lips. "They knew, of course, and let us go."

This was not true by any means. But Racke chose to think so. Indeed he honestly did think so. And Grundy also took in the suggestion and brooded on it. The charabanc turned before the Langdale school gates, and then it went lumbering back the way it had come, watched by a crowd of curious Langdale fellows who had run out through the gates.

During the journey back to St. Jim's, Grundy was like a "cat on hot bricks." He could not sit still, so great was his overpowering anxiety and wrath. The thought of Tom Merry's team playing Langdale filled him with burning indignation.

By the time the gates of St. Jim's came into sight, Grundy was in a state bordering on frenzy. He fairly hurled himself from the charabanc, and followed by his team he made a bee-line for Little Side. Long before they

reached the footer ground, however, they knew the worst. From the ground came a roar of cheering.

"Go it, St. Jim's!"

"Good man, Tommy!"

"Good old Merry!"

"Let's have another one!"

"Hurrah!"

The cheering was deafening. But the sound was not as music in Grundy's ears. He charged for the field, fairly seething with rage and indignation. A single glance out on to the field of play was enough.

It was Tom Merry's team right enough. Tom Merry with his supporting forwards was just running back up the field, having, as a matter of fact, just scored the fourth goal of the match. It was already half-way through the second half, and the game was a foregone conclusion in the general view. Tom Merry and his gallant men were in particularly good form, and they had notched three goals to the visiting team's one up to now.

That was how matters stood when Grundy arrived with his hapless team at his heels.

"Stop!" bellowed Grundy. "Stop! Tom Merry, you awful cad! Stop! Referee, stop the game! You hear?"

Anyone within a quarter of a mile of the field would have been deaf, indeed, had he failed to hear.

"Bai Jove! It's old Gwunday!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus breathlessly, as he trotted back up the field. "Now for trouble! He sounds feahfully waxy—must have just got back."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A howl of laughter went up from the crowd lining the touchline as Grundy came charging up to them, his face red with rage.

"Here's Grundy!"

"Good old Grundy!"

"Just in time to see the finish!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you howling rotters!" yelled Grundy. "Stop 'em! Referee!"

Phoop!

The referee took no notice of Grundy.

The ball came swinging up the field, and there was a rush for possession—Grundy being forgotten by Tom Merry & Co. as the game started again.

But Grundy was not the fellow to allow himself to be forgotten for long. Not a bit of it!

He gave one snort of amazed rage at the referee's glaring defiance, and then he rushed on the field, arms waving, bellowing at the top of his powerful voice.

"Stop! Stop the game, you rotters! Stop!"

From the crowd round the field came a roar of amazement and wrath.

CHAPTER 10.] Not Guilty!

"GRUNDY, you idiot—"
"Get off the field!"
"Throw him off!"
"Oh, my hat!"

From every corner of the field came the angry shouts, but Grundy did not heed them. His eyes were on Tom Merry, and it was for Tom Merry he was making—with a bull-like rush.

But his rush took him full into another rush on the part of the St. Jim's forwards. Tom Merry—too busy to notice George Alfred Grundy—had just taken possession of the ball again, and backed up closely by Blake and Talbot, he was taking it up-field—when Grundy arrived on the scene.

Grundy ran right into Tom, and Tom sprawled over him. As Talbot was at his heels, that junior went head over heels over both, quite unable to stop himself. The next moment Blake, with a Langdale forward speeding alongside of him, came charging up, and they joined the scrambling heap on the muddy ground.

Phoop!

The referee's whistle went, and a perfect howl of wrath swept round the field from the St. Jim's supporters. Grundy's blind rush had quite spoiled a pretty concerted movement that might easily have resulted in another goal for St. Jim's.

Naturally, the St. Jim's supporters were wrathful—and they showed it with yells of wrath and indignation.

The St. Jim's players also did not hesitate to tell Grundy what they thought of him.

"The—the footling idiot!" roared Levison, running up, his face flushed with wrath. "Grundy—"

"You mad rotter—"

"You burbling chump—"

"Yow!" bellowed Grundy from beneath the scrum.

*Lemme gerrup! I want Tom Merry—I'm going to smash
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him! I'm going to make mincemeat of the cad! Lemme gerrup!"

Somehow Grundy managed to scramble free—he jumped to his feet, muddy and dishevelled, and he made a blind rush at Tom Merry, who had also just scrambled up.

"Stop that!" shouted Rushden of the Sixth, who was the referee. "Grundy, you young idiot, get off the field! Are you potty?"

Grundy did not stop—he charged at Tom blindly, his big fists waving. But Levison acted swiftly. His foot slipped out, and Grundy went over it with a crash.

"Yooooop!" roared Grundy.

"Kick the footling ass off the field!" ordered Rushden angrily. "Collar him and boot him off—sharp! My hat! I'll lick him for this! Off with him!"

"Yaas, wathah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Wush him, deah boys!"

There was a rush of players for Grundy. That angry youth put up a terrific struggle, but it was useless. On all sides the St. Jim's players collared him, and he was swept up and rushed off the field, struggling madly and bellowing furiously. At the touch-line the footballers handed Grundy over to the far from gentle care of the St. Jim's spectators. Then they trotted back on to the field again.

Phoop!

The whistle went, and the game proceeded—Grundy forgotten by Tom Merry & Co., as the Langdale players—not a little amazed at the surprising scene they had witnessed—attacked with a will.

Meanwhile, the spectators were dealing with Grundy, the junior captain of St. Jim's! During the next few moments George Alfred had the time of his life. Struggling and kicking in vain, he was lifted and frogs-marched to the pavilion. There, at Bernard Glyn's suggestion, he was tied to one of the posts at the rear of the building. Leaving him there, roaring with rage, the laughing spectators then returned to watch the end of the match.

And an exciting end it was. Langdale seemed determined to make the most of the little time left them, and they pressed again and again. But not once could they get through the St. Jim's defence. Fatty Wynn was on form, and he was invincible. When the final whistle went at last St. Jim's were still leading by the two goals.

Amidst a roar of cheering Tom Merry and his men ran off the field, laughing and cheery, their heated faces bright. In the excitement of the last few minutes of the match they had forgotten all about Grundy—everyone had forgotten him, in fact.

With hearty cheers the Langdale players were sent off—they were not staying for tea, as they had a train to catch, and it was only when Tom Merry & Co. were trooping back to the School House that Tom Merry remembered Grundy.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom. "What about Grundy? Anyone know what happened to the silly chump?"

"Great Scott!" said Clifton Dane. "I'd forgotten about Grundy. We tied him to the pavilion post and left him there to cool down a bit. I expect someone's let him free by this time, though."

"It was rather hard lines on the silly chump!" laughed Tom Merry. "He must have fairly raved when he got to Langdale and found the team had left for St. Jim's. No wonder he was mad and went for me like that."

"The born idiot ought to be locked up!" snorted Herries. "But for him charging on to the field like that we should have scored then for a cert!"

"I'm afraid he's not finished with me yet," said Tom, frowning a little. "The ass seems to think I played him a rotten trick! I shouldn't be surprised if he doesn't want to lick me!"

"Blow the duffer!" sniffed Blake. "If ever any fellow asks for trouble he does. Blow him, anyway! You Shell chaps are coming to Study No. 6 for tea. Gussy's had a fiver, and we're celebrating this giddy victory with it."

"Good man, Gussy!" said Lowther heartily.

"Hear, hear!"

In high feather Tom Merry & Co. trooped into the dormitory. After a rub down and a change they made for Study No. 6 for tea. Digby, who had not been playing in the match, had been sent on ahead to get tea ready, and a pleasant odour of hot, toasted muffins greeted the tired footballers as they entered Study No. 6.

Scarcely had they seated themselves round the festive board, however, when the door flew open and Baggy Trimble came charging in. His face wore a gleeful grin, and his eyes blazed with excitement.

"Look out, you fellows!" he yelled. "Grundy's coming! He's been hunting everywhere for you, Tom Merry, and he's fairly raving! Someone's just told him you're in here, and he's—"

Crash!

Grundy had come. The half-open door flew back with a crash, and Grundy, dishevelled and raging, came rushing

in, sending the luckless Trimble flying forward on hands and knees.

But Grundy had scarcely seen the fat Fourth-Former—his eyes were on Tom Merry, and he made a furious rush at him.

"Now, you rotter!" he bellowed. "Now I'll have it out with you!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove! Look out, deah boys!"

Evidently Grundy had not long been released—his clothes were rumpled and his collar and tie still adrift. He was, as Trimble had stated, fairly raving. He came at Tom Merry like a whirlwind, and there was a yell of alarm as he sent Tom crashing against the table. The teapot flew out of Lowther's hand, and scalding tea shot over Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's lap.

The swell of St. Jim's yelled and jumped up, his knees lifting the table, which shot a couple of cups and saucers to the floor with a crash.

But that was only the beginning. The next moment Tom Merry and Grundy were fighting furiously—Tom himself having no choice in the matter. He had to fight to defend himself. They crashed against the table, and though, luckily, the table withstood the charge, the cloth was dragged off, and with it went a stream of crockery and foodstuffs.

"Look out!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Crash! Clatter! Crash!

"Stop them!" shrieked Blake. "Grundy, you fool—clear out! Chuck that born idiot out, chaps!"

Blake rushed in between Grundy and Tom Merry. He got a fearful clump from Grundy's fist for his pains, and that was quite enough for Blake. In another second a three-headed scrap was in progress; in another two seconds Arthur Augustus, Herries, Digby, Manners, and Lowther had piled in in a desperate attempt to deal with the situation.

But Grundy was a handful even for the seven to deal with. By the time he was overpowered the study was in a shocking state, and Tom Merry & Co. and Grundy himself were very much the worse for wear.

"Out with the madman!" gasped Blake, clinging fast to one of Grundy's wildly kicking legs. "Away from the door, you cackling owls! Out with him!"

The uproar had, naturally enough, brought fellows from their studies. The doorway and passage outside were crowded with interested onlookers. They scattered quickly enough as Grundy came flying through the doorway, all arms and legs. He dropped in the passage with a bump and a howl.

At that interesting moment Mr. Railton came hurrying up, his brow grim. It became grimmer still as he recognised the dishevelled individual on the linoleum as Grundy.

"Grundy!" thundered Mr. Railton. "You again! Foolish boy! How dare you? Never in my life have I met such a troublesome, quarrelsome boy! Get up this instant!"

"Ow! Yow!" gasped Grundy. "Ow! Groooogh!"

Somehow Grundy managed to get himself upright. Even with the Housemaster present, he seemed to be in two minds as to the wisdom of making another assault on the occupants of Study No. 6.

But—fortunately for himself—he paused.

"Grundy?" articulated Mr. Railton, his brow growing thunderous as he noted the junior captain's dishevelled state and that of Tom Merry & Co. "I—I am amazed beyond measure at finding you, once again, causing trouble in this House. I have no doubt whatever that you are the cause of this. You are the most troublesome boy in the school!"

"Me?" gasped Grundy, his jaw dropping. "Well—well—"

"What does this mean? Why are you fighting with Merry and these other boys, Grundy?"

"Why?" hooted Grundy, far too angry to trouble about trying to keep matters back. "Because that cad, Merry, played me a dirty trick! He's defied my authority as skipper—he's treated me shabbily—sent me and my team off on a wild-goose chase while he stayed here and played the team that I and my team should have played. Then, when I came back and went to claim my right to lead the St. Jim's team, his pals attacked me—they tied me to a post behind the pavilion. I've been there ever since. Ask the rotter! He can't deny it! He took a message on the phone from the Langdale skipper, and said nothing in me about it, the rotter!"

"Calm yourself, Grundy!" snapped Mr. Railton, with a sharp glance at Tom Merry. "What do you mean?"

Grundy explained—as clearly as his wrath and fury

would let him. But Mr. Railton soon grasped the situation as Grundy saw it.

"Is this true, Merry?" snapped the Housemaster. "Did you receive a telephone message from Langdale?"

"Yes, sir. It came just before Grundy and his team started out for Langdale. Trent, the Langdale junior captain, asked for me, believing I was still junior captain here."

"Why did you not give the message to Grundy, and so prevent him going to Langdale, then?"

"I—I was prevented, sir!" stammered Tom.

"What? How were you prevented?"

"Someone locked me in the prefects' room, sir."

"That's all rot, sir!" snorted Grundy.

"Can you give any proof of this, Merry?" said Mr. Railton, frowning. "If you did keep the message back then you have acted in a very unworthy manner indeed. I am surprised at you!"

Tom Merry was silent—he had no intention of giving Cardew away. But Cardew was not so squeamish. He stepped forward cheerfully.

"I can prove it, sir!" he said, smiling.

"How can you prove it, Cardew?"

"You see, I was the fellow who locked Tom Merry in the prefects' room."

"Oh, indeed!" snapped the Housemaster. "And why?"

"To save St. Jim's from a humiliating lickin', for one thing, sir," said Cardew coolly. "Grundy was taking over a team of hopeless duds to meet Langdale. I thought if they were well out of the way, then Tom Merry could meet Langdale with his regular team. It happened as I expected. Grundy went off with his team, and Tom Merry's old team met Langdale here, and they licked them—three to one! I think I was justified in the circumstances, sir."

"You—you rotter, Cardew!" spluttered Grundy. "You—"

"Silence, Grundy!" said Mr. Railton. "I think I begin to understand now. So Grundy did not take the regular team over to Langdale?"

"There wasn't one of the regular players in it," said Cardew calmly and frankly. "It was a team of hopeless duds. Not a man of them could kick a ball straight if he tried."

"Look here," Grundy was beginning again; but Mr. Railton silenced him.

"I have heard quite enough, Grundy," he said grimly. "You acted very foolishly indeed in taking such a team over. And, in the circumstances, as Langdale had arrived here, Merry did quite right in playing them in your absence. You appear to have attacked Merry without troubling to investigate the matter, however, and but for the fact that you have already been punished, I should punish you myself for your stupid and unjustified attack upon these boys!"

"Oh!" gasped Grundy. "But—but—"

"Silence! Cardew, you have acted very wrongly, and—and you will take five hundred lines. Grundy, you had better proceed to the bath-room and make yourself presentable. You are in a disgraceful state. It is quite obvious to me that you are not a fit person to hold the responsible position of junior captain. There has been nothing but trouble since you were appointed. If there is any more trouble I will exercise my authority to remove you from the position, whether your week's trial is ended or not. You may go!"

"But—but, sir—" spluttered Grundy.

"Go!" thundered the Housemaster.

And Grundy went—with feelings too deep for words. His chance had come—the chance to cover himself with glory on the footer field by leading his team to victory—and it had gone. At all events, it had gone for the time being. The new junior skipper of St. Jim's was certainly not finding his iron rule so successful as he expected it to be.

CHAPTER 11.

A Last Bid for Fame!

"IT won't do!" said Grundy.

Grundy spoke rather glumly—for once the mighty George Alfred's booming voice was somewhat subdued and dispirited. Wilkins and Gunn looked at him and smiled.

It was the following day just after dinner. Since the previous evening Grundy had not had a very happy time. The affair of the Langdale match had caused a great deal of hilarity at St. Jim's, and wherever Grundy went he met grinning faces.

Grundy did not like it at all. He suspected strongly that

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the fellows were laughing at him. That any fellow would dare to laugh at the junior skipper of St. Jim's seemed impossible. Yet Grundy strongly suspected that it was so, impossible as it seemed. He had even caught fags of the Third grinning, and he could not help the suspicion that he was the object of those grins.

Being a fellow with a remarkably good opinion of himself, and of his own importance in the scheme of things, Grundy was not likely to suspect, much less know, just how he was regarded in general at St. Jim's.

None the less, he had a suspicion now that fellows were laughing at him. He knew why, of course. It was this affair of the Langdale match. He had been made to look a fool—he, George Alfred Grundy, junior captain of St. Jim's.

It really was astounding.

"It won't do!" repeated Grundy, looking morosely at his study-mates. "This Langdale affair has done a great deal of harm to my prestige. Instead of me, it was that rotter Tom Merry who led St. Jim's to victory. It was the chance of a lifetime to show the fellows what I could do as skipper of a football team. Cardew—the howling rotter—mucked my chance up! Instead of gaining prestige, I've lost it, I'm afraid!"

"No doubt about that!" agreed Wilkins, winking at Gunn. "Not a shadow of a doubt!" added Gunn, returning Wilky's wink. "Still, after all it was your own fault in the first place, old chap! You should have listened to us and played Tom Merry. It wouldn't have happened then."

Grundy reflected. Then, to the surprise of Wilkins and Gunn, he nodded.

"Well, perhaps you're right!" he admitted. "Perhaps I should have kept Tom Merry in the team. Not that I think much of his play, mind you. But it would have kept the other fellows in. He's popular to some extent—goodness knows why! Well, I shan't make that mistake again!"

"You won't get the chance, old chap!" said Wilkins.

"Eh? Why not?" said Grundy, staring.

"Your week of office ends Saturday night!" grinned Wilkins. "And there isn't a match on Saturday; it's a blank day for footer. Your giddy chance has gone, old chap!"

"Has it?" said Grundy calmly. "That's all you know. I've just had a brainwave, you fellows! What about the Grammar School? I happen to know they've got no match on either. I'm going to run over to see that chap Gay, and fix up a match with him. I shall play Tom Merry this time, and I shall play most of the old team. Of course, I shall be skipper."

"But look here, you duffer—"

But Grundy was gone. He hurried away from the study, and made his way swiftly out of doors, cramming his cap on as he went. In the gateway he met Tom Merry, Manner, and Lowther. They smiled at him.

"Hallo, where are you off to?" asked Tom. "Nearly time for classes, you know."

"It's all right!" said Grundy loftily. "No need to tell me that. If Linton asks after me, tell him I've gone over to the Grammar School to fix a match up with Gay for Saturday."

"What? Here, hold on, you silly ass—"

"Rot! I've no time—"

"But hold on!" said Tom, grabbing the impetuous Grundy by the arm good-humouredly. "Better give the Grammar School a wide berth, old chap! It's less than a week since you helped us chuck Gay and Monkman into that ditch at Rylcombe. Gay's vowing vengeance—he's on the war-path, and he'll jump at a chance to take it out of you, Grundy."

"Rot! Think I can't take care of myself?" snorted Grundy, with withering scorn. "You're a back number, Tom Merry. I'm fixing up this match with Gay first. After the match I mean to take the Grammarians in hand in good style. I mean to put the kybosh on them once and for all. I might tell you I've already got a few ripping schemes in my mind. But for the present I'm concentrating on the footer."

"But, look here, Grundy—"

"Rot! The worst of you, Tom Merry, is that you're such a rotten funk! That's why you make such a feeble skipper!" snorted Grundy, over his shoulder. "I'm going to show you a few things before long. You see."

With this bit of information Grundy hurried away, and vanished through the gateway at a brisk trot.

"The—the blithering idiot!" breathed Tom Merry. "He'll be scalped if—"

"Oh, let him rip!" chuckled Lowther. "Perhaps Gay and his pals will teach the swanking duffer a lesson if we can't. Let the ass rip!"

"Yes, let him rip!" grinned Manners.

"I suppose it's no good trying to stop him!" laughed Tom Merry, and he went indoors with his chums. Meanwhile, Grundy was making all speed for the Grammar School.

"Cheek!" he murmured, as he trotted along. "Fancy trying to tell me what I should and shouldn't do. As if I'm likely to take Tom Merry's advice! Cheek! Hallo, that looks like those Grammar School cads ahead!"

Grundy had suddenly sighted three well-known forms just at the cross-roads. They were Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, and Harry Wootton. The three Grammarians were obviously hastening back to the Grammar School after a visit to the village.

"Hold on, Gay!" bawled Grundy. "I want you chaps!"

Gordon Gay & Co. looked round. They smiled as Grundy came running after them.

"It's that chap Grundy!" murmured Gordon Gay, a glimmer showing in his eyes. "Dear old Grundy! The great man with the face like a turnip and the brains of a bunny-rabbit! The chap who helped Tom Merry and his pals to duck us in that rotten ditch last week—all because we chucked a rotten tomato at Blake. What a really pleasant meeting! Cheerio, Grundy! Fancy meeting you!"

The three Grammarians casually surrounded Grundy, and smiled at him.

Grundy puffed and panted.

"A bit of luck catching you chaps like this," he said. "Saved me going as far as that beastly casual ward of a Grammar School!"

"You don't say!" said Gay. "How plainly you do put things, Grundy. We can only show our appreciation of your kind remarks in a practical manner, by deeds and not words! Collar him, chaps!"

"What-ho!"

"Here— What— Pax, you rotters! I came to—"

But, apparently, only Grundy was willing to make it "pax." Gordon Gay and his cheery chums grabbed Grundy, and the junior captain of St. Jim's howled fiendishly as he smote the earth.

"Now in that ditch with him, to begin with!" said Gay.

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander!"

"Good wheeze!" said Monk, sitting on Grundy's heaving chest.

"Then we'll give him a coat of paint," said Gay, carefully drawing a small tin of green paint from his jacket pocket. "I meant to paint old Hake's chivvy when he was asleep to-night. But we'll give it to Grundy now, instead. Chivvy first, and then his head! Hold the dear man, chaps!"

"Yarrooogh!" roared Grundy. "Oh, you rotters! Don't you dare to shove that muck on me, and if you dare shove me in that beastly ditch—"

But Gordon Gay & Co. dared and did. On reflection, Gay decided to give Grundy the paint first, and he did so, daubing it over that youth's flushed and furious face, and then pouring it over his hair and rubbing it well in. Then Grundy—despite his desperate struggles—went sprawling with a tremendous splash into the ditch. As he scrambled out they caught him again and held him, heedless of the mud that covered him from head to foot.

"There's a giddy donkey in the next field," chortled Gay gleefully. "He's rather an ancient specimen, but all the better. We'll send Grundy home in style. You've heard of chaps bearing their brother's burden, haven't you? Well, this giddy old donkey's going to do that, Grundy!"

But George Alfred Grundy was past speaking. He just gurgled and gasped with rage.

CHAPTER 12.

Poor Old Grundy!

"**R**EALLY, this is beyond all reason!" snapped Mr. Linton, quite crossly. "Grundy is the most troublesome boy I have ever had to deal with!"

It is now fifteen minutes since afternoon classes commenced, and Grundy has not yet returned. You are sure he said he was going to the Grammar School, Merry?"

"Y-yes, sir!" said Tom Merry uneasily. "He told us to tell you, if you asked, sir. He—he's gone to try to arrange a match with them for Saturday afternoon."

"He had no right whatever to absent himself from class for any such purpose!" snapped Mr. Linton angrily. "I shall punish him severely on his return. He must have known that he could scarcely get to the Grammar School and back in time. I shall—"

(Continued on page 23.)

"SKID" KENNEDY TRIES THE DIRT TRACK! If there's a speed record to be broken, "Skid" Kennedy's the boy to do the trick. Join him on the track, chums, and hold your breath, for he travels at breakneck speed!

"SKID" KENNEDY—SPEED KING!



A Brilliant New Serial
of Motor-racing Ad-
venture.

By

ALFRED EDGAR

(Introduction on page 26.)

Touch and Go!

AGHAST as he drove, Jack saw the Saxon's offside front wheel spinning and wobbling as it left the axle and went hurtling through the air.

He heard his chum shout madly. Then Fred leaned outwards in his seat, clinging by one hand as he tried to use his weight to balance the machine on its three remaining wheels.

Instantly Jack saw their one hope of escaping disaster. When a car takes a bend it tends to tilt to the outside. That is, its inside wheels are liable to lift from the ground, putting all the weight on the outer ones.

As they were rocking round a right-hand turn when the off front wheel was cast, it meant that the machine's weight was thrown on the other one.

Jack knew that if he could keep the weight in the same direction and skid the car on, he might yet slash under the finishing flag in front of the Falcon Six yet roaring behind them. The finish was only thirty yards away.

He hurled his weight towards Fred as he trod the throttle wide and dragged steadily on the steering-wheel. Crabwise, the car hurtled on up the road, balanced on three wheels!

Fred was clinging within an ace of death. If his grip should fail he must plunge to the road that was sliding beneath them.

From the tail of his eye Jack could see the Falcon Six making mad efforts to draw level with them, while Slade hauled his machine to the far side of the road, so that he would miss the Saxon when, as appeared inevitable, its wheelless axle stubbed into the ground and flung the car over in a smoking wreck.

For what seemed an age the two machines screamed on. The gasping crowd stared wide-eyed in an agony of apprehension. Jack could feel the steering-wheel wrenching under his hands, and he knew that the least failure of his muscles meant the end.

Grimly he hung on. He saw the Falcon closing up, but he was still half a length behind when the Saxon's one front wheel crossed the finishing line.

The boys had won!

Jack eased on the throttle pedal and let the Falcon shoot ahead. To the right of the road there was a low bank left clear by the spectators. He wrenched on the steering wheel, felt the car answer, saw the bare end of the

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axle dip, and he knew that if it touched the road they were done!

He stamped the throttle wide again, and a second later the end of the axle bit into the bank with a shock that juddered the car all through. The moment that it touched, Jack trod on the brake pedal.

That bank supported the front of the car for the fatal fraction of time that was necessary before the machine slowed to a safe speed. Earth and grass and stones were gouged from the bank; then the tail of the machine slewed swiftly round, and the Saxon began to run backwards up the road, dragging its lamed front after it, spinning slowly as it gradually came to a shuddering stop.

Game for Anything!

THE crowd had expected to see a smashing race, but they had not expected so sensational a finish. A dozen pairs of hands half lifted Jack from behind the wheel as men made certain that he was unhurt.

News of the Saxon's narrow escape spread like wild-fire, and from the paddock Ben and the Saxon men came tearing up the winding road, reaching the car just as an official bored through the crowd to get at Jack, with his hand outstretched.

"Congratulations!" he exclaimed. "You beat Slade, and you broke the record for the hill again! Your time was forty seconds exactly!"

A force of fists came out to thump Jack's back, while Fred grabbed his hand and pumped, it vigorously before the Saxon mechanics hoisted him on to their shoulders. The cheering men began to chair him down the hill, while others lifted Fred up and followed Jack.

Down the road they went, with the packed crowd yelling on either hand, applauding partly for the smashing way in which young Skid Kennedy had driven, and partly from their relief that he had escaped a crash. Down at the bottom of the hill stood a little group of men about the rival Falcon car, with Slade glaring from their midst.

He did not come over to congratulate Jack on his win, nor to say that he was glad the boy speedman had escaped. It would have suited Slade better had the Silver Saxon turned over and finished the boys who rode it!

Another wheel was fitted to the Saxon, and the machine limped down into the paddock. There Mr. Lloyd held an investigation about the cause of the accident. He could tell from the state of the axle that the front wheel had not been properly locked on, and soon he discovered the identity

of the mechanic whose duty it had been to make certain that all the wheels were secure.

He did not actually find the man, because he was missing during the inquiry. But Jack remembered him—a thin, cunning-eyed fellow whom nobody liked.

"Another perisher in Slade's pay!" Fred hissed to his chum. "We're surrounded by 'em! It was deliberate all right, Jack. They meant that wheel to come off!"

The Sunday papers were full of the exciting events at the hill climb, and the chums discovered that their photograph was in nearly all of them.

On the Monday morning the two turned up at Great Portland Street show-rooms, as usual. And set in the middle of the big window was the Silver Saxon, dusty and grimy, just as it had come from the race. There was a little crowd staring at the car, but the boys slipped in unnoticed. From the show-rooms they looked across to the Falcon Six establishment opposite, and they saw Slade approach the other entrance. He paused when he saw the crowd by the Saxon window, and he crossed the road.

He pushed his way forward, took one look at the Silver Saxon, then spun on his heel and strode hastily away, his eyes glowering.

"He doesn't like the look of it, eh?" Fred grinned. "There'll be a lot of things he won't like the look of before we're done with him, the rotter!"

Now that Carnaby, the head salesman, had sacked himself, the other three men in the show-room changed their attitudes to Jack and Fred. They became more friendly. But whether they were friendly or not did not make a lot of difference to the chums.

Customers who came into the place were glad to meet Skid Kennedy, the boy speedman, and to have him talk to them about Saxon cars. In the days that followed, Jack and Fred did as much business as all the other salesmen put together, and it was nearly a week after their return from the big hill climb that Mr. Lloyd sent for them.

He shook hands when they entered his businesslike office, and he said:

"You two youngsters are doing well, but I expect you know it." And he smiled a little. "Now, a little bit of business has come along, and I want you to help. Ever seen any motor-cycle dirt-track racing?"

"I can't keep Jack away from it, sir!" Fred grinned. "We've been to the White City Speedway every meeting since we started work here!"

"Good! Have you ever been to the New Palace Dirt Track? No? Well, they've got a champion British rider named Bert Brown, and he's been matched against one of these American cracks—a fellow named Red Fraser. Is that clear?"

They both nodded, and Jack glanced at Fred. "We'll go and see that race," he exclaimed. "Bert Brown's hot stuff. I've seen him ride, and he—"

"Half a minute!" exclaimed Mr. Lloyd, as he raised his hand. "I haven't finished yet. Now, the Dirt Track Syndicate own the course at the New Palace, and they want a good firm to look after the machines of the riders—tune them up, and that sort of thing. Well, I heard that the Falcon people have offered to take the job on, so, naturally, I offered to do it, too.

"You see, boys, it isn't what we get out of it so much as the reputation we shall gain. It'll be an advertisement for us. We want all the advertisement we can get, because the Falcon Six people are pressing us hard. Well, to cut it short, the syndicate have given the Falcon Works Red Fraser's bike to tune, and we've got Bert Brown's. It's agreed that if Fraser wins the race, then Falcon's will be appointed engineers to the syndicate. If Brown wins, we get the job. Understand?"

The two nodded, but said nothing.

"Well, Brown's machine is out at our racing-stable now. The race comes off next Saturday evening. I know that you both ride motor-cycles when you get the chance, and I thought you might like to go out there and give Ben a hand at tuning the bike up. At the same time you can see how our racing cars are being prepared for the big British Grand Prix, at Brooklands. I shall want you to drive in that, Jack, if you will. You can go out to the racing camp as soon as you like."

They borrowed a hack machine from the garage at the back of the show-room, and Jack whacked the old car up to a rattling mile a minute on the way to the works. They stopped outside the racing-shed with a wild skid, then both dashed in and pulled up short.

Ben was standing by a dirt track bike, talking to a short, very strong-looking fellow not a lot older than the chums. His face was brown and resolute, and they recognised him as the English champion rider.

Ben introduced the boys, and they found themselves shaking hands with Bert Brown, the dirt-track crack. They explained to Ben why they had come up to the works.

"Good!" he grunted. "I can do with you two! I want to take Bert's bike down to the New Palace speedway and work on it there. You might as well come with me, because you'll be useful."

"And if you come I'll lend you a couple of my other bikes, and you can see how you shape on the dirt," Bert Brown told them. He added to Jack: "You ought to be pretty good, anyway, Skid. Like to find out how different riding on a dirt crack is from driving in a motor race?"

"I would," said Jack, and his eyes lit up.

Many and many an evening had he and Fred spent hanging on the palings around the White City Speedway, watching the cracks roar round. Both had itched at times to get astride one of the roaring speed-irons, and now the champion of all British riders was giving them the chance!

"I would!" said Jack again. And Fred added:

"When do we start?"

On the Eve of the Race!

DIRT track racing takes place on a quarter-mile oval. The circuit is covered with cinders and earth, some six inches deep, and riders have to put their speed irons into hair-raising skids to take the turns at the ends of the oval. Spills are frequent and spectacular.

When crack riders are on the course, dirt-track racing looks exciting, but not especially difficult. Before the day was out Fred discovered that it wasn't anything like so easy as it looked. In the ordinary way he could handle a motor-bike with anybody, but he fell off five times before he completed his first lap, and he seemed only to get worse as he went on.

Jack was mounted on one of Bert Brown's old machines. He owned four, and it was his best and fastest that the Saxon firm was tuning. After a little while Jack got the knack of getting round the turns. The champion seemed to have taken a liking to Jack, and he gave him endless tips about the course.

The record for a lap was 20.5 seconds. Before he finished that afternoon Jack had done a lap in 23 seconds.

"That's darned good!" Brown told him. "I mean, you've never been on a dirt track before. If you were to stick at it you'd be as good as anybody."

The boys did all they could to help Ben, and it was Jack's job to take the crack's super-machine round the track after every fresh adjustment his brother made, in order to find out if the bike's performance was improved.

The result was that he almost lived on the quarter-mile speedway. He got more than merely interested in dirt-track work, and although he had not the slightest intention of taking up the game, he tried to better his lap times, Fred checking him with a stop-watch.

Ben was tuning the crack's bike as no machine had ever been tuned before. On the Friday Ben made his final adjustments, and he packed so much power into the engine that Bert Brown, when he opened the throttle, was taken by surprise and slung yards on a turn.

He said nothing until he had made half a dozen laps; then he asked another British dirt-track expert to take a little trip on the machine. This chap came off on the first bend. He mounted, and came off on the second.

"I can't hold the blame' bike!" he exclaimed when he had been picked up. "What's been done to it? It's too powerful for me."

"Can I have a go?" Jack asked.

"Go ahead!" Brown grinned.

Jack made three laps on the machine. The engine was so powerful that it felt as though the bike was trying to run away, and his second lap was covered in 21.5 seconds—just one second under the record, and a lot faster than some other riders could have travelled!

"She's a beauty!" Jack exclaimed when he brought the machine in.

"You're right!" Bert Brown agreed. "She feels about twice as fast as she used to be. I'll walk away from Red Fraser when we get going. Now, I'll take a few more spins round, just to get used to her, then we'll put her away until the big race comes off."

Standing at the side of the track with some of the racing cracks, the chums watched Bert Brown at practice. He took the curves of the quarter-mile speedway in one tearing, screaming slide.

Then, on his very last spin, when he had the throttle wide, Brown put the hurtling machine into a skid which he could not control. The chums saw him fighting to right

the bike. Then it appeared to fling itself at the safety fence around the course.

A glimpse they had of Brown hitting the wire, with the bike seeming to fall on top of him; then the scene was blotted out by a surging cloud of dust.

In a group they dashed to the scene. The British champion was struggling to get to his feet, his face twisted with pain as he clawed himself upright.

"Hurt my ankle!" he gasped; and half a dozen men helped to carry him clear, while Jack and Ben picked up the bike. It was unhurt, so far as they could tell, but the champion wasn't. A doctor came running to where Brown lay on the grass. He stripped off the fellow's boot, then examined his swelling ankle.

"Broken!" he said shortly. "Get him on a stretcher, boys. Sorry, Brown, but you're out of the big race!"

Skid's Great Chance !

HALF an hour later the chums stood with Ben and Bert Brown's bike in the little paddock at the side of the track. Near them the manager of the New Palace speedway was talking to the other British riders.

"It's the toughest bit of luck we've ever had," he said. "We can't blame poor old Bert, but we've billed this match race far and wide, and there'll be an enormous crowd to see him and this American crack ride. Well, Bert can't start, and the only thing left is for the best of you fellows to take his place. Now, Johnson, you're about the best after Bert. Will you take Red Fraser on?"

"My bike isn't fast enough," the rider said slowly.

"But you can use Bert's. He's just told me he'll lend it to anybody who wants to go against Red."

"I couldn't hold it," Johnson exclaimed. "The thing's like a bucking bronco, it's that fast and hard to handle."

The boys listened as the argument went on. It was plain that Bert's machine was the only speed-iron anything like fast enough for the challenge race, but nobody would ride it.

"What about you, Skid?" Fred poked his elbow into Jack's ribs. "Tell him you'll have a go at it! 'Scuse me, sir!" Fred stepped forward. "Skid's lapped at about twenty-one seconds on Bert's machine. He says he'll ride against the American."

"I don't!" Jack gasped.

"No; I'm sayin' it for you," Fred grinned.

The manager stared at the two of them, then he frowned thoughtfully. He knew that young Skid Kennedy had made a great name for himself, and that the crowd would go wild if they thought he was to ride against Red Fraser. He might not win, but it was certain that he would put up a mighty good show.

"Jack"—Ben leaned forward and touched his brother's arm—"don't forget what hangs on to this. If we win, the firm gets the job that Mr. Lloyd's after. Have a cut at it, young 'un!"

"What do you say, Skid?" The manager stepped towards him. "I've seen you riding, and you're good—honestly. I mean that. I don't want to force your decision in any way, but if you would race it would be upholding the prestige of the British riders, and there's—"

"All right," Jack stared at him for a moment or so, then he added: "I'll do my best."

Two minutes after that he was wondering what had made him say it. Experts were of the opinion that it took a couple of years to make a dirt-track rider, and here he had been at the game only a week! What possible chance did he stand against the American champion?

What Jack didn't realise was that he was born for speed work. In a day he picked up as much about this new style racing as other fellows learned in a couple of months. Besides, he had the nerve and the eye for speed.

He helped Fred and Ben to make certain that the super-tuned machine was undamaged, while the first of the crowd began to stream into the ground, and long before the first race started the speedway was packed with an excited crowd.

Into the paddock came Red Fraser, with Philip Slade, Carnaby, and a bunch of Falcon mechanics, wheeling the crack's speed-iron. Fraser was a hard-bitten American, tough and strong and ugly. Apparently he had heard that he was to ride against Jack instead of against Bert Brown.

He knew that Jack had had little experience, and he guessed that he'd have an easy win. Slade and Carnaby were grinning as they glanced across at the boy speedman. It was

impossible that Jack could even hold his own against the crack, and they all reckoned that he was in for a licking—if he didn't break his neck.

Jack got into the padded leather racing kit which had been lent him, and he came into the paddock as the time for the match race drew near. The British riders clustered round him, doing what they could to help him get ready.

Presently he heard the loud-speakers blaring their announcement that Bert Brown would be unable to ride, and a roar went up from the crowd. Then the announcer told them that Skid Kennedy, the boy Speed King, would take Bert's place.

The information was received with absolute, stunned silence for a moment. Then came a rolling spontaneous cheer.

That put heart into Jack. He buckled the strap of his crash helmet, dragged a blue slip over his leather jacket, then followed Ben and Fred as they pushed his machine out on to the track and down to the starting-line.

The race was for four laps, with a rolling start. The riders had to make one circuit of the course, then come back to the starting-line at speed, when the starter would drop his flag and the race would be on.

Straddling his machine, Jack glanced across at Red Fraser. The man sat nonchalantly in his low saddle, wearing a red slip. He did not even glance at Jack as he listened to the final announcements.

All around the crowd was seething and buzzing and craning to look at the riders. At the side of the track Jack saw that Ben and Fred were standing with a bunch of British cracks, and they sent him off with a sudden cheer as the starter waved them away.

Jack swept along the short, straight footing round the bend, with Fraser on the inside. Into the next straight they went together and into the second bend of the oval. Then Jack eased the throttle open, and the bike leaped forward as they approached the start.

The American crack sped up with him and, dead level, they slashed towards the uplifted flag. Throttles wide, close together, they ripped on. The flag slashed down, and the two machines rocketed at the first turn of the race, with the crowd roaring them off.

Into the bend they went, Jack's hands like steel clamps on the handlebars, fighting the kicking machine.

Still level they came out of the bend, and the wide-open exhausts of the machines woke mad echoes as the two slammed down the straight past the main stand. Instead of closing the throttle for the turn, Jack kept it wide, fairly hurling his screaming machine into the bend.

He could hear the tearing "whish-sh-sh!" of his rear tyre as it slithered on the cinders. His machine slashed almost broadside; then the front wheel bucked from a bump, and the machine seemed to leap into the air, but he mastered it.

The crowd could see him drawing ahead. He was a length in the lead when he shot into the straight, and he drew still farther away as he gave his mighty engine the last ounces of its power.

A mighty roar went up from the crowd at sight of it. Behind Jack the American crack tucked his head down and went after Skid Kennedy, using every trick of the game that he knew to close on him.

He didn't stick to the inside of the turn when he came to it. He seemed to get into a skid at once, and that skid carried him out towards Jack's threshing-machine.

Jack tried to pull out, and saw his mistake in the moment that he attempted it, because it was the very thing that Red Fraser was trying to make him do.

He couldn't ride wider without sending his machine into a skid that no rider living could control, and when he attempted it he felt his bike beginning to slide under him.

Desperately he tried to straighten it. He felt the rear wheel kick, bucking him out of the saddle.

Next moment he was off!

A glimpse he had of Red Fraser shooting ahead, then everything was blotted out by a wildly whirling fount of

dust and dirt and cinders as he struck the track and went sliding madly along on his back, his bike leaping sheer into the air, wheels spinning fiercely as it smashed down towards him!

(It looks as if Skid's done for now, but our cheery young speedman doesn't know the meaning of defeat. There's a big surprise awaiting you in next week's grand instalment. Don't miss it.)

INTRODUCTION !

JACK KENNEDY, has earned himself the nickname of "Skid" by the dashing way in which he drives in speed events. Together with his chum—

FRED BISHOP—and his brother Ben Kennedy, he has been sacked from the Falcon Six Works, owing to the jealousy and cunning of the Falcon Star speedman—

PHILIP SLADE. The two boys get jobs at selling cars in the Saxon Motor Company's show-rooms, and discover that the Saxon and the Falcon firms are deadly rivals; Ben goes into the Saxon racing stable at the Works. Jack drives a special Silver Saxon at a big hill-climb event, breaking the record and beating Slade. Afterwards, Slade challenges him to a race up the hill. Jack takes him on and with Fred as his mechanic, snatches the lead on the last bend. At this moment, the Saxon sheds its off-side front wheel, and it looks as though nothing can save the boys from smoking, crashing disaster!

(Note read on.)

HE THOUGHT HE WAS CAPTAIN!

(Continued from page 24.)

Mr. Linton was interrupted just then. There was a tap at the door, and Mr. Railton entered the Form-room, a very grim expression on his face.

"You will excuse me, Mr. Linton," he exclaimed. "I wish to speak to Grundy. Is he here?"

"No, Mr. Railton!" snapped Mr. Linton, frowning. "The foolish boy has not yet arrived for afternoon class. I understand he has actually had the impudence to visit the Grammar School in connection with a football matter."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Railton, looking thunderous. "There is no limit to that foolish boy's impudence! I came to see him because he has actually had the audacity to pin an absurd notice of his own over an important one which I myself placed on the board this morning—a notice written by Dr. Holmes himself. It was a grave mistake to place him in a position of responsibility at all, and I propose to end his term as junior captain forthwith. If he does not return soon—"

Mr. Railton was interrupted by an extraordinary sound which came through the open window.

"He-haw, he-haw, he-haw!"

"Good—good heavens!" gasped Mr. Railton. "What—what—"

"He-haw, he-haw, he-haw!"

Again came that loud bray and the scuffle of hoofs on the gravel outside in the quadrangle. Mr. Railton dashed across to the open window and looked out. In great excitement every fellow in the room stood up and peered out.

In the quiet, green-carpeted quadrangle stood a very ancient donkey. On his back, his hands tied together and to the reins lying loosely on the quadruped's back, was George Alfred Grundy. Grundy's legs were also tied by cord, which went round the donkey.

But that was not all. Grundy himself was a most weird and wonderful sight. His trousers, jacket, and waistcoat had been turned inside out. His cap was tied on the donkey's head. Grundy's own head was bare, and his hair stood up in stiff tufts and streaming with the green paint that almost hid his features.

The donkey had stopped to crop the grass of the quadrangle, and Grundy was trying desperately and in vain to force him to take the gravel path to the School House steps.

"Go on, you beast!" he was gasping frantically. "Gee up! Go on! Gef on, you fearful brute! Oh crikey! This is awful!"

Grundy's remarks came clearly through the open window. "G-good heavens!" gasped Mr. Railton. "It—it really is Grundy! That—that boy! That—that young—young donkey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Railton. "This is no laughing matter. That wretched boy must be released at once!"

With his lips set grimly, Mr. Railton fairly ran from the Shell Form-room. At the same moment Kildare emerged from the School House doorway and went scudding across to Grundy and the donkey.

"You—young ass!" snorted Kildare, rushing up and taking out his pocket knife.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Amidst roars of helpless laughter, Kildare slashed at the cords binding Grundy to the donkey. Then he cut the cords round the burly Shell fellow's arms and wrists. Grundy fairly tumbled off the donkey.

Just then, Mr. Railton came rustling up, his face crimson with wrath.

"Grundy—dolt! Buffoon! How—how dare you make such an exhibition of yourself? How dare you cause such a disgraceful scene as this in the quadrangle? How dare—"

"Think I could help it?" almost shrieked Grundy, nearly beside himself with wrath and dismay, and far too upset to mince his words. "Think I did it myself? I've been attacked—I was treated like this and stuck on that awful donkey against my will—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" thundered the Housemaster. "Grundy—boy—be silent! I will go into this matter with you in private! Mr. Linton—Mr. Lathom—Mr. Selby—kindly close your windows. Silence! Grundy, come with me!"

Grundy went with Mr. Railton, while Kildare, looking very self-conscious indeed, led the donkey away to hand him over into the charge of Taggles, the school porter. The entertainment—greatly to the disappointment of the youthful occupants of the various Form-rooms—was ended, apparently.

Monty Lowther proved to be correct in his prophecy. Twenty minutes later Grundy entered the Shell Form-room. He took his seat quietly, his mottled features showing crimson in patches. He seemed very subdued indeed—and he was subdued. To his chum Wilkins he confided the whispered information that he was sacked—had lost his job.

"Would you believe it?" he breathed, his voice fairly cracking in his indignation. "Railton seems to blame me for what happened. He says I'm not fit to hold a position of responsibility—me, mind you! He's ordered me to resign from the captaincy. Well, it's a blow! But I was a bit fed-up, I must say! I'm misunderstood here. I'm simply surrounded by envy and jealousy in high places and low. Sacked! Before I've even finished my week or even had the chance to show what I can do! It's sickening! What'd you think about it, Wilky?"

But Wilkins did not tell him what he thought of it. Had he done so their friendship would have ended there and then.

"Never mind, old chap!" he said instead, with a kindly intention to soften Grundy's bitter blow. "It's that ass D'Arcy's turn next week! I bet he doesn't last any longer than you—if as long!"

That, however, remained to be seen! Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a different sort of fellow from George Alfred Grundy.

In the forthcoming week it was his turn to shoulder the responsibilities and burdens of the junior captaincy. Whether he would last the week out was on the knees of the gods! The outlook certainly promised some excitement—if not fun!

THE END.

("CAPTAIN GUSSEY!"—That's the title of next week's extra-long complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's, in which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth, tries his hand in the important position of Skipper of the Lower School.)



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