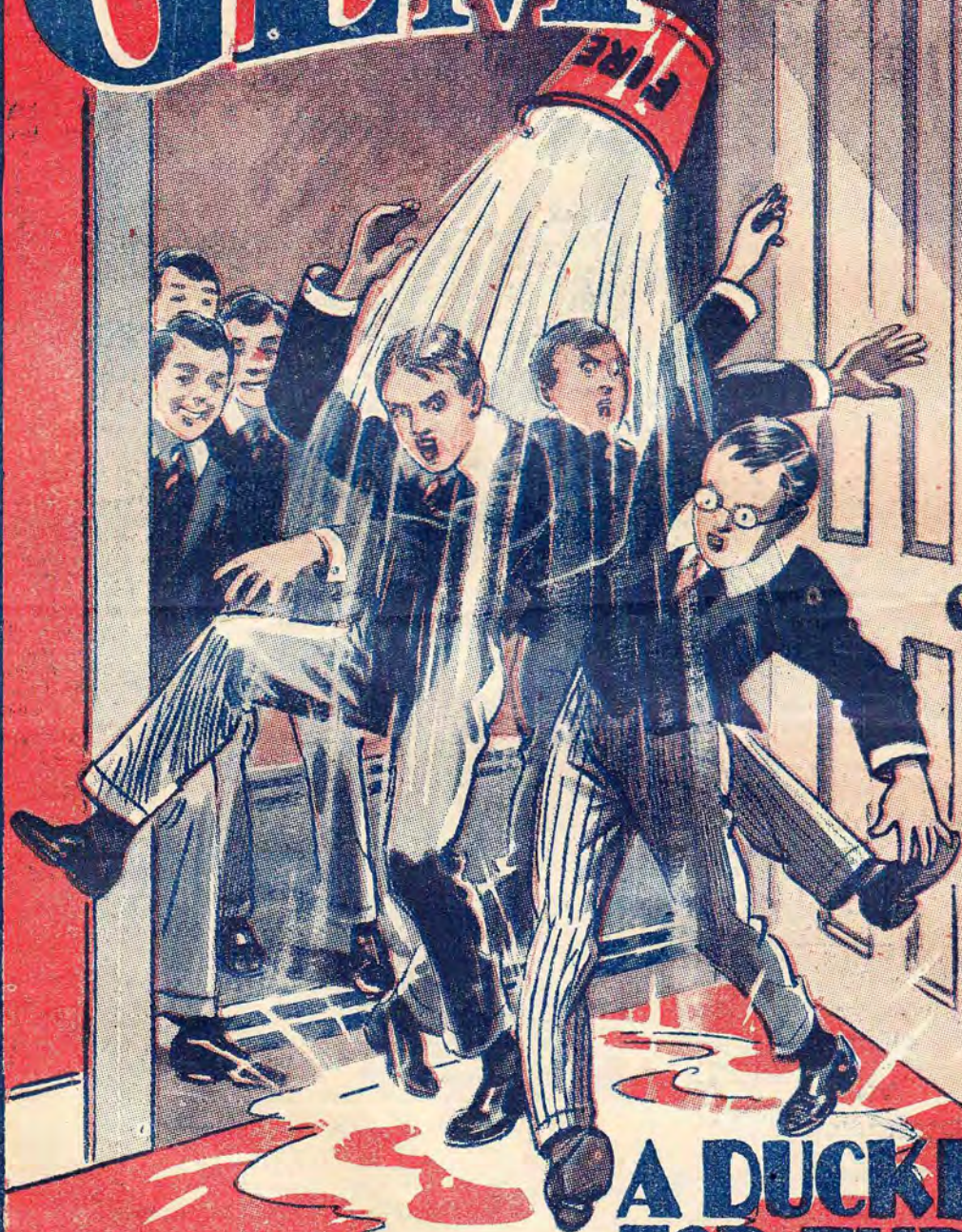


"THE JESTER OF ST. JIM'S!" This week's full-o'-laughs story
of Tom Merry & Co.

THE GEM 2d



A DUCKING FOR THREE!

SEE THIS WEEK'S ROLICKING SCHOOL YARN

No. 1,137.
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November 30th, 1929.
EVERY WEDNESDAY.

YOU'LL FIND HEAPS OF FUN AND AMUSING SITUATIONS IN—

The Jester of

By Martin Clifford.

Can you imagine George Alfred Grundy, the grim, earnest, great I AM of the Shell, suddenly changing into a cheerful, light-hearted practical joker whose one idea is to work off stupendous japes and hoaxes? Sounds all wrong, doesn't it? Yet that is what happens this week, and—but read all about it in the funniest school story of the year!



CHAPTER 1. Rejected!

"WHERE'S Tom Merry?"

George Alfred Grundy, of the Shell at St. Jim's, wearing a frown upon his rugged countenance, tramped into the pavilion adjoining Little Side and asked that question.

The crowd of juniors who were changing into football rig heard but heeded not. The buzz of talk which had been going on when Grundy entered continued to go on.

There was no doubt as to the newcomer's question having been heard. Grundy's voice, if not musical, possessed the merit of being audible. On this occasion it could be heard right through the pavilion and for quite a considerable radius outside.

"Where's Tom Merry?"

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Grundy repeated his question on a note which a musician might most justly have labelled "fortissimo." But the fellows continued to talk on, utterly regardless.

Grundy's frown deepened until it was almost a homicidal glare.

"Deaf, all of you?" he bawled.

Monty Lowther glanced round.

"Hallo, Grundy!" he remarked genially. "Did I hear you say something?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy almost choked.

"You know jolly well I said something! I asked you where Tom Merry is."

"Thought I heard you whisper something about 'Tom Merry,'" nodded Lowther. "You should speak up, you know!"

"Bai Jove!"

—THIS ROLLYING FINE LONG SCHOOL STORY OF ST. JIM'S!

St. Jim's!



The Sixth Form "Sneezing" Society!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, where is he, you grinning idiots?" hooted Grundy. "It's jolly important, and I can't stand here all the blessed afternoon arguing with a lot of dummies like you! Where's Tom Merry?"

"If you really want to know, he's behind you!" yawned Lowther, and there was another roar from the footballers.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy swung round, and Tom Merry, who had come in on the heels of the great man of the Shell, greeted him with a cheery nod.

"Want me, Grundy?"

Grundy gulped.

"Oh! So you're here! I should jolly well think I do want you! It's about footer!"

"Footer? What's that?" asked Tom Merry.

Grundy jumped.

"What's footer? Mean to say you want me to tell you what footer is? Why, you ass, you know already!"

"Quite! I just wondered whether you did, old bean!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—" Grundy made a move forward, as though he felt sorely tempted to fall upon the humorous skipper of the Junior Eleven and devour him. But with a mighty effort he choked back his wrath, and said: "I've just heard that Noble has had to stand down for this afternoon's game with Rookwood."

"Right on the wicket!" nodded Tom Merry. "Poor old Kangy has sprained his ankle and can't turn out. What about it?"

"That's exactly what I want to know!" snorted Grundy. "Is it right that you've put this silly ass Lowther in his place?"

"Quite right!"

"Then it's not right at all. It's jolly well all wrong, if you ask me!" roared Grundy, displaying unusual wit. "I

want to ask you a plain question, Tom Merry. Do you want to win to-day's match or not?"

"Decidedly I do!"

"Then what the thump do you mean by giving Kangaroo's place to Lowther and leaving out the best centre-half in junior footer?"

Tom Merry looked surprised.

"Didn't know I'd done such a thing, old bean! Who's the giddy marvel you're referring to?"

"Why me, of course!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you laughing at?" demanded Grundy excitedly.

"Oh, my hat! Your joke, of course!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Know any more funny stories like that one?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy clenched his big fists.

"So that's it, is it? I might have expected as much! Well, then, I'll tell you what I'm going to do."

"Tell us another funny story instead!" begged Jack Blake.

"For the umpteenth time," said Grundy solemnly, ignoring the facetious captain of the Fourth, "I'm being barred from the Junior Eleven on account of jealousy. Times out of number I've been passed over, even when I've been at the top of my form. I've put up with all that without

complaining—or, at least, without complaining much."

"Not more than fifty times a day!" nodded Tom Merry.

But now at last my patience is exhausted," said Grundy. "At a time when Noble is crooked, you pass me over—me, the best centre-half in the Lower School bar none!—and shove in Lowther! Lowther, of all men! The Form's funny man—the chap who's capable of doing nothing beyond making rotten puns and fixing up booby traps!"

"And playing you off your feet at Soccer!" added Lowther cheerfully.

"Bosh! Absolute bosh!" snorted Grundy contemptuously.

"Well, I'm not going to argue about it this time. Words are no good, I can see that! So now I'm going from words to deeds!"

"Which means—" queried Tom Merry.

"Which means I'm going to turn out against Rookwood this afternoon, whether you like it or not!"

The juniors looked at each other, then looked at Grundy. The great man of the Shell had succeeded in attracting their attention at last.

"You—you're going to turn out against Rookwood?" asked Tom Merry, almost unable to believe his own ears.

Grundy nodded calmly.

"That's what I said!"

"But—but my dear chap—"

"You must be potty!" said Kerr of the New House, with conviction. "How the thump can you turn out against Rookwood when the team's already complete?"

Grundy laughed.

"It's quite easy. I shall simply change into footer togs and turn out with the rest of you!"

"Oh, my giddy aunt!"

"But it's quite impos, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Don't you realise that the wof will uttably wufuse to allow twelve men to turn out?"

Grundy grinned.

"Naturally I know that. There's not much you can teach me about the rules of football, D'Arcy. But I shall decline to budge, you see. So Lowther will have to. See the idea?"

"Oh, ye gods!"

The footballers stared at Grundy almost incredulously. That the obtuse Shell junior took the palm for high-handedness they were already aware; but they had never imagined even Grundy capable of such reckless, unreasoning behaviour as this.

"You—you can't mean it?" stammered Tom Merry.

"But I do mean it!"

"Well, you're completely off your rocker, then!" remarked Jack Blake frankly. "Don't you see, you crass ass, that as soon as Tom Merry tips the wink to the ref he'll give you marching orders?"

"Perhaps he will," agreed Grundy. "I shall ignore 'em!"

"But he'll have you chucked off the field!"

"He's welcome to try!" said Grundy, with a confident grin. "I'm ready to meet all comers. And if I do get chucked off, I shall come back again and join in the play!"

"My hat!"

"Well, it's no good wasting any more time gassing," remarked Grundy. "I'll get changed now."

"Your mistake, old bean! You won't!" said Tom Merry, recovering from his astonishment and planting himself in front of Grundy's hefty form. "If you mean what you've said—"

"Every word!"

"Then in that case we're going to put a stopper on you before the joke goes any further," said Tom Merry. "Can't risk having you creating scenes in front of a visiting team!"

"Wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus warmly.

A crowd of determined-looking footballers gathered round George Alfred Grundy. Grundy eyed them in a very warlike manner.

"Going to lay hands on me? Because, if so, you'll get hurt!"

"We'll risk that! Collar him!" said Tom Merry suddenly.

Half a dozen pairs of hands shot out simultaneously, to alight on various parts of Grundy's person. Grundy, for his part, hit out.

A moment later a wild and whirling tussle was taking place in the football pavilion.

Grundy was not the fellow to submit without a struggle, and he fought furiously to keep his aggressors at bay, inflicting several minor injuries on the footballers in the process. One of his hefty fists landed on the aristocratic nose of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, drawing claret immediately, and the other collided with the point of Jack Blake's chin with a force that made the leader of the Fourth see stars for a second or two. Tom Merry and Piggins also received mementoes in the shape of a swollen ear and a cut lip respectively.

But they were merely incidentals about which nobody worried much. The important thing was that Grundy was speedily overcome and stretched out on the floor, with Fatty Wynn and Clive sitting on him for the purpose of keeping him down.

"Well, that's that!" gasped Tom Merry, caressing his injured ear rather tenderly. "Now, the problem is, what can we do with him?"

"Can't leave him here," said Jack Blake. "The Rookwood fellows will be along in a minute, and they might think it bad form if they find half the team sitting on Grundy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why not collect some fellows from outside to run him up to the House and lock him in his study for the afternoon?" suggested Monty Lowther brightly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Not a bad wheeze, though," said Tom Merry. "We shall know that he's out of harm's way there—especially if we take the precaution of having him tied up and gagged!"

"A vewy pwopah pwecautioun, deah boy!" remarked Arthur Augustus, who was engaged in dabbling his nose with a handkerchief. "I will twot out and collect a few volunteers!"

And the swell of the Fourth trotted out, to return in less than a minute with half a dozen grinning non-players.

"Gussy tells us you want some help with Grundy," remarked Herries. "Where is he?"

"Underneath Fatty and Clive at the moment," smiled Tom Merry. "What we want you to do is to run Grundy back to the House and lock him up somewhere or other—Lowther suggests in his own study. Better tie him up and gag him, just to make a good job of it."

"And lose the key of the study when you've finished!" added Jack Blake.

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The volunteers approached the recumbent George Alfred and took up strategic positions around him. At a given signal Fatty Wynn and Clive got up, and their captive was grabbed from all sides.

"Got him!" said Herries, with satisfaction. "Now, mind, Grundy, if you struggle we may have to treat you roughly!"

"Groooogh!" was Grundy's reply—the only reply he was capable of making just then.

"Ready?" asked Gore, who was among the volunteers.

"Ready, ay, ready!"

"Off we go, then!"

And off they went, carrying Grundy between them.

They ran into the Rookwood players at the entrance to the pavilion. Jimmy Silver and his merry men had just arrived. They stared at the sight of Grundy and his captors.

"Hallo, you men! This a new game?" asked Jimmy Silver curiously.

"Hem! It's Grundy," explained Tom Merry. "He suffers from a kink now and again, you know, and we have to treat him like this!"

"All serene! Don't mind us!" grinned the leader of the Rookwood contingent; and he made way for the little procession, which then moved rapidly out of the pavilion.

And within a very short time both teams had completely forgotten the existence of George Alfred Grundy in the excitement of a sterling tussle for honours on the football field.

CHAPTER 2.

Listening-in!

"MMMMMMMMMM!"

Thus George Alfred Grundy.

It was not a very intelligible remark. It was the best he could manage, however, in the peculiar position in which he now found himself.

Grundy was bound securely to a chair in Study No. 3, and gagged by means of a scarf. Thus he was deprived of his liberty either to move or speak. Not unnaturally, Grundy felt annoyed about it.

His position would have been bad enough without any further complications. But not content with trussing up the great man of the Shell like a chicken, Herries and his helpers had, so to speak, piled Pelion on Ossa by locking the study door after them and taking away the key.

"MMMMMMMMMM!"

Grundy mumbled on. There was not a great deal of satisfaction in mumbling. But Grundy continued to do it. There was really nothing else he could do but roll his eyes and mutter "MMMMMMMMMM!" through the scarf.

Herries & Co. had been merciful. Though they had taken care to tie him up securely, they had made him as comfortable as was possible in the circumstances. Grundy had very little to complain of on the score of comfort.

Gore had even gone to the trouble of switching on the portable wireless set which Grundy had recently acquired, so that the prisoner should have entertainment during his lonely afternoon. Even as Grundy's captors closed the door after them the music of a broadcasting orchestra floated out upon the air of the study.

It has been stated that music has charms to soothe the savage breast. The music that was being broadcasted on this occasion, however, seemed to exert no soothing influence on George Alfred Grundy.

As a matter of fact, he hardly heard it. Grundy, for the time being, was a seething mass of emotions, hardly capable of appreciating whether music was in the air or not.

He foresaw that, unless something like a miracle happened, he was doomed to spend the rest of the afternoon sitting in Study No. 3. It was undoubtedly the intention of Herries and the rest that he should do so, and they, holding the key to the door, controlled the situation.

The only hope was that Wilkins and Gunn would turn up. Gunn possessed a duplicate key, and could, therefore, obtain access to the study without the intervention of Herries. But Wilkins and Gunn had gone over to Wayland to see an uncle of Gunn's who was in the town for the afternoon, and the chances that they would return before calling-over were remote in the extreme.

Grundy rolled his eyes and tugged at his bonds. Herries & Co., however, had done their work too well for tugging to achieve any result. Eventually, Grundy gave it up as a bad job and resigned himself to the inevitable.

Without anything more definite on which to concentrate, he then became more conscious of the music coming from the wireless set. Far from soothing Grundy, however, it seemed to have the opposite effect. It was the kind of music known as chamber music, and chamber music was

"Collar him!" yelled Tom Merry suddenly. Immediately half a dozen pairs of hands fastened on George Alfred Grundy and a wild and whirling tussle began in the football pavilion. Grundy hit out furiously, and one of his hefty fists landed on the aristocratic nose of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Yoooop!" (See Chapter 1.)



not suited to Grundy's present mood. He would have derived far more satisfaction from a brass band containing a large number of bass drums and cymbals; but unfortunately there was nothing of that description in the programme for the afternoon.

A few hours before Grundy's portable wireless set had been the apple of his eye. He heartily wished, now, that he could be in a position to throw something heavy and destructive at it.

When the music ceased at last he breathed a sigh of relief—a sigh rendered rather ineffective by the scarf that was wound round his mouth. Nothing would have pleased Grundy better after that than to hear the announcement that the broadcasting station was closing down for the rest of the afternoon.

But that was not to be. When the voice of the announcer came through it was to introduce a lecturer. And Grundy, unable to give vent to his feelings in any active form, closed his eyes for a minute and pictured himself indulging in an orgy of head-punching, just to obtain a little relief. Grundy was not fond of lecturers.

It seemed like insult being added to injury when it was announced that the lecturer was a schoolmaster. Grundy had been listening to a schoolmaster, in the person of Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, all the morning. He had had quite enough of schoolmasters for one day—more than enough, in fact. The last thing in the world Grundy wanted just then was a lecture from a schoolmaster.

By the perversity of a cruel Fate, however, he had to listen to one. There being no alternative, Grundy simply listened.

The broadcasting schoolmaster had chosen as the title of his discourse the query, "Are Boys More Serious?" Grundy didn't care a rap whether they were or were not. Schoolmasters' opinions of boys had no interest whatever for Grundy of the Shell. "Grundy's Opinion of Schoolmasters," from his point of view, would have been a far more interesting topic for a wireless lecture.

Nevertheless, he did listen to the anonymous lecturer. He could hardly do otherwise. And in the course of a few minutes Grundy found, to his surprise, that he was listening with quite a lot of interest.

The view of the schoolmaster was that the boys, on the whole, undoubtedly were becoming more serious in their outlook. It came as rather a revelation to Grundy to find that the lecturer was inclined, to a certain extent, to regret this state of affairs. Grundy had not previously imagined that a schoolmaster would be capable of taking such a view as that.

From the abstract, the lecturer proceeded to the concrete. In a reminiscent mood he recalled his own schooldays, when men were men and boys were really boys. Evidently the learned gentleman had reached an age in life when he was apt to look back on the days of his youth through rose-coloured spectacles.

Grundy found himself quite enjoying his invisible entertainer's stories of life at a big public school in the late 'eighties. Whether the lecturer-schoolmaster's imagination was running away with him, or whether the yarns were really true, they were certainly interesting. Tremendous "rags," large-scale practical jokes, and stupendous hoaxes seemed to have occupied most of the time of the students of those early days.

The lecturer asked his listeners whether these things continued in Anno Domini 1929, and answered the question himself with a decided negative. The modern boy took things more seriously. Practical jokes and hoaxes there still were. But how few and how feeble they seemed in comparison with their counterpart in the good old days!

It might be, of course, that this was all for the best. But the lecturer begged leave to question that. The boys of the 'eighties turned out to be fine men, and the future might show that the more serious boys of 1929 were lacking in some important constituent of character as a result of

their failure to live their youth in the boisterous, light-hearted manner of their forebears.

There the lecture ended.

George Alfred Grundy found himself thinking.

The schoolmaster's words had touched a chord in the heart of the great man of the Shell.

Grundy himself was serious—deadly serious. Other people did not take him seriously, it was true. The more serious Grundy was, in fact, the more humorously other people regarded him. Grundy himself, unheeding, had hitherto taken life in a very earnest manner.

Could it be that he had been making a mistake? Was it possible that his partial failure—and Grundy, in his heart of hearts, admitted to himself that he was not an unqualified success—was due to the very seriousness with which he had taken things?

Grundy wondered.

That very afternoon, the place in the Junior Eleven which should in all justice have been his, had been taken by a fellow whose philosophy in life was just as light-hearted as that of the heroes of the 'eighties. Monty Lowther took nothing seriously. Hoaxes and practical jokes were the breath of life to Lowther. Was that the reason for his success? Did that account for the facility with which he had slipped into the Junior Eleven that afternoon?

Grundy saw nothing about Lowther to account for it. He decided that the answer was in the affirmative.

In a sort of blinding flash the truth was revealed to Grundy. He had been taking things too seriously all along. Of course, it was obvious now! He had never been the one to go in for practical jokes and hoaxes. He had always considered behaviour of that kind to be beneath his dignity. And he had been wrong all the time!

The lecturer's words had made everything as clear as daylight. Grundy wondered why on earth he hadn't seen it all before. That was what had been wrong; there was no shadow of doubt about it now. He had taken life too seriously!

The poet has remarked that there is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. Grundy was not aware of the identity of the poet who had uttered those inspiring words, but he remembered hearing them somewhere or other.

He felt suddenly that this fortunate tide had arrived in his affairs. And he made up his mind, with grim determination, to take it at the flood. Henceforth he would be as light-hearted and carefree as those heroes of the 'eighties had been. Practical jokes and hoaxes that should, figuratively speaking, set St. Jim's alight, should be planned and carried out. Lowther's insignificant japes should be outshone again and again till this so-called humorist of the Shell would be glad to hide his diminished head in shame.

Grundy's eyes gleamed. A boundless vista of opportunities seemed to open up in front of him. He felt as excited as a Second Form fag. If circumstances had permitted him to do so, he would have performed a jig round Study No. 3; but Grundy's present circumstances, of course, were such that activities of that kind were out of the question.

Grundy felt that he could even forgive the fellows for past injustices now. In his sudden buoyant mood the malice he had borne them for what they had done to him that afternoon died a natural death. He had been looking forward to the moment of his release as an occasion for a regular orgy of violence. Now he could see that that was wrong. Revenge he would have; but it would not take the form of black eyes and swollen noses. Instead, he would jape them—hoax them right and left. He fairly longed for freedom now, so that he could start his great campaign.

Grundy was brought back to earth by the sound of someone trying the handle of the door.

A moment later a key grated in the lock, and the door swung open, to reveal Grundy's two study-mates, Wilkins and Gunn.

CHAPTER 3.

Grundy's Resolve!

"WHAT the thump!"

"What the merry dickens!"

Wilkins and Gunn stood in the doorway of Study No. 3, fairly blinked at their leader. The unexpected apparition in the chair seemed to take their breath away for the time being.

"It's—it's Grundy!" stuttered Wilkins, at last. "But how in the name of goodness—"

"Mmmmmmmmm!" came from Grundy.

"Well, this is a go, and no mistake!" remarked Gunn. "Let's get that scarf off his chivvy and hear how it happened."

And Gunn hastened to remove the improvised gag, leaving Grundy free, for the first time for an hour, to talk.

Grundy's first words were not words of welcome to his

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two followers, as might have been expected. Other fellows in Grundy's predicament would probably have expressed something in the nature of gratitude. But Grundy was not like other fellows. His greeting took the form of:

"You silly asses!"

"Eh?"

"You silly asses! You blithering idiots, if you like that better!" roared Grundy. "Why the thump didn't you stay and back me up this afternoon, instead of buzzing off to see a blessed uncle?"

"Blithering idiot yourself!" said Gunn warmly. "I asked you to come. It was your fault that you stayed here, and a fine thing you've done by staying, by the look of things! How on earth did you get into this mess?"

"If you two fatheads will cut me loose, instead of gaping at me like a couple of sheep, I'll tell you!" growled Grundy. "Get busy, for goodness' sake! How is it you're back so early?"

"Gunn's uncle didn't turn up, after all," explained Wilkins, as he started hacking away at his leader's bonds with a pocket-knife. "But what have you been doing to get like this—scrapping with a gang of burglars?"

"No, I jolly well haven't!" hooted the leader of Study No. 3. "What's the matter with that rotten knife of yours? Use a bit of beef with it if it won't cut— Yaroooooop!"

Grundy's instructions ended in a fiendish howl as Wilkins' knife cut through the cord at last; the reason being that instead of stopping at that point, it went on through the arm of Grundy's jacket and shirt, to be pulled up only by Grundy's elbow.

"Sorry!" smiled Wilkins.

"I'll make you really sorry in a minute, if you're not jolly careful!" roared Grundy. "Don't slack, Gunn! Cut my ankles loose, if you've got nothing else to do! That's better!"

Grundy stood upright at last, aching in every limb, but very glad indeed to be free again.

"And now tell us all about it, old chap," said Gunn.

"About this bizney? 'Fraid I've got no time for that now. It was Tom Merry's work. I told him I was going to turn out for the Junior Eleven whether he wanted me or not, and this is what he did."

"My hat!"

"I don't wonder at it, then," remarked Wilkins, sotto voce; sufficiently sotto voce to give Grundy the impression that Wilkins was merely uttering an expression of sympathy.

"But I can't bother about that just now," went on Grundy briskly. "I've got a lot to do, and I want you fellows to help me. You see, I've been thinking."

"Great pip!"

Grundy paused to bestow a glare on Wilkins, who had made that remark.

"Trying to be funny, Wilkins?" he asked grimly. "Because if you are—"

"Not at all, old chap!" said Wilkins hurriedly. "Carry on, old man. You were saying you'd been thinking."

Grundy swallowed his wrath and nodded.

"Exactly. While I've been sitting trussed up in that chair I've been having a hard think. The conclusion I've come to is that I'm a dashed sight too serious."

"Serious?" said Wilkins.

"S-serious?" exclaimed Gunn.

Then Wilkins and Gunn looked at each other. Grundy's two followers evidently found it a little difficult to understand what their leader was driving at.

"Most chaps are too serious nowadays," explained Grundy. "I happen to be a particularly strong example of modern seriousness. See?"

"I—I see!" stuttered Gunn, though his looks certainly belied his words.

"Of course, it wasn't always the same. You chaps mustn't run away with that idea. As a matter of fact, things were very different in the 'eighties."

"In—in the 'eighties?"

Grundy nodded.

"Public school life was very different then, I can tell you. In those days, fellows believed in getting plenty of fun out of life. They were always getting up wonderful japes and simply staggering hoaxes. It must have been simply great to be a St. Jim's chap then."

"My hat!" murmured Wilkins.

He glanced meaningfully at Gunn, and Gunn returned him an equally expressive look. The same thought had occurred to both—that Grundy's brain had become slightly unhinged as a result of his recent experience.

"Look here, old chap—" said Gunn.

"Well, to get down to brass tacks, I intend to get back to the spirit of the 'eighties," said Grundy, ignoring his rather concerned cry. "As I say, I'm a dashed sight too serious—or, at least, I have been up till now. But now I'm going to be the humorist of the school—the japer of St. Jim's! Get the idea?"

"Old man—" said Wilkins, laying a restraining hand on Grundy's arm.

"Old fellow—" murmured Gunn gently.
 "Perhaps you don't quite understand at present," said Grundy cheerfully. "I dare say it's a little beyond limited intelligence like yours. Don't mind if I speak frankly, do you?"

"Not at all! We like it!" gasped Wilkins. "But—" "You see, old chap—" said Gunn.
 "Don't interrupt!" said Grundy, with a frown. "You fellows are always trying to interrupt me. Blessed if I can get a word in edgeways sometimes."

"Oh, my hat!"
 Wilkins and Gunn gave it up for the time being. That remark of Grundy's temporarily took the wind out of their sails.

"I'm out to jape all and sundry now!" said Grundy enthusiastically. "Fifth-Formers and Sixth-Formers and masters; in fact, I don't intend to stop even at the Head himself. And you fellows are going to help me!"
 "Oh!"

Wilkins and Gunn did not look enthusiastic. From the look of them, in fact, their enthusiasm was in reverse ratio to that of their enthusiastic leader.

"You fellows can help me no end when I get down to details," rattled on Grundy cheerfully. "Naturally, I shan't expect you to do the thinking part of the job. That'll be my part of the programme. Where you'll come in will be in the donkey work. See?"

"Hem!"
 "I'll think out a series of really brilliant wheezes, and you'll carry 'em out for me. Together, we'll set the blessed place alight," grinned Grundy. "Don't go just yet, Wilky. Matter of fact, I think I shall need you now. I'm going to make a start right away."

"You are, are you?" asked Wilkins.
 Grundy nodded.
 "Tom Merry scored against me this afternoon. Now I'm going to score against him. I believe he's having Jimmy Silver and another Rookwood chap to tea—Lovell, I believe his name is."

"Quite right!" agreed Gunn. "The Rookwood team are splitting up and going to various studies to tea. Silver and Lovell are teeing in No. 10, I know."

"Right! Then this is where I step in!" smiled Grundy. "The match isn't over yet, and we've just got time to work the oracle!"

"What oracle?"
 Grundy gave Wilkins a pitying look.
 "You're very dense, Wilky. What I mean is that we've just got time to rig up a few surprises for Tom Merry and his guests. For one thing, we can fix up a booby-trap over the door. For another, we can have a little game with the grub they're going to have for tea—put red ink in the jam, and so on! Then—Here, where are you going, you idiots?"

"As far away from the Shell passage as we can!" was Gunn's withering retort. "If you're going to start lunatic tricks of that kind, Grundy, the farther we're away from it the better. What say you, Wilky?"

"What-ho!" was Wilkins' emphatic response.
 Grundy's brow grew thunderous.
 "Why, you silly cuckoos—mean to say you're thinking of deserting me just when I need you to do all the donkey-work?"

"Just that!" nodded Wilkins. "Come on, Gunny!"
 Grundy gave a roar.
 "Why, I'll slaughter you! I'll spifficate you! Look here—"

But Wilkins and Gunn were deaf to the voice of the charmer. Before Grundy could decide exactly what to do they were out of the Shell passage and down the stairs.

Grundy eventually rushed out into the passage after them. By that time, however, his two mutinous subordinates had disappeared, and Grundy, mentally promising them all kinds of things at their next meeting, abandoned the chase and turned his footsteps in the direction of Study No. 10.

As he had anticipated, there was nobody at home. Tom Merry and Lowther were playing on Little Side, and Manners was probably among the spectators of the game.

Grundy entered the room and closed the door after him. He glanced round him with a thoughtful eye. Practical jokes were something new to Grundy.

A parcel was lying on the table—evidently something which Toby, the page, had delivered to the study during the afternoon. Grundy eyed that parcel for several seconds. The thought occurred to him that it might offer him an opportunity.

Possibly it contained tuck. If so, there was a chance for a jape. Pies and cakes and other comestibles of a like nature could be "doped" with mustard and pepper in generous helpings.

Grundy grinned and examined the parcel. It was addressed to Monty Lowther.

That decided Grundy. Without any more hesitation he untied the string.

The parcel, as it turned out, did not contain tuck. Grundy, however, was apparently not disappointed with the contents. He examined them one by one. Then he read a stereotyped circular which was enclosed, and as he did so his grin became broader and broader.

This is what Grundy read:

"Dear Sir,—We thank you for past favours, and trust that we may continue to be favoured with your esteemed orders in the future. We have pleasure in informing you that our enormous CHRISTMAS STOCK is now available. For details of this wonderful collection of Conjurers' and Illusionists' Stock-in-Trade, Games, Puzzles, and Tricks, we recommend you to a perusal of the Illustrated Catalogue enclosed herewith. We are confident that we can meet your needs in every way, and await your order in due course. In the meantime, we have great pleasure in sending you a FREE SAMPLE PACKET of goods selected from our Stock, including Ventriloquist's Patent Throat Attachment, Sneezing Powder, Itching Powder, Imitation Cakes and Chocolate made of rubber, etc., etc. These samples will, we are sure, give you and your friends endless pleasure and amusement."

"Yours faithfully,
 "TRIX & CATCHEM, LTD."

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" ejaculated Grundy.

This seemed almost providential. Just at the very moment when he had decided to become the jester of St. Jim's a sample packet of tricks and catches had come into his hands, like manna from heaven.

Grundy was not a dishonest fellow; nobody could have been less dishonest than George Alfred Grundy, in fact. But somehow it did not seem dishonest to appropriate this sample packet of Messrs. Trix & Catchem's stock. Almost without hesitating, Grundy began to transfer the ventriloquist's attachment, the itching powder, and the rest of the weird and wonderful collection to his pockets.

Having secreted the whole of the contents of the parcel about his person, Grundy consigned the wrappings to the fire.

Then he turned to the task of preparing a few surprises for Tom Merry and his guests. But time had evidently passed more quickly than Grundy had imagined. Before he had time even to fill up the jampot with red ink there

(Continued on next page.)



**Bunter's
 dropped
 it!**

Bunter's precarious position has caused him to drop his HOLIDAY ANNUAL. But he won't leave it there. Oh, no! Neither would you, for that wonderful budget of ripping school yarns and thrilling adventure stories is much too valuable to be lost. All the favourite schoolboy characters of Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood Schools are here to entertain you with their amazing adventures. There are also interesting articles, colour plates and many clever drawings.

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was a tramp of footsteps in the passage outside, coming to a halt at Study No. 10.

A moment later Tom Merry entered, followed by Lowther and Manners, his study-mates, and Jimmy Silver and Lovell of Rookwood.

CHAPTER 4.

Tea in Study No. 10 I

"GRUNDY!" said Tom Merry.
"Oh crikey! Dear old Grundy!" said Monty Lowther.

The Terrible Three paused in the doorway, irresolute. In the excitement of the game they had forgotten all about George Alfred Grundy. The remembrance of him came back rather forcibly now. They stared at him almost in dismay.

To them the presence of Grundy in Study No. 10 meant only one thing—that Grundy was out for trouble. And with honoured guests in the persons of Jimmy Silver and Lovell to entertain, Tom Merry and his chums were not at all anxious for trouble from Grundy.

Remembering the peculiar circumstances under which Grundy had left the football pavilion, it was only natural that the Terrible Three should assume, in the first place, that Grundy was waiting for them with the intention of starting a "scrap." After the first shock of surprise, therefore, they lined up in front of their guests in readiness for Grundy's first onslaught.

But Grundy was apparently not out for trouble. Wonderingly, the Terrible Three realised that, instead of glaring at them—as might have been expected—Grundy was regarding them with quite a friendly eye. He was almost beaming, in fact.

"So—so you're here!" Tom Merry managed to say at last. Grundy grinned.

"Just so! I'm here! Hope I'm not intruding?"

"Not at all! Welcome as the flowers in May, old bean!" gasped Tom. "Won't you stay to tea?"

"Thanks, I will!" said Grundy graciously. "How did the game go off?"

"Just managed to beat 'em by the odd goal in three," answered Tom Merry cheerily. "Trot in, you Rookwood chaps! Make yourselves at home, you know!"

"Trust us to do that!" grinned Jimmy Silver, entering the study. "Want any help with the tea?"

"Thanks, but we can manage. You'll give a hand, too, won't you, Grundy?"

"Pleasure!" said Grundy readily.

The Terrible Three blinked. This was a new Grundy—a Grundy they had never experienced before. Like Wilkins and Gunn before them, Tom Merry & Co. began to wonder whether something had gone wrong with the great man of the Shell's mental apparatus.

In a state of considerable astonishment, the chums of Study No. 10 busied themselves with preparations for tea. Grundy cheerfully piled in with them. Rather naturally, Grundy proved to be somewhat imperfect as a domestic help. Before the cloth had been laid he succeeded in smashing a couple of saucers and one plate, and burning the handles of three knives. But minor accidents of that kind were only to be expected, with Grundy on the scene. The Terrible Three had to admit to themselves, anyway, that the great man of the Shell was doing his best.

Tea was ready at last.

And then occurred the first of the strange series of accidents that were destined to mar the enjoyment of the occasion.

Tom Merry had drawn up a chair for Jimmy Silver, and Rookwood's celebrated "Uncle James" made to sit down in it.

Somehow—nobody knew quite how, though it was obvious that someone's foot had strayed under the table and moved it—the chair pivoted out of position on one leg the instant before Jimmy Silver sat down.

The consequence was that, instead of sitting at the tea-table, as he had quite anticipated doing, the Rookwood skipper went down on the floor, with a bump and a yell.

"Yaroooooooooooooh!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"How the thump did that happen?" asked Tom Merry in astonishment, as he helped Jimmy Silver to his feet.

"Not hurt, I hope, old scout?"

"Nunno! Not much, anyway!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "What beats me is how that blessed chair moved! I know it was there when I went to squat in it. However—"

He shrugged and then grinned, and the matter was dismissed.

But that was not the only peculiar incident to occur in Study No. 10 that evening.

Less than five minutes after the juniors had taken their places at the table there was a sudden yell from Lovell.

"What the merry dickens—"

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"Something wrong, old bean?" asked Manners.

"Oh crikey! I should jolly well think there is something wrong!" said Lovell emphatically. "Look at my bags!"

Lovell stood up from the table; and the rest, as requested, regarded his bags.

The reason for Lovell's excitement was immediately plain for all to see. The Rookwood junior's trousers, which had been immaculate and spotless when he entered the study, were now plastered down the front with what at first appeared to be paint. A closer look revealed the fact that it was jam.

"My hat! It's jam! Well, you are an ass, Lovell!" remarked Jimmy, in surprise. "Fancy spilling all that jam down yourself!"

"But I didn't!" hooted Lovell.

"Eh?"

"I didn't spill any jam down myself! I haven't even touched the blessed jam!"

"But, my dear old bean, there's a jam-dish standing right in front of you! Looks to me as if you knocked it over without noticing."

"I jolly well didn't, anyway!" snorted Lovell. "If you ask my opinion, somebody else did it—whether accidentally or deliberately, I shouldn't like to say!"

"S-sh! Not at Rookwood now," said Jimmy Silver, with a frown. A remark which had the effect of making Lovell colour up and abruptly cease his complaining.

Tom Merry helped the visitor to scrape off most of the sticky mess, and then tea was begun again in an atmosphere that was rather strained, despite Tom Merry's efforts to keep up a cheery flow of conversation.

If it had ended at that the little party might, in a short time, have got back to normal, so to speak.

But worse was to come.

After negotiating a course of sardines on toast, followed by buttered bread and jam, Tom Merry passed round a plate of cakes and pastries.

Grundy, who was sitting next to Tom, managed to upset the plate all over the table before passing them on to Jimmy Silver. There was, of course, nothing surprising in that. If anything was capable of being upset, Grundy was the man to upset it. Grundy had quite a gift for doing things like that.

That Grundy had on this occasion deliberately caused the little accident nobody at the table even suspected, any more than they suspected him capable of introducing two imitation cakes made of rubber into the rearranged pile on the plate. Those revelations were to be made later on.

The revelation that the cakes were not all that they seemed, however, came almost immediately, in the shape of a wild splutter from Jimmy Silver and a yell from Manners.

"Grooooooooooh! What the thump—"

"Mmmmm! Look here—"

"What's wrong now?" asked Tom Merry.

Jimmy Silver rose to his feet, his face almost green.

"I—I think I'll go out for a little fresh air," he muttered. "I feel a little faint, or something. It's—it's that cake, I think."

And Jimmy Silver made a bolt for the door. Manners almost followed him, then, with an effort, he overcame his nausea and sat down again.

"Grooooooh! Oh, my hat! I say, you chaps, don't touch the cakes!" he mumbled. "There's something wrong with 'em. There is with mine, anyway."

Tom Merry, with a frown, picked up Manners' discarded cake and examined it. Then he started.

"Great pip! It's not a cake at all! It's a dummy one! A blessed rubber imitation! What on earth—"

"It's a jape! Some silly ass in the room is wangling it, like he wangled Jimmy's chair and the jam on my bags," said Lovell, with conviction. "Of course, as your guest, I can't say much, but if I knew who was doing it, I'd— Yaroooooooooooooh!"

The crowning catastrophe had come. While Lovell had been speaking, the table had been imperceptibly tilted on one side. And before Lovell could say what he would do, if he knew the identity of the mysterious japer, there was a sudden crash, and a fiendish howl from Lovell as the tea-pot slid down to collide with his chest, shooting a stream of scalding liquid over him.

"Whoooooop! I'm scalded! Look here!" roared Lovell excitedly.

"Oh, my hat! What happened then?" gasped Manners.

"What happened? Why, the same silly ass who's been japing Jimmy and I ever since we came into the room has done it again—that's what happened!" hooted Lovell. "I'm going to get a clean-up now—thanks, but I don't want any more tea! Grooooooh!"

And Lovell, dabbing himself frantically with his pocket handkerchief, rushed out of the room, leaving the St. Jim's juniors staring at each other.

They continued to stare at each other for several seconds.

Then the stares of Tom Merry and Manners seemed to become fixed on Lowther.

"You silly ass!" roared Tom Merry suddenly.

Lowther jumped.

"Eh?"

"You footling, burbling jabberwock!" hooted Tom. "Don't you think you play those games quite often enough when we're on our own, without inflicting them on honoured guests like those Rookwood fellows?"

"Look here—" gasped Lowther.

"Don't listen to the silly cuckoo, Manners!" snorted Tom Merry. "Bump him!"

"Oh, rather!"

"Look here—" shrieked Lowther.

But Monty's protests were in vain. His incensed chums made a rush at him, and, before he could deny that the mishaps in Study No. 10 had been the result of his handiwork, he was swept off his feet.

Bump!

"Yaroooooop!"

Bump!

"Yoooooo! Look here—"

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"That'll do!" gasped Tom Merry at last, releasing the yelling Lowther. "Now, don't do it again!"

"Groooooogh!"

"Perhaps in future you'll think twice before japing our giddy guests of honour," said Manners severely. "What the thump are you laughing at, Grundy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Grundy.

Lowther scrambled to his feet, his face almost purple with rage and indignation.

"You idiots! You fatheaded, footling chumps!" he roared.



There was a sudden crash in Tom Merry & Co.'s study as the table tilted on one side. The teapot slid down to collide with Arthur Edward Lovell's chest, shooting a stream of scalding liquid over him. The Rookwood junior gave a fiendish howl.

"Whooooop! I'm scalded!" (See Chapter 4.)

"I tell you I didn't— Yarooooogh!"

Tom Merry and Manners continued to bump the innocent party with a right good will.

And, meanwhile, George Alfred Grundy, reclining in an armchair, simply yelled with uncontrolled laughter.

CHAPTER 5.

A Rival for Lowther!

"H A, ha, ha!" Grundy's laughter echoed through Study No. 10 in chorus with Lowther's yells of pain.

That Tom Merry and Manners should jump to the conclusion that Monty Lowther was the culprit was, from Grundy's point of view, a quite unlooked for sequel to the japes he had succeeded in bringing off during the little tea-party. To Grundy it was a distinctly amusing sequel. He roared.

It was not unnatural, of course, that Merry and Manners should fall into such an error. Monty Lowther was the recognised humorist and practical joker of the Shell. Little tricks of the kind that had just been performed in Study No. 10 had "Lowther" written all over them. True, it was not like Monty to outrage the laws of hospitality by japing guests of the study. But Tom Merry and Manners, in their anger, did not stop to give consideration to that detail. They just waded in, and bumped their humorous chum well and truly.

"Same to you, old bean!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "If a chap who japes his own guests isn't a born idiot—"

"But I didn't!" howled Lowther.

"Eh?"

"That's what I was trying to tell you, but you wouldn't listen! I didn't jape them at all."

"What?"

"Draw it mild, old chap!" urged Manners. "We saw what happened all right, and knowing you—"

"But I tell you I don't know anything about it!" hooted Lowther. "Think I'm potty enough to jape the fellows I've just been playing with at footer, you fatheads! Give me credit for a little savvy."

"But, my dear old fellow—"

"If you didn't—"

"Well, I jolly well didn't, anyway!" snorted Lowther. "And you bump a fellow without even giving him a chance to say whether he's guilty or not!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grundy, from his armchair.

Tom Merry and Manners looked at each other, then looked at the indignant Lowther.

"Well, if this is the straight goods—" began Tom Merry, scratching his curly head thoughtfully.

"Of course it is!"

"Then, in that case, we've bumped you for nothing. We owe you an apology, in fact."

"Sorry, old bean!" grinned Manners.

"Awfully sorry, Monty!"

"So I should jolly well think!" growled Lowther. "That doesn't take back the bumping, though."

"But—but—"

"If you didn't do it," said Tom Merry, "then who the dickens did?"

"Goodness knows! Unless—"

Monty Lowther's eyes turned suddenly in the direction of the armchair where Grundy was engaged in wiping the tears of merriment from his eyes.

Tom Merry and Manners followed their chum's glance. Then they started. Up to this moment neither of them had suspected George Alfred Grundy. Grundy, of course, was several sorts of an ass, but he had never been the kind of ass to indulge in practical jokes. Grundy had always taken himself far too seriously for that kind of thing.

But if no guilt attached to any one member of the Terrible Three, then, by the process of elimination, the only man left upon whom suspicion could possibly fall was Grundy himself.

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom Merry. "Grundy—"

"You frightful ass—"

"Mean to say that you—"

Grundy, still shaking with laughter, rose from the armchair and nodded.

"That's it! Right, this time!"

"So you did it?"

"Little me!" nodded Grundy. "Funny, wasn't it? Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—"

"Then it was you that jerked Jimmy Silver's chair away when he went to sit down?" asked Manners.

"Just me!"

"And shot the jam over Lovell's bags?"

"And planted those rubber cakes on us?"

"And upset the tea?"

"I did the whole lot," assented Grundy, his rugged face one vast grin. "And nobody guessed. You even ragged old Lowther for what I'd done! Ha, ha, ha!"

And Grundy went off into a fresh roar of laughter.

The Terrible Three looked at each other almost incredulously. As Grundy had confessed his guilt, they naturally had to accept it, yet they could hardly believe it. It was so unlike Grundy to indulge in japing that for the moment it was beyond their understanding.

"But—"

"But why on earth did you do it?" asked Tom Merry, in astonishment. "You've never done anything like it before!"

"Exactly! But that's not to say I'm not going to do such things in the future," remarked Grundy. "As a matter of fact, I've come to the conclusion this afternoon that I'm taking things too seriously."

"Eh?"

"Up till now I've left undeveloped a side of my character which should be developed," explained Grundy, racking his brains to remember the exact phraseology of the radio lecturer. "It's questionable, if I allow myself to develop on the serious lines I've gone so far, whether I shall make, after all, a better citizen than the public schoolboys of the 'eighties made."

"S-s-schoolboys of the 'eighties?" stuttered Manners.

"Exactly! In those days boys were really boys," grinned Grundy. "They japed and joked and hoaxed on a scale undreamt of nowadays."

"Great pip!"

"I'm going to start developing that side of my character now, you see. This," said Grundy, indicating the disordered tea-table, "is the beginning!"

"Oh?"

"So you've started out as a japer, and your first effort has been made at the expense of our guests. That it?" asked Tom Merry, in measured tones.

Grundy chuckled.

"Yes, if you like! But I think I've scored more over you than over Silver and his pal. Just fancy your scragging Lowther because you thought he'd done it! And I was the giddy hero all the time. Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy went off into another roar.

Tom Merry and his chums eyed him grimly. Then Manners and Lowther looked to Tom Merry for a lead, and Tom nodded.

A moment later Grundy's laughter came to a sudden end.

One pair of hands grasped Grundy's right hand. Another pair grasped his left hand. A third pair seized his ankles and jerked him off terra firma.

Grundy went down with a crash.

"Hold him down, while I get something to decorate his face with, chaps!" said Tom Merry grimly. "I've thought for a long time that Grundy's face needs decorating. He shouldn't be allowed to go about without hiding some of it, anyway!"

"No fear!"

Grundy gave a yell.

"If you put anything on my face—"

"We're going to, old bean. Here's something to get on with!" said Tom Merry.

The "something" in question was a jam-tart, which the leader of the Shell squashed firmly on to Grundy's nose, thereby eliciting a wild roar from that recumbent humorist.

"Whooooo! Grooooo!"

"Now have some ink," begged Tom Merry. "Keep your mouth shut, unless you feel thirsty!"

"If you dare— Ouch! Gug-gug-grooooo!" choked Grundy, as the contents of a small bottle of ink streamed over his face and into his open mouth.

"Can't say I didn't warn you!" grinned Tom. "Now what else can we give him, I wonder?"

"There's some soot up the flue, I believe," suggested Lowther.

"Good egg!"

"Grooooo! Look here—"

But Grundy spluttered and exsolated in vain. Nothing would satisfy the Terrible Three but plastering Grundy's already bedaubed countenance with soot.

By the time they had finished with him Grundy resembled a nigger minstrel who had been running amok in a pastry-cook's shop. Tom Merry regarded him with something like satisfaction as he stepped back.

"We'll let him go at that, I think," he remarked. "We can tell Silver and Lovell now that compensation has been duly paid."

"Oh, rather!"

"Yank him up and chuck him out of the room now," said Tom. "Then we'll go and see the Rookwood fellows."

"All serene! Kim on, Grundy!" grinned Lowther.

"Grooooo!"

Grundy was duly "yanked" up and "chucked" out. And, unlike Oliver Twist, Grundy did not come back and ask for more. Grundy had had quite enough of the Terrible Three for the time being!

(Continued on page 12.)



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Looking Back!

IN these jaunts up and down the country visiting this or that football club headquarters, I have had some strange experiences. In some places I have bumped into trouble; at other places I have found it unexpectedly; but at Bramall Lane, I actually went running after it!

I poked my nose inside the ground, and noticed George Waller just vanishing through a door at the other end of the office. I dashed after him—and caught up to him. Now, George is the trainer of Sheffield United, and I thought that I might be able to learn a few things from him. "Learn a few things," did I say? I learnt a lot. George just talked to me for hours and hours, telling me a lot of things I didn't know about football. And yet, after careful consideration, I am not really sorry that I ran after George, because, after all, he is one of football's characters, and he told me a lot of things which I can now put in this article.

George is a dear fellow, and he has been connected with Sheffield football and cricket, as man and boy, for as near fifty years as makes no matter. Just to show you how long it is since Waller first became a figure in sport, I can tell you that he played for Sheffield against Glasgow at football in 1886! That was before you were born, and may have been before your father was born. What tales he can tell about those olden days! For one thing, the horror with which Sheffield heard the news that certain footballers in Lancashire were being paid five shillings a week for playing football, and in addition had their lunch paid for on match days! The end of the world had come—or so the amateur players—pure amateurs—of Sheffield thought in those days.

NOW, I shall have to leave you to imagine most of the things which George can tell of the intervening days. But you can easily conjure up what George must think when he compares olden times with modern days. If five shillings a week paid to a footballer was a shock, what must he think now, when eight pounds a week is the regular wage; when players are sent away for special training if they have a big match on, and when anything up to ten thousand pounds is paid as transfer fee for a player!

BUT we must leave George and have a look round at Bramall Lane. You may or may not know that it is one of the few places—perhaps the only one—where First Division football and county cricket are played on—roughly—the same ground.

But in the summer-time Yorkshire play county cricket matches at Bramall Lane, and George Waller spends his summer working on the cricket pitch.

He is not the only one who has grown old in the service of Sheffield United and yet remains young at heart. The secretary, Mr. John Nicholson, remembers the beginnings of League football, and tells a graphic story of how Sheffield United lost in the Cup Final to the only team outside the Football League which has won the Cup since professionalism was introduced to the game. That was in 1901 when Tottenham Hotspur, then in the Southern League, beat Sheffield United in a replayed Final tie at Bolton.

Then, the assistant trainer, Harry Johnson, who also used to play for the club, is the father of the Harry Johnson who has often led the attack in the past few seasons, and who just loves to play when the ground is inches deep in mud. I got the idea from "old man" Johnson that he thinks Harry would always be a success in the United team if he could be rolled in mud before the start of a match!

A Wonderful Veteran!

ANOTHER Bramall Lane character is Billy Gillespie, still on the staff, but not now quite so certain of his place in the team as he used to be. For years and years Billy skippered Sheffield United, and skippered Ireland, too, and Fred Tunstall told me that he believed Ireland would have made a much better fight of it in the recent International game against England if Gillespie had been in the side to hold it together.

Billy himself has grown bald by so much thinking about football and so much heading of the ball. But he has certain prized possessions, among them a Cup-winners' medal. Then he has a fine clock presented to him by the Irish Football Association after a splendid victory over England. And when the Irish F.A. made Billy this present they did not forget little William, a bright boy who is now about five years of age. They sent him a silver rattle. Billy told me that young William looks like being a footballer—and he certainly ought to be!

FOR many years Gillespie and Tunstall were associated as the left wing pair of Sheffield United, and the game has known few finer couples in our time. You may remember that in the Cup Final of 1925 Gillespie made the pass and Tunstall scored the goal by which Sheffield United beat Cardiff City.

Fred says that he taught Gillespie to play bowls, but Billy denies this and

declares that he has forgotten more about bowls than ever Tunstall will know. Seeing that they have these views about the prowess of each other at "Drake's game," you can reckon they have some stiff struggles in the summer season.

Fred is also a pretty good lawn tennis player, and knows a bit about cricket. But I prefer to see him flying down the wing and then driving the ball goalwards, with that deadly left foot of his. Of course, goalkeepers prefer to see him playing other games! There are few men who can hit the ball harder than Fred, and I was told that he finds it difficult to get any shooting in practice with a live goalkeeper between the posts. Fred hits them too hard.

Changes come to all teams, and there were many lads out at practice when I called whom I didn't remember. The team is in the transition stage but the management is not making the mistake of fiddling while Rome burns.

I said as much to George Green, who has played—at football—for England. George thought there was something sinister in the remark, because you see he plays the fiddle rather well. He takes the instrument with him when they go travelling.

The Joke of the Season!

GOALKEEPER Norman Wharton is a collector of a strange sort. Wherever he goes to play a match he always gets a copy of the official programme, and these programmes he is keeping closely guarded. I don't know why he does it.

Syd Gibson is very fond of motoring, while if any of his pals' wireless sets go wrong, Syd is always ready to put them right again. Gibson is also a very fine organist, and has given recitals in a number of churches. Stan Fox is the comedian of the side. He is full of jokes, and keeps his pals amused with his comic songs.

There is another "broth of a bhoys"—Irish, now leading the attack. His name is Dunno. He keeps as souvenirs two newspaper posters which remind him of the days when he was at Darlington. They were issued by a Darlington newspaper on successive Saturday evenings. One contains these words: "Well Dunno Darlington!" The other one has rather a different sentiment: "Darlington Dunno in!"

There has always been an association between Bolton and Sheffield, and the present centre-half of the United side is Vincent Matthews, who used to be with Bolton Wanderers. Tom Sampy is one of two brothers who have played for the team in recent years, and there is another lad about whom this story was told to me, I won't tell you the name.

The players went to golf, and one of the younger members knew nothing about the royal and ancient game. He just went to watch. When a couple of players had driven from the tee, and were walking off, this young player said: "What about the sand-box? Shall I carry it round for you?" "Oh, yes, I wish you would," said Billy Gillespie. And quite seriously the lad carried the sand-box to the next tee. No, the player's name was not Green!

That story bowled me out, so I hopped it across the cricket pitch. "NOSEY."

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The Jester of St. Jim's!

(Continued from page 10.)

CHAPTER 6.

Grundy, the Jester I

GRUNDY'S conversion to a humorous outlook on life was one of the main topics of conversation in the Junior Common-room that evening. In the course of his hectic career at St. Jim's, George Alfred Grundy had been seen in many peculiar roles. But hitherto whatever role he had taken he had taken seriously. Other fellows had found amusement in his various adventures and misadventures. Grundy had remained deadly serious all the time.

But now, apparently, all this was to be altered. For reasons which the juniors at present found hard to understand, Grundy had suddenly made it his mission to be a japer and jester and player of practical jokes. The incidents which had taken place in Tom Merry's study made that quite clear. Grundy was determined to be a funny man!

The juniors did not find that prospect altogether exhilarating.

Grundy in himself was funny. Nobody attempted to deny that. The more seriously he took himself the funnier he appeared to other people. So long as he remained unconscious that he was funny, Grundy was the most screamingly funny fellow at St. Jim's.

But Grundy as a professional humorist—Grundy deliberately and consciously setting out to be a funny man—was a horse of a very different colour. The general opinion was that once Grundy became consciously humorous, the humour would depart from him altogether. Grundy's conscious humour was of a kind, as Lowther remarked, to make the angels weep. Nobody felt at all keen at the advent of Grundy, the Jester.

All eyes were turned on the great man of the Shell when he entered the Common-room just before bed-time that night.

Grundy, who by this time had eradicated all signs of the rough treatment he had received in Tom Merry's study, seemed to be suffering from suppressed excitement.

"Hallo, you fellows!" he exclaimed genially. "I say, don't you think it's time we were getting up to bed?"

The juniors stared. It was not usual for Shell juniors to display anxiety to get to bed. Most of them felt that the hour at which they were compelled to retire was much too early, as a matter of fact.

"Potty?" asked Kerruish politely.

Grundy frowned.

"No cheek from you, Kerruish! Look here, you chaps, you must be tired after a half-hol—footer and all that, you know! What about turning in now? Give Knox quite a shock when he comes along and finds we're all upstairs already, what?"

"My hat!"

"Man's mad—must be!" declared Jack Blake. "Mean to say, Grundy, that you want us all to turn in before bed-time?"

"Well, and why not?" demanded Grundy. "An hour before midnight is worth two after, they say. Jolly good idea to get in some beauty sleep, to my mind!"

"You can certainly do with beauty sleep, if that's the idea!" remarked Blake. "Still, that only holds good for you, doesn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats! I'm not worrying about you Fourth Form fags, anyway," said Grundy, with lofty disdain. "Now then, Shell! Who says bed?"

Knox of the Sixth looked in before anybody had time to answer that question. The prefect saved the fellows the trouble of answering at all by indicating the stairs with a jerk of his thumb.

"Bed-time, you young cubs!" he announced, in his amiable way. "Upstairs, before I lay my ashplant about you!"

"Cheery old Knox!" grinned Jack Blake. "Pleasure to oblige him, isn't it, you chaps?"

"Oh, rather!"

Knox scowled.

"Not so much talk, you chattering young monkeys!" he snapped. "I'll be up to both dorms in ten minutes. Mind you're all in bed!"

And Knox cleared off again, leaving the juniors to go upstairs without his escort.

Grundy led the way to the Shell dormitory. Why he should be so anxious to encourage his Form-fellows to get to bed early that night was a deep mystery. But his anxiety to do so was unmistakable. Strangely enough, however, when he reached the door of the dorm, he did not seem

so anxious to be the first to enter. Instead of going in himself he stood back to allow others to pass.

Gore and Talbot and Skimpole, who were in the van-guard, wondered what could be the explanation of Grundy's extraordinary behaviour.

They were not long left in doubt.

Gore, in his usual hearty way, aimed a kick at the partly-opened door and the three marched in.

Simultaneously, something that had evidently been poised above the door was sharply inverted, sending a shower of ice-cold liquid over the unfortunate juniors beneath.

Swooooooosh!

"Yarooooooocogh!"

"Whooooop! What the thump—"

"Ow! Help, my dear fellows!" yelled Skimpole. "Some invisible agency has projected a quantity of liquid over me! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laughter was from Grundy. The great man of the Shell had watched the progress of Talbot and Gore and Skimpole with great eagerness. Almost before the liquid had descended over their unoffending heads, he had burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh crikey! Look at 'em! Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat! It's a booby-trap!" exclaimed Tom Merry, with a glance upwards, where an inverted bucket was still hanging from the wall above the door. "Some silly ass has fixed a fire-bucket up there, so that the first chap coming through the door would get soaked!"

"Well, of all the daft tricks—" gasped Manners.

"Must be a lunatic at large!" said Clive.

Lowther's glasses fell on Grundy, and he started.

"My hat! Strikes me there he is, too!" he ejaculated.

"Look at Grundy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grundy.

Gore dashed the water out of his eyes and fixed a deadly glare on the hysterical humorist.

"Was it you, then, you benighted idiot?" he hooted.

"Because if it was—"

"Cave!"

Gore broke off suddenly as he spotted the figure of Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, in the offing.

Mr. Railton, who was on his way downstairs, paused for an instant and directed a warning glance at the Shell.

"A little more quietness over there, if you please!" he called out. "Good-night, boys!"

"Good-night, sir!"

And Mr. Railton vanished, leaving the Shell to proceed into the dormitory as quietly as lambs.

Inside the dorm, however, Gore turned a furious face to Grundy, and shook his fist meaningly.

"Just you wait," he hissed. "Only wait for a few minutes, and I'll give you booby-trap!"

Grundy grinned cheerfully, and started to undress. An observant spectator might have detected about him still that curious air of suppressed excitement with which he had entered the Common-room. Such a spectator might have hazarded a guess that Grundy had not yet reached the end of his programme. And he would have been right.

The heavy footsteps of Knox echoing along the passage outside sent most of the fellows tumbling into bed. Knox had a nasty habit of awarding fifty lines to fellows who were not in bed by the time he arrived, and nobody was anxious to collect imposts from Knox.

A score of juniors hurtled into bed simultaneously.

From that same score, an instant later, went up a united yell of mingled surprise, wrath, and discomfort.

"Yooooooocogh!"

"Oooooocough!"

"Oh, gad!"

"What the thump—"

The scowling face of Knox looked round the door in the midst of the consternation.

"What's the matter with you all, you noisy brats?" he shouted.

"Ouch!"

"B-r-r-r!"

"It's something in my bed!"

"And mine!"

"Mine, too!"

"It's in all of them!" yelled Lowther. "Wet sponges! Look at 'em! Some footling fathead has put a wet sponge in every bed in the dorm!"

"Some brat from another dormitory, I suppose!" remarked Knox, with a grin. "Well, you're all as bad as one another. The whole Form will take fifty lines each for kicking up a row going to bed!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"And any more trouble from you and I'll fetch the Housemaster up to you!" Knox added.

With that, Knox turned off the light and departed.

As his footsteps died away, there was a murmur from the Shell. That murmur increased in volume until it was a roar.

"It was Grundy!"
 "It must have been!"
 "The lunatic!"
 "Scrag him!"

A burst of laughter from Grundy's bed was the last straw. Gore and several others got out of bed and encircled Grundy's bed in the darkness.

"Are you there?" asked Gore.

"What-ho!" chorled Grundy.

"Suppose it really was you who put those sponges in our beds?"

"Right on the wicket!" Grundy answered cheerfully.

"Sorry to give you all a shock, and all that, but I've made up my mind to wake things up in this sleepy, serious old place, and this is the way I'm going to do it. There's not enough japing at St. Jim's at present!"

"There isn't, eh?" said Gore. "Perhaps we can convince you that there's quite enough! Wade in, chaps, and see if you can convince Grundy that there's enough japing for his liking at St. Jim's!"

Without more ado, the fellows waded in. All of them carried pillows, and they all knew how to use them to good effect. Pillows rose and fell and whizzed and sang

Aubrey Racke, his study-mate, bit his lip.
 "Didn't know I was showin' anythin'." Matter of fact, though, I am feelin' a little worried."

"What's the merry old trouble?"

"To tell you the truth, I've lost my cigarette-case."

"Oh!"

And there was silence in Study No. 7 for a few seconds. Racke and Crooke were the acknowledged leaders of the "blades" of the Lower School at St. Jim's. They were of the nuts nutty, and of the gay dogs doggy, so to speak. They affected a cynical and worldly-wise attitude towards things in general, were languid and slightly bored in manner, condescended to display an interest in the "sure snips" and "dead certs" of the Turf, and had the utmost contempt for fellows who enjoyed footer and boxing and anything else involving physical exertion.

In the more secluded parts of the school premises they indulged themselves occasionally in cigarettes. Racke, who was alleged to be simply rolling in that useful commodity known as "coof," went even further, being the owner of a solid gold cigarette-case, bearing his initials in a little square in the corner of the case, set off for that purpose.

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round Grundy's head, until that humorous youth hardly knew whether he was on the bed, the floor, or the ceiling.

"That's the first part of our little jape!" growled Gore, when they had concluded their buffeting of the great man of the Shell. "By the time you've had the second part perhaps you'll change your mind about there being insufficient japing here. Pass that jug, so somebody!"

"Pleasure!" grinned Clifton Dane.

A toilet-jug changed hands and flashed in the moonlight over Grundy's head.

Swoooooosh!

For the second time in fifteen minutes a quantity of water descended through the air in the Shell dormitory. This time, George Alfred Grundy got the benefit of it.

"Now you'll know for the future that there's quite enough japing at St. Jim's to meet your requirements!" grinned Gore, as he went back to bed.

And Grundy, as he mopped his head with a towel and changed his pyjamas, and made himself up an improvised bed on the floor, had to admit that it did not look for the time being as though the gentle art of japing, at St. Jim's, was in quite a flourishing condition!

CHAPTER 7.

A Shock for the Blades!

"WHEREFORE the worried brow, Aubrey? Feelin' peevish or somethin'?"

Gerald Crooke of the Shell asked the questions as he lounged into Study No. 7 at dinner-break on the following day.

Evidently it was that expensive article which he had had the misfortune to lose.

"Of course, it may have been pinched," remarked Racke, breaking the silence. "In that case, of course, there's nothin' to worry about. It cost a tidy bit of course, and the loss will be annoyin'; but it can't be helped."

"Hem!"

What really worries me is the thought that it might get into the hands of the beaks. If that happens, it will be all U P with yours truly!"

"But they wouldn't sack you, old top! I expect it would mean a Head's floggin'—that's all!" said Crooke consolingly.

Racke scowled.

"That's all! I like that! Think I'd stand a Head's floggin'? I'd rather be expelled, any day!"

"Were there any 'smokes' in the case?" asked Crooke, thinking that perhaps a change of subject was advisable.

"There were, worse luck! That'll make it all the blacker if one of the dashed beaks gets hold of it. Come in!" finished up Racke, as a tap sounded on the door.

Mellish of the Fourth looked round the door, and nodded to his chosen leader and patron.

"Lost a cigarette-case, Racke?" he asked, with a faint grin hovering round his thin lips.

Racke started.

"Just what Crooke and I were talkin' about! Trot in and close the door, Mellish. Have you found it?"

Mellish sniggered.

"No. But I can tell you where it is."

Racke's pasty face turned a shade more pasty.

"What do you mean? Has Linton, or Railton—"

"He, he, he! No, it's all right. The beaks haven't got it."

"Then who has?" asked Racke, considerably relieved.

"Grundy, as a matter of fact," answered Mellish. "I thought I'd better run up and tell you. He's flashin' it all round the Common-room, and makin' a dickens of a fuss about it. Someone's just told him it's yours, and I fancy he may come up with it. Better look out for squalls, if he does. You know what Grundy's like!"

Racke sneered.

"I'm not worried about that interferin' fool. If he starts preachin' to me and cuts up rough in this study, he'll get more than he bargains for. The three of us ought to be more than a match for him!"

"Hem!" said Crooke, looking a little uneasy.

"Sorry I can't stop, old chap," said Mellish hurriedly. "Just remembered, I promised to see a fellow downstairs." And Mellish turned to the door again.

Before he could get away, however, there was a tramp of footsteps outside, and the door was flung open.

George Alfred Grundy walked into the study, smiling as though in anticipation of good things in store.

Behind him trooped a crowd of Shell juniors and Fourth-Formers, all grinning with the utmost cheerfulness.

Grundy bestowed a nod on Racke.

"Lost something, Racke?" he queried.

Racke affected a yawn.

"Dear man, I'm always losin' somethin'! If you've found somethin' of mine, just leave it on the table, will you?"

"Not before I know whether it's really yours!" growled the great man of the Shell. "Let's hear what it was first, my pippin!"

Racke's eyes glittered.

"You know what it was, already! Tryin' to be funny?"

Grundy frowned.

"No cheek now, Racke, or I shall thrash you! Tell me what you've lost before I give you a thick ear! Sharp's the word!"

"Good old Grundy!" murmured Jack Blake, from the back.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Racke eyed Grundy's big fist for a moment, and decided that discretion was the better part of valour.

"Well, if you want to hear me say it, it was a cigarette-case!" he snarled. "Got any preachin' to do about that?"

"I might have, if you weren't too much of a waster to benefit by it!" retorted Grundy cheerfully. "Were there any cigarettes inside?"

"Three or four, I think. Goin' to hand it over now?"

"Pleasure!" said Grundy, producing the gold case from his trousers-pocket. "Catch!"

Racke caught it, and grinned.

"Thanks! Bit of a relief to get it back. Goin' to have one to celebrate it, Grundy?"

"Not for me. Don't let me stop you having one, though," said Grundy.

Racke sneered.

"You wouldn't! Have one, Crooke?"

"What, with this crowd lookin' on?" asked Crooke, in alarm.

"Why not, dear man? There are no beaks about at this time of the day!"

"Oh, gad!"

Crooke looked extremely dubious, but he took one of the proffered cigarettes and lit up. Crooke usually took his lead from Racke.

"No need to stay any longer now, Grundy!" drawled Racke, regarding Grundy lazily through a blue haze of cigarette smoke. "You're all right, and that sort of thing, but I simply can't bear lookin' at your face for long!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Crooke.

Grundy clenched his big fists, and almost came to the point of knocking the two gay dogs' heads together. Almost—but not quite. The remembrance of what he was waiting for pulled him up before he actually got to the point.

"Sorry about my face!" he managed to gasp, in the end. "However, I'll stay here for a few minutes, if you don't mind. I like looking at you fellows smoking, you know!"

"Reminds me of the Zoo—'Merry Blades at play in their natural haunts'!" remarked Monty Lowther gravely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The grinning crowd remained in the doorway, still grinning. Racke and Crooke couldn't quite make it out. As a matter of fact, they didn't altogether like it. Racke had lit up out of bravado, thinking that in any case the crowd would go in the course of the next minute or two. Now that they appeared to be making no attempt to do so, Racke felt sorry he had begun his cigarette.

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The grins on the faces of Grundy and his followers were irritating. Conspiracy seemed to be in the air, somehow. The fellows seemed to be waiting for something to happen—something of which Racke and Crooke had no knowledge.

Racke and Crooke soon learned what that "something" was.

In lighting up the cigarettes, they had omitted to observe that they were not the brand that Racke usually favoured.

Even if they had done so, they would never have guessed that the "smokes" were of the peculiar kind manufactured by Messrs. Trix & Catchem, Ltd. Such, however, was the case. Hence the grins on the faces of Grundy and his followers.

Two minutes after lighting up their cigarettes, Racke and Crooke were lounging back in their chairs, smoking, with every appearance of enjoyment on their pasty faces.

Then something happened that put a sudden end to their languid nonchalance.

Bang!

Crack!

Two reports rang out like pistol-shots across the room.

Simultaneously, the two blades of the Shell leaped to their feet, with terrified yells.

"Yooooooop!"



"Grundy, old bean," said Tom Merry grimly, "your face needs was a jam-tart, which the leader of the Shell squashed firmly and humorously."

"Whoooooop!"

"Help! Oh, gad, I'm burnt!" shrieked Racke.

"It's the dashed cigarettes! There's gunpowder in them! Grooooooh!" moaned Crooke.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a roar from the crowd in the doorway. And Racke and Crooke realised, now, what the crowd had been waiting for.

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, my hat! Worth waiting for, what?" yelled Grundy. "Perhaps you'll fight a bit shy of smoking after this, Racke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! It's burnt my lip! Oh, gad!" Racke turned a furious face to Grundy. "I suppose this is your work, you hare-brained fool?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Guilty!" roared Grundy. "What price the merry blades now, you chaps? Look at 'em!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd simply yelled. Certainly, for merry blades and gay dogs, Racke and Crooke, at that moment, presented a sorry spectacle. The explosion of their "smokes" had given them a considerable shock, and the expressions on their respective faces were still startled and terrified.

and not a bit nonchalant and cynical, as they should have been.

"This the finish of the show, Grundy?" asked Herries.
 "That's all just now!" nodded Grundy. "Hope you've all enjoyed it!"
 "We have!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

And the crowd departed, still chuckling. Racke and Crooke were left to calm themselves down a little. They did so eventually, of course, but it was quite a time before they got over the little shock which



ting. Here's something to get on with!" The "something" Grundy's nose. "Whooop! Grooogh!" roared the unfortunate (Chapter 5.)

Grundy had provided for them. For at least half an hour after the crowd had dispersed Study No. 7 continued to echo with "Ows!" and "Groooghs!" and "Oh, gads!"

CHAPTER 8.

Another Bright Idea!

"SOMETHING ought to be done about it!" Cuthbert Gunn, of the Shell, made that remark. And Wilkins, who occupied the next stool to his study-mate in the school tuck-shop, supported his opinion with a hearty:

"Hear, hear!"
 "I'm thinking of the chap's own interests, as much as anything!" continued Gunn, eying his half-consumed glass of ginger-beer with a reflective eye. "Grundy himself, of course, is incapable of seeing beyond his nose."

"That's very true, deah boy!" assented Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was standing near by.

"And it's impossible to convince him that if he goes on as he's doing he'll get the jolly old bullet from St. Jim's. So what's a chap to do?"

"Simply let him get on with it!" advised Blake sagely. "This particular form of madness won't last very long—no longer than his previous outbreaks have lasted, anyway!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "And, in the meantime, old Wilky and I have got to put up with him in our study!" grunted Gunn disconsolately. "All very well to say give him his head, but you don't have to be with him as much as we do!"

"The silly ass is trying out his stunts on us all day long!" growled Wilkins. "Last night he told me to hold a little tin affair up to the light and I'd see a miniature photograph of St. Jim's. When I did so, about half a pint of water shot into my eye."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Bai Jove! I wegard that as wathah funnay!"
 "So it might be, from your point of view!" snorted Gunn. "What about this, then? This morning he wanted me to put an imitation rose, sprinkled with sneezing-powder, on Linton's desk. Because I wouldn't do it the silly ass punched me on the nose!"

"Oh, my hat!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Hallo! Talk of angels!" grinned Digby.
 George Alfred Grundy himself tramped into the tuck-shop, wearing a thoughtful frown on his rugged face. He bestowed a nod on Wilkins and Gunn.
 "Hallo, you chaps! Glad you're here! I want you!"
 "Oh, crikey! What's on, this time?" asked Wilkins apprehensively.

Grundy sniffed.
 "Don't worry! I don't want either of you to risk your precious necks! I just want your opinion—that's all!"

"Oh!"
 "Delighted!" grinned Gunn.
 "I happen to possess a ventriloquial gadget for fixing into the mouth!" explained Grundy. "Rather a wonderful sort of thing. You put it in your mouth, and then you can perform tricks of ventriloquism—so it says in the instructions, anyway."

"Hem!"
 "With the aid of this gadget I can whistle like a canary, bark like a dog, and all sorts of things. Furthermore, I can throw my voice about in any direction I like," said Grundy, with a grin. "Rather natty, what?"

"Great pip!"
 "No skill needed?" asked Herries, with interest.
 "Oh, you have to use a fair amount of skill, naturally, but that will come easy to me," said Grundy confidently.
 "Hem!"

"Now, my idea is that with this in my mouth I can have a fair old game with Linton in class."

"With—Linton?" stuttered Wilkins.
 "Linton, our Form master?" asked Gunn, almost incredulously.

"Of course! Why not?"
 "Oh, my hat!"
 "There's a fat chap at Greyfriars called Bunter!" said Grundy seriously. "Rather an unpleasant sort of rotter, but quite hot at ventriloquism, I believe. Greyfriars men have told me that Bunter has had their Form master on toast times out of number. If a fat rotter like Bunter can do it, I don't see why I shouldn't."

"Oh, great pip!"
 "I'm going to have a cut at it, anyway!" grinned Grundy. "I thought I'd better try it out on you fellows first, though, just to see how I shape. I've got the gadget here with me. Just listen!"

Grundy transferred Messrs. Trix & Catchem's patent ventriloquial throat attachment to his mouth. The juniors in the tuckshop crowded round, deeply interested in Grundy's ventriloquial experiments.

Grundy coughed.
 A moment later he barked. Wilkins and Gunn judged that their leader was endeavouring to reproduce the sound of a barking dog. To them, however, as to everybody else in the tuckshop, the sound that was actually reproduced was that of a barking George Alfred Grundy.

With a final "Woof, woof!" Grundy ceased his efforts and glanced round with a pleased grin on his rugged countenance.

"Pretty good for a beginner, what?" he remarked.
 "Oh, my hat!"
 "What was it meant to be, Grundy?" asked Tom Merry innocently.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Grundy glared.
 "You silly ass! Mean to say you can't recognise the bark of a dog when you hear it?"

"Oh! Sorry, old bean! I only wanted to know!"

"But—but isn't a ventriloquist supposed to keep his lips still?" asked Wilkins.

"Well, so I did, didn't I?" hooted Grundy. "If you imagine I moved my lips you must be seeing things. I didn't move them once!"

"Great pip!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Idiots!" snorted the amateur ventriloquist wrathfully. "Blessed if I haven't a good mind not to go on with it, now. But I will, all the same. Now listen to this carefully. What I'm going to do is to throw my voice over to that corner of the shop. You'll find it will sound just as if somebody's speaking from the corner. Here goes!"

Grundy screwed his face up into an expression so extraordinary that Wilkins and Gunn wondered for a moment whether their leader was on the verge of some kind of fit.

Just when he seemed on the point of bursting, Grundy opened his lips, and, speaking as if he was suffering acute pain, yelled out:

"Hallo!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Wilkins, in surprise. "But we've already met before, old chap! What are you saying 'Hallo!' for again?"

Grundy relaxed for a moment to fix a freezing look on his subordinate.

"Don't be utterly potty, Wilkins! That's my ventriloquial voice speaking from the corner. It's not supposed to be me at all."

"Oh crikey! Isn't it?" gasped Wilkins.

Grundy screwed up his face again.

"Go and eat coke! You're all a lot of silly asses!" he called out, in a falsetto voice.

Some of the juniors eyed Grundy rather grimly.

"Does that apply to me?" asked Jack Blake sharply. "Because if it does—"

Grundy relaxed his face again and snorted.

"I wish you wouldn't interrupt! That didn't come from me—it came from over there in the corner."

"Oh, my giddy aunt! But we heard you say it—saw you, too!" grinned Blake. "Was that supposed to be ventriloquism, then?"

"It jolly well was ventriloquism!" roared Grundy. "You start sneering at my ability as a ventriloquist, Blake, and you'll get bashed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're a lot of fatheads!" declared Grundy wrathfully. "Dashed if I'm going on, after this! I'll keep it for old Linton this afternoon. He won't know I'm a ventriloquist beforehand, like you chaps, and he'll never jolly well guess who's the giddy culprit!"

"My hat! Surely, Grundy, you're not going to try this stunt on Linton?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Just where you're wrong—I am!" said Grundy calmly.

"But—but— Oh, ye gods! Tell him how hopeless it is, Wilkins!" urged Tom Merry.

Wilkins touched his leader on the arm and gave him a pleading look.

"Grundy, old chap! You simply can't go on with this," he said gently. "Drop it! Take my tip, old man, and let it alone. Linton's not a bad old stick, but he can't help cutting up rusty if you start playing games like this with him!"

Grundy gave a gasp of indignation.

"Why, you silly idiot—"

"Don't do it, old fellow," said Gunn, more in sorrow than in anger.

"You, too!" gasped Grundy. "Fine pals you two fellows are—I don't think! What you both mean to say is that you don't think I can bring it off! You don't think I'm a good enough ventriloquist to pull old Linton's leg. That it?"

"Not quite! It's not that we don't think you're good enough; the fact is we know jolly well you're not!" said Wilkins frankly.

"Well, my hat!" said Grundy.

He was so taken aback that he did not even try to "bash" Wilkins.

"You see, you can't do it," said Wilkins kindly. "To try to do so is simply begging and praying for a Head's flogging!"

"You simply mustn't!" said Gunn.

Grundy regarded his lieutenants for the space of a few seconds with a withering look of scorn and contempt.

"Then I'm jolly well going to, all the same!" he snorted at the end of that period. "What you've said, in fact, has simply put me on my mettle. I'm determined to do it now. Blow you!"

And Grundy walked out of the tuckshop with his nose high in the air.

George Alfred Grundy had spoken!

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CHAPTER 9.

Very Funny!

THERE was an air of expectancy and suppressed excitement about the Shell that afternoon. Mr. Linton, the amiable and kindly Form master of the Shell, noticed it when he came into the Form-room, and wondered what was the cause of it. Naturally, Mr. Linton had, so far, remained unconscious of the fact that there was a budding ventriloquist in his Form.

He was, however, to be made aware of the fact before the lesson had proceeded very far.

The subject for the first half of the afternoon was English History. English History was a pet subject of Mr. Linton's; he seemed to take the keenest delight in strings of dates and genealogical trees. Almost needless to say, his pupils did not share his delight.

On this occasion the charms of English History were even less obvious to the Shell than they usually were. Mr. Linton gathered that much when Lowther made the statement that Queen Elizabeth was the daughter of William the Conqueror, and again when Clifton Dane solemnly asserted that Magna Charta was signed on Flodden Field. Lowther and Dane didn't know a great deal about English History, but they ought to have known more than that.

Mr. Linton realised that something else besides English History was engaging the thoughts of his Form.

Eventually he came to the conclusion that Grundy seemed to be receiving rather a lot of attention from the rest. Covert glances were being directed towards that celebrated junior from all parts of the room. Mr. Linton, peering abstractedly over his spectacles once or twice, thought he even saw juniors making signs to Grundy. Once he felt sure he had seen Wilkins shake his head and turn his thumbs down—gestures the meaning of which were quite beyond Mr. Linton.

"Hom!"

It was a sudden cough from Grundy—not a genuine cough but an obviously forced one.

Mr. Linton's glance rested on Grundy for a second.

"Are you ill, Grundy?"

Grundy looked surprised.

"Ill? Certainly not, sir! Never felt better in my life!"

"Why, then, did you cough, Grundy?"

"I—I— Did I cough, sir?" stammered Grundy.

"You made a strange noise with your throat, at all events," said Mr. Linton. "Please see that it does not occur again!"

Mr. Linton turned to the blackboard and began to write some of his pet dates upon it.

He had hardly begun writing before a series of extraordinary sounds from the class caused him to swing round with a startled exclamation.

"Pheep! Pheep! Chuck-chuck! Phee-e-e-e-p!"

The Shell Form master fairly jumped as his eyes fell on George Alfred Grundy. That cheerful junior had screwed up his face into an expression of unutterable agony. His mouth was open and his cheeks were vibrating as though some very extraordinary process was going on inside his mouth.

Mr. Linton simply gasped.

"Grundy! My dear Grundy! What—what can be the matter with you, my poor boy?"

Grundy ceased his endeavours and looked up at his Form master with a start.

"Eh, what?" he asked.

"Thank heaven! You are recovering!" exclaimed Mr. Linton. "My dear boy, you must really see the School matron either now, or at the conclusion of lessons. I was never aware previously that you were subject to fits!"

"Fits!" hooted Grundy. "I—I— Look here, sir, I don't know what you mean!"

"My poor lad! I am indeed sorry for you," said Mr. Linton, genuinely moved. "The expression of pain on your face was really dreadful, and the strange noises you were making with your mouth were quite alarming. I must inform the Head, Grundy. For your own good, this matter should be attended to."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry faintly.

Grundy blinked at Mr. Linton for several seconds, at a loss for words. Then he gave a snort of disgust.

"I haven't had a fit, sir! You're mistaken!" he said. "As to the noises you heard, they sounded to me like the whistling of a bird outside the windows!"

There was a sound of suppressed laughter in the Shell. Mr. Linton stared at Grundy with a look of surprise on his face that was almost comical.

"A bird outside the windows? But, my dear Grundy, the sounds were coming from your own lips! And they in no way resembled the whistling of a bird! But perhaps you had better not discuss this painful matter too much. Do you feel well enough to remain in class, Grundy?"

"Of course I do!" growled Grundy. "I haven't been ill at all, I tell you, sir!"

Mr. Linton shook his head sadly and turned round to the blackboard again.

A smothered sound that seemed suspiciously like laughter went up from the Shell. Mr. Linton faced the class again, but the sound had died away and the faces of the Shell were like the faces of graven images. Mr. Linton decided that he must have been mistaken.

That little experience would have been quite enough to choke off any other fellow in the Form from further attempts at ventriloquism in class. But Grundy was not easily choked off. In less than five minutes, he coughed again, in preparation for another attempt.

That cough was followed by a series of barks and growls that rang across the Form-room almost deafeningly.

"G-r-r-r-r! Woof, woof, woof! U-r-r-r-r! Wo-o-o-o!" roared George Alfred Grundy at the top of his powerful voice.

The Shell watched the cheerful humorist in almost petrified astonishment. From Grundy they expected all kinds of absurdities, but hardly anything quite so absurd as this. How Grundy himself could be so deluded as to imagine that he was achieving a ventriloquial effect was a mystery, for it was quite obvious to everybody in the room that the fearsome growls and barks were all proceeding from the great man of the Shell.

Mr. Linton almost collapsed when the unexpected din

began. Almost tottering from the blackboard, he stared at Grundy in stupefied amazement.

"G-G-Grundy!" he stuttered.

"Woof, woof, woof!"

"Grundy! My poor, unfortunate lad!"

"G-r-r-r-r! Woof woof!"

"Dreadful!" exclaimed Mr. Linton. "Boys! By the appearance of your unhappy Form-fellow, I am compelled to conclude that he is suffering from the awful disease known as hydrophobia. Evidently the fit which he had five minutes ago was the prelude to this dreadful attack. A doctor must be summoned at once!"

"Here, what's that?" asked Grundy, suddenly ceasing his canine manifestations. "Who's the doctor for, sir? Not for me?"

"My poor Grundy—"

"I'm not your poor Grundy!" roared Grundy, turning red. "I'm as right as a trivet! Did you hear that dog barking outside the Form-room just now, sir?"

"No, Grundy. I did not hear a dog barking outside. What I did hear was a series of yelps similar to the barking of the canine species, but in this instance, made by yourself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Shell could no longer restrain themselves. A yell of

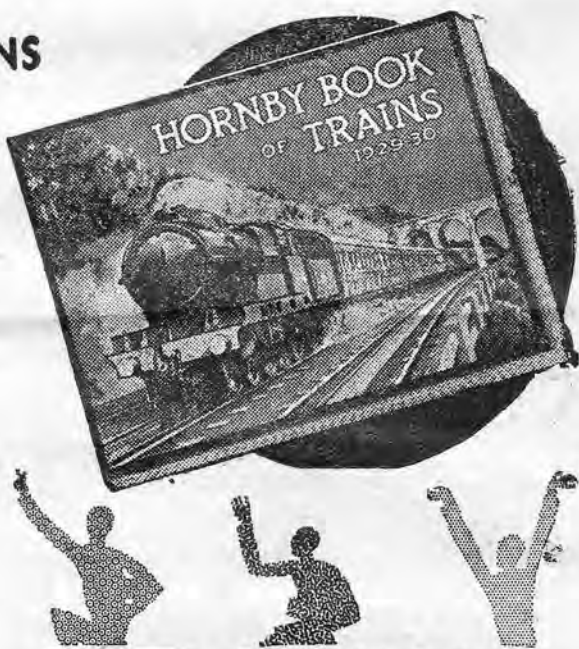
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laughter rang through the Form-room. Grundy blinked up at Mr. Linton, his rugged face a study. As for Mr. Linton, that greatly disturbed and concerned gentleman regarded his hysterical Form in horror-stricken amazement.

"Boys! How dare you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am shocked—disgusted by your levity in such distressing circumstances! I can hardly credit that you are callous enough to laugh when your afflicted schoolfellow is suffering the agonies of hydrophobia—"

"But I'm not suffering agonies!" yelled Grundy. "Look here, sir, I jolly well haven't got hydrophobia at all!"

"My poor lad—"

"Blessed if I know what gave you such an idea! There's nothing wrong with me whatever!" hooted Grundy. "And I didn't bark, either—or, at least, I didn't seem to! It sounded like a dog barking outside the Form-room to me, anyway. I think there must be something wrong with your hearing, sir!"

"Oh, ye gods!" gasped Tom Merry faintly.

"In any case, I'm not ill," added Grundy. "You can put that right out of your mind, sir. There's nothing wrong with me."

Mr. Linton looked very dubious.

"Really, Grundy, after the alarming symptoms you have displayed, you can hardly expect me to credit that statement. Are you quite sure that you feel all right?"

"Absolutely sir!" growled Grundy.

"You are not conscious of any strange feelings in the head?"

"Of course not!"

"In that case, Grundy, I will allow you to remain in class for the present. On the least sign of a return of your symptoms, however, I shall insist on your seeing the school matron."

And Mr. Linton went back to his desk, leaving Grundy looking wrathful and extremely puzzled.

Evidently Grundy found food for reflection in the extraordinary way in which Mr. Linton had treated his ventriloquial efforts, for nothing more was heard from Grundy for a considerable time.

But Grundy had not altogether concluded his performance for the afternoon. Ten minutes before the end of the lesson his gruff voice boomed out across the Form-room.

"Would you mind stepping into my study, Linton?"

A petrified silence fell upon the Shell. Grundy was apparently under the pleasant delusion that he had reproduced with life-like fidelity the voice of Dr. Holmes, the headmaster of St. Jim's. Grundy, however, was the only fellow in the Shell to suffer from that delusion. To everybody else it sounded very much indeed like the voice of George Alfred Grundy himself.

Mr. Linton, who had just got into his stride with English History again, almost collapsed as Grundy's dulcet tones fell on his ears.

"W-w-what did you say, Grundy?" he stuttered.

Grundy started with surprise.

"Did that sound like me, sir? I thought it sounded like the Head, calling you from outside the Form-room!"

The Shell gasped. Mr. Linton passed his hand over his brow as though he was beginning to lose his grasp on things.

"Grundy—my dear Grundy—" he babbled.

"Don't keep me waiting too long, Linton!" called out Grundy, his face twisting and vibrating spasmodically as he spoke. "There! That was the Head that time, wasn't it, sir? Sounded like him to me!"

"G-G-Grundy—"

"I shall expect you along in a couple of shakes, Linton!" said Grundy, lapsing into "ventriloquism" again. "It's awfully important, so don't forget—"

"Grundy!" shrieked Mr. Linton.

"Oh! Yes, sir? What's wrong?"

"Are you mad, boy? Are you completely demented?" roared Mr. Linton.

"Demented?" repeated Grundy, in astonishment.

"Are you ill, or is it—can it be that you are playing some extraordinary practical joke on me?" hooted Mr. Linton.

"I—I—"

"Speak, boy, speak!" thundered the irate Form master.

"Do you, or do you not, admit making some extraordinary remarks to me a moment ago, in the course of which you had the temerity to call me 'Linton'?"

"I—I—"

"Are you unable to do anything beyond senselessly repeating the pronoun of the first person?"

"I—I thought it sounded just like the Head myself!" stuttered Grundy, finding his voice at last.

"But it was you yourself who uttered the words!" roared Mr. Linton.

"Well, all I can say is, I'm dashed if I know how you found out!" said Grundy, genuinely surprised. "As a

matter of fact, it was me. I suppose I can't help admitting it, as you've found me out. It sort of was me, and yet it wasn't at the same time. It was my ventriloquial voice, you see, sir!"

"Your—your ventriloquial—"—

"I was throwing my voice out of the Form-room and imitating the Head at the same time!" explained Grundy. "Somehow, it seems to have misfired. Blessed if I can understand it, but things seem to have gone wrong. The canary's whistle—"

"Kik-kik-canary's whistle?" stuttered Mr. Linton.

"And the dog barking—"

"Stop!" Mr. Linton, with a mighty effort, had recovered his self-possession. "Then it would appear, Grundy, that your extraordinary behaviour this afternoon is the result of your endeavouring to hoax me by means of ventriloquial tricks?"

"Hem! Well, if you care to put it that way—" said Grundy, with a frown.

"That is enough, Grundy! At the conclusion of classes this afternoon you will accompany me to the Head!"

Mr. Linton swept back to his desk, the picture of outraged dignity.

And English History was resumed—without any more ventriloquial tricks from George Alfred Grundy!

CHAPTER 10.

Asking for It!

"HERE he comes!"

"Good old Grundy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar from the crowded Common-room as Grundy tramped in.

Afternoon lessons had ended, and nearly all the Shell and the Fourth had assembled in the Common-room to await the result of Grundy's visit to the Head.

The amazing story of Grundy's futile attempt to pull Mr. Linton's leg in class had been told and told again. Half St. Jim's was yelling over Grundy's "ventriloquism." Grundy had provided the Lower School with a good many laughs in the past. But nothing he had ever done before came up to his exploits in the Shell Form-room on this occasion.

Grundy seemed rather surprised at the general excitement.

"Hallo, you fellows! What's the row?" he asked coolly.

"Just what we're waiting to know, old bean!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "Are you going to be shot at dawn—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or sacked, or merely warmed up with the jolly old birchrod?"

Grundy frowned.

"Oh, that bizney of Linton, you mean? I'm disappointed over that. The Head didn't seem to look at it in the right light at all!"

"You don't say so?" exclaimed Lowther in surprise.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I explained to him that I wasn't intending any disrespect to Linton—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I pointed out that I wouldn't dream of addressing my own Form master as 'Linton' in the ordinary way. It was simply because I was using my ventriloquial voice—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But, somehow, the Head didn't seem to think that made a lot of difference. He gave me a frightful lot of pi-jaw. Can't remember what he said, but he was waxy, anyway—"

"Now I wonder why?" said Clive thoughtfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And at the finish he told me to report to him after prayers to-morrow morning for a caning. Rotten, isn't it?" finished up Grundy disconsolately.

"Not too bad, I should say myself!" remarked Tom Merry. "Considering you led old Linton to believe that you were suffering from fits—"

"Then hydrophobia!" gurgled Manners.

"And finally insanity!" grinned Tom. "Considering all that, I should say you're being let off lightly."

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, it's jolly disappointing to me, anyway!" growled Grundy. "What licks me is how I gave the game away!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That canary's whistle was perfect, if you ask me. As to the dog barking, it was lifelike. And nobody can deny that I got the Head's voice to a 'T'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled an incredulous and sceptical crowd.

"Well, and so it was, wasn't it?" roared Grundy indignantly. "Of course, there must be a flaw somewhere,

otherwise Linton wouldn't have rumbled me as he did. But I'm blessed if I can see where it is. However, what's done can't be undone. That affair's over and done with now. But I've got a fresh wheeze for to-night. That's what I've come to see you fellows about."

"Oh, my giddy aunt!"

"Still not satisfied?"

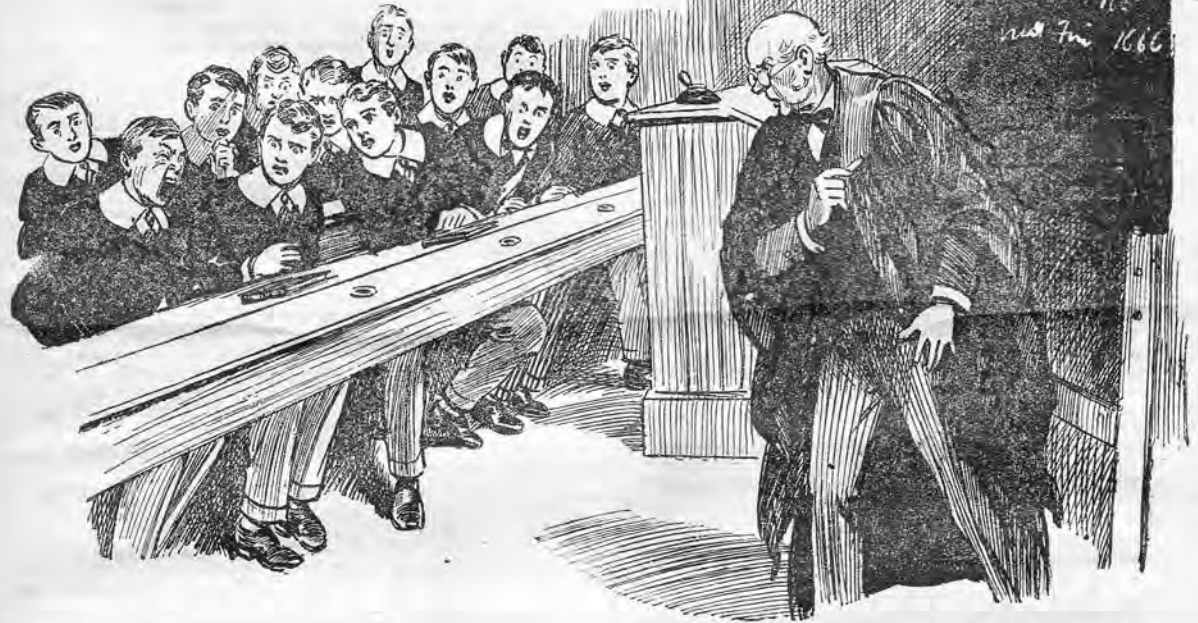
"I thought this out while the Head was pi-jawing me!" explained Grundy. "Nothing like five minutes of pi-jaw for making a chap think of other things."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is a real top-notch of a jape—the jape of the giddy term, in fact!" said Grundy impressively.

"Think it'll work out as well as this afternoon's effort?" asked Levison. "If so, you can count me out of it, to begin with!"

"Pheep! Pheep! Chuck-chuck! Phe-e-eep!" Mr. Linton fairly jumped as his eyes fell on George Alfred Grundy. That cheerful junior had screwed up his face, his mouth was open, and his cheeks were vibrating as though some very extraordinary process was going on inside his mouth.
(See Chapter 9.)



"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy frowned.

"Wish you idiots wouldn't cackle so much! I don't want you to do anything in this, except back me up."

"Depends what the backing-up means!" grinned Tom Merry. "Say on, old bean!"

"There's a meeting of the Sixth Form Debating Society to-night," said Grundy. "You know what that is—an affair where a lot of silly owls of prefects stand up and spout all the evening."

"Hem! Better not let any of them hear you say so!" grinned Jack Blake. "Of course, you're right, if it comes to that. Isn't it their 'open night' to-night?"

Grundy nodded.

"It is. That's what gives me the chance to bring off this jape. In the ordinary way anybody belonging to the Lower School who walked in to their debate would be kicked down the stairs. But to-night is open. Any of us can walk in and listen if we want to. Theoretically, we're entitled to speak."

"Never heard of anybody below the Fifth doing so, though," remarked Talbot, with a smile.

"Neither have I. But that's what I intend to do to-night!" said Grundy.

"You?" gasped Kerruish.

"Y-you make a speech in the Sixth Form Debating Society?" stuttered Jack Blake.

The juniors stared.

"Just that!"

"Oh, great pip!"

Grundy's listeners were temporarily overwhelmed.

The Sixth Form Debating Society at St. Jim's was a very exclusive institution. Non-members, especially fellows belonging to the Lower School, were inclined to look up to it with a great deal of awe and reverence.

Occasionally, this exclusive society ran an "open night," when non-members could attend, and even address the club, if they felt like doing so. Not many fellows availed themselves of the privilege of listening to the great men of the Sixth indulging in oratory. Fewer still had the temerity to stand up and join in the deliberations of such an august gathering.

Occasionally a courageous Fifth-Former would speak for a few minutes; but that didn't occur very often. For any-

body belonging to a Form lower than the Fifth to speak was unheard-of and totally without precedent.

Grundy's calm announcement that he was going to speak at the debate that evening came like a bombshell to the crowd in the Common-room.

"My dear old bean—" murmured Tom Merry, when he had recovered his breath.

"My dear old silly ass—" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Can it! Drop it! Think no more about it, old chap!" urged Gunn.

"Bai Jove! You should weally weconsid'ah the mattah, Gwunday, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy earnestly. "My own feelin' about it is that for a Shell chap to address the Sixth Debatin' Society is vergin' on positive bad form!"

"Asking for it, by gum!" said Jack Blake.

Grundy shrugged his broad shoulders.

"I don't think so at all! But I know how the Sixth will look at it, and that's why I think it's a thumping good wheeze! Kildare and the rest of 'em will have about fifty fits when I stand up and speak. That's the idea of the thing—to take the swanking asses down a peg or two! Get me?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Personally, I don't think much of the Sixth. Pretty scratch lot, in my opinion!" said Grundy critically. "If I stand up I shall take the opportunity of telling 'em so—put 'em in their places, by Jove! Anyway, I'm going to do it, whatever you silly asses think about it!"

"My hat!"

"I'm a pretty powerful orator when I get wound up, though I say it myself! I'm jolly well going to get wound up to-night, I can tell you!" grinned the great man of the Shell. "The subject of the debate is: 'That Genius Starves in a Garret.' I'm going to think it over between now and eight o'clock, and get a jolly hot speech ready for 'em. All I want you chaps to do is to come along and back me up—see?"

"Oh!"

"Easy enough, anyway!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "I think I'll trot along. What say you, Tommy?"

Tom Merry rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Blessed if I know what to say! I suppose you know, Grundy, that on top of all your other stunts, you're really asking for trouble to go along and rag the Sixth?"

"If there's any trouble, it'll come from me!" growled Grundy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"All serene! We'll all come, then. But you really are asking for it, you know!"

And that was the general opinion in the Lower School when the news became known. Grundy, in his anxiety to perpetrate a series of extraordinary hoaxes, was begging and praying for it. Most of the fellows were of the opinion that the time was rapidly coming when, as Lowther put it, Grundy would get it where the chicken got the chopper!

Notwithstanding which, the Shell and the Fourth decided almost to a man that not for worlds would they miss the anticipated entertainment of Grundy in the role of an orator!

CHAPTER 11.

Grundy Excels Himself!

THE great men of the Sixth received something like a shock that evening when they arrived at the room set apart for the open debate.

Usually, not more than a dozen "outsiders" turned up on these occasions. A score was considered an unusually big attendance, and there were not more than twenty-five chairs reserved for their accommodation.

But for once the Lower School appeared to have interested itself in the classic arts of oratory and debate. Not only were the chairs crammed with juniors; the aisles and gangways and every inch of space at the back of the room were also packed. The crowd even overflowed into the passage outside.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, looked round rather suspiciously when he entered, possibly scenting a "jape" in the air. But everything appeared to be in order. The crowd, though large, was orderly and well-behaved, and Kildare could find nothing to which exception could be taken.

Darrell of the Sixth, who was acting as chairman, thought it advisable, in view of the presence of such an abnormal number of visitors, to issue a warning that any outbreak of disorder would be treated with the utmost severity. He was listened to in respectful silence. Nobody, apparently, had any intention of acting in a disorderly manner.

After a few preliminaries the debate began.

Kildare rose, amid such a storm of cheering as had never before been heard in the dignified, academic atmosphere of the Sixth Form Debating Society, to propose the motion "That Genius Starves in a Garret."

Kildare was a good speaker, and the juniors found that they were not quite so bored as they had feared they would be. It was true that they didn't understand a great deal of what he was talking about, but he had such a pleasant way of saying it that that didn't seem to be a very great drawback, after all.

The captain of St. Jim's spoke for about twenty minutes, and having by that time proved, to his own satisfaction, at all events, that the geniuses of this unappreciative world always did, do, and always will starve in garrets, he resumed his seat.

The chairman then called on Rushden to oppose the motion. Rushden apparently held opinions that were diametrically opposed to those of the speaker who had preceded him. He seemed to think that no real genius ever had starved in a garret, quoting the names of many celebrated gentlemen of genius who had amassed vast fortunes in support of his contention.

While Rushden was holding forth, the crowd at the back began to get a little restive, and Darrell had occasion once or twice to make a stern call for "Order!" But the restiveness of the fellows at the back was as nothing to the restiveness of George Alfred Grundy at the front.

Grundy had made a point of securing a seat in the front row of the stalls, so to speak. For the first ten minutes of the debate he had been engaged in surreptitiously consult-

ing a number of scraps of paper which he held in his hand. After he had exhausted that occupation he sat bolt upright and listened to the speakers with an expression of growing impatience on his rugged countenance.

Long before Rushden had concluded his argument Grundy had become impatient almost beyond endurance. He crossed and uncrossed his legs, and folded and unfolded his arms so many times that Rushden, who was facing him, began to feel quite dizzy before the end of his oration.

Rushden sat down at last.

Darrell got up and announced that the debate was now open for general discussion.

It was customary on these occasions for a brief interval to elapse before the first speaker from the crowd arose. But George Alfred Grundy was no respecter of customs. Scarcely had Darrell finished speaking before Grundy was on his feet, rustling his notes and looking portentously serious.

There was an audible gasp from the Sixth and Fifth. It was the first time in history that anybody below the rank of a Fifth-Former had dared to intervene in a Sixth Form debate, and, judging by the looks on the faces of the seniors, the innovation was as unwelcome as it was surprising.

Grim looks of disapproval were fixed on Grundy from the ranks of the Fifth and the Sixth. Grundy observed them, and his rugged face broadened into a grin. Looks of disapproval were completely wasted on Grundy of the Shell.

"Gentlemen—" began Grundy.

"Half a minute, Grundy! Speakers must address the chair, you know," interrupted Darrell.

Grundy looked surprised.

"Why the thump should I address a blessed chair?"

"What I mean is that all speeches must begin, 'Mr. Chairman.'"

"What ever for?"

Darrell reddened.

"Never mind what for, young shaver! Just begin your speech properly and carry on."

Grundy looked inclined to dispute the point for a moment. But wiser counsels prevailed, and he made another start—this time observing the etiquette of the society.

"Mr. Chairman, then—if you must have it!" he cried.

"Mr. Chairman! I rise to say a few words on the subject, 'Do Garrets Starve in a Genius?'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You mean 'Does Genius Starve in a Garret?' you young ass!" said Darrell, frowning the laughter into silence.

"Sorry! 'Does Genius Starve in a Garret?' rather!" nodded Grundy. "Gentlemen—I mean, Mr. Chairman! You have just heard two speeches on this subject from Sixth-Formers. I don't think much of the Sixth, myself, and I don't think much of the two speeches in question. Kildare was much too long-winded—"

"Order! Order!" called out a dozen shocked and indignant seniors.

Darrell stood up, eyeing the cheerful Shell junior with a baleful eye.

"Speakers must not under any circumstances make personal remarks! Stick to the subject, Grundy—that is," he added, departing for a moment from his official aloofness, "unless you want to be thrown out of this room on your neck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Right-ho! I accept your ruling, Darrell, old chap—I mean, Mr. Chairman!" grinned Grundy. "Now to get on with the giddy washing—geniuses often starve in garrets! Why? Simply on account of the jealousy of other chaps who are not so clever! Take myself—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the delighted juniors in the audience.

"Every day I have to contend with jealousy from other fellows," said Grundy plaintively. "It's not that they don't recognise a genius when they see one; don't run away with that idea—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's simply that they're jolly well jealous of him and want to keep him in the shade as much as possible!" declared Grundy, with feeling. "For instance, take footer. Why am I barred from the Junior Eleven?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then again, why on earth don't they put me up into the Fifth?"

"Oh, ye gods! Why not?" almost wept Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why—" pursued Grundy, when a violent ringing of the bell on the chairman's table pulled him up with a start.

Darrell was on his feet, looking grim and wrathful. He pointed a stern forefinger at Grundy.

"That's enough, Grundy!" he said curtly. "You can sit down now!"

"Eh? But dash it all, I haven't finished yet!" objected Grundy.

"And you're not going to finish while I'm in the chair!"

This is supposed to be a serious debate—not a lecture on the cleverness of Grundy of the Shell!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—" roared Grundy.

"Going to sit down, Grundy, or do you want to be swished in front of this crowd?" asked Darrell sternly.

"Why, you—you—"

Grundy subsided, making unintelligible noises in his throat. It was a rare occurrence for Grundy to be intimidated by threats, but the thought of being subjected to the indignity of a caning before that crowd subdued even Grundy.

Grundy, however, had another card up his sleeve for the Sixth Debating Society. He had come prepared for opposition from the seniors, and now that opposition had manifested itself he lost no time in putting his plans into operation.

Unseen by the seniors, who had turned their attention again to the important question of genius and starvation, Grundy brought out from his pocket a little tin which bore the informative label:

"SNEEZING POWDER.
TRIX & CATCHEM, LTD.,
LONDON."

Silently he emptied the contents of that tin on to the back of his hand. Stealthily he lifted the hand until it was on a level with his face.

One sharp puff and the whole of the powder had vanished into thin air.

But though lost to sight, Messrs. Trix & Catchem's patent powder was destined to remain to memory dear.

It did not become effective immediately. Two or three minutes passed before anything happened, and Grundy began to feel quite anxious.

Then—

Baker of the Sixth was speaking, and Baker apparently

held very decided views about the genius and the garret. At any rate, he was waxing quite eloquent on the subject.

"I put it to you, Mr. Chairman, has the genius yet been born who was incapable of making enough to enable him to—atishoo!" finished Baker dramatically and unexpectedly.

"Hear, hear!" called out Grundy derisively.

"As I was saying—atishoo!—enough to enable him to—ashoooo!"

The chairman, looking rather concerned, rose to his feet. "Perhaps you had better—shooo!" he concluded, violently.

"To resume—ashoooo!" yelled Baker.

"Aaaatishoo!" came from Kildare.

"Ashooooo!"

"Shooooooo!"

"Oh dear!"

"Gentleman—atishoooo!"

"Mr. Chairman, sir—aaashooooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar from the spectators at the back.

"Gentlemen!" moaned Darrell. "Oh dear! 'Tishooooo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shooooooo!"

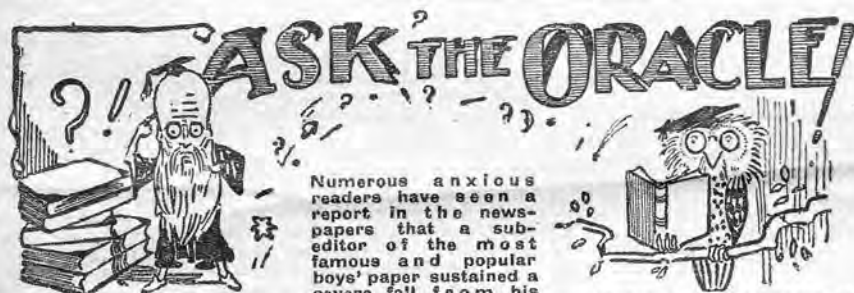
"Atishoo!"

The onlookers simply shrieked. Grundy's sneezing powder had spread with deadly effect. Everybody within a certain radius of Darrell's table was sneezing violently and repeatedly now. The Sixth Form Debating Society seemed, in the space of a few minutes, to have been transformed into the Sixth Form Sneezing Society.

Darrell, his eyes running water, held his hand up at last.

"The—the—atishoo!—the meeting—'shooooo!—is declared—ashooooo!—closed—'shooo!" he managed to sneeze out, with a mighty effort.

(Continued on next page.)



Numerous anxious readers have seen a report in the newspapers that a sub-editor of the most famous and popular boys' paper sustained a severe fall from his motor-bike, and want to know if it was the GEM'S sub that the accident occurred. We regret to state that the answer is in the infirmary!

Q.—What is a beetling cliff?

A.—A chum who lives in the Midlands has heard this expression and wants to know what it means. It means a projecting cliff such as is shown in the illustration, and another similar sort of term



This is what a beetling cliff looks like.

is beetle-browed which you sometimes hear. "Beetle" or "beetling" is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *bital* which literally meant biting or sharp.

Q.—Which is the shallowest sea?

A.—The Baltic, "Enquirer." It is not more than 130 feet in its deepest part.

Q.—Where is the Palace of Westminster?

A.—This, "Inquirer," is another and less known name for the Houses of Parliament.

Q.—Was Nelson killed by a boy?

A.—So it is believed, "New Entry," Devonport, although there is no definite proof. All that is known is that when Nelson's famous flagship, *Victory*, was ranged alongside the French warship, *Redoubtable*, he was killed by a musket shot fired from the enemy's fighting-tops. Shortly before the great little admiral was hit, a number of men were killed in the *Redoubtable's* tops, and among others sent aloft to take their place, was young Robert Guillemaud, who afterwards avowed he saw Nelson on the *Victory's* deck. Although he did not fire deliberately at the admiral, it is thought that one of the many shots he loosed from his musket brought about the historic tragedy in the moment of the British victory.

Q.—Will next January be a sunny month?

A.—This unusual query was sent in by a girl reader, Maggie Bream, who seems to think that an ancient like myself must necessarily be a prophet. No, Maggie, I was not born the seventh son of a seventh son, nor have I got second sight, despite that the office-boy—rude lad!—sometimes calls me Four-Eyes. Nevertheless, I can assure you that January will be a very sunny month—in Central Africa!

Q.—What are the Seven Wonders of the World?

A.—J. J. S. (Highgate) asks me this question, and after looking through my store of knowledge, I have found the answer. The Seven Wonders are the Pyramids of Egypt; the Tomb of Mausolus, King of Caria; the Temple of Diana at Ephesus; the Walls and Hanging Gardens of Babylon; the Statue of Jupiter Olympus; the Colossus of Rhodes; and the Pharos of Ptolemy Philadelphus at Alexandria. The Oracle is the Eighth!

Q.—Do clothes moths eat clothes?

A.—No, Arthur Weldon. It is the grub of the moth that likes old coats and trousers for its grub.

Q.—Why have some walls a large "S" on them?

A.—A London lad who signs himself "Cockney Charlie" has noticed on occasions a house with a metal plate, bearing the letter "S" together with a figure and the abbreviation "FT." What does it mean? he wants to know. The "S" stands for "sewer," chum, and the figure indicates the depth in feet where the sewer-pipes will be found under the roadway near the notice. It is a sign for the guidance of builders and other workmen to whom the position of sewer-pipes may be of importance.



A mysterious sign, which is to be found on some walls. What it means the Oracle tells you in the paragraph above.

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That was the signal for a wild rush. Sixth-Formers and Fifth-Formers and juniors alike scrambled for the door, in their anxiety to get out of the infected atmosphere. Surging and swaying and jostling and pushing, they streamed out of the debating-room. The seniors still sneezed again and yet again as they staggered away, while the juniors, who had mostly been out of the danger area, continued to yell with helpless laughter.

The laughter continued in various parts of the House right up to bed-time that night. It had been a memorable—almost a never-to-be-forgotten occasion, and nothing else was talked of that evening.

When the identity of the japer was revealed, Grundy was the hero of the hour. It was generally conceded in the Shell and the Fourth that for once Grundy really had excelled himself.

Fortunately for Grundy, the identity of the japer was not revealed in senior circles until the seniors had had time to regain their normal outlook on life. What could have happened to that cheerful member of the Shell had they discovered his guilt before bed-time remained for ever a matter for conjecture, but it would most certainly have been something painful and extremely unpleasant!

CHAPTER 12.

The Limit!

"Ow!" That was the first remark that George Alfred Grundy made on leaving the Head's study after prayers on the following morning.

He repeated it several times in the course of his journey to the end of the passage, and squeezed his hands under his arms as he did so. Apparently his visit to Dr. Holmes had resulted in damage to his palms.

Wilkins and Gunn, who were waiting for their leader at the end of the passage, exchanged a wink as he came round the corner.

"All over, old chap?" inquired Gunn.

"Ow!"

"Did he lay it on, old fellow?" asked Wilkins sympathetically.

"Wow!"

"Wonderful how the old chap preserves his strength as he does!" grinned Gunn.

"Ow! My hands jolly well hurt!" groaned Grundy. "Bit thick, I call it, for such a trivial thing as I did!"

"Hem! Well, that's a point of view, old bean!" grinned Wilkins. "After all, japing a Form master like you did is usually considered fairly serious, you know."

Grundy snorted.

"Why should it be? What I've done is simply nothing compared with the larks they used to get up to when the Head was a boy. That fellow on the wireless distinctly said as much. You wouldn't believe how they used to rag in the 'eighties!"

"Hem! Hardly do to tell the Head that, though," remarked Gunn.

"Pity I didn't! I jolly well will, if I'm ever up on the carpet again. Ow!"

"By the way, Grundy, old chap, Kildare's been asking for you," Wilkins mentioned casually. "I fancy it's about last night. Got an idea that Racke and Crooke managed to be heard talking about you rather loudly when he passed them in the Hall this morning."

"Blow them! And blow Kildare, too!" grunted Grundy.

"I'm going to be too busy to-day to see Kildare. I've got a jape to bring off this afternoon that's going to make old Linton really sit up!"

"You—you've got a what?" asked Gunn faintly.

"A—another jape on Linton? Are you completely potty?" asked Wilkins.

Grundy smiled.

"It's a real jape this time—something like a jape, I can tell you! Seems to me that Linton wants taking down a peg or two—wants it badly. Well, I'm the chap to do it, and I'm jolly well going to!"

"But—"

"Listen to this, you chaps," grinned Grundy, forgetting the injuries to his palms as he thought over his latest brain-wave. "Linton's refereeing a fag match this afternoon. He does it sometimes, you know, when there are no seniors available."

"But listen, old chap—"

"Don't talk so much, Wilky! I'm always telling you about it!" said Grundy, with a frown. "Now my idea is to have a lark with Linton while he's busy on the fag sports ground. As you know, he takes refereeing seriously—dresses up for the part, and so on."

"Yes; but—"

"He looks a real scream when he's in his ref's rig-out," grinned Grundy, unheeding. "I've seen other masters hide their grins when he trots down in footer shorts and a

Norfolk jacket. Well, the wheeze is to compel him to remain dressed up like that for the rest of the day!"

"Eh?"

"While he's busy refereeing for the fags, I shall go up to his bed-room, and shift every bit of clobber he possesses."

"You'll what?" yelled Wilkins.

"Shift all his clobber, you know," said Grundy, with a chuckle, "and hide it somewhere where he won't find it for days."

"M-m-m-my only sainted aunt!"

"The result will be that poor old Linton will have to walk about the House till further orders in his old Norfolk jacket and footer shorts!" said Grundy, beginning to laugh aloud at the thought of it. "Linton will be as mad as a hatter—you know how spick-and-span he is—and the rest of us will have the laugh of a lifetime! Now what do you think of it?"

Wilkins and Gunn looked at each other helplessly.

"You—you mean to say—" stuttered Gunn.

"That you're actually thinking—"

"Of hiding Linton's clobber so that he'll have to go about in footer shorts?"

"That's the idea! Brilliant, don't you think?" grinned Grundy.

"My hat! Well, we knew you were mad—"

"Eh?"

"But I'm jolly sure that neither of us suspected that you were half so mad as this!" said Wilkins, in measured tones.

"Mad isn't the word for it. You're imbecilic!"

"What—what?" gasped Grundy, in amazement.

"Imbecilic! Daff! Bats in the belfry, if you like!" hooted Wilkins. "If you try anything like the potty jape you've just told us about, then all I can say is you'll jolly well deserve all you get!"

"And that'll be the sack!" added Gunn.

Grundy blinked at his plain-spoken henchmen for a few seconds as if he could hardly credit that he had heard aright. Then, evidently coming to the conclusion that he had, he made a rush.

The natural result of a rush from Grundy was the immediate collapse of anybody unlucky enough to be in his way. That was the result that Grundy confidently looked for on this occasion.

Strange to say, that result did not materialise.

Instead of Wilkins and Gunn biting the dust before their furious leader, Grundy himself, by some extraordinary mischance, was the one to bite the dust.

The astonished and almost petrified Grundy felt one pair of hands grasp his shoulders and another pair his ankles. For the space of one second Grundy was suspended, like Mahomet's coffin between heaven and earth. Then, swiftly and suddenly, he descended, and Grundy's anatomy and the hard, unsympathetic floor of the passage came into violent and painful collision.

"Whooooooop!" roared Grundy, almost as much surprised as he was hurt.

And he remained in the position wherein he had been placed for quite a considerable time before he could pull himself together sufficiently to rise.

When he got up, Wilkins and Gunn had vanished from sight.

Naturally, the opposition of Wilkins and Gunn had no deterring effect on the great man of the Shell. Grundy had made up his mind, and when Grundy had made up his mind there was nothing more to be said. A mule was an extremely tractable animal in comparison with Grundy when his mind was made up.

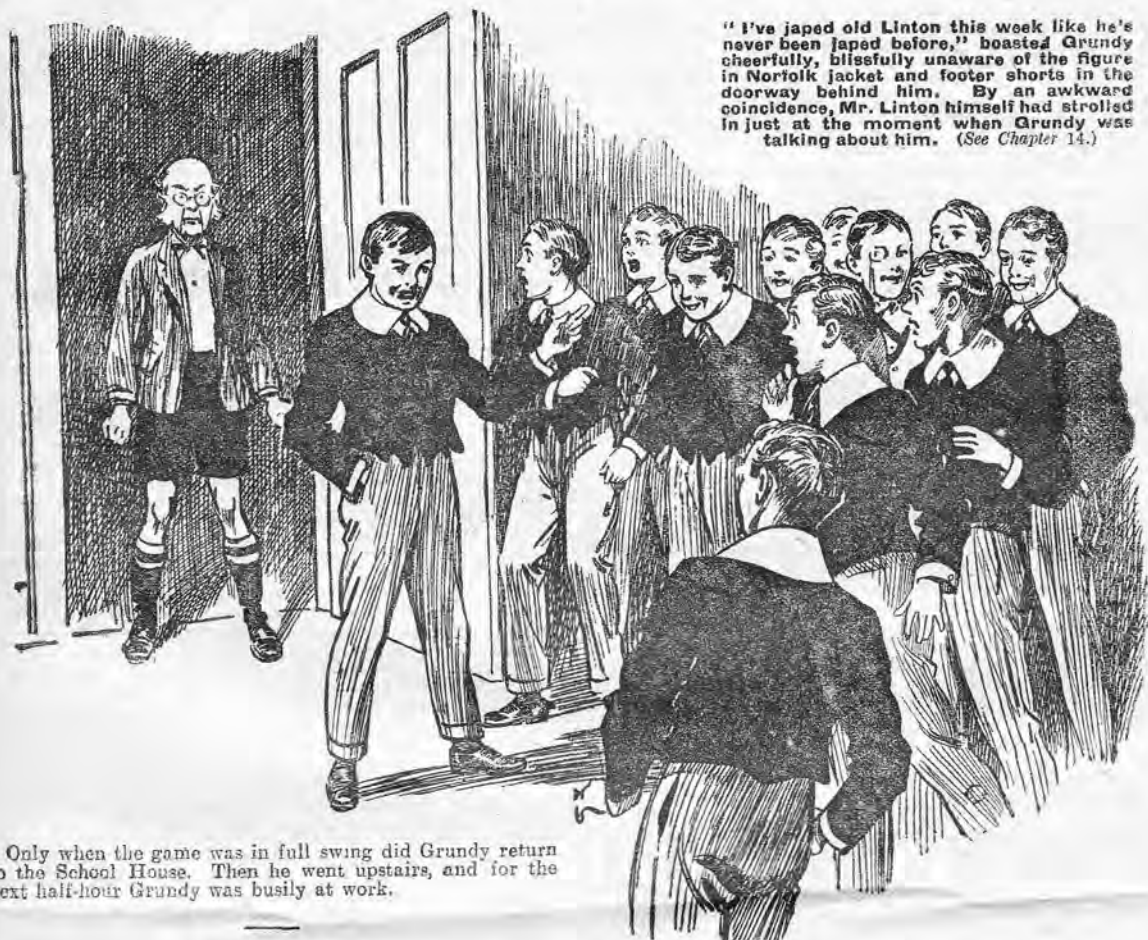
That Grundy's complaint had changed from mild, harmless insanity to stark, staring madness, was the general opinion of the Shell, when Wilkins and Gunn passed on the news. After morning classes, quite a crowd gathered round the great man of the Shell, arguing and imploring. All, however, to no effect. Grundy was not to be shaken.

After dinner, Mr. Linton came downstairs, attired in the football shorts and Norfolk jacket which he considered indispensable to any serious referee.

The Shell master was followed by a good many curious glances. Mr. Linton usually did attract a good deal of attention when he took upon himself the duties of a referee. There was something about the spectacle of Mr. Linton in football shorts that the juniors could never get used to. On this occasion, however, it was something more than his mere appearance that attracted attention. The juniors were wondering how it would seem if Grundy's wild scheme materialised, and Mr. Linton had to take the Shell on the following day in the garb he was wearing for his official duties on the fag sports ground.

Grundy was among those who watched Mr. Linton descend the stairs. Grundy did more than that. He followed the Shell master out of the House down to the sports ground, and waited for the fag game to commence. The great man of the Shell was not exactly cautious by nature, but he wanted to make quite sure that the coast was clear before he invaded the sacred domain of Mr. Linton's bed-room.

"I've japed old Linton this week like he's never been japed before," boasted Grundy cheerfully, blissfully unaware of the figure in Norfolk jacket and footer shorts in the doorway behind him. By an awkward coincidence, Mr. Linton himself had strolled in just at the moment when Grundy was talking about him. (See Chapter 14.)



Only when the game was in full swing did Grundy return to the School House. Then he went upstairs, and for the next half-hour Grundy was busily at work.

CHAPTER 13.

Mr. Linton Causes a Sensation!

"EXTRAORDINARY!"

Mr. Linton fairly snorted out the word. The master of the Shell was standing in his bedroom in the School House. The match on the fag sports ground was over, and Mr. Linton, having indulged in a cup of tea in his study, had come upstairs to change.

To his utter astonishment, he could find no trace of his clothing. Mr. Linton, who was a neat and tidy man, had a very clear recollection of depositing the suit of clothes he had left off that afternoon in his dressing-chest. Now, however, there was no trace of the suit. It was extraordinary, inexplicable, and very annoying.

Annoying as it was, however, it was not half so annoying as the discovery that Mr. Linton made immediately after.

The second discovery put the lid on it, so far as Mr. Linton was concerned. Not only was one suit missing, almost every stitch of clothing he owned had vanished, too.

Mr. Linton turned out his dressing-chest, went through his cupboards, and ransacked every nook and corner of the room.

There was no sign of the missing "clobber."

With a very peculiar expression on his face, Mr. Linton pressed a bell-push to summon Toby, the page.

Toby poked his head round the door two minutes later.

"Which you rang, sir?"

"Yes, Toby. My clothing is missing."

"Clothing—missing?" repeated Toby, as though he found it difficult to make reason out of the Shell master's statement.

"During my absence from the House this afternoon," said Mr. Linton, his voice rising as he became more and more conscious of his peculiar position, "some practical joker or dishonest person has entered this room and taken away every garment I possess."

"My eye!" ejaculated Toby.

"Is there any circumstance you are aware of which can throw any light on the affair?" asked Mr. Linton, glowering at the page as though Toby himself might have been under suspicion. "Have you, in the course of the day, seen any suspicious character on the school premises? Speak up, boy!"

Toby gasped.

"Nunno! Suttinly not, sir! I never saw nobody about—blow me if I did!"

"It is most annoying, and—and inconvenient," said Mr. Linton, his face turning a pinkish hue as he glanced down at his bare knees. "Apart altogether from the monetary loss I may have sustained, this means that I shall have to walk about in my present habiliments until I recover my missing garments, or purchase new ones."

Toby looked at Mr. Linton's Norfolk jacket and football shorts, and burst into a sudden involuntary roar of laughter.

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"Toby!" exclaimed Mr. Linton.

"Haw, haw, haw! Which I was thinking, sir. It'll be rather funny if you 'ave to walk about like that for long. Haw, haw, haw!"

"I—I— Impertinent youth! How dare you!" gasped Mr. Linton. "Return to the servants' quarters immediately, and make inquiries on my behalf, or I will report you for disrespectful behaviour."

Toby became serious again as if by magic.

"Ow! Yessir! Suttinly, sir!" he said, and departed to execute the orders of the unhappy master of the Shell.

Mr. Linton, with a heightened colour, marched downstairs to make inquiries for himself.

A surprisingly large number of juniors were about, considering that it was the hour at which they usually took their tea. Some of them stared at the sight of Mr. Linton in his referee's outfit at so late an hour. Others sniggered, and once there was a burst of laughter at the remark of a wit among the spectators.

Mr. Linton's face, which had been pink, became scarlet. He realised that this was but a foretaste of what he would have to endure if he had to wear football shorts for the rest of the evening, and the realisation was not a pleasant one.

Mrs. Mimms, the housekeeper, was ascending the stairs as Mr. Linton came down. The flustered Form master became more flustered still as he saw her start of surprise on observing his attire.

"Oh—er—Mrs. Mimms," he said, as they met, "possibly you are surprised to see me in such unusual dress?"

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"Not at all, Mr. Linton, sir," said Mrs. Mimms cheerfully. "What with these dress reformers, and what not, I'm not surprised at anything nowadays."

Mr. Linton coughed.

"Dear me! Pray do not conclude that I am concerned in any movement for dress reform, madam. The fact is that some unknown miscreant has dispossessed me of all my clothing while I have been superintending a football match this afternoon."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Mimms, giving the Shell master a hard look that seemed to imply a doubt as to whether Mr. Linton was in his sane and sober senses.

"To the identity of the culprit I have unfortunately at the moment no clue," said Mr. Linton. "Woe betide him when I find out who he is! In the meantime, madam, I would ask you to institute inquiries among the domestic staff."

"Yes, sir. I will do that with pleasure," smiled the housekeeper.

Mr. Linton nodded and went on his way. A moment later he started. He could almost have declared that he heard behind him a smothered laugh. Mr. Linton did not take any steps to confirm his suspicions, but he was uncomfortably aware of the probable explanation—that Mrs. Mimms had actually found something humorous in his predicament. Mr. Linton's blood boiled within him at that dreadful thought. He marched on, experiencing emotions to which it was impossible to give expression.

There was a buzz from the crowd in the Hall as he entered. Fifty pairs of eyes were fixed on the master of the Shell. Mr. Linton began to feel an overwhelming desire for the earth to open and swallow him up.

In a state of utter confusion he stopped to speak to Tom Merry, who was chatting with a crowd of juniors at the foot of the stairs.

"Merry, a most extraordinary thing has happened to me," he said, in a choked voice. "My entire wardrobe has disappeared during my absence from the House this afternoon."

"Oh, sir!" said Tom Merry, doing his best to appear surprised.

"That any boy belonging to the School House can have been so reckless as to hoax me in this manner, I am unwilling to believe," said Mr. Linton. "I am forced, therefore to the conclusion that a housebreaker has been at work. Are you aware that any suspicious character has been observed in the House during the afternoon?"

"I haven't heard of one being seen, sir," answered Tom Merry truthfully.

Tom could have enlightened his Form master considerably on the matter, had he felt so disposed. Naturally, he did not feel disposed, and, in the circumstances, his answer combined truth with tact.

"You will inform me at once, should it transpire that such a character has been seen by any junior to whom you happen to speak?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well."

And Mr. Linton continued on his way, looking as though things were far from being very well in reality. He was conscious that a subdued laugh followed him from the group at the foot of the stairs.

Mr. Linton made his way towards Mr. Railton's study. He became aware suddenly that in the course of his journey from the upper regions of the House he had collected a considerable following. At least a score of juniors, prominent among whom was Grundy of the Shell, were now straggling along at a discreet distance behind him. The flustered Form master paused for a moment to look round and bestow on them a baleful glare that had the effect of making their cheerful grins disappear with remarkable rapidity. But when he resumed his journey the grins reappeared again, and Grundy and the rest followed on as before.

At the corner of one of the passages Mr. Linton collided with Mr. Selby, the master of the Third. Mr. Selby looked in a disagreeable mood. Mr. Selby usually did look like that. He gave a violent start as his glance travelled down to his colleague's uncovered knees.

"So you have joined them!" he remarked icily.

"Sir!" exclaimed Mr. Linton stiffly, wondering what could be the meaning of that cryptic remark.

"I have read about this futile, preposterous movement in the absurd daily Press!" said Mr. Selby harshly. "I must say that up till now it did not occur to me that members of the scholastic profession would be so misguided as to join it."

"Mr. Selby!" gasped the surprised Shell master.

"For grown men to parade about in the ludicrous garb of Boy Scouts shows a lack of the sense of the fitness of things that I can only describe as deplorable. You will excuse me, Mr. Linton, if I tell you that in your present attire you look undignified and absurd."

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"Sir!" hooted Mr. Linton.

"For the life of me, I cannot understand your joining such a movement!"

"Such a movement as what?" almost shrieked the master of the Shell.

Mr. Selby's lip curled.

"Why, the Dress Reform League, of course. Presumably, sir, that is the society whose aims you are following at present?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a roar from the back. The listening juniors simply couldn't help it.

Mr. Linton was hardly conscious of them. His attention, for the moment, was taken up entirely by Mr. Selby.

"Are you—are you seriously suggesting that you think me capable of joining the Dress Reform League, sir?" he roared.

"That is the only conclusion possible in the circumstances," replied Mr. Selby tartly. "When a gentleman in your position appears in public at this hour of the day dressed in Boy Scout's breeches—"

Mr. Linton seemed to choke.

"Stop! I forbid you to say more!" he gasped. "For the moment, sir, I decline to bandy words with you. Later, you will perhaps realise that your conclusion is a hasty one, without a tittle of evidence to support it. When that time arrives, sir, I trust that an adequate apology will be forthcoming. I bid you a very good-evening, sir!"

And Mr. Linton fled, leaving Mr. Selby to stare after him in frowning perplexity, and a crowd of highly entertained juniors to yell.

Mr. Linton was in Mr. Railton's room for quite a long time. The juniors would dearly have loved to hear what went on in the interview between Housemaster and Form master; but that pleasure, naturally, was denied them.

The Shell master reappeared eventually, still wearing his referee's "clobber," and a buzzing crowd, consisting of half the House, shepherd him on an aimless tour of the building, abandoning that pleasant recreation only when the time arrived for prep.

And when prep was over and done, the news spread like wildfire through the quarters of the excited and deeply interested juniors that Mr. Linton was still searching for his missing habiliments—and searching in vain!

CHAPTER 14.

Trouble for Grundy!

"GOOD old Grundy!"

A yell went up as George Alfred Grundy's hefty figure appeared in the doorway of the junior Common-room that evening.

Grundy was accompanied by Wilkin and Gunn, who were looking rather worried and uneasy. Grundy's study-mates, who felt a certain amount of responsibility for their celebrated leader, were, as a matter of fact, rather alarmed by the success of the hoax on Mr. Linton.

Grundy himself, of course, felt nothing remotely resembling alarm. His rugged face was beaming like a full moon. He felt delighted and proud and successful and a lot of other things. But he didn't feel alarmed.

"Well, I've done it!" he remarked genially, as he strolled into the Common-room.

"You have that! Strikes me you've done for yourself, too!" said Tom Merry rather seriously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fancy I've scored this time, what?" grinned Grundy. "Ever see anything like it before? There's old Linton raging all over the House, looking like a scarecrow in his footer shorts, and all the other masters chortling—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And old Selby still mad because he thinks Linton's become a dress reformer—"

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

"And all the time Linton's clobber's up in the box-room, where I shoved it this afternoon. Some jape, eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bit too much of a jape, if you ask me, Grundy," said Tom Merry quietly. "If you take my tip, you'll finish it as quickly as you can, now. There's trouble coming along for you if you don't."

Grundy grinned.

"I'll ask for your advice when I want it, Tom Merry! Linton asked for it by reporting me to the Head, and now he's jolly well got it! He can have his clobber back when he finds it! Meanwhile, he can punt around in his footer rig-out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom smiled faintly.

"That's all very well, old bean. But Linton's rag is out over this bizney, and if he finds out who japed him—"

"No reason why he should," said Grundy.
 "Well, considering that half the House knows who did it already, I should prefer to say that there's no reason why he shouldn't! And once he does, there's trouble for you, Grundy—trouble, with a capital T!"

"Who cares? Think I'm afraid of a bit of trouble?" asked Grundy, with a sniff.

"Not a bit of it! But you haven't heard the last of that rag in the Sixth Open Debate last night yet. Kildare's been inquiring for you several times during the day, you know. And with this coming on top of it—well—"

"Might turn out to be serious!" finished Manners.

"Exactly!"

Grundy laughed carelessly.
 "You mean I might get a Head's flogging? Well, it would be worth it, wouldn't it?"

"Possibly. But I'm thinking it might be worse than that," said Tom. "It's quite on the cards that the Head may think it had enough to merit the sack."

Grundy frowned.

"Oh, but that's rot! Mean to say that the Head would be likely to sack me?"

"He might!"

"Never!" declared Grundy, with conviction. "The Head's several sorts of an ass at times, I know, but he's not quite such an ass as that!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Take my word for it, the Head's not so soft as he sometimes looks. He's got a pretty good idea who holds the Shell together and puts life and soul into the School House," said Grundy confidently. "The Head won't be potty enough to sack me, don't you worry!"

"Great pip! Then you are the one who holds the Shell together, and puts life and soul into the School House?" asked Lowther blankly.

"Of course!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything funny in that! I should have thought it obvious after all I've done this week," said Grundy. "Who else would have thought of playing up old Linton in class, as I did?"

"Ha, ha! Nobody!"

"Who else would have thought of any of the wheezes I've worked in the last few days, if it comes to that?"

"Nobody—or, at least, nobody in his right senses!" grinned Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cackle away, you silly asses! You know jolly well it's true, anyway!" snorted Grundy. "I've japed old Linton this week like he's never been japed before and nobody can deny it!"

"Sh-sh!" came a sudden warning from some of the crowd.

While Grundy was speaking, those of the juniors who were looking in that direction, had observed the door of the Common-room open. Their grins underwent a lightning transformation when they recognised the newcomer.

For the figure in the doorway was a figure in Norfolk jacket and footer shorts. By an awkward coincidence, Mr. Linton himself had strolled in just at the moment when Grundy was talking about him!

Grundy was blissfully unaware that the subject of his remarks was standing behind him. Loftily, ignoring the "Sh-sh's!" that were directed at him, he continued:

"Whatever the rest of you feel about it, I can tell you that I'm jolly well not afraid of any Form master, let alone Linton!"

"Grundy!" muttered Manners, with a horrified look at the frozen figure of Mr. Linton.

"Blessed if I understand what there is to be frightened of, anyway!" rattled on Grundy cheerfully. "Why, when I mentioned the idea of hiding Linton's clobber to Wilkins and Gunn this morning, you'd have thought by the way they looked that I was planning some awful crime!"

"Old man—" whispered Wilkins, almost with tears in his eyes.

"It didn't prevent me working the jape, anyway!" grinned Grundy. "You know for yourselves now, that I was right and they were wrong. It's been a howling success all through, and—"

"Grundy!"

Grundy jumped. His cheerful rattle of talk ceased as though he had suddenly been struck dumb.

"That's torn it!" remarked Monty Lowther, sotto voce.

"Grundy! You—you— How dare you!" stuttered Mr. Linton, stalking into the Common-room with majestic and awe-inspiring tread.

"Ow! Linton!" muttered Grundy.

It was not often that Grundy felt nonplussed. But he certainly felt at a loss now. The thought that Mr. Linton had heard what he had just been saying struck a sort of chill even into Grundy's heart.

"Boy!" thundered Mr. Linton, who seemed, for the moment, to be at a loss for words.

"I—I—" stuttered Grundy.

"I can scarcely credit what I have heard. It is amazing—almost incredible! That a boy in my Form should have been responsible for the disappearance of my clothing fills me with almost incredulous astonishment. That he should be found afterwards boasting of and glorying in his infamous conduct fills me with disgust!"

"You—you see, sir—"

"I do not see, Grundy! I refuse to see any reason in the dreadful behaviour to which I have heard you confess!"

"Yes, but—"

"Silence, sir! I decline to bandy words with one who has had the temerity to place his own Form master in the unpleasant and humiliating position in which I have been placed. Any explanation you have to make, Grundy, must be made to the headmaster. Follow me!"

And Mr. Linton—majestic in his wrath, in spite of his footer shorts—swept out of the Common-room.

Grundy, for once in his life utterly dismayed, followed, and the door of the Common-room closed behind him, leaving the juniors fairly buzzing with excitement.

It really looked as if Grundy, at long, long last, was, to use Monty Lowther's expression, "for it!"

CHAPTER 15.

Duffer's Luck!

"ASTONISHING!" said the Head.

"Almost incredible!" supplemented Mr. Linton.

"Amazing!"

"Unprecedented!"

The Head and the Shell master, having reached the top note in expressing their astonishment, amazement, and incredulity, subsided and regarded Grundy with grim, stern looks.

The great man of the Shell was standing before the Head's desk. Mr. Linton had taken up a position on one side of him, and on the other side stood Kildare of the Sixth.

Troubles, it is said, never come singly. Grundy was finding the old axiom true on this occasion. When he entered the Head's study, on the heels of the irate Mr. Linton, it was to find Kildare present, discussing the unfortunate affair of the Open Debate. Kildare and Mr. Linton, combining forces, had made out a case against the Shell junior that even Grundy, obtuse as he was, realised must look pretty serious in the eyes of the Head.

"Grundy!"

The Head's voice seemed even deeper than usual.

Grundy looked up, with a frown on his rugged face.

"Yes, sir!"

"You have heard what has been said by Mr. Linton and Kildare. You are accused of perpetrating two practical jokes of a most audacious and disrespectful description—jokes which, it seems, are but the culmination of a whole series of similar exploits. To me it appears impossible that there can be any extenuating circumstances attached to your outrageous behaviour. I am, however, prepared to listen carefully to anything you have to say in your defence."

Dr. Holmes sat back in his chair and waited.

Grundy's self-possession began to come back to him. Mr. Linton's awe-inspiring wrath had temporarily deprived him of it; but now, at the crucial moment, it fortunately returned.

Grundy regarded the Head fearlessly.

"All right, sir. I'll explain all about it, then; and I'm jolly sure—I mean I'm sure, sir, that when you see my point you'll agree that what I've done is in the best interests of the rising generation!"

"What—what!" gasped Dr. Holmes, almost jumping out of his chair.

"I've only been doing in a small way, sir, what was done on a much larger scale in the 'eighties," explained Grundy. "Considering things in a general sort of way, schoolboys are more serious nowadays than they were in the 'eighties, aren't they?"

"Grundy!" exclaimed the Head helplessly, looking at the great man of the Shell as though he might have been some queer new specimen of animal life.

"In the 'eighties, rags and japes flourished like they never have done since," pursued Grundy seriously. "The schoolboys of those days took life carelessly and lightheartedly. Were they any the worse for it when they grew into manhood?"

"Boy!"

"They were not!" said Grundy, answering his own question. "As a matter of fact, they turned out to be jolly fine men. But nowadays things are very different. Chaps like myself have been in the habit of looking at everything too

(Continued on page 27.)

The Worst Form at Codrington!

By
David
Goodwin



Toasting a Hero!

"BY Jove! Uncommon clever of you to trace the glasses to Dereker!" laughed Sir Harry. "You're quite an expert in crime."

"Oh, no!" said the Woolly Lambe, smiling.

"Wynne is a born detective. In fact, he set out as a policeman one day and was about to arrest me, though I don't know what wickedness he thought I'd been guilty of."

"Oh, I say, sir!" said Taffy, blushing like a beetroot. "This is too bad! I—"

"We must have the story!" chuckled Sir Harry. "Wouldn't miss it for anything. What was it, Mr. Lambe?"

The Remove master was just going to oblige with the tale when Taffy, in sheer agony of mind, broke in.

"It isn't fair, sir! It—if you don't stop, I shall tell them about your pulling me out of the weir."

"No, no!" exclaimed the Woolly Lambe, laughing, but startled. "Not that! Mercy, my boy! I surrender!"

"He saved my life and very nearly lost his own," said Taffy to the others.

"Bless my soul! We've got to hear about that!" said Sir Harry emphatically. "I won't let a soul out of the room till I've heard it."

"So you shall, sir. It was this way. Jellicoe and I were fishing one day when the river was flooded."

"Wynne, you promised to hold your tongue about it!" cried the Woolly Lambe.

"Only in the school, sir," said Taffy mischievously. "You've made things so hot for me to-night I'm going to make you uncomfortable, and then we'll be quits. Yes, Sir Harry, lots of men have got the V.C. for less plucky things than Mr. Lambe did. It was like this."

In simple language, and to the Remove master's great discomfiture, he told of the gallant rescue the Woolly Lambe had made when the punt went over the flooded weir, and how narrow an escape they had both had. There was complete silence, and everybody hung on the boy's words, listening eagerly.

There was a pause after he had finished, and then the baronet, his eyes glistening as he looked at the master, stood up.

"Friends," he said. "I give you a toast. Drink with me to the health of the most gallant gentleman who ever came to Codrington!"

All were on their feet in a moment, and, looking towards Mr. Lambe they toasted him with a heartfelt cheer, and as it died out Dereker's deep baritone burst forth in two notes.

"For—or——"

The others all took it up.

"—he's a jolly good fellow,

For he's a jolly good fellow,

For he's a jolly good fe-ell-ow!

And so say all of us!"

The Head joined in more heartily than anybody, and three ringing "Hip-hip-hurrahs!" wound up the verse as they sat down.

"You young scoundrel, Wynne!" said the Woolly Lambe, feelingly. "Wait till I get you in class to-morrow."

"I'm proud to have you under the roof of Roydon, sir!" said Sir Harry enthusiastically.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

Convinced that Mr. Wollaston Lambe, their new Form master, is an escaped convict, Taffy Wynne & Co., and Ferguson & Co., rival factions in the Remove, the most unruly Form at Codrington, determine to bring pressure to bear to rid the school of the new master's presence. Their efforts prove of little avail, however, for the Woolly Lambe not only shows that he is capable of taking care of himself and his Form, but startles the school by catching a cracksmen in the act of looting the school's strong-room. Although Wynne & Co. are ready to back up the Woolly Lambe, Ferguson and his cronies are still determined to expose their new Form-master. Later, Taffy Wynne is instrumental in saving the life of Dorothy Beckford, the pretty daughter of one of the governors of the school. As a recognition of his bravery he is invited, together with his chums and a new boy named Jellicoe, to dine at Sir Harry Beckford's house that same night. Canon Wyndham, the headmaster of Codrington, and Mr. Wollaston Lambe are also invited. Seizing the chance of putting a spoke in the Woolly Lambe's wheel, Ferguson expresses an anonymous letter to Sir Harry warning the wealthy baronet that the Form master is a thief. Sir Harry, however, ignores the misdee, and filling his glass to the brim, promptly drinks to the health of his visitor, after which Mr. Lambe himself amuses his host by telling him how the juniors have tried to pull his leg by wearing monocles in the Form-room. (Now read on).

"And I never even heard of this," said the Head. "Not a word of it!"

"He wouldn't let me mention it in the school, sir," said Taffy.

"A brave man is always modest," added the baronet.

"I wish I'd left you in the weir, you young rascal," said the tormented Woolly Lambe. "Just fall in again and I'll take care you don't get out!"

The laugh went all round the table, and all was jollity again very quickly. The meal was ended, all but the dessert, and when that was over Sir Harry rose and suggested a move to the drawing-room.

The footman opened the door, and Sir Harry stood aside while his two older guests filed out first. Just then Purvis, the butler, approached his master.

"Beg pardon, Sir Harry! Will you give me the keys to lock the valuables up as usual? Or shall I wait?" he said, in a low voice—it was a rule at Roydon Hall for the safes that held the gold plate to be locked at nine o'clock.

"Oh, I'll see to it myself," said the baronet. "I want to show my guests one or two things. I don't suppose you four youngsters care about old plate, and heirlooms, and things, eh? All right, stay here for a quarter of an hour, and help yourself to more dessert, or coffee, or anything you fancy. We'll have a game of billiards presently, or some shooting at the model rifle range."

He went out, and the boys were left in the dining-hall. They glanced at each other meaningly as soon as they were alone.

"What a rippin' evening!" said Birne. "But I say, that was a rum go when the message came in for Sir Harry. There was something about Lambe in that letter."

"It looked as if there was going to be a row," said Taffy. "It was an ugly business, that. I wonder——"

"It don't take much guessing who sent the thing, and the reason why it came just when it did," said Dereker. "I'm going to see."

He stepped quickly to the fireplace. The crushed-up note had not been burnt. It had fallen off the firebars, as Dereker noticed at the time, and was lying among the cinders. He picked it up and opened it.

"I say," said Taffy, "we oughtn't to do that, you know. We're Sir Harry's guests, and that's his letter. It won't do, prying into his——"

"Look here," said Dereker, "we're on Lambe's side, aren't we? And we know there are some blackguards up against him. We're pledged to do our best for him, an' I say it's no breach of faith with anyone to read this note, because I know who sent it."

"Derry's right enough," said Birne. "We're doing all we can for Lambe, and it looks as if somebody's played a low-down trick on him. Sir Harry's in the dark, and we're not."

Taffy agreed, and Dereker smoothed out the note. They read it quickly. It was not written, but printed in capitals with a pen, and read as follows:

"LOOK AFTER YOUR GOLD PLATE. THE MAN WHO CALLS HIMSELF LAMBE IS A THIEF, AND THE POLICE ARE AFTER HIM. HE HAS DONE ONE BURGLARY NEAR HERE ALREADY. YOUR HOUSE WILL BE THE NEXT."

"A WELL-WISHER."

"Look at that!" said Taffy, clenching his fists. "The skunk who sent this reckoned to get Lambe disgraced right here at the table."

(For the continuation of this serial see next week's special enlarged CHRISTMAS NUMBER of the GEM.)

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The Jester of St. Jim's!

(Continued from page 25.)

seriously. We may find later on that because of that we're lacking in something or other."

"G-G-Grundy!"

"And that's why I've been japing all round lately," said Grundy. "I thought it over, and came to the conclusion that it was time I got out of my serious ways; and I made up my mind to mould myself on the pattern of the fellows of the old days—"

"But—but this is preposterous! Have you been reading some extraordinary literature, that such strange ideas have entered your head?"

Grundy smiled.

"Not reading, sir; listening-in. I heard it on the wireless the other afternoon."

There was a sudden exclamation from Mr. Linton.

"The—the wireless?" he stuttered. "The wireless, Grundy?"

Grundy nodded.

"It was a lecture by a schoolmaster on—'Are Boys More Serious?' I heard it right through."

"Goodness gracious me!" exclaimed the master of the Shell. "Dr. Holmes—"

"I do not think we can take Grundy's statement seriously—the Head was saying, when Mr. Linton broke in with:—"

"But—but really, sir, I hardly know what to say. Grundy's statement, I must admit, comes as a bombshell to me. In point of fact, there was such a lecture as he describes a few days ago."

"Dear me!"

"It is a fact that the lecturer became rather reminiscent in the course of his talk, and referred rather enthusiastically to a number of hoaxes and practical jokes in which he took part in his young days," said Mr. Linton, whose expression had become very extraordinary. "The explanation was, of course, that he was looking back on the past in a sentimental fashion."

Dr. Holmes looked considerably surprised.

"Dear me! You appear to know a great deal about this lecturer, Mr. Linton!" he remarked.

"That is so, sir. To reveal the truth—" Mr. Linton hesitated; then, with a sudden rush, said: "I was the lecturer myself!"

For half a minute there was silence in the study. Dr. Holmes, Kildare, and Grundy stared at the master of the Shell as though stupefied.

"I—I— Really, Mr. Linton, this makes the position most awkward!" observed Dr. Holmes. "I recollect now your informing me that you were to deliver a broadcast lecture one afternoon, but—but—"

"Well, sir, I must say that I hardly imagined my lecture was capable of being taken by a boy in my own Form as an inducement to play practical jokes on me!" said Mr. Linton, helping the Head out.

"Well, really, Mr. Linton, I am placed in a most peculiar position!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes. "Have you any suggestion to make?"

"The only suggestion I can make, in the circumstances, is that you allow the whole matter to drop. In common justice, I can hardly ask for the boy to be punished after—"

"Hem! Exactly!" murmured the Head. "At the same time, Grundy, it must be clearly understood that behaviour of this kind can in no circumstances be countenanced again. There is no doubt in my mind that you have misunderstood Mr. Linton's ideas on the subject of discipline, and Mr. Linton will, I assume, acquaint you fully with his exact views on the matter at the earliest opportunity. You may go!"

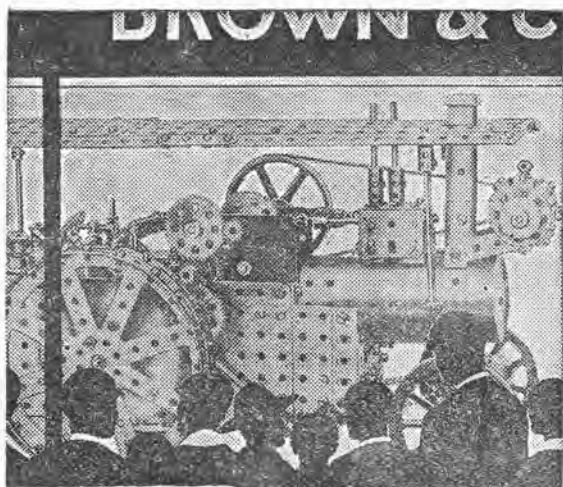
Once out in the passage, Grundy was besieged by an excited crowd of juniors, who listened to the story of Mr. Linton's lecture and how it had actually led Grundy to do the things he had done.

"Well, it's a case of a duffer's luck, if you like!" remarked Tom Merry, when Grundy had concluded. "But you've been a howling ass, Grundy!"

And there was not a solitary junior at St. Jim's who did not agree with the junior captain's statement.

THE END.

(Next week's **GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER** of the GEM will contain another long complete story of St. Jim's, entitled: "**THE MENACE OF THE WOLF!**"—the first of a new and amazing series introducing a new boy from South America. There's bound to be a great demand for our special enlarged Christmas Number, chums, so be sure **YOU** order **YOUR** copy **WELL IN ADVANCE!**)



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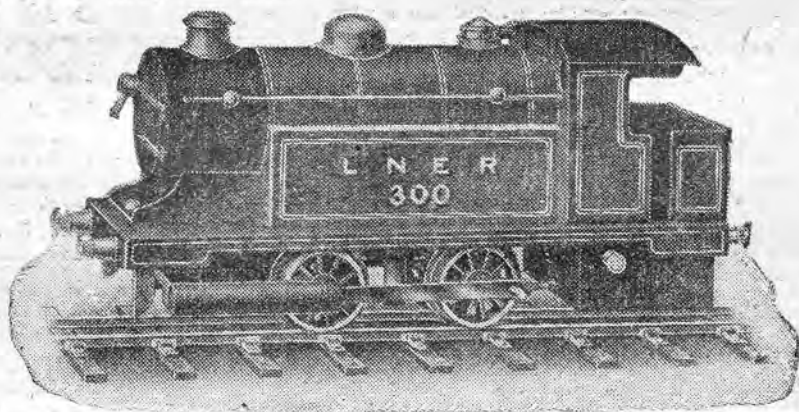
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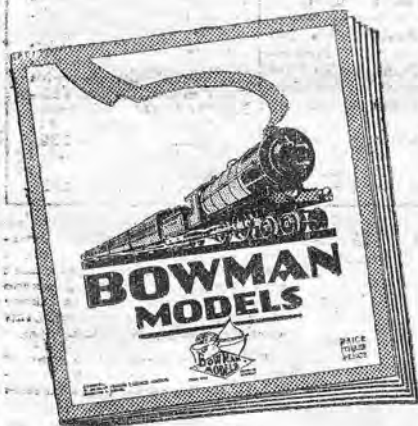


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