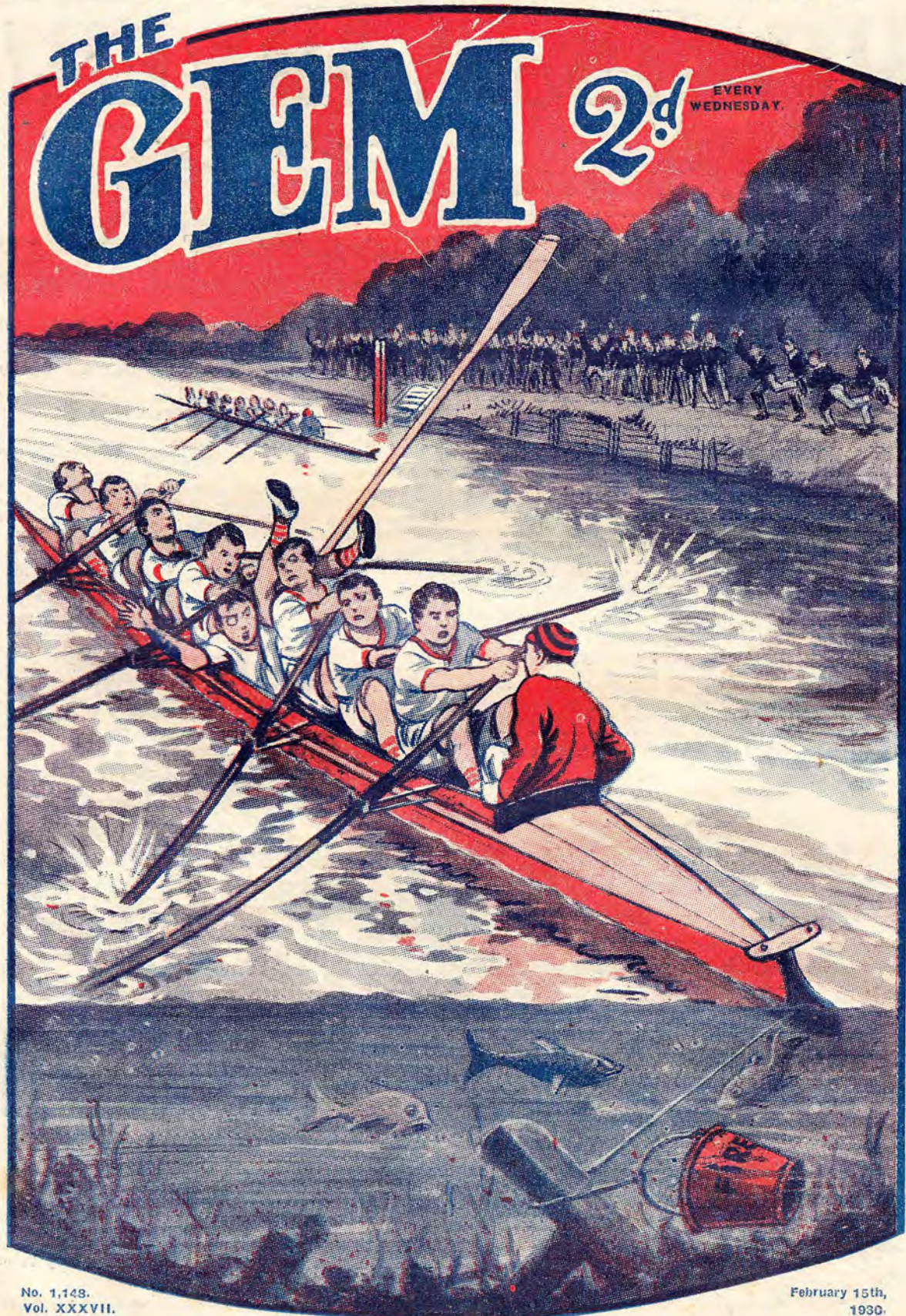


12 WEMBLEY CUP-FINAL TICKETS for "GEM" Readers!
—See Inside.



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1930.

Read "RIVALS OF THE RIVER!" THIS WEEK'S SUPERB
STORY OF ST. JIM'S.

A ROUSING TALE OF SCHOOL-LIFE AND SPORT—

RIVALS of the RIVER!

By Martin Clifford

Sixteen bending backs. "Row, you beggars, row!" Sixteen flashing blades. "Up—up—up!" Here they come, going all out for the honours of the river! Who will win?

CHAPTER 1.

An Ultimatum!

"HALLO! Here you are, then, you fellows! Good!" George Alfred Grundy, of the Shell at St. Jim's, spoke with cheerful satisfaction as he glanced up from the table and sighted Wilkins and Gunn, his study-mates, in the doorway.

But his good humour was not reflected in the faces of George Wilkins and Cuthbert Gunn. They did not speak, but their looks were eloquent of dissatisfaction as they glanced round the study. They had come in tired and hungry from footer, and they had hoped that Grundy had, for once, got the tea ready for them. Instead of tea and hot buttered toast, eggs, jam, and cakes, they only saw George Alfred Grundy, seated at the table with a pen in his hand, a sheet of paper before him, and a keen and satisfied expression on his rugged features.

"Good!" repeated Grundy. "I've been waiting for you fellows!"

"Waiting for us to come along and get tea ready!" grunted Wilkins. "Of all the slackers! You might at least have made a start with it."

"We've been at it hard on Little Side," said Gunn. "You've only been frowsting before the thumping fire, Grundy."

"Eh? Don't talk rot!" said Grundy. "Well, I've got my list out, you fellows!"

"Oh, good!" Wilkins, at least, looked suddenly interested. He instantly visualised a list of good things to eat. Grundy was a generous fellow, and a comparatively wealthy one, and he usually supplied all luxuries for the study teas. "Good! If the stuff's not ordered I'll run

along to the tuckshop with the list now—tired as I am, old chap."

Grundy glared at him.

"Ass! Idiot! Who's talking about grub? All you fellows seem to think about is grub."

"Then, what—"

"I'm talking about my crew, of course," said Grundy witheringly. "I've got my list out—"

"Oh, dear!" groaned Cuthbert Gunn. "That again! Well, keep the list till after tea, old chap—"

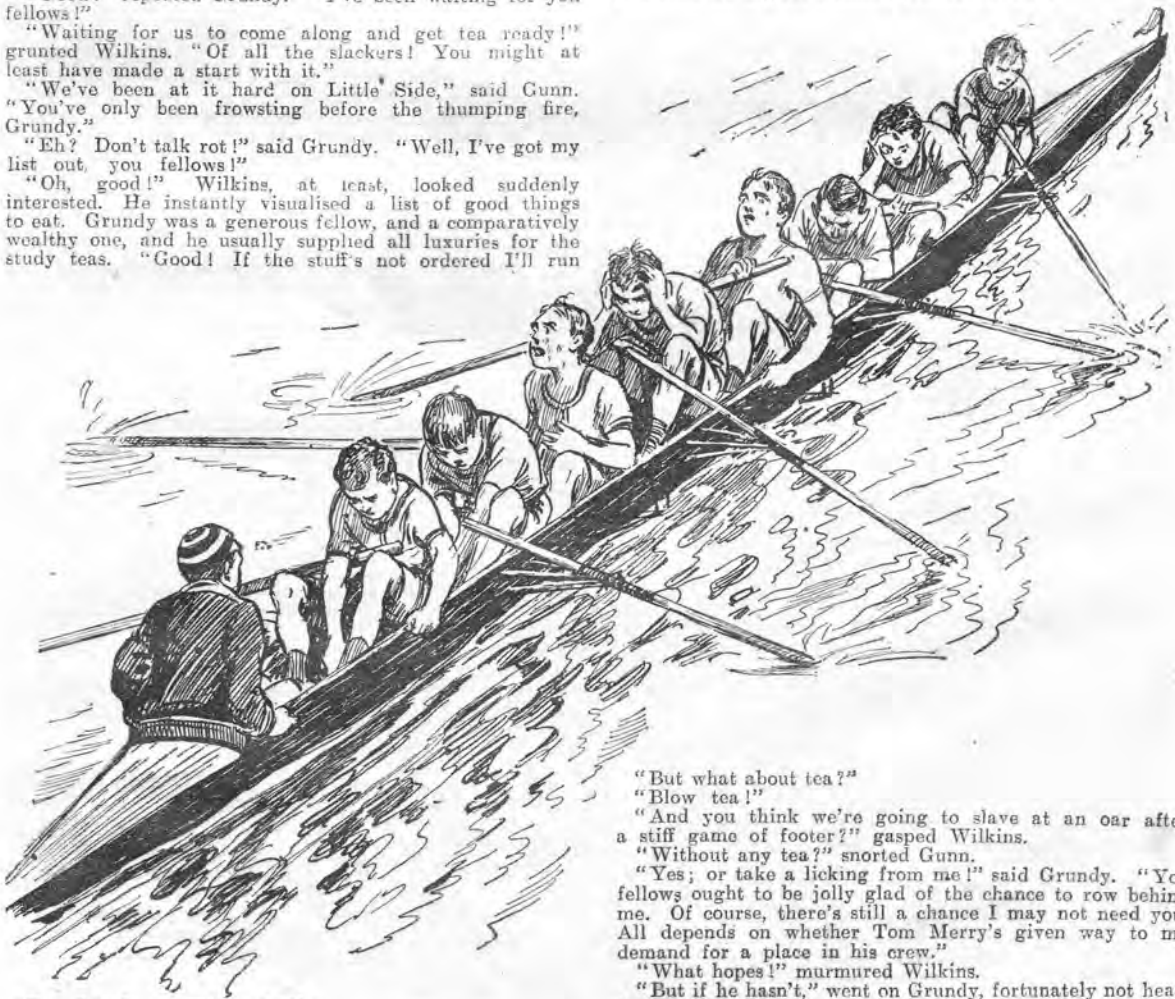
"Tea be blowed! Tea can wait!"

"But we're jolly hungry!" snorted Wilkins.

"You'll be hungrier still after a good pull up the river," said Grundy calmly.

"A—a pull up the river!" stuttered Gunn.

"Just that!" Grundy smiled. "At least, I shall need you fellows if Tom Merry's left me out of his crew! There's just time for a good training pull before dark."



"But what about tea?"

"Blow tea!"

"And you think we're going to slave at an oar after a stiff game of footer?" gasped Wilkins.

"Without any tea?" snorted Gunn.

"Yes; or take a licking from me!" said Grundy. "You fellows ought to be jolly glad of the chance to row behind me. Of course, there's still a chance I may not need you. All depends on whether Tom Merry's given way to my demand for a place in his crew."

"What hopes!" murmured Wilkins.

"But if he hasn't," went on Grundy, fortunately not hearing Wilkins' remark, "then I shall go ahead full steam with

—STARRING TOM MERRY & CO., THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S!

my programme. I explained all that to you fellows at noon. If Tom Merry has put me in his crew, well and good; if he hasn't—if he still persists in ignoring the finest oarsman in the Lower School—then I shall put my crew on the river and challenge him! We'll fight it out to prove which is the best crew to represent St. Jim's against the Grammar School."



"Well, let's discuss it over tea, old chap," suggested Gunn, with a hopeless look at Wilkins.

"Rot!"

"But you're wasting your time, Grundy!"

"What?"

"I—I mean Tom Merry will never meet you if you do get a crew up!"

"Won't he? We'll jolly well see about that!"

"In any case, we're not rowing for you," said Gunn.

"We've—we've told you that more than once!"

"And I'm in Tom Merry's crew!" pointed out Wilkins wearily. "Do chuck this rot, Grundy, old man!"

Grundy rose to his feet, his face registering great, growing and majestic wrath.

"What's that?" he articulated. "You still intend to defy me—after all I've said?"

"Look here, old man—"

"Do be reasonable—"

"Aren't I being reasonable?" bawled Grundy, in sudden heat. "Aren't I boss in this study? If I say you'll join my crew, you will—I'm standing no nonsense! As for you, Wilkins, if Tom Merry's been ass enough to shove you in his crew, then you'll drop out at once. I want you!"

"Look here, you—"

"Not that you can row for toffee!" said Grundy disparagingly. "Just shows what a little Tom Merry knows about his job, selecting a duffer like you!"

"Yet you want me!" said Wilkins mildly.

"In my case it's different—rest of my crew doesn't count! I'm stroke, and will make up for the mistakes you duffers make. I'll soon lick you into shape, you know," explained Grundy frankly. "So that's settled."

"Is it?" ejaculated Wilkins.

"Exactly," said George Alfred briskly. "Now this is the programme—we go straight away and tackle Merry. Matter of fact, his list ought to have been on the board this afternoon—he said it would. Still, I'm not waiting any longer. If I'm down, well and good! My crew's off in that case; but if I'm not, then we go right away, get our men together, and have our first training pull to-night—this very evening. No time to waste if we're going to lick 'em! Come on—sharp!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Wilkins and Gunn gazed blankly at Grundy. That he had the cheek to expect them to join his pantomime crew—as Wilkins called it—was enough, but that he expected them to turn out that very evening, after a gruelling match, was too much.

They did not want to turn out for Grundy—far from it. All they wanted at the moment was a good tea, and then to spend the time before prep toasting their toes before a blazing fire.

What was to be done? If they did not go willingly

Grundy would certainly adopt his usual press-gang methods. And they had a wholesome respect for Grundy's big fists—even with the odds at two to one in their favour.

Then Wilkins got a brain-wave.

"But hold on, Grundy!" he gasped. "Why trouble Tom Merry at all? Haven't you seen the list—his list yet?"

"Eh? You don't mean to say it's on the board?" said Grundy quickly.

"He shoved it up ten minutes ago," said Gunn. "We've just seen it. Go and have a squint, Grundy—it'll surprise you, I bet!"

"Yes, rather!" said Wilkins. "You'll be no end—"

But George Alfred Grundy was already out of the room.

"Oh, good!" gasped Wilkins, winking joyfully at his chum. "Thank goodness he's gone! I knew that would fetch him! Good job he didn't make us go with him! Oh dear! What about tea?"

"Better have tea in Hall—nothing else for it! In any case, that's better than trouble with Grundy. I'm not going to be such an awful ass as to pull an oar in the same boat as him!" said Gunn.

"No fear! Sheer suicide, in fact. I say, I know—what about teasing with Tom Merry? He asked us for tomorrow, and we can explain.

He knows how things are with that born idiot, Grundy!" "Good wheeze!" said Gunn eagerly. "Buck up, then—before the ass comes back!"

And Grundy's faithless chums hurried out to seek hospitality in Study No. 10.

Meanwhile, George Alfred was rushing for the notice board in Big Hall. Wilkins had hinted that the list there would interest him—as good as said his own name was down there. So Tom Merry had seen sense at last! Possibly he dared not risk his—Grundy's—raising a rival crew!

That was the joyous thought in Grundy's mind just then.

Well, now Tom Merry had seen sense at long last he would accept a position in his crew! But he would insist upon being stroke—Tom Merry would have to give place to him on that point! Grundy was quite resolved upon that!

Though it was close on tea-time, there were quite a lot of fellows in Hall. Most of them were near the notice-board; many of them standing before it, scanning a list pinned up there. It was the list of the crew selected by Tom Merry to represent St. Jim's against the Grammar School in their annual race for the honour of being Head of the River. The boating season was a busy time for Tom Merry, who was junior skipper of boats in addition to being junior skipper of footer.

There were smiles as George Alfred Grundy was seen marching towards the board.

Grundy was a fellow who haunted the notice-board. He always seemed to be expecting to see his name down there, either in a footer team, a cricket team, or any other list that happened to be thereon displayed. But Grundy was always disappointed, for his ambition to shine in sports and games was not equalled by his skill and abilities. To put it with brutal frankness, Grundy was a hopeless duffer at everything—excepting, perhaps, the use of his big fists; nobody denied him skill in that direction.

Grundy himself, however, was blissfully ignorant of all this.

It was sheer envy, in George Alfred's opinion, combined with crass stupidity and incompetence, that caused Tom Merry to keep him everlastingly waiting for his chance!

Had his chance come at last?

He elbowed his way to the notice-board in his usual masterful manner.

Then he glanced at the board. He stared at it. His eyes went down the list and then up it again. He blinked at it. Then he snorted.

Again there were smiles. Grundy always did snort when he scanned the notice-board.

"Looking for anything, Grundy?" asked Monty Lowther innocently. "If you're looking for your name, old chap, you'll find it on the detention list—not that!"

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There was a chuckle.
 "This isn't a cackling matter, you idiot!" stuttered George Alfred. "Where's that born idiot—that—that footling, fumbling bungler— Oh, there you are, Tom Merry!"

"Adsum!" said Tom Merry cheerily.
 "You—you blundering duffer!" snorted Grundy.
 "Thanks, old bean! But why pay me compliments that are due to you?"

"You crass ass!" said Grundy. He pointed to the list.
 "Call that a crew?"

"Yes. A winner, isn't it?"
 "Winner!" hooted Grundy, anger and disappointment mingled in his rugged countenance. "Not one of 'em knows an oar from a soup-ladle! But where do I come in?"

"Nowhere, old chap; you're not even an 'also ran'!" smiled Tom. "Sorry, but I'm wanting oarsmen, not gardeners!"

"Why, you—you—" spluttered Grundy.
 "We'll give you your chance at the river carnival, old fellow—as an ancient steamboat!" said Lowther. "You row like a paddle steamboat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 The Terrible Three strolled away, smiling. Grundy glared after them.

"Here, come back, Tom Merry!" he bawled furiously.
 "Rats!"

The Terrible Three disappeared. Grundy hesitated, undecided, and then he grabbed a sheet of paper from his pocket.

"That settles it!" he snapped. "Here goes! Tom Merry's had his chance and thrown it away! Now we'll see! I'll show him!"

With the paper in his hand, he rushed out after the Terrible Three, chortles following him as he went. In the quadrangle he caught up with Tom Merry and his chums.

"Here, hold on, Tom Merry!" he snapped, grabbing the captain of the Shell by the shoulder and whirling him round.
 "I want you to look at this!"

Tom Merry looked at it. He smiled as his eye ran over the list of names on the sheet.

"What's this, old chap?" he asked curiously. "I see Wilkins and Gunn are on it as well as you. What have they done to deserve being put with a hopeless set of duds like that?"

"I want no cheek!" bawled Grundy. "If you want to know, that's my crew—the crew that's going to lick your set of fumbling duffers to a frazzle!"

"Oh, my hat! So—so that's a crew, eh?"

"Yes; it is! You've had your chance, and you've chucked it away, Tom Merry. Now here's my ultimatum. Either give me a place in your crew, or I'm going to challenge you with that crew—and beat you! What's it to be?"

Like Brutus, George Alfred Grundy paused for a reply. The Terrible Three laughed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling rotters!" roared Grundy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you sniggering at?"

"Your little joke, old chap," said Tom Merry innocently.

"Or have we laughed in the wrong place?"

"You—you—you—"

The Terrible Three walked away towards the tuckshop.

Grundy snorted and rushed after them, really angry now.

That his great ultimatum, given in all seriousness, should be treated as a joke, was too much!

"I'll smash you!" he roared, and grabbing Tom Merry round the neck he whirled him round again.

That proved a little too much for Tom's patience.

"Here leggo, you ass!" he exclaimed. "On the ball, chaps! We shan't have tea to-night at this rate!"

The next moment a whirling struggle was in progress.

Grundy fondly imagined himself capable of handling the three, but he discovered his mistake when he found himself whirled off his feet and plunged head foremost into a big wire litter-basket.

Then, breathing hard, the Terrible Three walked on towards the tuckshop to get supplies in for tea—without further attentions from George Alfred.

CHAPTER 2.

Disappointing!

THE litter-basket was a big one, and it had been almost empty—only a few scraps of paper being at the bottom. But Grundy's burly form filled it to overflowing. His legs stuck out at the top, waving wildly as he struggled desperately to release himself from his wire prison.

But it was easier attempted than done. The basket was bolted to the trunk of a tree, and even Grundy's wild plunging did not move it.

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, came along the path. The GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,148.

and sighted the strange object. He blinked through his glasses at the basket and stopped short.

"Bless my soul! What—what— Good gracious! Grundy!"

"Grooogh! Ow-ow! Oh crikey! Help!"

"I—I am surprised at you, Grundy!" said Mr. Linton sharply. "How dare you play such childish games in public? Get out of that litter receptacle this instant, sir! You are old enough to know better!"

"Can't you see I'm stuck?" bellowed Grundy, in a muffled voice, too excited and furious to consider his words.
 "Grooogh! Help me out instead of standing there! Oh, crumbs! Ow, ow, ow!"

He struggled and squirmed, breathless and panting with his exertions. Desperately he strove to get his jammed arms free in order to raise himself by gripping the wire, but it was useless. All he could do was kick and squirm and bellow, and he did that vigorously and well.

But it did not help him.
 "G-good gracious!" gasped Mr. Linton, grasping the true position at last. "Wait one moment, my boy. I will call Taggles!"

But it was not necessary to call the school porter. At that moment the Terrible Three came from the tuckshop, loaded with paper bags. They grinned at sight of Grundy's wildly-waving legs.

"Grundy has managed to get himself fixed in this litter-basket, my boys!" said Mr. Linton, quite flustered and agitated. "Really, he is the most foolish boy I have ever had to deal with. I can only imagine he was playing the buffoon, as usual. Kindly—ahem!—assist him to get out!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Tom Merry cheerily.
 "Oh, yes, sir!" said Lowther. "He must have thought it was a cage! Poor old Grundy!"

The Terrible Three lowered their parcels to the grass and set to work to release the hapless George Alfred.

It was not an easy job. The Terrible Three, despite the fact that they wanted their tea, did not hurry themselves, though they appeared to be doing so. And, judging from Grundy's wild howls, they were none too careful at the task. But they pulled him out at last, and Grundy sprawled on the gravel, panting, quite exhausted, and a wreck. His collar and tie were sadly adrift, his jacket was split up the back, and his rugged features were crimson with his terrific exertions.

"Ow, ow, ow!" he gurgled. "Yow-ow!"

The Terrible Three touched their caps, and, picking up their packages, walked away rather hurriedly. In Mr. Linton's presence they hesitated to give vent to their mirth. They also feared that even the master's presence might not deter Grundy from restarting hostilities.

They wanted their tea—not further trouble with the obstreperous George Alfred. Moreover, their unexpected and self-invited guests, Wilkins and Gunn, were waiting in Study No. 10.

Grundy scarcely noticed their departure. He sat and panted and gurgled. Mr. Linton blinked at him severely.

"I—I am surprised—astounded at such childish behaviour, Grundy!" he said with some indignation. "A boy of your age should know better than to play such clownish tricks in open quadrangle!"

"I—I— You—you— I—" gurgled Grundy.

"I do not desire to hear any excuses, Grundy," said the master of the Shell sternly. "You will take fifty lines for interfering with that litter-basket, and in future kindly confine your acrobatic amusements to the gymnasium!"

And Mr. Linton walked on after the Terrible Three, frowning.

Grundy spluttered—this time with great and overwhelming indignation. Fifty lines on top of his humiliating and painful experience! Why, he had jolly nearly been strangled, and might have broken his neck! And Mr. Linton apparently imagined he had been amusing himself by attempting an acrobatic feat!

"Grooogh!" choked Grundy. "The—the old idiot! Ow, ow! I—I'll smash those rotters for this! Ow, ow, ow!"

He staggered to his feet, still panting and breathless, and started to put his attire to rights. Then he bolted for the School House doorway—raging, breathing threats and slaughter.

Lessons were quite wasted on George Alfred Grundy.

Little dreaming of the cyclone that was about to burst in on them, the Terrible Three, meanwhile, had arrived at Study No. 10, where Wilkins and Gunn were making themselves useful—Wilkins making toast, and Gunn brewing the tea.

They laughed rather half-heartedly as the Terrible Three related their adventure with Grundy.

"Oh dear!" groaned Gunn dimly at last. "That means trouble; he'll be along here after you now, and we didn't want the duffer to know where we were. You see, he wanted us to go on the river in his silly crew this evening."

"After playing footer, too! Fancy that!" said Wilkins.
 "In any case, it's like his cheek to shove us in his 'Harry



"Bless my soul!" Mr. Linton blinked through his glasses at the strange object in the wire litter-basket. "Good gracious! Grundy!"

Tate's crew without asking our permission, isn't it? He seemed to take that for granted, the awful ass!"

"Just like him, though!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Did he ask the others—Gore and Boulton and Bates and Mellish, and the rest of them?"

"Oh, yes! The asses jumped at it!" grunted Wilkins. "You see, he's promised to stand feeds after every training run, and ten bob a head for a race. And some of 'em are glad to get in any sort of a crew—something to write home about, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three roared as they understood how Grundy was getting a crew together. There were a good many fellows in the Shell and Fourth who never got the chance to shine in a racing crew; they would be only too pleased to have their vanity tickled by getting a place in Grundy's—especially with feeds and payment thrown in.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry, greatly tickled. "And does Grundy think he stands a chance against us with that lot of duffers?"

"Absolutely! His confidence is really touching, you fellows," said Wilkins, shaking his head seriously. "You see, he thinks his splendid oarsmanship will make up for the shortcomings of the others. But he's the biggest duffer of the lot, the awful ass! I say, if he comes here, you chaps will back us up, I hope?" he added appealingly.

"Ha, ha! Yes, old chap!" laughed Tom. "But he'll—Hallo! That sounds like him now!"

From the passage came the sound of heavy footsteps—hurried footsteps. Even as Tom spoke the door crashed open, and Grundy appeared.

"Now, you cheeky rotters," he bawled, "we'll see—"

He broke off suddenly at sight of Wilkins and Gunn. Gunn was kneeling by the roaring fire, ruddy-cheeked, while Wilkins stood with the teapot in his hands.

Instead of rushing in to the attack, Grundy suddenly halted, thunderstruck at sight of his faithless chums.

"Well, my hat!" he gasped. "Well, upon my word! What the thump are you chaps doing here, eh? Well, I like that!"

"Glad you like it, old chap!" mumbled Wilkins feebly. "You—see, we're teasing with these fellows."

"You rotters!" roared Grundy. "What about my orders? What about my rowing practice? Didn't I tell you I wanted you?"

"D-did you mean this evening, old man?"

"You jolly well know I did, George Wilkins! Drop that dashed teapot and get changed right away!"

"But it's too late now—" began Wilkins.

"Rot! I'm just going to give these three fellows a hiding!" said Grundy grimly. "And then I'm rounding my crew up! Got that?"

"Well, we're not coming," said Gunn.

"What?"

"We're not coming now, and we're not joining your silly crew, you footling owl!" snorted Wilkins, gaining courage as he remembered Tom Merry's promise to back them up. "If you want to go slogging up-river and chance being late for call-over, you can; but we're not!"

"No fear!" said Gunn.

"Oh, aren't you?" gasped Grundy thickly. "We'll see about that!"

And with that the burly Shell fellow went into action.

But he did not go for the Terrible Three; the hiding he intended to administer to those rash youths could wait. The most urgent task at the moment was to crush this rebellion and bring Wilkins and Gunn to heel.

He rushed at Wilkins. There was a howl from that youth as the teapot flew from his hand, and another one from Monty Lowther as a stream of scalding tea spouted over his trousers. Then the teapot fell with a crash, and scalding tea flew to right and left over both Grundy and Wilkins, who were now rolling on the floor in a deadly embrace.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "That's the second teapot gone west this week! We're not standing this! Pile in, chaps!"

Monty Lowther had already piled in while Tom was speaking, anxious to let Grundy know what he thought of him. Tom and Manners and Gunn joined in, and Grundy disappeared from sight, though his powerful voice still awoke the echoes.

Five to one was long odds, even for the valiant George Alfred to contend with. The wild and whirling struggle went on amidst toast and tea on the hearthrug for some minutes, and then Grundy took a rest. With arms and legs pinned down and Tom Merry seated on his chest, he found he had to.

He lay on his back and gasped and panted for breath.

"Now, you burbling bandersnatch!" panted Tom Merry. "Are you going to leave this study quietly, and on your feet, or are you going out on your neck?"

Grundy's answer was to renew his struggles, having got his breath back a little. He never knew when he was beaten.

"No good!" said Tom Merry, with a sigh. "We'll see what a little persuasion will do. Get the ink, Monty!"

"What-ho, Tom!"

"And the jam and the milk, and scrape up some of the tea-leaves and a handful of cinders! You can mix the stuff in his cap—here it is, sticking out of his pocket!"

"Right-ho, Tom!"

Monty Lowther was only too eager to carry out Tom's instructions. His trousers were drenched with tea, and his legs were still smarting and very uncomfortable indeed. He hastily mixed a horrid concoction of ink, milk, jam, tea-leaves, and cinders in Grundy's cap.

Grundy watched these preparations in great wrath and apprehension.

"Leggo!" he roared. "Lemme gerrup, or I'll smash you!"

"Going to behave yourself and go quietly, then?"

"No; I'm going to thrash the lot of you!" roared Grundy furiously, wriggling and struggling frantically. "If you bring that muck near me, you rotter, Lowther—"

Lowther saw there was no help for it. He raised the cap on high, and a little of the thick, horrid-looking mixture dripped on Grundy's hair. Grundy shrieked.

"Stop! Hold on, you awful rotter!"

"Going to behave yourself, Grundy?" asked Tom.

"No! Yes!"

"Good! You'll walk out of here quietly?"

"No—I mean, yes, you awful rotters!" choked Grundy, his eyes fixed in horror on the cap poised above his head.

"And you won't take it out of Wilky and Gunny afterwards?" demanded Tom.

"I jolly well— Oh, crikey! Keep it away! No—nunno!"

"Splendid, old fellow! I knew you'd see sense!" chuckled Tom. "And now, what about this crew business? Your press-gang methods won't do, Grundy! Fellows aren't forced to row against their will at St. Jim's. Besides, Wilkins is in my crew, and I can't part with him. Promise to stop these press-gang tricks!"

"What!" roared Grundy. "No! Never! I'll jolly well—Gug-gug-groogh!"

Grundy's powerful voice ended in a gurgle. But only for a moment, for even as a blob of the mixture entered his open mouth, he gave a spluttering yell of horror as he saw more dripping over the edge of the cap.

"Stop! Groogh! Yow! It's all right, you—yow!—rotters! Stop!"

"Yes, or no?"

"Yow! Yes!"

"You'll not worry your dear pals again about rowing?"

"No—blow you!" roared Grundy, still spluttering.

"Right! Let him get up, chaps! Empty that muck out of his cap. I'm afraid it'll need washing after that, Grundy! Sorry, but it was your own fault, you know!"

Grundy scrambled to his feet, trembling with wrath. But his word was his bond, and though his big fists were clenched, he kept them by his side. He gave his chums, Wilkins and Gunn, a bitter, reproachful glare.

"You—you rotters!" he gasped. "Wouldn't back up a pal—a man out of your own study!"

"Grundy, old man—" began Wilkins.

"Rot! Shut up! I'm tired of you fellows!" said Grundy, mopping his crimson, smudgy face with his handkerchief.

"Well, that's settled it! I wouldn't have you in my crew after this if you went on your bended knees! Rotten finks!"

"Look here, old fellow—"

"Oh, don't talk to me!"

And Grundy went out, slamming the door after him with a crash that rang the length of the Shell passage.

CHAPTER 3.

Check!

"HALLO, what's this?"

Tom Merry halted. It was after dinner the next day—a half-holiday—and several members of his crew were just starting out for the river, when Tom's eyes fell upon a little crowd of laughing fellows round the notice-board in Hall.

Evidently there was something on the board of an amusing nature.

Tom Merry & Co. were surprised and curious. Notices on the official board did not usually provide a laugh.

Levison of the Fourth, who was standing before the board, called to them.

"Seen this, you men?"

"No. What is it?"

They went across to look. They soon discovered what was causing the interest and merriment.

It was Grundy again. On the green-baize board was a

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notice, in Grundy's peculiar handwriting and spelling, and it was signed by Grundy. It ran as follows:

"ST. JIM'S JUNIOR CREW

In consequence of the general dissatisfaction with the official Junior Crew, G. A. Grundy has decided to form a rival crew, which, in due course, will challenge the official crew to a race, the winners to represent St. Jim's in the annual race with Rylcombe Grammar School, for the honour of being Head of the River for the year.

The new crew is komposed as follows:

Stroke	-	-	-	-	G. A. Grundy.
No. 7	-	-	-	-	G. Gore.
No. 6	-	-	-	-	P. Mellish.
No. 5	-	-	-	-	H. Bates.
No. 4	-	-	-	-	D. L. Wynn.
No. 3	-	-	-	-	B. Trimble.
No. 2	-	-	-	-	R. F. Boulton.
Bow	-	-	-	-	C. Tompkins.
Coxswain	-	-	-	-	R. Piggett.

(Signed) GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY."

"Well, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "That chap Grundy's a corker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry could not help joining in the laugh. Grundy's new ambition to shine as an oarsman had caused no little amusement in the House. The previous evening it had been the talk and entertainment of the Common-room.

But Tom had scarcely expected him to go so far as this. Evidently Grundy was in earnest.

"Better look out, Tommy!" chuckled Clifton Dane. "Grundy's out for scalps! And with men like Fatty Wynn and Trimble—"

"No reason why Grundy shouldn't get a crew together," laughed Tom. "A bit of hard training will do that lot good, and I bet Grundy will see they all work. But, I say, where's the official list?"

And Tom Merry's smiles suddenly disappeared as he saw that the list he had pinned up the day before had gone from the board—or appeared to have gone. Lowther jerked Grundy's list down, and then it was seen that the official list was underneath it.

"He's pinned his over yours, Tom!" breathed Monty Lowther. "Well, the cheeky rotter!"

"Tear the silly thing up!" said Blake wrathfully.

"Yaas, wathah!" assented Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was in Tom's crew. "It's a wotten insult, bai Jove! The fearful ass!"

"Oh, pin it up again alongside mine!" said Tom Merry, suddenly bursting into a laugh. "If the fathead wants to make a fool of himself, let him. I've no objection to his getting a rival crew up, anyway!"

So the list was pinned up beside the official one, and Tom and his chums made their way down to the river, laughing at Grundy's latest. They were soon to lose their humorous view of it, however.

Bates, the boatman, and his assistant, eyed the juniors rather uneasily as they tramped up to the open doors of the boathouse. Tom had ordered the racing shell to be in the water ready for them at three o'clock, but there was no sign of it now, though it was several minutes past the hour.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom. "Where's our boat, Bates?"

Bates raised his cap, scratched his head, and eyed Tom uneasily.

"Which it's gorn out, Master Merry!" he said.

Tom stared. Two fixed-seat boats and one sliding-seat shell were allotted to the Lower School for practice and racing purposes, and the racing shell was used only by the official crew, all three being under Tom Merry's control, as junior captain of boats.

Naturally, he was astonished to hear Bates' answer.

"Gone out?" he ejaculated. "But who the thump's taken it out? Kildare?"

"Nunno, sir! Master Grundy and his crew have got it! I—I thought as it must 'ave bin your orders, Master Merry!"

"My orders!" yelled Tom. "I never told that born idiot he could use that boat! What about the official crew, Bates?"

"I—I was a bit doubtful about lettin' Master Grundy 'ave it," said Bates. "But he said as Mr. Raiton and Master Kildare had approved of his formin' a crew, and he sorter insisted on his rights, as he put it. He said as your crew needed a lot of tubbin' practice yet, and you oughter only use one of the fixed-seat boats until you'd learned 'ow to handle slidin' seats."

"What?"

"Bai Jove! The cheeky wottah!"

Tom Merry and his chums stared at each other in growing fury. It was adding insult to injury, indeed. But it was

just like the lofty, high-handed George Alfred. As Tom Merry's crew was practically the same crew that had beaten the Grammar School the previous year, and had won other river honours over other rival schools, Grundy's disparaging statements were enough to make them long to get their hands on him.

"And—and you let that fool have the boat?" almost howled Tom.

"Y-ee-s, sir!" stammered Bates, quite forgetting to add that Grundy had tipped him five shillings as an additional inducement. "You—you see, Master Grundy's rather a 'high-handed young gent, and he's sort of insisted—"

"You ought not to have allowed him to take the boat!" snapped Tom wrathfully. "Why, only about two fellows in his crew know one end of an oar from the other. Great pip! How long have they been gone?"

"Four or five minutes, sir!" gasped Bates. "Right. Come on, you fellows," said Tom curtly; "we're going after them, and if they don't hand over the boat we'll pitch 'em into the river! Of all the cheek—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Blazers and coats off and buck up!" snapped Tom. The juniors had already changed at St. Jim's, and they hurriedly shed their blazers and coats. Then, clad in their rowing togs, and with sweaters on, they followed Tom Merry as he led the way along the towing-path with a rush.

Rarely had Tom Merry been so roused to anger. His authority had been flouted by the self-satisfied and high-handed George Alfred, and his position as junior skipper of boats set at naught. Moreover, he knew that Kildare would hold him responsible for allowing such untrained and unskilled duffers as Grundy & Co. to take out a valuable boat.

He seethed with wrath as he ran. Blake, Figgins, Lowther, Talbot, Arthur Augustus, Herries, Wilkins, and young Wally D'Arcy, who composed Tom's crew, followed quickly enough, though a trifle doubtful as to Tom's intention.

"I'll punch that idiot's head myself for this!" snorted Blake. "Looks as if our afternoon's practice is going to be mucked up, Tom."

"Blessed if I can see why we're going after them along the towing-path!" panted Lowther. "You don't want us to swim out and pitch 'em out literally, Tom?"

And Lowther shivered, for a cold wind was blowing, and the River Rhyl looked chilly and far from inviting.

"I didn't mean exactly that!" grunted Tom. "But I mean to stop the crew of idiots, and I shall warn Grundy that if he doesn't pull in and hand the boat over I'll report the matter to Kildare. It's beyond a joke this time, and Kildare holds me responsible for that boat. We can't waste all afternoon waiting for them at the boathouse, fathead!"

"Wathah not!"

"Well, that fool Grundy ought to be pitched in, anyway!" snorted Jack Blake. "Of all the cheeky, born idiots—"

"Hallo, that sounds like an eight!" interrupted Figgins. To their ears came the sound of well-timed rowing—the musical click of oars in rowlocks, sharp and clear on the wind.

At that spot the river took a wide sweep round a bend, but intervening willows almost hid the stretch of water beyond from their sight, though they caught glimpses of a boat, and the rise and fall of oars.

"Hold on!" ordered Tom Merry curtly. "We'll wait here for the rotters. The bank's low, and they can pull ashore easily."

"It doesn't sound like them, anyway!" said Herries, puzzled. "If it is, they're keeping jolly good time! Listen!"

"Must be them!" snorted Tom, who was far too angry to listen to the clicks that sounded with clockwork precision. "None of our senior boats are out, and the Grammarians practise on the stretch above the locks. It must be them!"

"Oh, all right!"

They pulled up obediently, and Tom ran to the edge of the bank.

"Here they come!" he exclaimed grimly. "Now, give the rotters a yell!"

The next moment the splash of oars was heard, and the sharp, long nose of a racing shell shot round the bend. Then came a quick glance of bent backs, of the flash of sunlight on wet, dipping blades, and then the juniors yelled.

"Stop!" roared Tom Merry. "Stop, you rotters!"

"Stop! You born idiots, stop!"

It was a howl.

"Grundy, you cheeky owl—" Tom Merry was yelling again, when, quite abruptly, he stopped and his jaw dropped.

At the same moment, with equal abruptness, his chums' shouts died away.

They stood and blinked across the river with ludicrous expressions on their heated features.

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus feebly. "Oh, gweat Scott!"

He jammed his eyeglass more firmly into place and blinked again at the crew out on the river. In obedience to their bawled orders, the "rotters" and "born idiots" had stopped rowing. With their blades feathered, they were drifting back on the stream.

But it was not Grundy & Co.; nor was it the Grammarians, or any St. Jim's crew, either junior or senior. It was a crew Tom Merry & Co. had never seen on the Rhyl before.

It was, in fact, a crew composed of girls!

A ripple of laughter came across the water to the astonished juniors. Nine girlish faces, ruddy-cheeked and cheery, were turned towards them. They recognised the auburn-haired stroke as Lady Peggy Brooke; behind her at No. 7 was D'Arcy's cousin, Ethel Cleveland; at No. 6 thwart was Doris Levison; and behind her Miss Bland; and the rest of the crew, including the youthful coxwain, were girls from Spalding Hall School, the girls' school near St. Jim's.

Covered in dismay and confusion, Tom Merry & Co. blinked as they recognised the cheery, laughing faces.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Tom Merry, blushing to the roots of his hair.

Lady Peggy's self-possessed voice came across the water:

"Well, what's the matter, Tom Merry? What are you calling us rotters and born idiots for? Jealousy, I suppose!"

Another ripple of laughter came from the racing craft. At a word from the coxwain they skilfully kept the boat level with the juniors on the bank.

"I—I say, I—I'm awfully sorry, girls!" called Tom Merry dimly. "It—it was a mistake, you know; we thought you were Grundy and his crew!"

"What?" replied Lady Peggy, with a little squeal of horror. "If that isn't an insult I don't know what is! Why, if I couldn't row better than Grundy does I'd drown myself!"

"Oh crumbs! I didn't mean—" began Tom hastily.

"We've just seen Grundy's crew higher up the river!" said Lady Peggy scornfully. "They're blocking the river up, and if they ever land at St. Jim's safely I shall be surprised. You'd better send a lifeboat and some lifebelts along there, Tom Merry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The girls' crew roared with laughter. Evidently Grundy's crew had already been an object of merriment to them.

"Weally, deah gals," interposed Arthur Augustus. "Allow me to explain the posish. That feahful ass Gwunday has taken our boat, y'know, and we thought your boat was it when we heard you comin' wound the bend! I twust you will accept our apology, deah gals!"

"In that case we will!" said Lady Peggy, with a chuckle. "Well, we'll be getting on—it's jolly cold out here. Hold on, though! I say, you look jolly surprised to see us, Tom Merry!"

"We're more than surprised!" said Tom Merry. "We—we'd no idea you'd taken up rowing at Spalding Hall. And

"WHO SCORED THOSE GOALS?"

See pages 14 and 15 of this issue.

you row jolly well, I must say. Why, you might have been in training for ages!"

"We have!" laughed Lady Peggy. "I rowed at my old school, and we've been practising above the locks in secret for a long time. You see, we haven't got Miss Finch's permission to form a rowing club yet."

"And we're afraid we won't get it, either!" said Doris Levison dismally. "She's afraid we'll get drowned, and thinks it's too dangerous a sport for girls! Awful rot, isn't it?"

"Yes, rather! I say, you girls are jolly plucky to risk it!" said Tom Merry admiringly. "And you handle oars well—for beginners, anyway!"

There was a touch of condescension in Tom Merry's voice, and Lady Peggy tossed her pretty head.

"Beginners eh? I like that!" she said indignantly. "Just you wait, Tom Merry! This is only our first trip out on this stretch, and in a first-class boat. You wait until we've had a bit more practice! Then we're going to challenge you and the Grammar School!"

"You—you are? Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

"That's the programme, Tom Merry!" called Lady Peggy cheerfully. "Neither the Grammar School nor St. Jim's will be Cock of the River this year, eh, girls?"

"Rather not!" came the emphatic, enthusiastic chorus.

"So you'd better look out, Tom Merry!" called Cousin Ethel, with a merry laugh. "If you can't make a better showing than Grundy, then we'll have to give you a few lengths start!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lady Peggy spoke to the coxswain, and the next moment her youthful voice rang out.

"Come forward! Paddle!"

Click! Click! Click!

The blades dipped, and the crew went back like a well-oiled machine, their oars clicking as one in the rowlocks. The racing shell swept on downstream.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

He stared admiringly at the girls, as did the rest of the startled St. Jim's fellows. The Spalding Hall crew was not wearing the usual shorts and vests of the modern rowing girl, but all were dressed in their usual gym costumes, and they looked very pretty and attractive with their healthy faces flushed and their hair blowing in the wind. But it was not only their looks that the juniors were admiring. They could not help being impressed by the stylish oarsmanship and the determination of their girl chums.

The boat swept on, and to their ears came the coxswain's voice:

"Get a beginning! Mind your time, two! Bow, you're bucketing! Swing straight—keep your eye on stroke's back!"

Obviously the girls meant business.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, breaking the silence at last. "Did you evah!"

"And they're out for scalps!" breathed Jack Blake, eyeing Tom Merry curiously. "And what's more, they can row, Tom!"

"Yes, rather!" admitted Tom Merry, smiling grimly. "Well, good luck to them, chaps! It—it's absurd to suppose they stand a ghost of a chance against us or the Grammarians, of course. But—but—"

"We mustn't take them too lightly!" chuckled Lowther. "They shape no end well, and we'll have to accept their challenge, Tom!"

"Of course!" agreed Tom; and he looked very thoughtful indeed as he led the way along the towing-path again to meet Grundy's crew. They could afford to laugh at rivals like Grundy's crew, but the Spalding Hall eight was a very different proposition.

CHAPTER 4.

Rather Awkward!

"PUT your beef into it!"

"Look here, Grundy—"

"Shut up! No back answers! Keep it up!"

"Oh dear! I say, Grundy—"

"Get down to it, you fat slacker!" roared Grundy.

"You're not pulling at all, Trimble! I'm going to tan your hide when practice is over! Now, you men, all together! Go it!"

Grundy's men went it—as well as they were able. Grundy was a hard taskmaster indeed. His hapless crew were already wondering if even his sumptuous feeds and lavish generosity, combined with their tickled vanity, were worth this slavery. Trimble was on the point of collapse, though he had done little actual pulling! And the rest of the crew were in a similar state. Even Fatty Wynn, stout-hearted as he was, had had enough, and wanted a rest.

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But Grundy was still going strong; Grundy might be a slave-driver, but he was a terrific worker himself, and he was pulling away as if his dearest wish was to pull the bottom out of the Rhyl. And while he pulled he roared out advice, orders, and threats in his bellowing voice. Being in Grundy's crew was really no joke.

But they had to stick it! Fears of Grundy's mighty wrath kept them going. Grundy himself set the pace—both in time and vigour. Unfortunately his crew did not keep the pace in either respect. As a result the boat rocked, swayed, and jerked in a manner that was alarming. No two blades hit the water together, and the result would have made a rowing coach weep.

Still, they got along somehow, though it was a miracle how they escaped capsizing a score of times on their erratic course upstream. They had almost run down the Spalding Hall crew, and Grundy had halted the boat to give his views on the cheek and idiocy of girls in trying to handle an oar.

And they were still rowing, though Trimble, Mellish, and other members of the crew were imploring Grundy to give them a rest.

Only Fatty Wynn kept silent, though he had worked like a Trojan, and was as whacked as any of them. Fatty was a far different fellow from Trimble. He was a wizard with a cricket ball, and the best goalkeeper in the Lower School at St. Jim's. And he was about the only fellow in Grundy's crew who did handle an oar really well. It was not only the terrific temptation of lavish feeds that had persuaded Fatty into joining Grundy's crew. He was not a little peeved at being left out of Tom Merry's crew, and he had joined Grundy partly with the idea of showing just what he could do with an oar.

But it was difficult to show one's skill in a boat stroked by George Alfred Grundy. Fatty Wynn was already fed-up. The smiles on the faces of the Spalding Hall girls had made Fatty blush for very shame as he saw their skill and smartness.

The boat surged on amid a terrific splashing, and a rattling of rowlocks, and many gasps and groans. Rarely had the shining surface of the Rhyl had such a churning up. But the rest they craved for was soon to come. Baggy Trimble suddenly went on strike and ceased rowing with startling unexpectedness.

The next moment all was confusion in the rocking boat. Fatty Wynn's broad back struck the doubled-up Trimble, almost sending him backwards over his sliding-seat. Then their blades struck, and the next instant eight oars were mixed up amidst an uproar of alarmed yells. It was a miracle the boat did not upset; possibly Trimble's and Fatty Wynn's combined weight kept it on an even keel.

"You born idiots!" roared Grundy. "What the thump—Steady, or you'll have us over, you footling duffers! Trimble, you fat slacker!"

"Ow, ow! I'm whacked, Grundy!" panted Trimble, collapsing over his oar. "Yow! I've had enough!"

"Had enough?" bellowed Grundy. "Why, you've hardly pulled at all, you fat rotter! You've had too much to gorge, you mean! I saw you guzzling something only a few minutes ago, you fat frog! Fancy eating when a man's rowing! Bah!"

"Well, we've had enough for a bit, Grundy!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Dash it all, we can't go on for ever without a rest, if you can! I'm taking a rest anyway!"

And Fatty Wynn feathered his oar and slipped his sweater over his podgy shoulders.

It was just then that Grundy's crew heard laughter, and became aware that the little incident had caused amusement to the occupants of a skiff that had appeared on the scene. Grundy glared as he recognised its occupants. They were Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, and Carboy, of the Grammar School.

"Sheer off, you cackling hyenas!" snorted Grundy. "What the thump are you laughing at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cheeky rotters!" grunted Grundy. "Here, let's get on, you men, for goodness' sake! And try to remember you're handling oars, not soup-ladles. You nearly had us over that—"

"Look out!"

Grundy's exhortation to his weary, fed-up crew was interrupted by a yell of warning from Fatty Wynn, followed instantly by other yells from his crew. So busy was Grundy in blaming his crew, that he had failed to note that the Grammarian skiff had suddenly darted in on the stern of the racing shell.

He turned his head round just in time to see the skiff glide within a few inches of the shell's stern, and as it did so, Gordon Gay leaned over and neatly unhooked the rudder of the racing craft.

"Look out!" roared Fatty Wynn again. "Hold on, Piggott, you idiot!"

Piggott, grasping the position, held on desperately to

the rudder lines, and was nearly dragged into the river as a result.

"Better let go, kid!" called out Gordon Gay sweetly. "Otherwise you'll get a ducking! That's right!"

Piggott let go hastily as he saw the risk of his being dragged overboard.

The next instant the skiff was sailing merrily away, with Gordon Gay waving the captured rudder, and roaring with laughter.

Grundy's eyes nearly started from his head.

"Well, the cheeky cads!" he gasped. "They've pinched our rudder! Hi! Bring our dashed rudder back, you rotters!" he ended with a bellow of amazed fury. "Bring it back or I'll smash you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gordon Gay. "What price St. Jim's now, Grundy! Good-bye-e! Mind that crab doesn't bite you, old chap!"

And the Grammarian boat sailed on downstream, leaving

his crew caught sight of the white-clad figures in the racing boat. This time they knew at once that there could be no mistake—no possible error whatever. In their opinion, only one crew in all the wide world could have managed a boat as this boat was being managed now, and that crew was Grundy's.

It was too distant to distinguish faces or forms. But the ragged rowing, the splashes, and the strangely erratic course of the boat was enough.

"It's Grundy's lot right enough!" gasped Tom Merry. "Did you ever see such an awful sight? Why, a crew of elephants could manage a boat better than that! That kid Piggott must be potty."

"Just look! Bai Jove!" groaned Arthur Augustus, who was a very stylish carsman. "It makes me feel quite ill to watch, deah boys. Gwreat Scott! Somethin' must be w'ong! They're all over the wiver!"

"It's Grundy's style," explained Monty Lowther.



Hardly able to believe their eyes, Tom Merry & Co. stared at the racing crew out on the river. They were the girls of Spalding Hall!

Grundy and his men staring after them in speechless wrath and dismay. To a skilful crew the position would have been awkward, though not hopeless by any means. But to a crew like Grundy's the position was utterly dismaying. Even the great George Alfred realised that the journey back was going to be one fraught with unpleasant possibilities.

"Oh, the—the awful bounders!" spluttered Grundy. "Pinched our rudder! The—the cheek of it! I'll—I'll smash the cads for this! This comes of having a lot of hopeless duds for a crew! Of all the footling duffers—"

"Why, it was your fault, Grundy!" howled George Gore furiously. "If you hadn't caught that crab we should have been well away from the cads!"

"What?" bellowed Grundy. "Me—caught a crab! Well, of all the impudence! I'll lick you to a frazzle for that when we get back, Gore! A dashed crab—me! Why, I—I—I—!" Words failed Grundy; but he got his breath back at last, and then under his bellowing orders the boat turned, amid much splashing and squabbling, and went in pursuit of the Grammarians. It went in a series of zigzags downstream, first almost into one bank and then almost into the other. How it avoided mishap at all was a miracle, but the biggest miracle of all was that it didn't go to the bottom!

"There they are!"

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

In the distance, along the shining river, Tom Merry and

"Though even Grundy can't be responsible for the steering. Oh, ye gods!"

"What the thump are they playing at?"

"Ring-a-ring-of-roses' by the look of things!" chuckled Lowther. "Or else they're chasing each other."

Really it was rather alarming. Piggott, they knew, was a fairly useful coxswain, and had coxed many crews before. But the boat's course was remarkably erratic, and even as Tom Merry & Co. watched, they saw it pull up, just in time to avoid running full-tilt into the bank.

"And that ass—that born idiot," stuttered Tom Merry, "thinks himself fit to turn out in a forty-guinea racing shell. What's Piggott up to, anyway? No wonder those chaps in that skiff are cackling. Listen to Grundy bawling. You can hear him from here. The silly— Oh, my hat! See who those chaps are in the skiff?"

And Tom groaned deeply as he recognised the laughing trio in the skiff as Gordon Gay & Co., their deadly rivals.

"We shall never hear the last of this now, Tom," groaned George Figgins. "Nice disgrace for St. Jim's. Those Grammarian rotters will rub this in no end. Hallo! Gay's yelling to us!"

Gordon Gay had seen the juniors on the bend, and he stood up in the boat waving something aloft.

"It's a rudder!" howled Blake. "Can't you see it now? Those awful bounders must have pinched their rudder. No wonder they're all over the river."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Tom Merry & Co. stopped short on the towing-path. What Gay was waving so gleefully aloft was undoubtedly the slender rudder of a racing craft.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gordon Gay. "Is that the crew you're entering for the race this year, Tom Merry? Better enter 'em for a crossword puzzle instead, old chap."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you awful rotter!" yelled Tom Merry angrily. "Is that their rudder you've got there?"

"Looks like it—what?" chorled Frank Monk. "What price St. Jim's? Caught napping again, Tom Merry?"

"You rotters!" howled Tom Merry. "Hand that rudder over at once, Gordon Gay!"

"Bow-wow! Come and fetch it, old dear!"

"You—you frightful bounders!" shouted Blake.

"Go it! Ha, ha, ha!"

The Grammarian boat moved leisurely on its way, Gay still waving the captured rudder, and all three Grammarians roaring with laughter.

"They're going to keep it by the look of things!" panted Jack Blake, in great alarm. "Oh, my hat!"

"Not if I can prevent it!" snapped Tom Merry, his eyes gleaming. "We'll make the bounders sit up for this! Oh, that—that born idiot!"

Suitable words with which to describe George Alfred Grundy failed Tom.

After glaring for several speechless moments after the hilarious Grammarians he gave the word to move again, and they went to meet Grundy & Co.'s labouring craft.

"We'll have to follow 'em down to the boathouse after all, I'm afraid," said Wilkins dismally. "Those fools will never be able to bring the boat in without a rudder!"

"Looks like it!" said Tom, breathing hard. "They'll upset the boat if they try, the hopeless duds. Look at 'em!"

But Wilkins and Tom proved to be pessimists. Though they lacked the skill and ability to manoeuvre the boat in-shore, Grundy & Co. were in a position to manage it by accident.

Which they did.

They were twenty yards out when Tom Merry & Co. came up to them at last. Tom and his chums gave vent to their feelings by yelling with all the power of their lungs.

"Stop! Grundy, you howling idiot, stop!"

Grundy bawled an order, and the wild splashing ceased. Grundy turned a flushed, wrathful face shorewards. He glowered as he recognised Tom Merry and his men.

"Oh, you!" he panted. "Sheer off! What the thump do you kids want?"

"What?" gasped Tom. "Why, you—"

"Sheer off!" roared Grundy. "Come to cackle, I suppose—like those rotten Grammar School cads! Jealousy!"

"Wha-what? Why, you born fool!" shrieked Tom Merry. "We want our boat! You cheeky rotter, I'll make you sit up for this, Grundy!"

"Your boat?" echoed Grundy, staring. "Well, I like that! Cheek! You'll be saying the blinking school belongs to you next, Tom Merry! I explained it all to old Bates, didn't I? I'm a member of the club, and I've as much right to take this dashed boat as you have, Tom Merry, so put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

"You—you howling idiot!" shrieked Tom. "That boat was allotted to us—to the junior official crew. Nobody else is allowed to touch it, you silly owl! If you do any damage to it you'll get in a fearful row, Grundy."

"Rot! Like your cheek to suppose I can't manage a boat like this!" snorted Grundy. "Go and eat coke!"

"Look here, you thickheaded chump!" roared Blake.

"You shut up, Blake! That's enough! I've no time to waste on you fellows!" bawled Grundy. "Those cheeky Grammar School cads have pinched our rudder, and we're going after them!"

"Look here—" shrieked Tom Merry.

"Rot!"

"But—"

"Shut up! Now, you fellows—ready? Come forward! Paddle!"

And Grundy pulled at his oar in his usual enthusiastic manner! Unfortunately, his crew were not quite ready, and they followed him one after the other, their blades hitting the water at various angles, and at various times.

But that terrific drive of Grundy's did it. The boat swung round, and, before anyone knew it, the slender prow was nosing in the shallows at the bank.

"Look out!" shrieked Tom Merry, terrified of damage to his precious shell. "Easy all, you fools! Stop!"

"Go it!" bellowed Grundy. "Get a beginning, and pull your stroke well. Oh, my hat!" Grundy suddenly became aware that they were running ashore. "Great pip! Pull her round, bow side!"

"Easy all!" roared Tom.

Fortunately, Tom Merry was obeyed. Amid a confusion of clashing, colliding oars the crew ceased rowing.

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Jumping down into the shallow water by the bank Tom reached out and caught a grip of the slender prow, stopping its further progress by main force. He held on grimly, and yelled.

"Catch Grundy's blade, Blake. Lift your oars, stroke-side."

But Blake had already jumped into the shallow water, and had a grip of Grundy's oars. Mellish, Fatty Wynn, and Boulton obeyed Tom instantly, and, as they lifted their blades Tom Merry and Talbot dragged the boat in. Fortunately, the bank was low, and the blades slid over the grass.

Grundy was raging.

"You cheeky rotters!" he bawled. "Leggo my oar, Blake, or I'll punch your cheeky head, blow you. Of all the—the—"

"Never mind, Grundy!" rapped out Tom Merry, his face grim. "Mellish and the rest of you, get out of the boat at once! You, too, Piggott! Out you get—sharp!"

Mellish obeyed instantly, as did Fatty Wynn and the rest of the crew—excepting Grundy! Grundy stared in great and growing fury as, one by one, his crew grabbed their sweaters and scrambled ashore.

"Now cut back to school, the lot of you!" snapped Tom.

"Look here—" roared Grundy.

He sprang up in the rocking boat, and then he jumped ashore and rushed at Tom Merry, his big fists whirling.

There was a brief, exciting struggle, and then Grundy was whirled aloft and sent, all arms and legs, over the edge of the bank.

Splash!

Grundy went in with a terrific splash that cut short his frantic howl.

"In with him again when he comes out!" shouted Blake.

But Grundy had had enough this time—more than enough. That plunge into the cold water had damped his warlike spirit. Instead of rushing back into the fray, he splashed his way along the bank, and scrambled ashore higher up.

"Let him go!" gasped Tom. "He's had enough, I fancy!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Grundy, for once, had had enough.

He shook a furious fist at the oarsmen, and then turned and fled along the towing-path.

"That's settled him, the born idiot!" panted Tom Merry, breathing hard. "Let's hope it will be a lesson to the cheeky fathead! Now, you men, we've got to catch those Grammar School rotters up and get that rudder back!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And after making sure the boat was not damaged, the juniors manned it, and soon they were afloat in mid-stream. Then, with a very grim face, Tom nodded to Wally D'Arcy, who gave the word to paddle.

CHAPTER 5.

The Tables Turned!

TOM MERRY and his crew were expert oarsmen, and the task of steering the boat downstream presented little difficulty to them. Save for a word now and again, Tom left it in the capable hands of D'Arcy minor, whose crisp commands kept the boat on a fairly straight course downstream. They passed Grundy trotting dismally along the bank, but they ignored his shouts; and farther along they slid smoothly past Fatty Wynn and the rest, trailing dismally homewards.

Then they sighted Gordon Gay & Co.

The Grammarians were larking about in the centre of the river, obviously not dreaming of danger. But at sight of the racing shell bearing down on them, with oar-blades rising and falling with steady effectiveness, Gay at once realised his danger.

"Oh, my hat!" he gasped. "Look out, you men! Blessed if Tom Merry and his pals haven't collared that boat, after all—must have chucked Grundy's lot out! Buck up, or we're done!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The three were alert on the instant, and Gay himself manned the single pair of sculls, and drove at them desperately. But he realised it was hopeless from the first.

"We'll dodge 'em, though!" he panted. "Quick—round with her, Franky!"

Frank Monk tugged at the rudder-lines, and Gay whirled the boat round with a few desperate, skilful strokes, just as the prow of the racing craft edged slowly towards them.

Instantly Tom Merry's voice rang out:

"Round with her, chaps! Paddle, stroke-side; back her, bow!"

Round swept the racing-boat in a matter of seconds, and then she was after the small skiff again. Three times this manoeuvre was accomplished, and each time Gay & Co. had a narrow escape. But they realised it was no good; they

(Continued on page 12.)



Mr. Parker POPS IN TO SEE BARNSELEY.

They have seen fame at Barnsley F.C., but they have also been faced with misfortunes and hardships. Yet, like true sportsmen, they play the game whatever the state of affairs!

Bracing Barnsley!

A FEW days ago I had a bit of a dust-up with your Editor, and though we settled our differences in quite a friendly way, I had a feeling that sooner or later he would try to get one on me. And when I asked him into which football ground I should poke my nose this week I had those feelings confirmed.

There was a strangely ominous half-smile on his face as he replied curtly, "Barnsley." Right down in his heart of hearts I believe he had an idea that I should not like to go to Barnsley: that it was one of those places to which one only goes when business is to be done.

But the laugh was on my side, because, as a matter of fact, I not only don't dislike going to Barnsley, but I am jolly glad I have been there, because I got quite a good football tonic. Mind you, this is not saying everything entirely in favour of the bracing breezes which blow round the Barnsley ground. I have been in towns which I prefer, as such, and when one is a bit run down in health, for example, it would be nicer to get a free ticket for a journey to the South of France than to Barnsley. But I repeat that in the football sense there are worse treats than being sent to Barnsley.

And They've Won the Cup!

I MUST also confess to a real liking for the club and the fellows associated with it. My admiration is of what might be called the long-standing variety. I recall the days when the name of Barnsley had real meaning for footballers. You may recall—though you wouldn't remember it—that there were certain years before the War when Barnsley did things in the Cup line. They were then—as now—a Second Division team, and judged by the League standard, quite an ordinary team at that. But they went to the Cup Final twice in three seasons, and on one of those two occasions won the Cup. There are clubs older than Barnsley, and more famous in some senses, which have never yet won the Cup.

Perhaps it can be said with a considerable amount of truth that much of the glory has departed from the Oakwell ground. That is one of the tragedies associated with clubs like Barnsley—that the glory must of necessity depart. It is the clubs like Barnsley, only commanding comparatively small patronage, that play the role of recruiting stations to the more wealthy organisations.

Cheery Optimists!

BARNSELEY have to find the material when it is in the raw state. Having polished up this raw material, and in many cases turned out beautifully cut diamonds

from the rough, they have to sell in order to keep the wolf from the door. It is a pity, but there it is—a relentless affair, this football. If I told you about all the good players produced by Barnsley, and then allowed to go to other clubs, I should have no space left to talk about the present-day players. And if the present-day players are not so wonderful as some of those who have gone before, I must say I still like them.

One of the things I like about the club—and this is why I was glad I went to Barnsley—is the evidence of cheerfulness in spite of adversity. Anybody who goes to Barnsley expecting to find the players and the officials bemoaning their luck will get a shock. I stumbled on just about as cheerful a company of optimists as I have found anywhere in my ramblings. Manager Fairclough hasn't much money to throw about, but he did not seem worried about the possibility of the club going down to the Third Division. "We have weathered storms before," he said, "and will weather this one all right."

Music Bath Charms!

AND when I joined the players at their training quarters I found the same spirit of optimism. The portable gramophone was hard at work, adding to the cheery general tone, and I understand that it goes with the players on all their journeys. Try as I would, however, I could not find out who had presented the gramophone to the club, but one of the players somehow managed to give me the impression that it had been obtained as a sort of antidote to the singing of Brough Fletcher, the captain.

Fletcher has a good voice, but there seemed to be a sort of general impression that he ought to reserve it for giving advice on the field, rather than for the singing of popular songs. Whether this idea is a good one I had no means of finding out, but I did discover that Brough has musical ideas in other directions. He plays the piano quite well, and as the players at Barnsley in general don't appreciate music—that is Fletcher's summing up, not mine—he and Charlie Baines get over it by having musical evenings on their own. Fletcher plays the piano and Charlie does some singing. I fished for an invitation to one of these musical evenings, but didn't succeed in getting one. Perhaps the players concerned thought that I was of the same stamp as some of their colleagues—that I didn't appreciate music.

A Football Story!

BAINES is one of the older members of the team, and I think I am right in saying that he has played in over three hundred League matches for Barnsley, a

total which is only exceeded by his skipper and "concert party" partner, Fletcher.

Next to football, the pastime over which Baines is most enthusiastic is gardening. It is no uncommon thing for him to turn up for training with a prize specimen from his allotment.

Goalkeeper Tommy Gale has been at Barnsley a little while, too, and he is ever ready to entertain his colleagues with good football stories. He tells one—which I hope is true—about another of the Barnsley players taking a lady to see one of the games. What she didn't know about football would have filled many books. During the game she heard quite a lot about half-

backs, and finally put this question to her companion: "How long has a man to be a half-back before he becomes a full-back?"

I have explained that Barnsley can't pay big prices for players—that the manager has to look for them in the high-ways and byways, as it were—but he has found some good ones in this manner. Bert Hodgkinson, the full-back, is one of them. He made a bigger jump than most players. On a certain Thursday of one week he was a member of an obscure junior side at Penistone. There he took the eye of Manager Fairclough, and was signed on. Two days later, owing to a regular full-back being injured, and the manager in a dilemma, Hodgkinson turned out for the first eleven. And he didn't let the side down, either.

Summer Months!

THEY know good centre-half-backs at Barnsley, having had such men as Tom Boyle and Frank Barson on the staff in the past. George Henderson is a good one, too. He started his football career at St. Bernard's, and then went to Sunderland ere joining up at Barnsley. He can do a bit on the golf links, but is not so good as Jimmy Curran, a fellow who can play on either wing, and who is the champion golfer of the side.

When I was there he was being chipped about his prowess at the "stationary ball" game by George Caddick, another fine half-back. You see, George is a devotee of lawn tennis, and very good at it, too. He says that no man should walk after a ball so long as he has enough energy to run after one.

In the summer months, however, the Barnsley players, almost without exception, take to cricket, and the skipper of the football side is also captain of the Barnsley eleven. Some of the good-class cricket clubs of the district have found that the Barnsley footballers know quite a lot about cricket.

At Oakwell they don't put a ban on their players motoring a bit for fresh air during the week, and Teddy Ashton, Hodgkinson, and Atkinson all profess to know quite a lot about sparking plugs and that sort of thing connected with motors. Jack McMullen, the trainer, hasn't been a footballer himself, but he is acknowledged as a physical fitness expert, and whatever else may be said about Barnsley they can set a hot pace and keep it up. McMullen is a great believer in Swedish drill, and when he told the lads it was time to have a go at this, I thought that was also a hint for me to go.

"NOSEX."

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Rivals of the River I

(Continued from page 10.)

could never get away from the speedy, if more unwieldy, racing shell.

"Better give in, Gay!" called out Tom Merry cheerily. "You're whacked, and you know it! We'll follow you all day, if necessary, but we're having that rudder back, my pippins!"

"Rats! Go and eat coke!" gasped Gay defiantly. "We can keep this up as long as you can! Go it, chaps!"

Once again the skiff was whirled round and set on a new course, in a desperate attempt to escape. And then suddenly Gay got an idea—though it was an idea that proved their undoing.

"Steer under the high bank there, Franky!" he muttered. "They daren't follow us there!"

"Oh, good man!"

Gay pulled and Frank Monk steered for the high bank. They reached it in a few pulls, and, reaching up, Carboy got a grip on the grassy bank and held on.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Gay gleefully. "Done in the eye, Tom Merry! Follow us here if you dare, you cheerful chumps! We can play the waiting game here as long as you can!" He stood up with a scull in his hand.

"Right! We'll wait, old bean!" called Tom Merry, with surprising cheerfulness.

And the crew of eight waited patiently, their eyes fixed not on Gordon Gay & Co., but on several figures that were swiftly approaching the grass alongside the towing-path.

The foremost was Fatty Wynn, and he raised a hand warningly as he came nearer, his lightly-clad feet making scarcely a sound on the grass. The St. Jim's juniors might quarrel among themselves, but they stood shoulder to shoulder against the common enemy.

Tom Merry knew he could rely upon the gallant Fatty, at all events.

Under the high bank Gay & Co. did not see the approaching figures—they had completely forgotten Grundy & Co. Fatty himself knew what to expect from Figgins unless he wiped out his offence.

They reached the spot with a rush. Gordon Gay suddenly heard the crunch of cinders, and a shadow fell across the boat. He wheeled as a yell came from Carboy, and then Fatty Wynn arrived.

He leaped down into the boat, and the startled Gay went thudding backwards, with Fatty on top of him. The next instant Boulton, Bates, and Gore arrived.

"Yaaaaooooooooop!" roared Gay. "Gerroff me chest! Help! Franky, Carboy—quick!"

But Carboy and Monk had their own hands full the next moment as other members of Grundy's crew leaped down into the wildly-rocking boat. Even the timid Tompkins leant a hand. All were apprehensive of trouble to come with Tom Merry, and here was a chance to make amends.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co., out in mid-stream.

The next moment the racing-boat was being manoeuvred inshore at a spot farther along, where the bank was lower. Soon seven of the crew were leaping ashore, leaving Wally and bow in charge of the boat.

With groans of dismay Gordon Gay & Co. gave it up then.

"Yank them out!" called Tom Merry, his good-humour quite restored now. "Hear us smile, Gay, old top! What price St. Jim's now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gay & Co., dishevelled and panting, were dragged up on to the bank. Their game was up.

"Pinch our rudder—what?" said Tom Merry. "I suppose you mean to keep it until we'd owned up that we were licked—eh? Well, you must pay for your little amusements, Gay, old chap!"

"Look here!" spluttered Gay. "I— It was only a lark! Make it pax, Tom Merry!"

"Yes, we're likely to do that, old chap!" smiled Tom. "Fetch me a scull, chaps! We'll give 'em each six of the best, roll 'em in the cinders, and then let 'em go!"

"Good wheeze!"

Needless to say, Gay & Co. did not think it a good wheeze! They protested against the punishment, but Tom Merry & Co. were adamant. A scull was fetched from the Grammarian boat, and one by one the three jokers were held flat while Tom brought the blade of the scull down on their tightly-stretched garments with resounding whacks.

Gordon Gay & Co. howled fiendishly. But their howls and threats did not prevent their being afterwards rolled in the

cinders of the towing-path. When the Saints had done with them they looked wrecks.

"See the joke now Gay?" asked Tom Merry cheerily.

"St. Jim's wins once again."

"Ow, ow, ow! Rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. departed for their boat, while Grundy's men started on at a trot again for home. Gay, Monk, and Carboy sa' up and gasped and panted as if for a wager. They staggered up at last to shake their fists in helpless wrath at Tom Merry & Co. as the Saints rested on their oars in midstream, the rudder tack in place, and the rudder-lines gripped in Wally's hands.

"Good-bye, Gay!" called Tom Merry sweetly across the water. "Good-bye, bluebells! We'll leave your things at the lock-keeper's cottage for you. Good-bye-e-e!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come forward! Paddle!"

The St. Jim's official crew swept upstream for a good two-mile practice spin to the locks. Gay & Co. glared after them. They wondered, however, what the "things" were that Tom Merry had alluded to. They soon discovered when they reached their own boat. They found that not only was their rudder missing, but both sculls as well!

It was a dreadful discovery—the last straw for the Grammarian jokers. Unless the wished to haul their boat the two miles to the locks along the towing-path, they would have to paddle it along as best they could with their hands, or with the floorboards or stretchers. And at that prospect Gordon Gay & Co. looked at each other with feelings that were too utterly deep and dismal for words.

CHAPTER 6.

Grundy's Chance!

"ROT!"

"But look here, Grundy—"

"Rubbish!"

"But do listen, old chap—"

"Bunkum!"

"But—"

"Bosh!"

There was no arguing with Grundy. When Grundy said a thing, it was so. Grundy was a fellow who prided himself on knowing his own mind. He also prided himself on being a fellow who spoke his mind, which he did, regardless of anyone else's feelings or opinions.

"Bosh!" he repeated, glaring at his feebly-protesting chums. "Bosh, fiddlesticks, bunkum, and rot! That's enough, Wilkins, and you, too, Gunn. You let me down to-day badly! It's not the first time either! You let me down yesterday," he added bitterly. "Stood by, and even helped while outsiders ragged your pal and study-mate! And now, look at this afternoon! You, Wilkins, stood by and did nothing while those cheeky rotters pitched me into the river! Nice pal, ain't you?"

Wilkins shifted uncomfortably.

"I—I—it was your own fault, Grundy," he gasped. "You'd no right to take that boat—"

"What! There you go again!" bawled Grundy excitedly. "No right fiddlesticks! Bosh! Bunkum! I've already told you I've as much right to take that boat out as Tom Merry or any other member of the dashed club."

"But Tom Merry—"

"Blow Tom Merry!"

"He's junior captain of—"

"Blow junior captain! Think I acknowledge such a footling position?" said Grundy excitedly. "I don't! But never mind arguing, I hate fellows who argue! The point is that I've decided exactly what to do. I shall go to Tom Merry right away and challenge him to a race—a race to decide which crew shall have the boat to meet the Grammar School!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Grundy rose to his feet.

"Buck up," he said impatiently. "Never mind tea!" "You're going to see Tom Merry now?" said Gunn uneasily.

"Of course! Come on, I shall want you chaps as witnesses!"

"Is that necessary?" asked Wilkins, with one eye on Grundy's fists and the other on the jam tarts and cake. "We shall only muck things up—we always do, you know, according to you! We may say something that will lead to an argument and a row!"

"These delicate errands are much better left to you, old chap!" added Gunn, shaking his head. "You're so tactful and diplomatic, Grundy!"

Grundy nodded.

"Well, there's something in that!" he admitted. "Yes, perhaps you're right, you fellows. You stay here and leave

it to me. But if you hear me yell you'll know they've started arguing, and then you can come along and back me up—not that I shall need any help, though!"

He nodded again and left the study. Wilkins and Gunn looked at each other, chuckled deeply, and gave the cake and jam-tarts their attention with a will.

"He's a regular corker, isn't he?" mumbled Wilkins.

"Jever know such an ass!" said Gunn, helping himself to cake. "Priceless idiot, you know! If he does yell—"

"He can go on yelling until doomsday!"

And Grundy's pals polished off the cake and tarts and went for a stroll in the quadrangle.

Meanwhile, George Alfred Grundy had reached Study No. 10, where he found Blake & Co. at tea with the Terrible Three.

There was a general smile as Grundy walked in. Lowther's hand strayed to a loaf of bread, Manners reached down and took up the study poker. Tom Merry jumped up, ready for anything. But for once, George Alfred Grundy was not, apparently, seeking trouble.

"Now, no silly kid's games, you fellows," he began, with a sniff. "I've not come here for a row—"

"You haven't? Well, my hat!"

"I jolly well haven't!" roared Grundy. "I've come to talk this boat question over. But if you're asking for a thick ear—"

"All serene, Grundy!" laughed Tom Merry. "What's the trouble?"

Grundy breathed hard.

"I've a jolly good mind not to make my offer now," he snorted. "But I want to be fair—I want to give you fellows every chance! You'll need it. I could easily claim the boat and tell you to go to pot. But that's not my style. I'd rather prove to the school the justice of my claim by licking your crew into a cocked hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

"My idea's this!" said Grundy. "You chaps can borrow the Fifth Form boat, and we'll race in public for the right to use the junior boat and the right to meet the Grammar School. Of course, I reserve the right to use the junior shell."

"Do you?" ejaculated Tom.

"Naturally! A fellow in my position can't make too many concessions; it would show weakness, you know! You fellows borrow another boat for the race. If you win, of course, you have the right to the Lower School boat!" Grundy smiled. "I'm not anticipating that, though!" he added.

"Well, my hat!"

"Isn't he a dream!" murmured Lowther. "A fellow in his position! Oh, ye gods! And his position is at the bottom of his Form, as the most hopeless duffer in St. Jim's or any other school!"

They fairly blinked at George Alfred. His sublime and airy cocksureness quite took their breath away, well as they knew Grundy.

"Well, you are the outside edge, Grundy!" gasped Tom at last. "Of all the cheek! And—and you actually think I'm going to let you have that boat again!"

"You won't stop me, Tom Merry!"

"Won't I? And you imagine, too, that I'm going to waste my time and the time of my crew meeting a set of hopeless duds like you, Grundy!"

Again Grundy restrained himself with commendable self-control.

"I'm used to talk like that from you, Tom Merry," he said, with a gasp. "I'm used to envy and jealousy at St. Jim's. I ignore it. A fellow like me must expect to meet with opposition from inferiors! But I'm going to stand no nonsense. I shall stand firm for my rights. I know what I want—"

"So do we, old chap! You want a strait-waistcoat!"

"You shut up, Lowther!" said Grundy, clenching his fists. "My hat! Does this mean you actually won't meet my crew in a fair race, Tom Merry?"

"Just that, you silly ass!"

Grundy became excited then.

"That means you're jolly well afraid, you rotter!" he bawled. "But I'll show you what's what!"

"Oh, sheer off, you footling ass!" said Tom, getting tired of the argument. "We had too much of you this afternoon. Can't you give us a rest in the evening?"

As he spoke Tom flung open the study door. But Grundy was not going yet. Grundy never did know the best time to quit. He grabbed Tom Merry, ran him backwards swiftly, and sat him down with a thump in his chair.

"That's my answer!" he hooted. "Show me the door, would you? Now, Tom Merry, we're going to have this out! You stay here and listen to— Here, what—"

Bump!

Grundy sat down on the hearthrug, wondering for the moment how he had landed there. Then he became aware that Tom Merry's chums had surrounded him.

"Kick the idiot out!" gasped Tom breathlessly. "There's been too much Grundy to-day. Frog's march him back to his own study, chaps!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here!" roared Grundy. "Why, I'll—I'll—Leggo! Here, hands off, you rotters! What—Yoooop!"

He began to struggle furiously, but his struggles availed him little against such odds. All agreed that there was a little too much Grundy about; and, despite his struggles, George Alfred was whirled over, spreadeagled, and rushed to the door.

Grundy roared and bellowed.

In the passage outside the strange procession suddenly halted, however, as a deep voice was heard.

"Boys!"

It was Mr. Railton, who had come along the corridor behind them. He stared at the figure wriggling in the juniors' grasp.

"What—what— Bless my soul! Release Grundy this instant, boys! What is the matter, Merry? What has Grundy been doing?"

The Housemaster knew Grundy well enough. He only asked what Grundy had been doing! That hapless youth was allowed to assume a perpendicular position again. He stood and panted breathlessly.

"We—we were just taking Grundy back to his study, sir," said Tom Merry meekly. "Only a joke, sir! We weren't hurting him!"

Grundy had his own views about that, judging by the way he rubbed the back of his head. But he had no thought even for his hurts just then. More important matters still occupied his mighty intellect.

"Joke!" he gasped, crimson with wrath. "It wasn't a joke at all, sir! I don't say I didn't start it—I did, sir! But I was demanding justice. I'm out for my rights, Mr. Railton! I collared Tom Merry and planked him down—"

"You admit that you started this disturbance, Grundy?" demanded Mr. Railton sternly.

"Yes, sir," Grundy was never a fellow to sneak, or to excuse himself. "I started it, I suppose. I insisted upon Tom Merry listening to what I had to say!"

"It was really our fault there was such a row, sir," said Tom Merry. "We were trying to take Grundy to his study, and we actually started the disturbance!"

"Explain what the trouble is about, Merry."

Tom Merry explained—not relating the events of the afternoon, however.

"It seems that you are somewhat at fault then, Merry," said the Housemaster at length. "It is a pity there is only one first-class racing boat allotted to the Shell and Fourth. But surely you can arrange to meet Grundy and his crew in a friendly race to settle the matter. If you care to accede to Grundy's desire in that respect, I will speak to Kildare about the matter, and arrange for the loan of a senior boat."

"But—but—"

Tom Merry paused, flushing a little. It was scarcely possible to explain to Mr. Railton that Grundy & Co. were not safe in a racing craft, or that they were hopeless duffers in any case. Mr. Railton obviously did not understand the real position. Still—

"I really see no reason why a race should not be arranged, Merry," went on the Housemaster, before he could answer. "I should imagine you and your crew would welcome a trial race. If Grundy and his crew are keen they should receive every encouragement. If I might suggest that Grundy's desire be acceded to—"

He paused. The Housemaster had no power actually to order Tom Merry to give Grundy a chance; only Kildare, as skipper of boats, could do that. But a request from a Housemaster was as good as an order. Mr. Railton, obviously, felt that Tom was being childish and unsportsmanlike, and Tom flushed crimson.

"Very well, sir," he said. "I—I will arrange a race with Grundy. It will certainly settle Grundy—I mean, the matter, one way or the other!"

"I also think so, Merry," said Mr. Railton, smiling. "In the circumstances, I will overlook this—er—commotion! Grundy, return to your study. I will speak to Kildare in regard to the loan of a senior boat."

And the Housemaster walked on.

Grundy gave the juniors a triumphant look.

"So that's settled, Tom Merry!" he said cheerfully.

"Now we'll see what's what! My crew aren't as well trained as yours, perhaps, but that scarcely matters. I fancy I shall show you a clean pair of heels, Tom Merry!"

And, with a kindly, condescending nod, George Alfred walked away. He had got what he had set his heart upon, and he felt as if he were walking on air as he went back to his own study. His crew were recognised at last—officially. His chance had come—the chance he had dreamed about for terms. And the issue was not in doubt—for Grundy!

(Continued on next page.)

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Rivals of the River!

(Continued from previous page.)

CHAPTER 7.

Trimble's Wheeze!

"I SAY, Mellish, old chap!"

There was a cunning gleam in Baggy Trimble's little eyes as he spoke.

It was some days later—the morning of the day fixed for the race between the rival eights, in fact.

Despite the general opinion, Mr. Railton had had his way in the matter. The fellows, including Tom Merry, had hoped and believed that Kildare would manage to explain the position clearly to the Housemaster, and that he would easily persuade him to cancel the proposed race. In the general view it would not be a race, but an utter farce.

But Kildare, apparently, had not succeeded in doing so, though it was plain enough to see what he thought about the arrangement. In fact, his opinion was seen very clearly when he carried out Mr. Railton's wishes by allotting Grundy & Co. the oldest racing shell the seniors possessed. Kildare was taking no chances of any of the best boats being damaged.

Grundy, of course, had objected strongly to the ancient boat—indeed, he had been terrifically indignant about it. It was grossly unfair, in his mighty opinion. And certainly, to some extent, it was. But then Kildare knew that the race would be a farce—a sheer waste of time, in fact. But with an old boat, possibly no harm would be done.

Tom Merry & Co., being the official crew, were fully entitled to use their own racing shell, and Grundy & Co. were obliged to use the senior boat for practice during the first few days.

Now it was the morning of the race. Dinner was over, and Trimble had gone round to the back of the chapel to dispose of a bag of tarts. He had gone there for seclusion, because Grundy was keeping a very strict eye on his men, who were all supposed to be in strict training. Baggy Trimble found it necessary, therefore, to fill up his empty spaces in deadly secret, and far from George Alfred's heavy hand.

On this occasion, however, he found Mellish behind the chapel on the same game. Being fellows of the same kidney they had exchanged views on Grundy, and rowing in general, while devouring their grub. Then Trimble had lowered his voice mysteriously.

"I—I say, Mellish, old chap!" he went on. "I've got a great wheeze—tophole! It's rather a shady sort of wheeze, but that should suit you, old fellow. I know you're not a particular chap!"

"You silly owl!"

Trimble chuckled. He would not have approached Mellish with the idea if he had not known that worthy's character. He lowered his voice again.

"We shall get licked this afternoon," he said.

"Eh? Of course we shall!" grunted Mellish. "Think I'm going to pull myself to death for a rotten race? No fear! What's the good, anyway? Everybody knows we couldn't win if they gave us half the course start!"

"That's just it!" went on Trimble. "And what will happen then? When Kildare sees what a muck-up we shall make of it, he won't give us another chance, will he?"

"Well, so much the better in some ways," grunted Mellish. "I'm fed-up with Grundy and his blessed practices, though my pater's no end bucked about my getting in a crew. He thinks it's the official junior crew, of course, and he's already sent me a quid because he's so jolly bucked about it!"

And Percy Mellish chuckled.

"We're doing jolly well out of it!" grinned Baggy Trimble. "My pater's jolly pleased about it, too—in fact, he scarcely believed it until I sent him that photo Grundy took of us the other day! He, he, he! And we needn't pull hard when Grundy isn't keeping his eyes open."

"Well, that's so," admitted Mellish, with a grin. "Catch me doing any more work than I can help, anyway. But what's the wheeze, you fat frog?"

"He, he, he! Tell me first whether you want the game to go on or not, Mellish!"

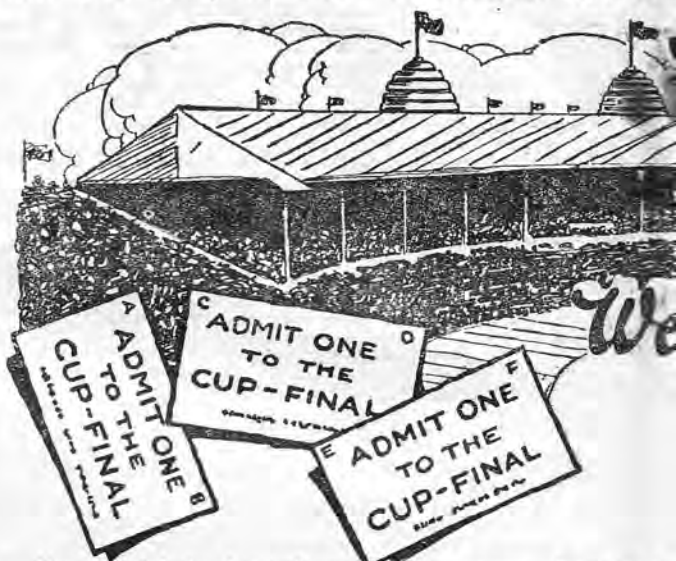
"Of course I do, ass!"

"Well, it won't unless we win this afternoon, old chap!" grinned Trimble. "My wheeze is to make sure we do win, see! I want to go on all through the spring and summer. Old Grundy's an awful ass, and a rotten slave-driver, but

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HERE YOU ARE, CHUMS! A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY



Now then, lads, here's a really stunning offer for you. Just think of it! And then there are also twelve Tickets for the Wembley Cup Final—which prizes we offer you, so come along—don't miss this opportunity, whatever it is!

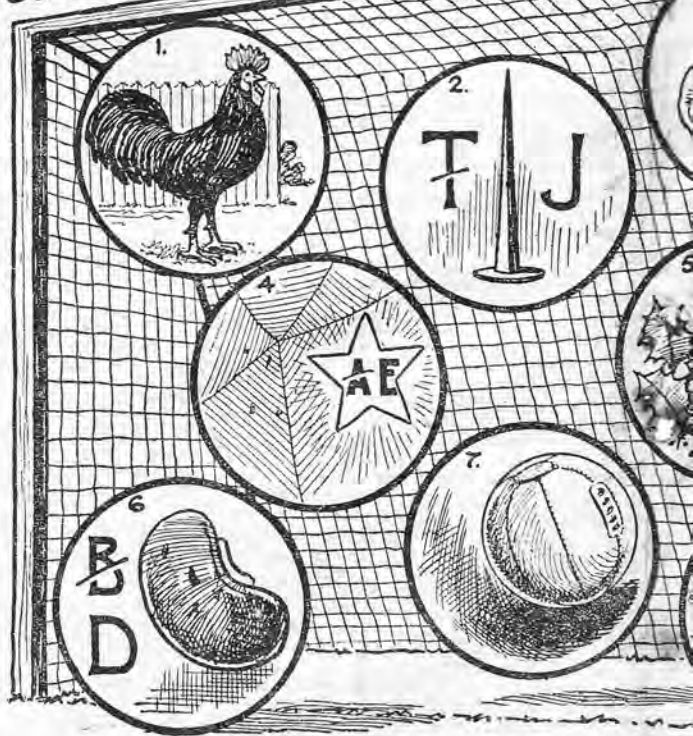
This is what you have to do to win one of the prizes. In the goal net of them is a picture-puzzle representing the name of a well-known footballer. The answer is COCK, a player well known to you, and we have filled in the puzzle for you. Now see if you can solve the seven remaining puzzles in the same way!

We are sure you will find them all thoroughly easy, but to make the puzzle also give on this page a list of Footballers' Names which contains the answers.

As you find the solutions, write them IN INK against the corresponding number, which you should then sign, also in ink. Now cut out the coupon and send it to us with the second set of puzzles and the list of names belonging to it will appear.

The competition will last for four weeks only, and with the final set of puzzles in of your entries.

Who Kicked Them?



OPPORTUNITY OF GOING TO THE CUP-FINAL AT WEMBLEY!

"Who Scored those Goals?"

A Simple 4 Week Competition

6 TOPPING "MEAD" CYCLES and

Wembley Cup-Final Tickets OFFERED



ENTER NOW—
IT'S FREE!

Set of it—Six First-class Bicycles—all ready for the road!
which every boy wants to see. These are the grand
ever you do
net which you see here, are eight circles, and in each
footballer. For instance, take the first puzzle—clearly
the answer for you on the Entry Form. Easy, isn't it
me way
the contest absolutely fair and equal for everybody we
answers to all this week's puzzles.
esponding numbers on the Entry Form given on the
oupon and keep it by you until next week, when the
set we shall give you full instructions for the sending



SET 1

OUR COMPETITION RULES.

The Six "Mead" Bicycles will be awarded to the six readers whose solutions of the four sets of puzzles are correct or most nearly correct, the other prizes of Twelve Cup Final Tickets following in order of merit.

In case of ties, the Editor may divide the prizes, or their value, as he considers necessary, but in any case the full value will be awarded.

Any number of entries may be sent, but each must be made out on a separate set of the "Who Kicked Them?" Entry Forms (Nos. 1 to 4, inclusive that is). No responsibility can be taken for entries lost, mislaid, or delayed in the post or otherwise, and no correspondence will be allowed.

The Editor's decision will be final and legally binding throughout. Entries mutilated or bearing alterations or alternative solutions will be disqualified. Employees of the proprietors of GEM, and of "Nelson Lee," whose readers are also taking part in this contest, must not compete.

YOU CAN FIND THE ANSWERS HERE.

Adcock	Jack
Andrews	John
Bacon	Keenor
Ball	King
Barclay	Lane
Barrett	Loftus
Bedford	Miles
Bishop	Mills
Bowen	Mort
Brain	Odell
Broadbent	Osborne
Brown	Pearson
Cable	Price
Campbell	Rankin
Chandler	Readman
Coates	Rhodes
Cock	Riches
Cook	Ritchie
Craig	Rowley
Deacon	Ruffell
Dean	Smeaton
Dimmock	Sorrell
Dominy	Storer
Easson	Taylor
Evans	Thackeray
Farrell	Thomson
Forsyth	Vallance
Forward	Walker
Gomm	Webster
Graham	Weddle
Halliday	Wells
Hammond	Wilson
Hartley	York
Herod	Young
Hine	
Hughes	

"Who Kicked Them?"

FREE ENTRY FORM No. 1.

COCK

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

"GEM"

Competitor's
Name.....

1

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Rivals of the River I

(Continued from page 14.)

his feeds and cash are all right. He used to boot me if I even mentioned a little loan. Now he hands it over without a giddy murmur."

"Gets pottier and pottier!" was Mellish's comment.

"He, he, he! Still, if we can win to-day it'll last a bit longer, anyway," said Trimble. "Besides, it'll be no end of a score if we win! Grundy's going to have our photos taken, and I bet our giddy aunts and uncles and others will stomp up if we send 'em one. See?"

"Oh, get on with the washing!" sniffed Mellish. "What's the game? If it's risky—"

"Not at all, old chap! All you do is to get a bucket—"

"A—a bucket?"

"Yes, old chap! And tie a rope to it—"

"A—a rope?" gasped Mellish.

"Yes; then tie the other end of the rope to the stern of Tom Merry's boat! See the wheeze?"

Mellish blinked at him.

"You—you silly owl!" he said in measured accents.

"Easy enough!" grinned Trimble. "You see, the bucket will fill with water and sink, and act as an anchor. They'll have to drag it along behind 'em, and we should win easily—lick 'em by a few lengths. See?"

"Oh—oh, my hat!"

Mellish gasped as the great and wonderful wheeze dawned in upon his intellect. It sounded hopelessly mad, and yet—

"I've thought it all out," said Trimble complacently. "It can't go wrong. There's a sort of slot at the stern where the rudder fits in, and it's under water out of sight—you know that. Well, with a hook at the end of the rope—"

"Yes; but you'll be spotted hooking the dashed bucket on, Trimble!"

"Me?" said Trimble. "Oh, nunno! You'll do that, of course, Mellish! I've had all the work and trouble of thinking the wheeze out. Besides, it'll only take a second, and there's no danger!"

"Then do it yourself, old fat ass!"

"Look here—"

"Rats! Catch me doing it!" said Mellish derisively. "It's a rotten idea, if you ask me! Think you can do a job like that with a crowd of fellows about?"

"But we get the bucket ready beforehand, when nobody's about," explained Trimble earnestly. "Here, don't walk away, you ass! Listen! While Bates and his men are at dinner we can do the job—get the bucket and rope sunk and hooked on a nail just below the water-line. Then, when Tom Merry and his pals have carried their boat out and gone back for their oars, it'll only take a second to hook it on the stern. See! Easy as falling off a form!"

"Oh! In that case"—Mellish was impressed at last—"in that case, it might work! You mean have the rope hooked on a nail of the staging in readiness, then unhook it and hook it on the boat when it's carried out!"

"Yes, that's the idea! You'll do it, Mellish?"

"Will I thump!" said Mellish, with a chuckle. "But, I say, it's no end of a wheeze, and no end of a lark, too. Fancy those cocky bounders pulling away at a boat with a bucket of water anchored on! Ha, ha, ha! I say, I'll keep cave for you, Trimble! How's that?"

"Look here, you mean rotter—"

Trimble pointed out all sorts of reasons why Mellish should do it, but the sneak of the Fourth was not taking any. He approved of the wheeze enthusiastically, but he did not intend to run any risk. At length Trimble was obliged to give way. He felt the price of victory was worth the risk, anyway. And having reached an agreement at last the precious pair of schemers hurried away to the boathouse to carry out their preparations.

"Ready, old beans?" asked Cardew. "Ready for your Waterloo?"

"Get ready for a record licking!" called Levison. "I hear Grundy's already written home to announce his victory. That looks as if he's pretty confident."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Laughter and chipping greeted Tom Merry and his men as they arrived at the boathouse that afternoon. Tom Merry & Co. were looking rather flushed and unhappy. They knew they would win, of course—indeed, they never expected Grundy & Co. to finish the course, much less give them any sort of a race. But they felt that the whole

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affair was absurd and ridiculous, and they felt keenly sensitive of the chaff and laughter.

But it couldn't be helped—they had to go through with the farcical race now. And what made it worse was that a big crowd of fellows had come to see the farce—they looked upon the whole thing as the joke of the term. They did not intend to miss such an entertainment.

They passed through the big double doors of the boathouse, and as they vanished Grundy and his men arrived, to be greeted with a hurricane of laughter and chipping. But Grundy did not seem to mind—he loved the limelight, and he certainly did not note the irony in the cheers. He stalked into the boathouse with his head in the air, nodding to fellows he knew with lofty condescension.

He did not notice that two of his men were hanging behind. Mellish stopped by the doorway, and Trimble went down to the edge of the staging. The crowd scattered, some to go up-river and some to enter the boathouse to watch the heroes of the afternoon get ready for the fray.

Tom Merry's crew soon had their boat out, and then they went back for their oars, Wally D'Arcy being left in charge of the boat. Trimble edged nearer the prow, and stooped over the water, splashing his hands in.

"What the thump are you up to, Trimble?" called Wally.

"You leave that boat alone, you ass!"

"Who's touching your silly boat?" snorted Trimble.

"Can't you see I'm washing my hands—they're sticky with toffee!"

Blake came out from the boathouse with his oar, followed by the rest of the crew.

"Hallo! Come away from there, Trimble!" chuckled Blake.

"No good trying to sink our boat, old fat man!"

"Can't you see I'm washing my hands?" said Trimble warmly. "They're sticky with toffee. You're an awfully suspicious chap, Blake!"

And Trimble hurried off into the boathouse, shaking his wet hands to dry them. Tom Merry and his men busied themselves getting their oars fixed and testing slides, while Wally hooked on the rudder and arranged the rudder-lines to his satisfaction. He found the rudder rather stiff in its socket, but he imagined it would soon get right when they got going. He certainly did not dream of the truth.

"Oh, here you are, Trimble!" bawled Grundy, as Trimble joined them. "Blessed if I didn't think you'd done a bunk! Now look here, fatty, you've got to work this afternoon as you've never worked before! If you don't—well, I'm going to give you the booting of your fat career."

Trimble grinned. For once he did not seem to be much impressed by Grundy's dark threats. Possibly he thought the booting would not be necessary. Trimble and Mellish exchanged winks and helped to carry the light boat out. They were met with a rousing cheer from the group round the doors and on the towing-path.

By this time Tom Merry's boat was away from the staging, and working out into midstream. There seemed to be a heated argument going on in the boat, and it was clear that something was upsetting not only Tom Merry, but his crew and coxwain. Wally D'Arcy was working his rudder-lines in a puzzled sort of way, and Tom Merry's brow wore a deep, perplexed frown.

"What's the matter, Tommy?" called Bernard Glyn, from the bank. "Got cold feet already?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

As it happened Tom Merry and his men certainly had something approaching cold feet. The fact was that every fellow in the boat wondered if they were not aboard a loaded mudbarge instead of a feathery-light racing shell. It was a mystery—a complete mystery to Tom Merry. Not only was the boat not answering her rudder at all well, but the boat felt heavy and water-logged—though not a spot of water was in her.

Tom Merry and his men simply could not understand it. They understood it still less as they began to paddle up to the starting-post. They tugged and pulled desperately, with the perspiration streaming down their faces. Long before they reached the post Grundy's crew had passed them amid bilarious laughter and cheers from the banks.

When they arrived there at last, almost on the point of exhaustion, Grundy & Co. were resting on their oars in readiness for the signal to start.

"For goodness' sake buck up, you men!" panted Tom Merry, glaring round at his heated followers. "My hat! What the thump is the matter with the dashed boat? It's like pulling a log of wood!"

"It was all right when we carried it out!" gasped Figgins. "I know that—I—I looked her over myself!" stuttered Tom. "It fairly beats cock-fighting. Perhaps some weeds have got stuck on the prow somehow!"

"The stern, you mean!" snorted Wally D'Arcy. "Great pip! The blessed boat's fairly wallowing, and I'm expecting it to sink under me any minute! And this rudder's playing monkey tricks, too!"

"Oh, my hat!"
 "Oh, bai Jove!"

Gaspings complaints went along the boat from end to end. But they had little time to exchange notes. The two boats were level at last, and Kildare's puzzled voice came from the bank.

"What's the matter there, Merry? Anything wrong?"
 "Goodness knows what it is!" called Tom dismally. "But the thumping boat's like a mudbarge, Kildare!"
 "Rot!" snorted Kildare. "Pull yourselves together, you young idiots! If you row like you did coming up to the starting-post you're booked for the licking of your lives! Ready?"

There followed a moment's wait, and then—
 Bang!
 They were off—at least, Grundy & Co. were off. Amid a terrific amount of splashing, and a confused medley of jumbled oars, Grundy's boat got away, their performance causing a howl of laughter.

But the laughter was stilled as it was seen that Tom Merry & Co. had made a far worse start. The junior crew had put in a lot of practice at quick starting, but somehow it did not materialise this time. Their boat rocked worse than Grundy's, and their time became surprisingly ragged. Within a few seconds they were half a length behind Grundy's craft, and a howl went up from the banks.

"Buck up, you silly owls! What's the matter with you?"
 "They've got some game on!" laughed Digby. "Silly asses! I suppose this is just to make the chaps laugh, and throw dust in Grundy's eyes."

It certainly seemed so. The crowd could account for it in no other way. Tom Merry & Co. were pulling Grundy's leg—allowing him to get ahead purposely just for a lark! Yet it did seem a silly way of doing it. Why, they'd finish by upsetting the boat, by the look of things!

"You silly young asses!" bawled Kildare. "What game do you think you're playing, Merry?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 The crowd entered into the joke, little realising the truth. They followed behind the trailing boat, trotting comfortably along the towing-path—indeed, there was scarcely need to trot to keep level with either crew.

It was the most remarkable race ever seen on the Rhy!—al, agreed upon that!

But the surprise was yet to come. Every moment the crowd expected to see Tom Merry & Co. cease their queer antics and start pulling in earnest, but that moment did not come.

Then, with startling unexpectedness, Tom Merry & Co.'s wildly rocking boat was suddenly seen to stagger and stop dead.

The result was inevitable. The boat had been moving at scarcely more than a snail's pace, but that convulsive jerk, just as if they'd run into a brick wall, as Blake described it afterwards, sent the crew tumbling helplessly back into each other.

Oars shot skywards, and for a moment the crowd on the towing-path held its breath in anticipation of seeing the slender shell capsize.

Followed a terrific roar.

"Look out, there!"

"What's the matter?"

"You'll be over!"

Tom Merry sat up dazedly and grasped his oar.

"Steady, you men!" shouted Wally D'Arcy desperately.

Fortunately, the crew kept their heads, and one by one, as the boat settled down again, they pulled themselves upright and feathered their oars.

"What on earth happened, Merry?" yelled Kildare from the bank.

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders wearily.

"Don't ask me, Kildare!" he called back. "The blessed boat's bewitched or something!"

"Well, if you can shift it, you'd better finish the course," returned the captain of St. Jim's. "Though it's all over now bar shouting!"

The truth of Kildare's words was obvious. With half the course run, Grundy's crew were a dozen lengths ahead.

The spectators were completely at a loss. It was only too evident now that Tom Merry & Co.'s amazingly poor display was not an attempt to pull Grundy's leg; but what the real explanation was, no one could guess.

With weary resignation the junior crew pulled at their oars again. Somewhat to their surprise, they found that the boat was moving, though only at its former sluggish pace.

Meanwhile, Grundy was almost beside himself with joy. They were winning—winning hands down! Never had the great George Alfred enjoyed such a delicious thrill, though his own boat seemed likely to capsize every moment. He yanked away at his oar with terrific drives, and his crew also put their beef into it, encouraged by the entrancing and amazing hope of victory. Keeping time seemed of little consequence to Grundy's crew, and their performance sent the crowd on the banks into fits of hysterical laughter.

But they were leading—that was all that mattered. The knowledge kept fellows like Trimble and Mellish plugging away with might and main, though they were bordering on collapse.

Tom Merry & Co. did their best, but it was hopeless. Amazing as it seemed, Grundy's crew of duds were beating the official well-trained and accomplished junior crew!

Kildare was almost frothing at the mouth as he saw Grundy & Co. nearing the winning-post, with Tom Merry's crew wearily, yet doggedly, plugging away twenty lengths behind. Every man in the boat looked as if he was in the last stages of exhaustion—as, indeed, he was!

They had finished complaining now; all their breath was needed in that desperate, hopeless fight.

It ended at last.
 There was a roar of voices, shrieks of merriment, and cheers! Then—

Bang!
 The race—if it could be called that—was over.
 And Grundy's despised crew of hopeless duffers had won!

CHAPTER 8.

The Anchor Weighed!

"HURRAH!"

"Three cheers for Grundy's crew!"

"Let 'em rip!"

"Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 The cheers sounded like gorgeous music in Grundy's ears. As for the laughter, he imagined it was due to Tom Merry & Co.'s pitiable effort.

He was whacked to the world; but he was not too far gone to miss making the most of this, the most triumphant moment of his life. He waved his hand in acknowledgment of the cheers from the bank. This magnificent gesture raised another storm of cheers and laughter.

His men lay in various postures that spelt exhaustion about their thwarts as the boat drifted with the stream beyond the winning-post.

"Well done, you men!" panted Grundy. "We've done it! My hat, we've done it! But this is only the beginning, chaps!"

"Ow, ow, ow!" gurgled Trimble. "I'm whacked! Still, we've won! It was worth it! He, he, he!" Trimble giggled hysterically. "Look at those cripples—only just passing the post!"

Grundy waved a disdainful hand back at Tom Merry's crew, and then he gave the order to move to the boathouse. It was a great moment for George Alfred Grundy. Not sharing Trimble and Mellish's secret, he was naturally highly elated at his victory. The rest were just as elated, but far more bewildered than elated. Why had Tom Merry allowed them to win? Was it possible that they were better oarsmen than they had imagined they were?

The boat reached the stage after a struggle, and Grundy, his honours thick upon him, stepped ashore and acknowledged fresh cheering. He showed a modest front, though his heart was thumping with joy. The boat was lifted and carried in, and laid on the trestles. The crew put their oars away, and went back to the stage, mopping heated brows, wet with honest toil. They badly wanted to see the defeated crew come in.

They were just in time. Grundy smiled as the rival crew tooled their boat sluggishly to the staging, and Tom Merry and his men staggered ashore.

"Well rowed, Tom Merry!" said Grundy, nodding cheerily. "Quite a good race! Can't expect to win always, what? I don't want to rub it in, but the best crew won, and you've met your Waterloo this time!"

Tom Merry did not answer. It was not like him to take a licking badly, but he certainly appeared to be very cross indeed now.

"Yes, you won, Grundy," he said shortly. "But there's something jolly wrong with our dashed boat! It was like pulling along a water-logged mudbarge! Let's have her in, chaps!" he rapped out.

Every fellow in the junior crew was scarlet with mortification. All around them were grinning faces, and others showing blank amazement. Nobody seemed to be able to understand the remarkable happening even yet.

It was just then that Kildare appeared on the scene.

"What the dickens was the matter with you, Merry, you young ass?" he snorted. "Is this a silly joke—or what? You rowed like a lot of sand bags! Have you been wasting my time over a thumping farce? It was bad enough—"

"We did our best!" snapped Tom. "There's something wrong with the boat! That's all! Let's get away from this, chaps—quick! Clear out of that, Trimble—get away there!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Trimble stood up again, a guilty flush over his fat face.

It had suddenly occurred to Trimble that it was very necessary to unhook the bucket before it was discovered. Really he ought to have thought of that before. He had already made one cautious attempt to get at it, but Blake had booted him away. Now, just as his hand was dipping into the water, Tom Merry had spotted him.

"Oh, really, Merry!" protested Trimble. "I was only—"

"Get away!" snapped Tom. "Can't you see we want to lift the boat out? Sheer off, you fat owl!"

"Oh crickey!"

There was no help for it—the eyes of dozens of fellows were upon him now. It was quite impossible to get near to the stern, even under the pretence of washing his fat hands again. Nor did he get the chance; for just then the long, slim racing craft was lifted from the water.

There was a yell.

"Hallo! What's that?"

Stretching taut from the stern was a length of rope that disappeared into the water.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Trimble.

Mellish vanished along the towing-path, hastily shoving his blazer on as he went. Mellish had come to the conclusion that it was time to go while the going was good. Baggy Trimble, however, remained gazing at that hanging length of rope as if fascinated.

"Lift her, chaps!" shouted Tom Merry. "Lift her, you silly asses! Why, she's as heavy as a barge! What the thump! Up with her!" he shouted crossly.

They gave another heave—several fellows rushed up to lend a hand. Then there was a roar as the bucket came up, water pouring from it as it swayed and rocked at the end of the rope!

The roar was followed by an instant's stupefied silence, and then a howl of hysterical laughter went up.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd fairly shrieked with helpless merriment as they sighted the bucket, swinging forlornly at the end of the rope. They understood now why Tom Merry's crew had lost, and why Grundy's crew had won!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What in thunder—" began Kildare; he stared as if thunderstruck at the "anchor!"

Tom Merry and his hapless crew very nearly dropped the boat in their amazement.

"Oh, great pip!" roared Blake. "So that's it!"

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

"Oh crumbs!" gurgled Grundy. "I—I say, who shoved that there, Tom Merry? Oh crumbs! What a rotten trick!"

"Who shoved it there!" choked Jack Blake, his face crimson with emotion. "Just you wait until I get my paws on the worm! I'll—I'll— Here, stop that fat rotter!"

Just in time, Blake had sighted Trimble sneaking away. The fat Fourth-Former had left his getaway too late—much too late! Bernard Glyn made a grab and collared him, and the next moment the boat was hurriedly lowered, and the furious, raging Tom Merry & Co. surrounded the tricky Trimble.

"It was Trimble! I'm certain it was!" yelled Tom Merry. "I saw him hanging about the stern just now—watching for a chance to unhook the rotten thing, I suppose!"

"Of course it was!" hooted Blake furiously. "I booted him away twice before we started out. I wondered what the fat rotter was up to, and he said he was washing his hands, the little sweep!"

"I saw him, too!" yelled Wally D'Arcy excitedly. "He did it, of course! Collar him! Smash him! Chuck him in the river!"

"That's it! Chuck him in the river!"

"Boil the fat rotter in oil!"

"Smash him!"

"Spifficate him!"

"Yaroooooop!" shrieked Trimble. "It wasn't me! Of course it wasn't! I know nothing about it! Ask Mellish! He'll tell you I don't!"

"You fat worm—"

"I tell you I'm innocent!" shrieked Trimble, struggling in the grasp of half a dozen raging oarsmen. "I know nothing about it! Ask Mellish! If he says it was me, and that it was all my idea, don't believe him! You know what a fibber he is!"

"Then it was you!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Of course not! Ain't I telling you it wasn't me?" howled Baggy. "Besides, it was Mellish's doing as much as mine! In fact he—"

"What's that?" roared Grundy, beginning to understand the meaning of it at last. "Did—did that fat rotter tie that bucket on your boat, Tom Merry?"

"Can't you see he did?" shouted Tom. "No wonder our boat was like a barge! No wonder we were jerked nearly out of our seats! That blessed bucket must have got

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entangled in something! Great Scott! And we've nearly broken our backs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no laughing matter!" shrieked Blake. "I never had such an awful time in my life! Smash him!"

"Into the river with the fat worm!"

"Yaas, wathah!" shouted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Even the usually good-natured Gussy was feeling ferocious.

"Leave him to me!" bawled Grundy. "We've won, of course, and what Trimble's done could have made little difference! Still—"

"What?" It was a yell!

"No difference at all in the long run!" explained Grundy. "We should have licked you just the same. Still, it was a rotten trick, and as Trimble's a member of my crew, I'll deal with him!"

"Yaroooooop!"

Trimble shrieked as George Alfred Grundy rushed at him.

At the same moment all the members of Tom Merry's crew went for Trimble.

The fat schemer of St. Jim's disappeared from sight under a billowing, rocking mass of avengers! Faint shrieks came from the scrum—Trimble's voice raised in muffled but frantic appeals and howls. Grundy's bellowing rang out above all the uproar, while the hilarious crowd simply yelled with laughter. The seriousness of Trimble's scheme to win the race was quite lost to them in the humour of the situation.

Fortunately, law and order was at hand in the shape of Kildare, Darrell, and a couple more prefects—though they found it difficult to restrain their laughter. The simplicity of the bucket scheme, the absurdity of it all, seemed to cover over the shady side of it, and made it ludicrous and a subject for laughter.

They rushed into the scrum, and, after a struggle, succeeded in rescuing Trimble—and he certainly required rescuing. He was a wreck! He tottered away along the towing-path schoolwards escorted by Darrell and Baker of the Sixth, both grinning widely.

By this time Bates and his assistant had recovered the bucket, the rope, and the hook, and the crew, panting and breathless still, carried their ship in, despite Grundy's protests.

"I tell you I'm perfectly willing to row it off again if you fellows demand it!" bawled George Alfred. "In fact, under the circumstances, I think it will be best and fairest!"

"Oh, shut up!"

"What?"

"Cheese it, you born idiot!" snorted Tom Merry. "Can't you see the whole thing's a farce?"

"Farce! What the thump are you talking about?" hooted Grundy. "You don't mean to say that you're going to question my victory?"

"Rats! Don't be a silly ass!" said Blake. "Can't you see that we should have wiped you up but for that rotten trick, you born idiot?"

Grundy nearly fell down.

"What?" he bawled. "You refuse to own up that we licked you?"

"Of course!"

"Then I demand that the race be rowed again!" shouted Grundy. "I can understand your objecting, in the circumstances, and I'm willing to row it over again! You hear that, Kildare?"

"Yes, I hear!" said Kildare grimly. "And if I ever catch you in a racing craft again, Grundy, I'll give you a licking you won't forget in a hurry!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy stuttered with wrath and amazement.

"Well, my—my hat!" he gabbled. "Mean to say you refuse to let the race be rowed again?"

"Just that!" snapped Kildare. "The way you hopeless duffers managed that boat was a sight to make the angels weep! Mr. Railton asked me to give you a trial, and I did! But never again, Grundy! I expected you to wreck that boat twenty times at least, and I'm not going through such a nerve-racking experience again! The boat was half-full of water when you'd finished, and it was a miracle it wasn't swamped a score of times! I'm responsible for these boats, and you'll not enter another racing shell while I'm skipper, Grundy! Got that?"

"Why, you—you—"

"That's enough! I shall explain the matter to Mr. Railton, and I'll give Bates final instructions, Grundy! You can use one of the fixed-seat boats if you must act the goat on the river! But you've finished with racing craft, Grundy! That's final!"

And Kildare walked away, frowning.

"Well!" ejaculated Grundy. "Well, upon my word! What do you fellows think about that for a rotten injustice? I never thought old Kildare was jealous of my abilities! But it's pretty plain he is!"



"Great pip! Look!" Yells of amazement came from the Grammarians as they gazed at the "girls" crew in the water—their wigs floating around them

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You cackling rotters!" spluttered Grundy. "Blessed if I can see anything to laugh at! Here I win a race after a magnificent fight, and this is what I get! Of all the—the—the—"

Words failed Grundy. He shoved on his blazer and glared at Tom Merry, who was grinning now.

"You wait!" he gasped. "I'm not done yet! I shall defy that awful ass, Kildare! I'm going right ahead with my training. I've licked you, Tom Merry, and now I'm going to lick the Grammarians! You wait!"

And Grundy tramped away along the towing-path, seething with indignation at the sheer, disgraceful injustice of it all. A final yell of laughter followed him. But Grundy did not heed it. The race had been rowed, and it had been won, and George Alfred told himself that it was to be the first of many victories!

CHAPTER 9. Trimble Again!

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY was a stickler; nobody who knew him questioned that fact. Despite its ending, George Alfred persisted in looking upon the race as a brilliant victory for his crew. For days he went about with his head in the clouds and a look of lofty pride on his rugged face. Fellows ragged him and chipped him, but it made no difference. True, Baggy Trimble, a member of his crew at the time, had done a dirty trick. But it really had no effect on the issue—according to Grundy. His crew would have won just the same! Wilkins and Gunn, after several unfortunate attempts to show the affair in a different light, gave it up as a bad job.

Grundy respected Kildare's orders in so far as he did not attempt to take a racing craft out. But he took his crew out every day for practice spins in a fixed-seat boat—a proceeding neither Kildare nor Tom Merry could object to. Trimble, of course, had been dropped from the crew—a result of his scheming that filled Baggy with utter dismay

and disappointment. He missed the loans and feeds provided by the generous Grundy badly. He mourned for them, and would not be comforted. And so far from Grundy's relenting, he kicked Trimble every time he saw him. He blamed Trimble for the fact that his great victory was not officially recognised.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry's crew was out every day, training hard for the coming race. They saw little of the Grammarians, who practised above the locks far up the river. Nor did they see much of the Spalding Hall crew, who also practised on a different stretch of the river still, rarely coming downstream. But once or twice Tom had seen them out, and the way they shaped had made him look very thoughtful.

He had long ago received the official challenge from the girls' crew, as had Gordon Gay from the Grammar School, and all details and arrangements for the race had been fixed up between Lady Peggy Brooke, Gordon Gay, and Tom. As Miss Fincen, the headmistress of the school, was still ignorant of the girls' ambitious intentions, the matter was, of course, kept as secret as possible.

Lady Peggy and her chum had at first declined to receive a start in the proposed race at all. But Tom Merry and Gordon Gay, in their smiling superiority, had insisted upon ten lengths being given them. And that, finally, had been settled upon.

But Tom Merry often wondered if they were not risking a lot by being so generous. It would be really horrid to be licked by a crew of girls! He shuddered at the thought of it. Still, the race was arranged now, and they would have to make the best of the result whatever it was.

It was on the morning of the day fixed for the annual race that Baggy Trimble happened to come upon Grundy in the passage outside the door of Study No. 10. Grundy was seated on the linoleum, looking very dazed and very dishevelled, and he was raging. Quite obviously Grundy had been thrown out of the Terrible Three's study—not an unusual happening by any means!

Trimble chuckled.

It was a mystery to most of the fellows why Grundy was training his crew so hard. He could not hope to enter for the race; Kildare's fiat was still in force, so there was no possible hope of that so far as the fellows knew. Nor were Gordon Gay and Tom Merry likely ever to agree to it, in any case.

But Trimble knew why! Grundy was still hopeful that a chance would present itself—somehow. He had spent long hours thinking the problem out, but the great day—what Grundy looked upon as his great day—had arrived at last, and he was as far off solving his problem as ever. He could scarcely collar a racing boat belonging to the Fifth or Sixth after what Kildare had said. Yet something had to be done!

Trimble knew this, and he had a good suspicion why Grundy was seated on the lineoleum outside Study No. 10 now. Grundy had been "at it" again; he had been worrying Tom Merry in a last desperate attempt to persuade that harassed youth to allow him to row. Possibly he had tried to insist upon his rights with his fists; indeed, Grundy's appearance gave colour to that supposition.

"He, he, he!" sniggered Trimble. "I say, Grundy, have they chucked you out again? You're an awful ass, you know! They'll never let you row in the race! He, he, he!"

"You—you—you—" Grundy choked with wrath. It was entirely owing to Trimble that his victory had gone unrecognised by the powers that were. But for Trimble, Grundy's crew would now be the official crew to meet the Grammar School and Spalding Hall that day. It was owing to Baggy that he was seated on the lineoleum now, feeling as if he had been in an earthquake.

"He, he, he!" went on Trimble. "I say, Grundy, I've got an— Oh crikey!"

Trimble turned and bolted, just escaping Grundy's furious clutch as he went.

Grundy followed him, raging. Once again Tom Merry had turned down his just demands, and he was bitterly disappointed. But, at least, he could take it out of Trimble's hide!

He tore after Baggy, who fairly flew, yelling as he ran. Realising he could not hope to outdistance Grundy, Baggy bolted into the box-room at the end of the passage, and slammed the door, feeling frantically for the key.

Unfortunately for him it was not there, and the next moment Grundy's powerful shoulders had sent the door flying inwards, and Trimble was in his grasp.

"Now, you fat rotter!" panted Grundy. "I'll show you! Cackle at me, would you?"

"Yarroooh!" wailed Trimble. "Lemme go, you beast! I say, stop! I've got news for you, Grundy—I've got a great idea!"

"You fat sweep—" "I tell you I have!" shrieked Trimble. "It's a wheeze—a ripping idea to get you in the race this afternoon! Yooop! Leggo!"

Grundy paused, his grasp still on the fat junior.

"What d'you mean, you fat clam?" he roared. "Cough it up, or I'll smash you! Quick!"

"Yow—leggo, then! It's all right. Lemme go and I'll tell you, Grundy!"

Grundy released him, but kept his back to the door. If Trimble had a wheeze that would enable him to get his cherished desire he would be only too jolly glad to hear it. Trimble fumbled in his inside pocket and produced a crumpled, fingered envelope. He opened it and handed Grundy a note that was inside the envelope.

Grundy took it and read it before he quite grasped what its contents were. It was on Spalding Hall notepaper, and it ran as follows:

"Dear Tom Merry,—Alas, our game is up! Miss F. has discovered all about our rowing, and has forbidden us to take part in the race to-day. Isn't it too frightful? We're all detained, and will not be able to row, of course. So dreadfully sorry, as we were so looking forward to giving you and those Grammar School fellows a thorough trouncing on the river! But we're not done yet; some other time we'll meet you and beat you! Will you please let Gordon Gay know in time?"

"In great haste.—Yours, etc.

"PEGGY BROOKE.

"P.S.—Hope you have a good race, and may the best crew win!"

"Well, my hat!" gasped Grundy. Then his rugged, honest face went red with wrath and disgust. "Here, this letter's addressed to Tom Merry!" he exploded suddenly.

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"And I've read it, and—and—" He shook Trimble until the fat junior's teeth rattled in his head.

"Yarroooh! Stop it!" yelled Trimble. "Of course—"

"It's addressed to Tom Merry, and you've opened it, you fat rotter!" gasped Grundy. "Well, you little worm! How did you get hold of it?"

"Yow! It—it came open in my hand!" gurgled Trimble.

"A girl—a young kid from Spalding Hall gave it me in the lane—asked me to give it to Tom Merry!"

"And you've opened it and read it!" snorted Grundy.

"Why, you little—"

"Yow-ow! Stop sh-shaking me!" wailed Trimble. "I did it for your sake! At least, I mean it came open in my hand and I couldn't help reading it. I say, Grundy, can't you sus-see a ripping idea in it?"

"What d'you mean, you little rotter?"

"Promise to lemme join your crew again and I'll tell you!" gasped Trimble eagerly. "I've got a ripping idea!"

"Cough it up—I'll promise you nothing!" hooted Grundy.

"Out with it before I lam you!"

"I—I say, but look here— Yow! Oh, all right! I say, why not keep that letter back, and race this afternoon in the girls' place?"

"Wha-at? Don't talk rot!"

"Easy as winking!" said Trimble excitedly. "You can hire some girls' togs, and you can make yourself up as them. Out on the river nobody'll tell the difference, I bet! See the wheeze?"

"Phew!" Grundy's mouth fell open as Trimble's latest wheeze soaked in.

"Mum-my hat!" he gasped. "What a—what a wheeze!"

"Ripping—what?" chortled Trimble. "I say, you'll kick out Scrope from the crew now and gimme my place back, eh?"

"I'll give you my boot, you sneaking little rotter!" snorted Grundy. "You've made me read something I'd no right to read, you awful rotter! Take that—"

"Yoooop!"

"And that—"

"Yarroooh!"

Trimble flew through the doorway, and collapsed in the passage with another howl. But he scrambled up again like lightning as Grundy made a rush out after him.

"Here—yooop!—keep off, you awful beast! Gimme my— Yoooop!"

Trimble fled, narrowly missing another kick from Grundy's boot as he went. Grundy was really furious at having been led into reading another fellow's letter. He decided that Trimble deserved to be kicked, and, therefore, Grundy kicked him. But Grundy did not take the letter along to Tom Merry—that was a different matter entirely, in Grundy's valuable opinion. That letter would be duly delivered, of course—when the race was over. It would never do to let Tom Merry know its contents now.

Grundy chuckled his satisfaction. Trimble's idea was really a corker! Of course, he would have thought of it on hearing that the girls were not able to row. So he owed Trimble nothing. Actually it was his idea as much as Trimble's; it was just the sort of idea that would have occurred to him. And the end justified the means; for the sake of St. Jim's he was perfectly justified in holding the letter back in order to carry out his great wheeze!

He had plenty of money, and there was still time to rush over and purchase or hire togs and make-up. The race was not until four, and dinner was only just over. Good! But not a moment was to be lost. He had to get the clobber, and hide it somewhere in the woods, and he had to break the news to his crew and give them their instructions.

So Grundy rushed off in high feather, his hopes once more raised high. It was going to be his great day, after all!

CHAPTER 10.

Many a Slip!

"NO signs of those girls yet, Merry!"

"No; they're bound to turn up, though!"

"You're sure they know the time, kid?"

"Yes, Kildare!" said Tom, frowning.

"Well, they'll have to buck up; it's close on four now!" grunted Kildare. "Anyway, you'd better be getting ready. I see the Grammarians are already out!"

And Kildare bustled away.

There was a hum of cheery voices along the shining Rhyl. Cold as it was, a big crowd had collected, for the annual race for the leadership of the river always created the keenest interest. But this year it was greatly intensified by the addition of a new crew—the Spalding Hall girls.

Naturally, perhaps the majority of the fellows looked upon their inclusion in the race as all "rot," and a piece

of fearful cheek into the bargain. That they could hope to stand the ghost of a chance even with ten lengths' start was absurd on the face of it.

But neither Tom Merry nor Gordon Gay felt at all sure about that. Gay, in fact, was more uneasy about the ten lengths' start than Tom—simply because he had seen much more of the girls' practices. It would be too awful for words if the girls did win!

It was within a minute or two of four o'clock now, and there was no sign of the Spalding Hall crew. Yet, from the fact that Spalding Hall girls swarmed along the towing-path, it was clear that they intended to compete.

So far as Tom Merry knew, nothing had happened to prevent them. Yet he remembered that when speaking to Lady Peggy and her chums several days ago, the girls had mentioned that Miss Finch was getting suspicious.

Had the principal of the school "tumbled" and forbidden them to take part in the race? Tom hoped not. He admired the pluck and spirit of the girls greatly, and he really hoped they would put up a good fight.

"No signs of 'em yet!" said George Figgins, coming along just then. "Looks as if they're dished, Tom!"

"Better get our boat out, anyway!" said Tom, calling to his men.

The St. Jim's craft was soon carried out, and all made shipshape for the race. Then Tom glanced anxiously along the gleaming river, hoping to see the girls' boat appear.

He knew their plans well enough. The boat they used was one hired from an Abbotsford firm, and they kept it at Wayland boathouse. But on the night before the race they intended to house it in readiness at Claxton's, the boat-repairers, only a mile along the river from the St. Jim's boathouse.

But there were no signs yet of the Spalding Hall crew on the shining Rhyl.

Tom was just giving the word to board the St. Jim's boat, however, when a yell went up:

"Here they come! Give 'em a cheer, chaps!"

The cheer was given with a will, and, looking round, Tom sighted a racing craft that had just come round the bend from the direction of Claxton's. A glance was enough for Tom. Instead of the usual white vests, the crew were in dark blue!

"Here they come—good!" said Tom, eyeing the approaching crew critically. "My hat, they're shaping badly to-day, and no mistake!"

(Continued on next page.)



The Oracle wishes to inform all readers that he is not entering the competition on pages 14 and 15 of this issue, and therefore gives others a chance of winning one of the topping prizes.

Q.—Who invented the bagpipes?

A.—Walter Heep, of Finsbury Park, says there's a man in his road learning to play them, and he wants to do something about it. "If I could only get hold of the chap—" writes Walter—and you can see that he is almost trembling with rage as he writes. Well, Walter, they do say learning the pipes is very difficult, and some think it a pity it's not impossible. But after dipping my whiskers into all kinds of books of reference, I've failed to trace either the name or address of the man who started the trouble. "The origin of the bagpipes," so I find, "may be sought in remote antiquity." It's been going on for a long time, Walter, but cheer up, and learn the cornet, that's pretty awful, too.

Q.—What is a griffin?

A.—A griffin, or griffon, Tom Walls, of Leeds, is, or was, an imaginary animal invented by the ancients to frighten people



The griffin that stands at the Temple Bar, London.

from robbing their gold-mines and treasures. Nobody has ever seen one alive, or even stuffed, but you will often see this weird and wonderful-looking object on coats of arms. He has a lion's body, and the head, wings, and claws of an eagle, and usually has one leg in the air as though preparing for a barn-dance. There's one to be found in London—at the Temple Bar, in fact—and this one our "Gem" artist has illustrated for you.

Q.—What does "sic" mean in a sentence?

A.—This is a Latin word meaning "thus" or "so." It's often printed after a doubtful word or phrase to indicate that the word or phrase is quoted exactly as in the original. The full Latin is "Sic originali," meaning "thus in the original." I'm a dab at the classics, old top. I once won a fishing-net and a jam-jar at our school for the best Latin construe.

Q.—To whom do we owe summer-time?

A.—The man who suggested altering the clocks during summer for daylight-saving purposes was W. Willett, who died in 1912.

Q.—Is there such a thing as an indoor aviator?

A.—Yes, "Phunny Phiz"—a hotel lift-boy!

Q.—Who called himself the Perfect Warrior?

A.—A gentleman named Jenghiz Khan, a famous Mongol ruler of the twelfth century. History depicts him, S. J. H., as a cruel, barbaric, elegant, thieving conqueror who subdued the whole of China and some of the bordering countries as well. His countenance, from what records we have of it, must have frightened whole towns into subjection.

Q.—Where is Fujiyama?

A.—In Japan, Wilfred Mayes, of Stoke. It is a dormant volcano, very sacred to the Japanese, and probably the most popular subject for pictures of Jap artists,

Q.—What is a lych-gate?

A.—I dare say you've walked through several, Harry Wilde, of Hammersmith, and you've no doubt seen those roofed-in gateways, like porches, leading into churchyards. They are called lych-gates, lych being from an old English word meaning "corpse." The idea of the roof was to shelter the pall-bearers, and perhaps the clergyman, while he read the service. Sometimes in old lych-gates you will find large flat stones, called lych-stones. They laid the corpse on these stones in the old days, often uncoffined, before burial. The path along which the



An old lych-gate.

corpse was carried was called the lych-way, and the bell they rang at the burial was known as the lych-bell.

Q.—What is a haggis?

A.—This query, from P. G., of Streatham, savours of the Gaelic. No, P. G., it is not the haggis you hear, wailing like furious tomcats, at the Highland Games. Walter will tell you all about that. The haggis is a dish prepared from the heart, liver, and lungs of a calf or sheep, seasoned with pepper and onions, mixed with suet and oatmeal, and boiled in the animal's stomach-bag. It has been a popular item on the menu north of the Tweed for many years, and many of the victims have survived by coming South, where the haggis is rarely found. Personally, I've never sampled a haggis myself. Give me boiled beef and carrots, it's safer!

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Others had noticed that, too, and chuckles and grins went along the towing-path. Certainly the girls were rowing badly—or so it seemed. There was neither precision nor skill in their awkward movements, and the boat was fairly wallowing along.

Kildare came up to the juniors, smiling.

"If that's the Spalding Hall crew you haven't much to worry about, Merry!" he laughed. "I thought they were a bit better than that!"

"They—they must be spoofing; pulling our legs!" gasped Tom.

The boat splashed its way opposite the boathouse at last. Kildare gave the crew a shout.

"Pull along to the flag there and get ready!" he called, "That's your ten lengths. Time to start!"

Back came a shrill answer—a trifle too shrill. As usual, George Alfred Grundy was overdoing it!

"No fear!" he called, in what he fondly imagined was an imitation of Lady Peggy Brooke's voice. "We don't want any start at all. We'll lick any crew on this river on level terms, or not at all!"

Tom Merry jumped. He felt he knew that voice, shrill as it was. But it was not Lady Peggy's—far from it! Nor was the rather burly figure in stroke's seat Lady Peggy's slim form. Moreover, this girl's hair was a flaming red, instead of a golden-tinted auburn. On top of this, he could not, for the life of him, recognise one of the other members of the crew in gym dresses and bobbed hair; and he was quite startled.

So were his chums.

"That's not the Spalding Hall crew!" gasped Lowther. "At least, it can't be Lady Peggy's crew! Look at stroke—"

"Rather a hefty-looking lot!" grinned Levison, a curious grin on his face. "And that girl at No. 4 weighs a bit, I bet!"

Every fellow in the Grammar School boat was staring at the new crew in puzzled wonder. They had a much clearer view than those on the bank, and they were perplexed, knowing Lady Peggy and her chums well enough.

"This beats cock-fighting!" said Tom Merry, frowning. "If the crew's been changed, Lady Peggy should have told us—Hullo! Oh, my hat!"

Tom had suddenly sighted a figure coming along the towing-path in great haste. It was a short lady, prim and severe, wearing glasses and carrying an umbrella. He

recognised, with a thrill of dismay, Miss Finch, the headmistress of Spalding Hall School.

She fairly hurled her way through the startled crowd.

Almost at once she sighted the crew in gym costume out in the river, and she stepped to the edge of the staging and waved her gamp.

"Stop! Girls, bring that boat to this staging at once. Do you hear me? I forbid you to row in this race! Stop!"

Her shrill voice rang out across the water. All the figures in the boat out in midstream turned their heads, startled.

"Miss Finch—" began Kildare, hurrying forward.

"Those rebellious girls must come ashore at once!" stormed Miss Finch, turning on Kildare in great anger. "I have forbidden them to row—I strongly disapprove of girls rowing at all! They were detained this afternoon, and they have defied me and broken detention!"

"But, ma'am—" began Kildare again; but Miss Finch raised her hand.

"I wish to hear nothing from you, sir! Doubtless you have encouraged those foolish girls in their rebellious conduct! I insist that they come ashore at once, and they shall be punished severely for this disgraceful disobedience."

She turned upon Bates, the old boatman.

"My man, you will go out and bring in that boat without delay. I will, of course, pay you for your trouble. But those girls must be brought ashore at once!"

Old Bates scratched his chin and looked at Kildare, who was flushing uncomfortably. While they hesitated, Miss Finch waved her gamp again to the crew out on the water.

"Girls, I order you to come ashore this instant! Peggy Brooke—Ethel—Doris—Maud, obey me this instant!" she almost shrieked.

"Rats!" came back the answer in a surprisingly gruff voice for a girl. "Go and eat coke!"

Miss Finch nearly fell into the river. She shook with wrath. Being very shortsighted, she had no doubts as to the identities of the crew. But she was astounded at the reply to her order. It certainly was not ladylike, at all events; nor was it polite and respectful!

She flounced round on Bates again, her eyes gleaming with wrath.

"Never have I been so insulted—treated with such gross impudence, by my girls!" she gasped. "My man, go out and bring in that boat at once; otherwise I shall report this matter to Dr. Holmes!"

"My heye!"

"You'd better go, Bates," said Kildare, frowning in exasperation. "Persuade them to come in, if you can. Here, I will go with you!"

One or two skiffs were tied up at the far end of the landing-stage, and Bates and Kildare boarded one and pushed off. They pulled out towards the racing shell, Bates pulling and Kildare steering. They stopped at last within a yard or so of the racing boat. Kildare frowned. He did not know one of the crew in gym costumes.

"You've got to come ashore, girls," said Kildare kindly. "I'm sorry; it's jolly hard lines! But Miss Finch insists, and unless you want trouble all round, I should come!"

Grundy glared, quite forgetting whom he was supposed to be in that moment of horrified dismay. Was all his time and trouble to be wasted, after all? In the very moment of victory—Grundy firmly believed that victory was already in his grasp!—was this interfering female, Miss Finch, to muck up all his chances?

Never!

He gave a roar.

"Go and eat coke, Kildare!" he bawled, to the alarm of his crew and the utter amazement of all within hearing.

"What the thump are you shoving your oar in for, you cheeky rotter? Sheer off, can't you?"

"G-good gad!" stuttered Kildare.

He nearly fell down in the boat. That voice; he knew that voice only too well! He had not recognised one of the crew in the boat; but the stroke at least seemed strangely, weirdly familiar to him.

Now he knew. Grundy's voice had done it!

"Grundy!" he yelled. "What the—the—"

"Sheer off!" hooted Grundy, trembling so much with rage that his bobbed mass of ginger hair fairly shook. "If you don't sheer off I'll dot you on the nut with this oar, prefect or no prefect!"

"Good gad!" ejaculated Kildare. "You—you cheeky, daring young sweep! I see it all now!" He stood up in the boat again, grasped a boathook, and swiftly hooked it on to Grundy's rowlock, Bates having already pulled the boat nearer. "Here, you're coming out of that, my pippin! You're not mucking this race up if I can help it!"

Grundy jumped up in the wobbling boat, his face, covered as it was with grease-paint and make-up, recognisable enough to Kildare now. Reaching over, he grabbed the end of the boathook, and unhooked it.



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The crowd on the banks were staring out at the scene in amazed bewilderment. Miss Finch shrieked as she sighted Grundy standing up in the wildly-wobbling shell.

But she soon had something more to shriek about!

As Grundy shoved off the boathook, Kildare just as quickly hooked it on again, his face set grimly. He was not likely to be defied by a fellow like Grundy!

Then Grundy grabbed the boathook again, and gave a furious wrench, trying to take it from Kildare's strong hand. But the captain of St. Jim's held on, though he was nearly dragged overboard in doing so.

The crowd gazed in speechless astonishment. That Kildare could play such a risky tug-of-war game with a



With yells of laughter ringing in their burning ears, the disguised Grundy & Co. fled into the House!

girl fairly startled them. But the tug-of-war did not last long; it only lasted a couple of seconds, in fact. For, reaching the limit of his patience, Kildare also gave a wrench—a terrific wrench that pulled Grundy clean overboard!

Splash!

Again Miss Finch shrieked, and the next moment she shrieked still louder in horror, and her shriek was echoed by yells of alarm as the flimsy racing craft turned turtle. With the unskilful oarsmen holding their blades at all angles—mostly pointing skywards, it was a marvel it had not turned turtle before. But the sudden jerk, and release of Grundy's weight, did the trick.

There was a series of terrific splashes, wild yells and gurgles, and shouts of alarm from the bank. The next moment the supposed girls were floundering in deep and cold water.

"Good gad!" gasped Kildare. "Some of these chaps—quick, Bates!"

He himself hauled first Tompkins and then Boulton aboard. By that time the Grammarian boat had shot nearer, and the crew were just about to take headers to the rescue when Gay caught sight of Grundy's head, devoid now of his gingery wig, which was floating in the water.

Other wigs had come adrift, too, and made short work of grease-paint and other make-up.

"Great pip!" yelled Gordon Gay in stupefied amazement. "It's that fool Grundy—Grundy and his silly crew got up as girls! Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" The Grammarians howled as they gazed at the dismal, terrified, and yelling forms in gym dresses that still floundered in the water.

"The heartless cads!" hissed Tom Merry, who had leaped into a boat with Figgins and Blake and was pulling swiftly to the rescue. "Fancy laughing at the poor girls! The cads!"

"Yes, rather!" said Figgy. "Look! Oh, great jumping crackers! It—it's Grundy's lot!" he ended, with a terrific howl of astonishment.

The truth dawned upon them then, and the amazing news was yelled out to the startled crowd on the bank. By the time the drenched Grundy & Co. had been rescued and landed, the whole towing-path was in an uproar of laughter. Miss Finch's horror and alarm changed to amazement and indignant wrath as she realised that it was all an "outrageous hoax," as she termed it, and after storming for some moments she flounced away and vanished.

"Now, Grundy," gasped Kildare grimly at last, "what does this mean, you footling imbecile! Whose boat is this?"

"Blessed if I know!" panted Grundy, almost exploding with rage and bitter disappointment. "Oh, you—you rotter, Kildare! This is the second time you've done me down, you—you—"

"But why on earth—" yelled Kildare.

"Can't you see?" hooted Grundy. "It was my only chance of proving what I could do, wasn't it? I heard that those girls were detained and couldn't come, and Trimble told me their plans and where their boat was waiting—at Claxton's. So I thought of this idea, and we've taken their places; and now, you—you—you—"

Grundy choked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you—you born idiot!" gasped Kildare. "Clear off—clear off before I do the world a service and drown you! Clear off, the lot of you, and get changed—sharp!"

"But look here—"

"Clear!" roared Kildare.

And Grundy & Co. cleared; they ambled away along the towing-path, looking ludicrous sights in their drenched gym

outfits and weirdly decorated faces and close-cropped hair. Shouts of helpless laughter followed them. It was proving Grundy's great day—though in a way he would never have chosen himself!

"They had scarcely gone, and the laughter was just dying down, when a shout went up:

"Here they come!"

It was Cousin Litch & Co.—at last! Lady Peggy led the way, cheery, but determined. The girls came trotting along the towing path, trim and businesslike in their neat outfits, and a rousing cheer greeted them.

"Oh, good!" shouted Tom Merry. "So you've turned up after all! We heard you'd been detained!"

"So we were!" panted Lady Peggy, with a chuckle. "But we've broken detention! We should have been here in good time, but some cheeky girls have actually collared our boat and gone off somewhere with— Why, there it is!" she broke off, pointing at the boat which several seniors were just landing and emptying of water. "What—who—why—"

"We'll tell you the story later!" laughed Tom Merry. "But it's just as well you did come later, or you'd have been caught nicely. Miss Finch has just been and gone! So—"

"Oh dear!" gasped Doris Levison. "Then we're safe enough to take part in the race now? Good!"

"Ripping!" agreed Tom Merry, with a cheery laugh. "Grundy has his uses, after all! But for him you'd have been packed off back to school by now. Instead, he was packed off. Three cheers for Grundy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And while the hapless Grundy trudged away with his dripping, dismal crew, little dreaming how useful he had been for once, preparations were made for the great race, and a hush settled upon the course.

CHAPTER 11.

The Race!

BANG!

They were off!

Most of the crowd had congregated by the flag which marked the starting-point for the Spalding Hall crew, and a cheer went up as all three crews got away well, rowing beautifully together. From the way they shaped in the first few minutes it had the appearance of being a keen and interesting race.

"Go it, St. Jim's!"

"Bend to it, Grammar School!"

"Well rowed, Spaldingites!"

The crowded mass of fellows—with here and there an equally excited group of Spalding Hall girls who had miraculously appeared from nowhere—went plunging and galloping downstream, yelling themselves hoarse in their excitement.

Not an inch appeared to be gained by either crew as yet. The Grammar School and St. Jim's were rowing neck-and-neck, fighting desperately every inch of the way. Ahead of them—still ten lengths—the gallant Spalding Hall crew of girls pluggd away with a sharp precision and neat oarsmanship that brought roars of admiration and encouragement from the crowd.

Right up the half-way post it was a ding-dong struggle between the Grammar School and St. Jim's, both crews being fairly evenly matched, and both crews being equally determined to win. Moreover, each crew now had the additional fear of being licked by the girls—a really horrid thought, much as they admired the girls.

But, alas! for the hopes of Spalding Hall. Superior strength and longer training was bound to tell sooner or later; and it did. Once past the half-way post the girls began to lose their neat oarsmanship; their time began to suffer, and their rowing began to be ragged.

"Keep it up, Spalding Hall!"

"Keep it up, girls!" came shrieks from their chums on the bank.

But they had shot their bolt, though they stuck it doggedly. And foot by foot the two boys' crews began to creep up and overtake them.

Grammar School spurred first, and they crept ahead of their rivals swiftly—so swiftly that howls and shrieks came from the Saints on the banks, imploring Tom Merry to spurt. And the next moment he did spurt, and there followed a desperate ding-dong struggle.

But the Saints won it. In twenty yards they were ahead, leading by half a length; in another twenty they were a length ahead, nosing up to the stern of the Spalding boat. They were almost level now, the girls plugging away desperately still, showing no signs that they intended to give in, whether beaten or not.

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The Saints were past the girls now, every man in the boat rowing a magnificent race. The Grammarians hung on to them grimly, doggedly, and soon they also were past the plucky girls' crew. Strength and long training was all in the favour of the two boys' crews. It was obvious to all now, if it had not been before, that the Spalding Hall crew were out of the race. Yet they plugged on with remarkable courage, not relaxing their desperate efforts for one moment.

Over three-quarters of the course run now. Wild cheers and shrieks of joy came from the St. Jim's supporters galloping along the banks, but they were drowned by a mad roar from the Grammarians as Gordon Gay & Co. made another magnificent attempt to get on level terms.

"Hurrah! Good for you, Gay! Go it, you cripples!" came the roar. "Up—up—up! Pick it up!"

The Grammarian craft seemed to eat up the intervening space between the two boats hungrily, amid a perfect bedlam of sound. They were level now, but Tom Merry gave no sign. There were still three hundred yards to go, and he had already taken the measure of his rivals.

The Grammarians gained not an inch more. For several yards they raced neck-and-neck, and then young Wally gave a confident yell.

"Now, you beggars—get on to it! Use your legs! Up—up—up! Oh, good men!"

They were going up again—Tom Merry's delayed spurt came at last. Desperately, Gordon Gay tried to respond, but it was useless. The Saints already had them beaten. Two of Gay's men were cracking up, and Gay realised it with a groan of despair. They were splashing wildly, and the boat was rocking. Its former rhythm and swing were gone.

Tom Merry & Co.'s magnificent effort was slackening off a trifle now. But they had gained the lead again, and they kept it. The two boats swept along towards the winning-post—terribly near now. Three lengths behind them toiled the plucky Spalding Hall girls, game to the last, and still cheered hysterically by their schoolfellows, and a good many of the Saints and Grammarians.

Less than a hundred yards to go now, and Wally D'Arcy's shrill voice rose to a scream:

"Now, you potato diggers!" he shrieked. "Now! Give her ten—ten of the best! You've got them—let 'em rip! Up—up—up—"

And Tom Merry & Co. gave them, though their hearts were thumping madly, like giant hammers, and their staring eyes half-blinded with sweat.

Then—

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Three sharp reports announcing the finish—and that St. Jim's had won.

The race was over. Amid rousing cheers, Tom Merry & Co. rested on their oars, done to the world. Then came more cheers as Gordon Gay & Co. rowing like men in a dream, came past the post. And after them came the Spalding Hall crew—doggedly plugging away to the last, though their rowing now was a sight to watch.

"Let 'em have it!" shouted Kildare from the bank. "Three jolly good cheers for the girls, you men! They've earned 'em!"

The Grammarians and the Saints joined in with a terrific yell of cheering that brought deep flushes to the faces of the panting, exhausted Lady Peggy and her gallant crew. They had lost, but they had made a gallant fight for it to the very last, and covered themselves with glory.

Miss Finch got to hear about it, of course. But when she learned of the plucky fight her girls had put up, she was filled with pride, and she forgave the disobedience and daring escapade of Lady Peggy and her crew there and then.

The troubles of Grundy & Co. did not end with their misadventure on the river. When they arrived at the secluded spot in the woods where they had left their ordinary attire, they found it bare—the clothes had gone! Trimble, had had his revenge on Grundy by removing the clobber and taking it back to St. Jim's, and Grundy & Co. were obliged to run back to school in their drenched feminine attire. There they found a swarm of fellows, let into the joke, awaiting them, and Grundy & Co. fled indoors with yells and howls ringing in their burning ears.

So ended Grundy's great day—a day he and his misguided crew were not likely to forget in a hurry. At all events that final fiasco damped Grundy's ardour very effectually—it quite killed his ambition to shine as an oarsman. Which was just as well, perhaps, for more reasons than one!

THE END.

(Next week's bumper issue of the GEM will contain another rollicking fine story of St. Jim's, entitled: "GLYN'S TANK CORPS!" You'll enjoy every line of it, chums!)

OUR POWERFUL SERIAL OF STRANGE ADVENTURES I

THE VALLEY OF FORTUNE!

By JOHN SYLVESTER.

Cornered, without a possible chance of escape! But are our band of adventurers downhearted? No! While there's life there's hope!

different zones of vegetation; beginning in the mountains with black belts of pine, becoming more luxuriant farther down until, thousands of feet underneath, lay the tangled, rioting vegetation which formed the western fringe of the great jungles of the Amazon. If he could have flown, straight as a crow, he knew that he would continue across the whole continent to the Atlantic shore, with no change of scene, nothing but primeval trees and virgin soil.

It was unmapped, untrodden for the most part by white men. The view stretching before him now was almost identical with the scene which must have met the gaze of that Spanish missionary, hundreds of years ago, whose parchment had brought them here. Somewhere in the mysterious distance, perhaps ever farther than his eye could reach, lay the sinister glade known as the Valley of Fortune.

"We've got to reach it!" Dick told himself, clenching his teeth.

He paused and drank in the sharp, clear air, still with that exhilarating tang of glaciers and mountain-tops. Very different from the fever-ridden swamps that must lie below. And yet—

Some instinct made him draw back. It was as well he did, for there was a whizzing sound, followed by a ping, and, to his amazement, he saw, barely an inch from his foot, an arrow quivering in the ground.

"Jehosaphat!" he gasped. "But how on earth—"

The arrow was peculiar. It was the size of a harpoon, and fastened to it was a rope. He looked up, and he saw the rope continued. He followed the rope with his eyes, and it stretched right across the torrent. On the bank opposite he saw six queerly-garbed figures, and they were brandishing their arms.

It was fully a minute before the truth dawned on Dick. His first thought was that he had been sighted by predatory savages who were taking a shot at him. But that didn't explain the rope. It didn't account for their weird gesticulations. There was only one possible explanation. All at once he waved back wildly, and tore down the hillside.

"Trent," he shouted—"Trent! I've found the way out!" The bank on which the natives were standing was invisible to Trent, and, as he saw Dick running towards him, he removed his pipe and gaped.

"Have you gone off your head, sonny?"

"Quick!" panted Dick. "We can get across—"

"Feel your wings sprouting? That'll happen if we've got to stay here."

"There are natives on the other side!" Dick blurted out. "They've just fired an arrow with a rope. They mean to help us. Like a ship's rocket, with those lifelines. If we can fix it to a tree we can get over the stream."

This time Trent took notice.

"Show me!" he said eagerly. "I can hardly believe it. But if it's really true—"

He hurried up the hill, Dick racing in front. The sight



HOW THE ADVENTURE STARTED

Convinced that Pedro Lopez, a Brazilian adventurer, has stolen their map, which holds the key to the whereabouts of a fortune in rubies, Robert West, a scientist, and his companion, John Trent, together with a plucky youngster named Dick Blackwood, determine to follow the arch-villain to Brazil. Reaching a desolate plateau in the Andes, the three explorers, accompanied by a party of Indians with pack mules, find their advance blocked by a large lake bounded on either side by unscalable mountains. Leaving his companions to make a raft, West rows across the lake in a collapsible boat to explore some distant caves. That same night, while West is exploring, the Indians, bribed by Lopez, mutiny, and bolt with everything they can lay their hands on. In an attempt to cut off the Indians Dick is captured by Lopez and offered as human sacrifice to the God of the Shrieking Pit. The plucky youngster is saved at the critical moment by Chico, who, to revenge the murder of his father, dynamites the cave and puts Lopez and his villainous crew to rout. Chico's knowledge of the mountains places the two in good stead, for they succeed in rejoining West and Trent, and discover two rafts, rifles, and a quantity of food. Misfortune befalls the party again, later, however, for after a long and tortuous journey through the caves their rafts go tossing over a gigantic waterfall and they are left stranded on a seemingly desert island.

(Now read on.)

Rescued!

IN the centre of the island there was a hill, and Dick climbed it, thoughtfully, noting the distance from the banks on each side; not very considerable, yet impossible to swim or even cross in a boat—assuming they had one—owing to the turbulent rush of water.

The scenery was magnificent. He was not exactly in the mood to appreciate the finer points of its beauty; but accustomed as he now was to tremendous perspectives, he had never yet seen, even in the mountains, such a vast tract of country.

They were plainly on the other side of the Andes. Behind, just below the snow line, rose the lofty, alpine area, called the montanas. Dick could see the cavern, high above, from which the subterranean river poured in a huge cascade. It descended to this shelf, and in front, not a mile distant, there was another cascade, then a similar shelf, and yet another and another smoky fall. The ground, therefore, dropped in wide terraces from that immense wall of mountains, and five cascades roared into the lake immeasurably below.

Beyond, seen dimly through a haze of heat, and looking like a panorama viewed from an aeroplane, rolled a tropical forest. Dick could distinguish, vaguely, the

of the arrow, with its fine attached, and then of the savages on the opposite shore, put an end to Trent's doubts.

"We'll risk it!" he declared. "We haven't any choice."

"But where is the risk?" protested Dick.

"Oh, we can get over to the natives all right! The only thing that occurs to me is that they must have some reason for wanting to help us. I can't really believe it's out of the goodness of their hearts."

"We must chance that," retorted Dick impatiently.

"Of course we must. But that rope won't do as a life-line. I think the best thing is to go over one at a time with it fastened around the waist. They can just haul us ashore. That'll suit West better. He isn't up to circus stunts at the moment."

"Who goes first?"

"You," said Trent promptly. "No, cut out the shrinking modesty. You may not get such a good reception as you think."

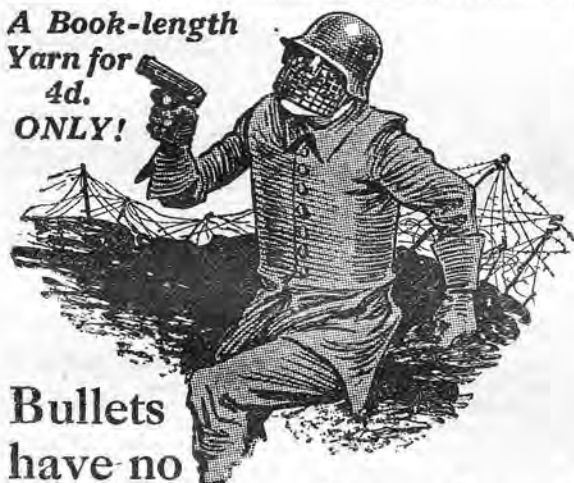
They didn't waste any time, however. Dick untied the rope from the arrow, and secured it round his waist. As he advanced to the water's edge, the gestures of the rescuers opposite seemed to suggest that he was complying with their intention.

"Well, here goes!"

And he dived into the stream. It was impossible to swim. He found it difficult even to keep afloat. So great was the strength of the current that before he was half-way across he wondered if the rope—which was made of some hide—would stand the strain. Six men were pulling on the other side, and it needed all their efforts.

But, finally, he got within reach of land, and he was hauled into safety. As he scrambled to his feet he saw

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what seemed to be the head man approach, with hand up-raised, palm outward. Instantly Dick did the same, rightly guessing that this was some sort of signal of friendship.

These men—he could tell at a glance—were different from the semi-sophisticated natives of the montanas. They wore striped blankets over their shoulders, and there were bright feathers in their long hair. Several had their nostrils pierced by pieces of bone, and they had their cheeks scarred—originally some ceremonial form of branding with a hot iron.

It was obvious at a glance that they had had no contact with civilisation. Their only weapons were bows and arrows, although two carried spears.

Once the greeting was exchanged the head man turned, and, attaching the rope Dick had now discarded to another arrow, he drew his bow and fired into the air. The arrow described a parabola, this time falling short of the hill; but, nevertheless, it was a fine shot. Dick marvelled at the strength it took to draw that bow.

West came next. He was unable to stand up when he landed, but he was treated with every mark of respect. Chica followed, and Trent came last.

"I feel like a blooming fish," Trent chuckled, as he stood up and unfastened the rope. "I've often wondered what it felt like to be hooked alive, and then served up for someone's dinner."

Dick noticed instantly that there was something deeper in his manner than mere jesting. A startling suspicion occurred to him.

"You think they are cannibals?"

"Worse," said Trent cryptically.

in the Hands of Head-hunters!

TWO days passed in travelling. Accompanied by the natives they made the steep descent into the tropical valley. A litter was made, and West carried; but at the end of the third day, when the native village came in sight, he was almost himself again.

So far there was not the slightest outward reason to suppose their guides nourished any sinister intentions. They were friendly in the extreme, and Trent, who knew some of the Indian dialects, managed to hold some sort of verbal communication.

"They seem to like us," he said, walking beside Dick as they entered at long last a deep gorge. "Do you see the smoke rising ahead? That's the village."

The mountains they had left looked incredibly remote, like flaming, conical clouds in the sunset sky. Instead of the crisp, invigorating air, the gorge was like a hot-house. On each side were thickets of bamboo, and the thorny shrubs and Buddleia of the heights were replaced by alligator pears and passion-flower fruit.

"They talk a queer lingo," Trent continued. "They belong to the Huascan tribes. But amiable as they seem they have some nasty practices."

"As, for example?"

"You will see in a minute. Around this corner, if I'm not mistaken, we shall come across the entrance to the encampment. Look out for the ju-ju."

Dick looked up and saw, immediately in front of them, a wall of bamboo. In the middle of the palisades there was a door, swinging open on their approach. A gigantic figure, carved out of wood, with a hideous face daubed with scarlet and ochre, stood on each side of the door.

But that was not all. Stretched from the neck of each ju-ju idol was a rope, like an enormous necklace. At first Dick thought that the gruesome heads—there were fifteen altogether, suspended as a necklace round the neck of each idol—were also examples of expert wood-carving.

"They are real," Trent said, so unexpectedly that he turned in amazement.

"But it's impossible! They are too small."

"They are real," repeated Trent. "But they are shrunk and embalmed by some secret process. I don't know the details, and I believe it takes months. The inside is scooped out and the head filled with hot pebbles, and then the whole thing is put in a pickling-pot. The result is that the finished article is the same in every respect as it used to be—the features and the expression are unaltered—except that it is less than half its original size."

"B-but what's the idea?" Dick stammered.

"Don't ask me. Some superstition or other is at the back of it. There's never any telling what is at the bottom of a savage's mind; he doesn't think as you and I do. That's why you were wrong in concluding that because they were friendly towards us, they were really good Samaritans."

They weren't just doing their good deed for the day. I'm very much afraid they were thinking of the pickle-pot."

"So that's what you meant when you said they were worse than cannibals?" cried Dick.

"It's a matter of taste, I suppose," he shrugged. "I've known cannibals who were very decent fellows; they would only eat victims they had killed in battle—which explains why they left me alone. They were splendid fighters, and they believed that the courage of the enemy they ate entered them—just as you've probably met people who believed that beef made them strong. But this is not quite the same. It's cold-blooded murder—and by natives who are so infernally polite to you all the time."

"Then we've got to get out—mighty quick!" exclaimed Dick.

"But how? If you broke away now you'd have an arrow through your body before you got ten yards. If we had weapons it would be different, but they've taken our only gun."

"We've got to do something," Dick insisted. "We can't sit down and wait until they chop off our heads."

"At least, we'll have to wait until it's dark," said Trent. "For the present we've got to pretend we are grateful guests."

They were passing through the gates. Dick noticed the shadow from those mummified heads, swaying above, fall on his chest, and it gave him a creepy sensation.

In front, huts were arranged in a semicircle, opposite which was a beehive hut, larger than the rest, and it was towards this hut, standing alone, that they were led.

Terrific excitement was caused by their arrival. Men and women came running out, pointing and uttering shrill cries. A crowd formed at the entrance to the hut, and Trent turned as though to expostulate with the head man, who was motioning him to enter. His action must have been misinterpreted, for suddenly the point of a spear was turned towards him.

Dick also felt a sharp prick, and as he glanced hastily across his shoulder he saw there was a savage behind, also with a spear.

The friendliness had vanished. They were now surrounded by armed men, their faces stern and implacable. The mask had been dropped, and there was no longer any doubt that they were prisoners.

They were thrust forward into the hut, and the door was closed. At the same time, with tropical suddenness, the sun went out. The forest shuddered under the rushing darkness.

"They are not even going to feed us." That was Trent's voice. "It looks bad."

"It's a case of stepping from the frying-pan into the fire," replied West grimly. "We ought never to have trusted the devils. At least, no harm could have come to us on the island."

"We could either have starved or drowned," said Trent, trying to sound cheerful. "As a matter of fact, they would have waited. You've no idea of the extraordinary patience of an Indian. No, we did the only thing possible. I wonder—"

He broke off. The darkness into which they had been plunged was suddenly relieved by a blaze from outside. Through chinks in the door they could see leaping flames. Then drums began to beat.

"Going to have a musical evening," Trent remarked, gluing his eye against one of the cracks. "Bit of a dance and supper, by the looks of it. There's the jolly old witchdoctor plastered with feathers. They'll get worked up presently."

He paused, and was about to continue his facetious description—perhaps more to keep their spirits up than for any other reason—when there was an interruption.

"Senors!" cried Chica hoarsely. "We may yet escape—look!"

He pointed towards the ceiling. Trent wheeled round and looked up. Every eye was turned and came to rest on a patch of starry sky.



The white men were surrounded and pushed into the hut!

"Jupiter, there's a hole in the roof! But how high is it? Can we reach it?"

"Let me climb on your shoulders!" cried Chica eagerly. It was no sooner said than Trent crouched, and Chica hoisted himself up. As Trent straightened, gripping the Indian's ankles to hold him secure, they all waited tensely.

"I can't reach—I want another arm's length," came the disappointed reply.

"Quick, Dick!" rapped Trent. "You've done this in your gym days. We've got to make a human ladder."

Dick didn't hesitate. He was helped by West, and gripping Chica's hand he managed to climb on to the Indian's shoulders. They swayed dangerously, but to his relief Dick found he could easily reach the roof. He threw himself forward, and scrambled through the hole in the thatch. Then he looked down. In the faint glow of the bonfire, which was all that penetrated, he could see three upturned faces.

"But what about you chaps?" he called out.

"You look after yourself first," declared Trent. "But if you can find that rifle they took from me shoot the guard outside, and I think if we rush the door it will give. We could make a dash, anyhow, which is better than waiting here."

Dick caught his breath. He hated leaving them, but on the other hand he realised that he was very far from being out of danger himself. He slithered down the thatch. He no sooner touched the ground than he collided with a native. The man was so startled, however, by that sudden appearance of a figure from the sky that he threw up his arms wildly. He would have yelled if Dick hadn't, with great presence of mind, slammed a right-hander into his gaping mouth. He followed it with a left uppercut, which made his knuckles sore but had the effect of putting the native quietly to sleep—a sleep from which he would awake convinced that a demon had dropped out of the sky and hurled itself upon him.

"So far so good," Dick muttered. "But where I am to look for that precious rifle, Heaven only knows."

He moved stealthily around the back of the hut, keeping to the shadows. Then he came to an abrupt standstill. He could see an immense fire, on which faggots were still being thrown. In the lurid glare the braves were dancing, with

shield and spear; a rhythmic movement, in which they first raised the shield and then lunged forward with the spear, uttering raucous, bloodcurdling battle cries, but keeping time with the throb of the drums. They moved in a circle around the fire, led by the witch-doctor, who wore a hideous mask, and a bizarre costume of feathers.

Suddenly, as Dick halted, the procession changed its direction. The witch-doctor, brandishing a torch, moved towards the hut where the prisoners were shut up. He was followed by warriors with spears raised menacingly, and then the door of the hut was flung open.

"Even if I find it now," thought Dick, in despair, "I shall be too late!"

He dared not linger. The attention of everyone was so concentrated on the hut, that with the darkness to help him Dick had little fear of being seen. He noticed, fifty yards away, another hut, and some instinct urged him to go towards it. There was no guard outside, nothing to indicate that it contained anything of value, but as he crept forward and stopped on the threshold, he could hardly suppress a cry.

The light was dim, but it was sufficient to reveal the outlines of the astonishing contents. Stacked in front of him were rifles of every description. There must have been a hundred at least, and there were boxes which obviously contained cartridges.

It was almost incredible. Yet, as he noticed the various patterns, the old-fashioned type of some of the guns, it flashed on him that they must have belonged to various victims who had been captured and put to death by the Indians. Trappers, prospectors, adventurers of every class, had come this way and fallen into the clutches of the head-hunters. They had been killed for their heads, and, preferring to continue using their poisoned arrows, the natives had merely stacked the unwanted rifles.

Hope rushed through Dick. With these rifles they could put up a stiff resistance. If he took one now he could steal up and pick off some of the niggers who were in that procession, including the witch-doctor. In the panic that must follow he might be able to free his companions, arm them, and then—

He darted forward, but as he did so, something moved in the darkness. Instantly he realised that he had been watched all the time. A threatening figure loomed up in front of him. He heard a mocking laugh and found himself staring into the muzzle of a revolver.

"At last!" hissed a voice, that made him start with recognition. "You are at my mercy now. You shan't escape me this time. I'm going to blow out your brains!"

There was a click as the safety catch was released. Before the shot was fired, Dick saw, looming in front of him, pale and malevolent, the face of Lopez!

Lopez!

It seemed incredible. But there was no time to think. No sooner had the yellow, mocking face become visible than there was a flash and a roar.

Something singed Dick's cheek as he leapt aside for his life. By a miracle, he realised, he had escaped.

The revolver still menaced him, however. It was pointing at him again, and the man whose finger was curving round the trigger had sworn to murder him.

Dick acted instinctively. Once more his experience as an amateur boxer came to his aid. There was barely an instant

between the first report of that revolver and the second. But the second time it went off Dick was gripping a snowy wrist, and the bullet crashed into the roof, bringing down a tiny shower of thatch.

"I'll get you!" Lopez snarled, baring his teeth and trying to tear his arm free. But he was astonished by the strength which Dick possessed. In a flash he brought his knee up, and Dick gasped as he received the cowardly blow below his belt. He half let go, and a savage kick made him release his hold altogether.

"Now!" cried Lopez, in triumph.

He would have fired as Dick staggered backwards, but at the same moment a monstrous shadow appeared on the wall, the shadow of an enormous hand carrying a spear. He whirled round in a flash and saw that a powerful native in fighting dress was standing on the threshold. The man, perhaps the first of many others, had heard the two shots and come to investigate. He was about to hurl the spear, but the bullet intended for Dick caught him on the temple and he dropped like a log.

"Now we shall be surrounded!" cried Lopez, in a fury. He turned to Dick, who prepared to duck if he fired again. "But we can beat them off. There's plenty of ammunition here. Get that gun behind you!"

For a moment Dick hesitated, fearing a trap.

"I'm not so mad as to shoot you now!" snapped Lopez. "A whole pack of armed natives are racing towards this hut. We'll settle our own differences later. Meanwhile, we are just two whites surrounded by a mob of howling niggers."

"So you are white, are you?" muttered Dick. "I thought it was an optical illusion."

"Hurry, you little fool! They are coming! Here is—"

His gun jumped in his hand; there was another roar, and a feathered savage stumbled over the body of the first. Five or six were behind, and a thrown spear cleaved the smoke and landed quivering within an inch of Lopez's foot.

He fired again.

"Let 'em have it while I re-load. You can't miss!"

Dick was now holding a Winchester rifle to his shoulder. He fired into the doorway while Lopez feverishly filled his revolver. When he had finished Lopez was ready to start once more.

It was a crazy sort of battle. It was so unexpected, so fantastic—especially to find himself fighting with Lopez—that Dick had a wild feeling it was a nightmare. He had no time to collect his thoughts. He was standing in pitch darkness, firing blindly, his brain still dizzy after that struggle for his life.

Sobered by the loss of four of their numbers, the Indians retreated. There was a brief lull, and Dick wondered what Trent and West would make of this shooting. The sound must come to them like a message of hope.

"Presently we must make a dash for it," said Lopez, interrupting his thoughts. "While there's a chance sling as many of these rifles and any cartridge belts over your shoulder as you can. We shall need them all if we get out of here."

(It's Dick's only chance of escape! But will Pedro Lopez play him false? You'll be thrilled to end with next week's gripping instalment. Be sure of reading it, chums, by ordering next week's GEM well in advance!)

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