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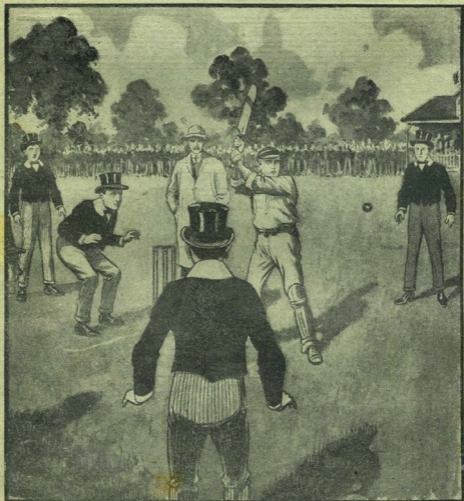
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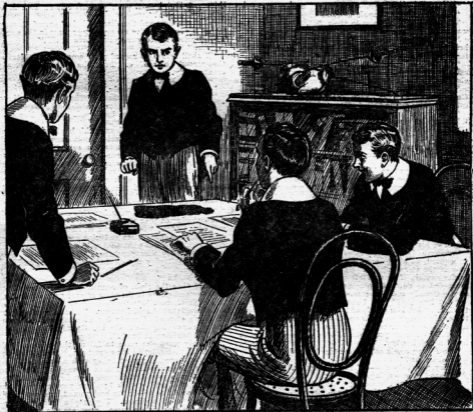


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GRUNDY'S DOWNFALL!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co.

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



"Let him rip!" said Lowther, dipping his pen into the ink. "Go on, Grundy. You don't mind if I take down your remarks, do you?" "Eh! What do you want to take down my remarks for?" asked Grundy. "To fill my comic column for the Weekly." "Ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter 1.)

CHAPTER I.

Grundy Comes Down Heavy.

THUMP!

A loud knock sounded on the door of Tom Merry's study in the Shell passage. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther had finished tea, and they were getting on with the "copy" for a forthcoming number of the "Weekly." The sudden thump on the study door startled the Terrible Three

in the midst of their literary labours. Naturally, they jumped, and three separate showers of blots were scattered over a leading article, a photographic article, and a comic column.

Three separate glares—all of them ferocious—were turned upon the fellow who opened the door after delivering that heavy thump and came into the study. It was Grundy, the new fellow in the Shell.

"You silly ass!"

Next Wednesday:

"LEVISON'S LAST CARD!" AND "THE CITY OF FLAME!"

"You howling duffer!"

"You thumping chump!"

It could not be called a polite greeting, but Grundy of the Shell did not seem to mind. He closed the study door behind him with a slam. Grundy was a burly fellow, with heavy limbs and big feet, and hands of unusual size, and he did everything with a bump or a slam. There was a heavy frown on Grundy's brow at the present moment, and it was evident that he had called on serious business.

"See what you've done, you giddy cuckoo!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Look at my comic column!"

"Blow your comic column!" said Grundy.

"Look at my leading article!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Bless your leading article!"

"Look at my photographic article!" hooted Manners.

"Bust your photographic article!"

The Terrible Three rose to their feet. Argument was wasted on Grundy of the Shell.

"Now, none of your rot!" said Grundy. "I've come here on an important matter. You can leave that rot for a bit. I've been thinking—"

"Oh, if you've been thinking, that alters the case," said Monty Lowther. "You shouldn't try these sudden changes."

"I didn't come here to listen to rotten jokes," said Grundy. "You can keep all that for the comic column! I've got to talk to Merry about the cricket."

"Oh, good!" said Lowther, sitting down again and taking up his pen. "Go ahead!"

"The silly ass isn't going to talk cricket to me!" howled Tom Merry. "What does he know about cricket?"

"I could play your head off, and chance it!" snorted Grundy.

"I dare say you could if I were keeping wicket when you were batting," said Tom. "But you're jolly well never going to have a chance of playing my head off!"

"I want to speak to you about my place in the eleven."

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Tom crossly. The junior captain of St. Jim's was quite fed up with Grundy and his claims to play in the junior eleven. The way George Alfred Grundy played cricket was a sight for gods and men and little fishes, and there was no room for a player of his peculiar abilities in Tom Merry's eleven.

Grundy had only lately come to the school, and he had announced, as a matter of course, that he was going to play in the second eleven. He proposed to "whop" the junior captain if he was left out. That, indeed, he had proceeded to do, but unfortunately for his programme it was Grundy who had received the whopping.

"Let him rip!" said Lowther, dipping his pen into the ink. "Let him go ahead! I haven't half done with the comic column yet. Go on, Grundy. You don't mind if I take down your remarks, do you?"

"Eh? What do you want to take down my remarks for?" asked Grundy.

"To fill my comic column for the 'Weekly'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you silly ass——" roared Grundy.

"Shush! I'm waiting."

Grundy gave the humorist of the Shell a glare, and then turned his attention to Tom Merry.

"Now, I want to put it to you as a sensible chap, Merry," he said impressively. "I warn you, in the first place, that I am not going to stand it. You know how I play cricket?"

"I do," grinned Tom Merry. "I does!"

"Splendid!" exclaimed Lowther.

Grundy looked at him.

"Oh, you think my cricket is splendid, do you?" he asked.

"Oh, no; splendid joke!" explained Lowther. "That's all I need for a whole paragraph in the comic column—just the words: 'How Grundy plays cricket!' No need to enlarge on it—just that will make the fellows scream."

"You burbling idiot!"

"Go ahead," said Lowther encouragingly. "I'm waiting for the next."

"You—your funny idiot!" said Grundy. "Look here, Tom Merry! I've given you time to think it over, and

now I want a plain answer. Are you going to do the sensible thing, or are you not going to do the sensible thing? Yes or no!"

"Yes," said Tom, at once.

"You're going to put me in?"

"No; I'm going to keep you out."

"I won't argue with you," shouted Grundy. "You haven't brains enough to be argued with. I simply warn you that I'm not standing it. I'm the best cricketer in the Shell, though I say it myself! You know yourself that when I play the fellows simply crowd round the ground to look on."

"Topping!" exclaimed Lowther.

"Eh? What's topping?"

"That's your second really good joke," said Lowther. "Keep it up. I shall get my comic column done in no time at this rate!"

"And the long and the short of it is," roared Grundy, "that if you don't give me my proper place in the eleven I shall refuse to recognise your eleven at all!"

"Eh?"

"I shall refuse to regard your crowd of fumblers as the second eleven of St. Jim's," said Grundy emphatically.

"Oh, my hat!"

"I mean it," said Grundy.

"Excellent!" said Lowther. "That's number three. Grundy refuses official recognition to the second eleven." This will be the best comic column I've done for dogs' ages. Go on, Grundy!"

The burly Shell fellow clenched his big fists and looked for a moment as if he would commit immediate assault and battery upon the humorous sub-editor of "Tom Merry's Weekly." But Grundy was determined to keep his temper as long as he could.

"I shall totally ignore the existence of your so-called eleven," he went on, with growing emphasis, "and I shall proceed to raise another eleven to represent St. Jim's."

"Wha-a-t?"

"That rather takes your breath away—what?" said Grundy, pleased with the impression he had succeeded in making at last. "But I mean it. I shall raise a new eleven among the juniors and wipe your silly old eleven right out. You see what that will mean for you? You will practically disappear from junior cricket. First of all, I shall play my eleven against yours, and beat you hollow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And then the club, of course, will adopt my eleven as the second eleven in the place of your gang of fumblers and duffers. See?"

"Magnificent!" said Lowther. "That's number four! Grundy's eleven! Grundy & Co., wholesale dealers in ducks' eggs! Rippling! Go on, Grundy!"

"You burbling fathead!"

"I only want one more to fill up the column," said Lowther. "Now, let's have a good one, Grundy. Blessed if I ever suspected you of being such a humorist!"

"I want an answer!" roared Grundy. "Now, Tom Merry, this is your last chance. You do the right thing at once, or I set to work to shove your rotten eleven where it ought to be—in the background, and you simply disappear as a cricketer. I give you fair warning—that's only playing the game. Now, are you going to do the right thing, or do you want me to come down heavy?"

Tom Merry closed one eye at his chums.

"I think you'd better come down heavy, Grundy," he remarked. "We'll do our best to help you. Collar him!"

"Look here—yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three collared the truculent Grundy and he was wrestled to his feet, and he came down with a bump that shook the study and a roar that might have been heard the length of the Shell passage. There was no doubt at all that Grundy had come down heavy, though not in the sense he had intended.

"Oh, my hat! Oh, jiminy!" gasped Grundy.

"You can take that as an answer!" grinned Tom Merry. "Now kick him out!"

"Leggo! I'll wallop you! I'll squash you—yooooooop!"
Up went Grundy again in the grasp of three strong pairs of hands, and he was swept through the doorway, and he came down heavy in the passage once more.

Bump!
The study door closed, and the editors of Tom Merry's Weekly chuckled in chorus. But Grundy was a fighting-man to the very finger-tips; and in about two seconds the study door was hurled open, and Grundy rushed in again, looking for vengeance.

He rushed into three pairs of ready arms, and was whirled into the air and whipped into the passage again.

Bump!
"Yowwwwwwwww!"
Slam!
Then the study door remained closed. Even George Alfred Grundy had had enough. He crawled away to his own study, grunting, and the Terrible Three grinned and resumed their editorial labours. In spite of the terrible threat uttered by Grundy of the Shell, somehow the junior captain of St. Jim's did not seem alarmed.

CHAPTER 2 Drastring Measures!

"**B** AI JOVE!"
"Come on, Gussy!"
"Pway look heah, deah boys! This is vey intewesting!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form had halted before the notice-board in the hall. Several other fellows had stopped there, and they were all grinning. The noble features of the Honourable Arthur Augustus relaxed into a smile as he read the latest notice on the board.

Blake and Herries and Digby stopped. Study No. 6 were on their way to the cricket-ground for practice, and Blake had his bat under his arm.

"What is it?" granted Blake.
"It's a new notice, deah boy—somehinv' vey atwikin', signed by the now chap—Grundy of the Shell."

"Cheek!" said Herries. "A new kid sticking a notice on the board! That new kid has too much nerve!"

"He's been asking for a place in the eleven," grinned Digby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The mere mention of Grundy in connection with the junior eleven was always enough to elicit a laugh. George Alfred Grundy had drawn quite a lot of attention upon himself in the short time he had been at St. Jim's. His doubtful attempt to "whop" Tom Merry had made him famous for a space. For it had been a really terrific fight, and both Grundy and Tom Merry had been almost complete wrecks for days afterwards. Grundy, however, had been the greater wreck of the two.

And that was a really fortunate circumstance; for if Grundy had succeeded in "whopping" the champion athlete of the Lower School, there would have been no holding him afterwards. There was hardly any holding him as it was.

Study No. 6 perused the latest notice, and burst into a chuckle over it. Grundy of the Shell seemed determined to keep himself in the public eye, and to furnish gaiety to the juniors. This is how the notice ran, in a huge, sprawling hand which looked more like the "fist" of a Second Form fag than of a Shell fellow:

"NOTICE.—Owing to the rotten state of cricket in the Lower School, and the well-known incapacity of the junior captain, a meteing is called for six o'clock this evening, in the junior common-room, to discuss the matter.

"The meteing will be presided over by the under-signed member of the Shell Form, who will submit a resolution to the meteing, and suggest drastick changes in the clubb. In the opinion of the under-signed member of the Shell Form, drastick changes are required.

"A new eleven will be formed under the superintendence of the under-signed member of the Shell Form, who will act as captain. The new eleven is desired to

knock out the eleven captained by Tom Merry, who is not worthy to uphold the traditions of St. Jim's.

"The new eleven—to be known as Grundy's Eleven—will then be considered to represent St. Jim's Juniors, to the exclusion of Tom Merry's fatheaded eleven.

"Meteing at sharp six.—Signed,
"GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY."

"I wathah think, deah boys, that that takes the cake," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I'm not suah, but I wathah think so."

"The whole blessed cake manufactory!" grinned Blake. "Of all the cheek—a new kid—a fellow nobody's ever heard of, too!"

The notice tickled the chums of the Fourth, but it surprised them, too, and had a somewhat exasperating effect upon them. Study No. 6 had the honour of being members of the team which Grundy characterised as Tom Merry's fatheaded eleven.

If Grundy had been a first-class cricketer, a Hayward, a Grace, and a Stoddart all rolled into one, his cheek would have been amazing. He was a new fellow in the school; and he was proposing to call a meeting, for the purpose of turning out the junior eleven and instituting a new eleven, with himself as skipper!

But considering that Grundy, so far from being a first-class cricketer, was about as bad a player as could be found within the walls of St. Jim's, his nerve was almost unnerving.

"Pshaw do you think of it, istirely?" asked Reilly of the Fourth.

"The blessed cheek!" said Kangaroo. Noble of the Shell was one of the mighty men of the junior eleven, and he was justly indignant. "The silly ass won't get anybody to his silly meeting."

"Not unless the fellahs go to wag him," remarked Arthur Augustus.

"By Jove! that's not a bad idea!" exclaimed Blake. "It's close on six now. Let's all go, and frog march him round the common-room for his cheek."

"Hear, hear!"
"Seen this, Tom Merry?" called out Blake, as the Terrible Three came downstairs.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the three, as they read the notice on the board.

"Here he comes!" sang out Levison of the Fourth.

Grundy of the Shell came along, with Wilkins and Gunn, his two study-mates. Wilkins and Gunn were grinning. They always backed up Grundy, who was too hard a hitter to be argued with in the study. Besides, Grundy was a good fellow in his way. He was simply rolling in money, and Wilkins and Gunn weren't. They rolled in Grundy's money.

George Alfred kept open house, as it were, in his study, and he was so open-handed that it was impossible to help liking him. He would do anybody a good turn. And he would punch a fellow's nose or lend him half-a-sovereign with equal readiness and facility.

Wilkins and Gunn were backing him up, as usual, in his latest departure; but they could not help grinning. Grundy was not grinning, however. He was deadly serious. How any fellow could be such an ass as Grundy was, was a deep mystery that passed the comprehension of his chums, and Wilkins and Gunn did not try to puzzle it out. They simply let Grundy have his head.

The sight of a crowd of juniors grinning over his notice on the board made the new Shell fellow frown. He did not see anything to grin at himself. So far as he could see, his proceedings were perfectly natural and reasonable.

Grundy gave the fellows a lofty frown, and kept on to the common-room. It was nearly time for the "meteing," and Grundy was going to take the chair.

The common-room was empty when they entered it, and Wilkins and Gunn exchanged a wink. They were fully persuaded that the "meteing" would consist wholly and solely of themselves.

"The—ahem!—fellows don't seem to be coming," remarked Gunn, in a casual sort of way.

"Nearly six," observed Wilkins, with a glance at the clock.

Grundy wrinkled his brows.

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"They must have seen the notice, most of them," he said. "I suppose they've got sense enough to realise that the matter's important!"

"Ahem!"

"What are you grinning at, Wilkins?"

"W-w-was I grinning?" murmured Wilkins.

"There's nothing to grin at. The meeting will come along all right. Some of the fellows have sense!" said Grundy. "A good many of them must have realised that Tom Merry is no great shakes as cricket captain, and that a change is needed. They will see that I am the right man in the right place, I think!"

"Ahem!"

"What are you grunting about, Gunn?"

"Was I grunting?"

"Yes, you were. Nothing to grunt about. You'll jolly well see what you'll see!" said Grundy confidently.

"There, what did I tell you?"

Half a dozen juniors came into the common-room. They were Stud No. 6, and Reilly and Levison. Hammond and Kerruish and Lumley-Lumley followed them in, and then came Kangaroo and Dane and Glyn of the Shell.

"This right for the meeting?" asked Kangaroo.

"This is right," said Grundy, with a triumphant look at his surprised chums. "Glad to see you here!"

"Oh, we were bound to come," said Blake seriously.

"You see, as members of Tom Merry's fatheaded eleven, we're interested in the drastic changes."

"Yess, wathab!"

The Terrible Three came in, looking very demure. Talbot and Gore of the Shell followed them, and then Crooke and Mellich and several more fellows. The meeting was already growing numerous.

A few minutes later arrived Piggins & Co. of the New House, very prominent members of the junior cricket club. After them came Redfern and Owen and Lawrence, also of the New House. Then some more School House fellows.

Grundy watched the growing numbers of the meeting with a satisfied eye. That the word had been passed round among the juniors to come and "rot" the egregious Grundy naturally did not occur to him. In that prompt recognition of his call he saw plain signs that his importance was already duly noted by the juniors of St. Jim's. He had not been long in the school, but he had already made his mark, and the fellows recognised it—that was how Grundy looked at it.

"Pwyy, when is the meetin' goin' to begin, Gwunday, deah boy?" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy ventured to inquire.

"I'm holding this meeting," said Grundy. "You leave it to me."

"Bai Jove!"

"I think we may as well begin now," said Grundy. "I'll take the chair. I'm chairman."

"May I take the table?" inquired Monty Lowther, seating himself on the corner of that article of furniture.

"I'm tableman."

"If you've come here to be funny, Monty Lowther, I warn you to chuck it. Any silly idiot starting funny jokes at my meeting will go out on his neck. This meeting isn't a joke."

"My mistake—I thought it was!" said Lowther blandly.

"Gentlemen, this meeting is now open," said Grundy, rapping on the table. "Please give me your attention."

"Hear, hear!"

"I want to call the attention of the meeting to a few facts—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I want to explain—"

"Hear, hear!"

"That!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I—"

"Hear, hear!"

Grundy paused and glared. He really ought to have been pleased at being greeted with thunders of applause, but he didn't look pleased. There was a certain amount of difficulty in making a speech when every word was followed by a roar of applause.

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"Look here—"

"Hear, hear!" thundered the meeting.

"I—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Shut up!" roared Grundy. "Hear what I've got to say, can't you? I'll buzz this cushion at the next silly ass who yells 'Hear, hear!' Silence!"

The juniors looked at Monty Lowther, who seemed to be master of the ceremonies, so far as the audience were concerned. Lowther held up his hand for silence, and assumed an expression of owl-like gravity. A pin might have been heard to drop in the common-room.

"Gentlemen, this is an important meeting," pursued Grundy victoriously. "It must have come to your notice that cricket affairs are in a rotten state in this school. I noticed it immediately I came to St. Jim's!"

Dead silence.

"I felt that it was up to me to make a change, and I'm going to do it. I've given Merry the chance of putting a really good man into the junior eleven to put some life into it. He has refused. I needn't tell you my opinion of his intelligence. Probably you have formed your own judgment about that. Gentlemen, the time has come for drastic changes!"

A still, small voice proceeded from Monty Lowther.

"Drastic with a 'k'?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've warned you once, Lowther," said Grundy darkly. "Gentlemen, I have decided to take a drastic step. Desperate diseases require desperate remedies," as Tennyson remarks."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I mean Browning," said Grundy hastily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shakespeare, you ass," whispered Wilkins.

"You shut up, Wilkins. I'm addressing this meeting," said Grundy. "Gentlemen, I have decided that reform is needed, root and branch. I'm going to form an entirely new junior eleven and lead it to victory. The fumbling duffers who have hitherto called themselves the junior eleven of St. Jim's will be put in the shade. They will, in fact, be out of it! Gentlemen, I am now ready to take the names of applicants for places in my eleven!"

Grundy paused for a burst of applause or a rush of applicants, or perhaps for both. But neither came.

There was a dead silence.

"You understand?" exclaimed Grundy, puzzled by the silence and seriousness of the meeting. "I'm making up my new eleven at once. Now, I want recruits. Fellows needn't be nervous about coming forward. I shall train my eleven and coach my players carefully, giving them the full benefit of my thorough knowledge of the game."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I hope to make my eleven really representative of the best cricket traditions of the school. Now, don't all speak at once."

The juniors did not all speak at once. They did not speak at all! They stood staring solemnly at Grundy. Jack Blake took out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes, as if the situation appealed to him as pathetic.

"What's the matter with you?" exclaimed Grundy, exasperated. "You blinking set of boiled owls! Why don't you speak?"

"Gentlemen," said Monty Lowther, breaking the sad silence. "I beg leave to utter a few words in support of our friend Grundy."

"Well, cut it short," said Grundy. "You can say a few words in support if you like. I don't allow opposition!"

"Gentlemen, our friend Grundy is a new fellow in the school. In spite of that fact he had spotted all our little weaknesses—"

"Exactly," said Grundy.

"With a single glance of his eagle eye," continued Lowther. "he has seen just what is wrong, and has decided to remedy it."

"Quite so," said Grundy.

"He has called this meeting, not to ask our views, as a common or garden person might have done, but to tell us what he has decided on."



"Mutiny, by George! Mutiny in my team! Why, I'll pulverise you." Grundy's hand rose in lordly command, and pointed to the door. "Get on the ground at once." (See Chapter 12.)

"Just so!"

"I therefore call upon the meeting to testify, in the most unmistakable manner, its opinion of Grundy, and to bestow upon him a mark of its appreciation."

"Hear, hear!"

Before Grundy could guess what was going to happen there was a wild rush, and the whole meeting swarmed over him. Grundy, with a yell, disappeared under the charging juniors.

"Wow-wow-wow!" came in muffled accents from under the juniors.

Then George Alfred Grundy appeared in sight again, minus his collar and tie, with his hair ruffled, and his jacket split. In the grasp of half-a-dozen fellows he was swept along in a frog-march.

Yelling wildly, Grundy went round and round the common-room in the frog march.

Bump! Bump! Bump!

"Yow-wow-wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump! Bump! Bump!

"Oh, dear! Oh, crickey! Leggo! Yaroooh!"

With a final terrific bump Grundy was landed on the big table, and left there gasping for breath and wondering whether he was on his head or his heels. By the time he recovered sufficient breath to sit up and blink

round him, the grinning juniors had streamed out of the common-room, and he was alone. Grundy blinked and gasped, and gasped and blinked.

"Oh, dear! Oh, my hat! Wilkins, where are you, you idiot? Gunn! Where are you, Gunn, you jackass! Oh, dear? The rotters! Yow-ow-ow!"

The meeting was over.

CHAPTER 3.

Declined Without Thanks.

"FEELING bad?"

Wilkins and Gunn asked that question together when they came into the study an hour or so later. Grundy of the Shell was seated at the table, with a pencil in his hand and a thoughtful frown on his brow. He was jotting down names on a sheet of paper and conning over them.

He looked up as his study-mates came in. Wilkins and Gunn were doing their best not to smile. They were loyal to their leader, and in their eyes the great Grundy did not seem so howling an ass as in the eyes of the other fellows. But even Wilkins and Gunn had to admit that Grundy's latest departure was a little "thick."

Grundy did not show much sign of the rough handling he had received. He was as hard as nails.

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NEXT WEDNESDAY:

"LEVISON'S LAST CARD!"

"Feeling what?" he grunted. "Rats! I'm not hurt!"

"Oh!" said the Co. "I'm not made of glass!" said Grundy. "I'm not bothering about that. Do you know, I believe those fellows hadn't really come to the meeting at all—they just come in to rag me, you know."

"Go hon!" murmured Gunn. "There's a lot of jealousy here, I'm sorry to say," remarked Grundy, with a shake of the head. "I don't like to say it, but it's no good blinking at plain facts. There's often a lot of jealousy in cricket. Fellows get accustomed to the limelight, you know, and then a new chap comes along who could play their heads off and they try to keep him in the shade. It's a sort of conspiracy. I don't say they quite realise how mean it is," Grundy added magnanimously, "but there it is, all the same. That's how the matter stands. Of course, I can't be expected to put up with it."

"Nunno!" said Wilkins. "B-b-but I don't quite see what you're going to do, old chap."

"I'm going to make up a new eleven."

"Eh!"

"Didn't you understand that that was what the meeting was about?" exclaimed Grundy irritably.

"Ye-e-ah," stammered Wilkins.

Grundy's chums had concluded that the result of the meeting would have been enough for George Alfred. The juniors had shown so very plainly what they thought of him and his nerve that even Grundy might have been expected to feel fed up. But he wasn't. Grundy was a stickler.

"That meeting was a failure," said Grundy. "All those dodderers of the cricket club conspired together to make it a failure. They want to keep a new man out, you know. Of course, I shall take no notice of it. What the junior cricket club needs is new blood. I'm going to see that it gets it. There are some passable cricketers in the club, but I'm not satisfied with the general style of play. I want an improvement all round. That's my idea."

"Oh!"

"I'm jotting down names for a new eleven," said Grundy. "Members of the old eleven will be eligible. There are a few of them I'm satisfied with. But there will have to be new blood. I'm putting myself in as skipper, of course. I'm putting you two chaps in, too. With some coaching from me, there's no reason why you two shouldn't make really good players."

"Thanks awfully!" gasped Wilkins.

"Not at all. Of course, I stand by my own study," said Grundy. "Well, that's three of us—three of the best, I may say. We want eight more. I'm going to make an offer to some of the best players in the old eleven. My idea is that they ought to be glad to get into a really first-class eleven. There's that chap Talbot, for instance. I should have to give him a few tips about his batting, but he's splendid material—splendid! Blake, too—only a Fourth-Form kid, but very decent at bowling. Then that fat Welsh chap Wynn, over in the New House. He's a good bowler, and, with a wrinkle or two I could give him about his delivery, he would be first-class—really first-class. I assure you I'm going to open their eyes all round about cricket."

"Oh dear!"

"You come along with me," said Grundy. "I'll see Talbot first. Nothing like striking the iron while it's hot."

Wilkins and Gunn seemed incapable of speech. They followed George Grundy down the passage like fellows mesmerized.

Grundy gave one of his loud thumps at Talbot's door and opened it. He found Talbot and Gore and Skimpole at tea in the study. Gore grinned at the sight of the hero of the Shell, and Skimpole blinked at him through his big glasses, and Talbot gave him a cheery nod.

"Any more meetings coming off?" asked Gore.

"No," said Grundy, with a frown. "You needn't cackle, Gore. I'm no fool, and I'm perfectly aware that there's a conspiracy to keep me out of cricket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But, my dear Grundy," said Skimpole, in his mild

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way, "you are such an exceedingly bad cricketer. Although no great player myself, I have been surprised at your really extraordinary play. It is entirely against the rules to knock your wicket down with your bat, and when you bowl and catch a fieldsmen on the side of the head, he is naturally annoyed. I should be annoyed myself under such circumstances, though I do my best to be patient and equable."

"Wounded up?" asserted Grundy.

"My dear Grundy—"

"Oh, don't begin again!" urged Grundy. "Talbot, I came here to speak to you."

"Go ahead!" said Talbot.

"I take it that you're a sensible chap."

"Thanks!"

"You'd rather play in a really first-class eleven than among a set of mugs whose play is—well, awfully so-so?"

"Certainly."

"Then you're my man," announced Grundy. "I'll play you in my eleven."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gore, and even the mild Skimpole chuckled. Talbot stared at the new Shell fellow and grinned.

"Thanks!" he replied. "Upon the whole, I'm sticking to Tom Merry's eleven, if you don't mind."

"That's just where it is—I do mind," said Grundy. "I've picked you out as a good man—with a little coaching, of course."

"Coaching!" said Talbot.

"Oh, yes! That will be necessary."

"Coaching from whom?"

"From me, of course," said Grundy testily.

Gore burst into a renewed yell.

"Well, what do you say, Talbot?" asked Grundy.

"Oh, I say rats!" said Talbot cheerfully.

"Better try the next, old chap," murmured Wilkins.

"Oh, dry up!" said Grundy. "I want Talbot in my eleven. With a little licking into shape he would make a really good bat. Now, Talbot, you'd better think it over and decide to join my eleven."

"Take him away!" moaned Gore. "I shall have a pain in my ribs soon."

"Well, Talbot?" said Grundy, unheeding.

"My dear chap," said Talbot, "you can't play cricket. You are a duffer. You're not being kept out of cricket because you're a jolly good player, but because you're a jolly bad one. Now, take that as a friendly tip."

"So you're in it, too?" said Grundy darkly.

"Eh? In what?"

"The conspiracy."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I came here to make you a friendly proposition," said Grundy. "I didn't come for any cheek. I may as well say out plain that I'm not standing any rot. I never stand any rot. You'll put down your name for my eleven, or—"

He paused impressively.

"Or what?"

"Or I'll wallop you!"

"Oh dear!"

"Now, which will you have, Talbot?"

"I think I'll have the walloping," said Talbot.

"Mind, I mean business."

"So do I," smiled Talbot.

Grundy strode into the study. He did mean business. He laid a terrific grasp on Talbot. Talbot laid a grasp on him in return, and they clutched one another like a pair of vices.

Gore and Skimpole and Wilkins and Gunn looked on with deep interest. Grundy was a big and powerful fellow; but Talbot, though not so big, was as hard as steel. He compressed his grip till Grundy began to gasp wildly. Grundy's mouth came wide open, and his eyes blinked dazedly at the smiling face before him. The grip went on tightening. Grundy had intended to sweep Talbot off his feet, but Talbot's feet were planted on the floor as firmly as if they were riveted there. It was Grundy who was weakening.

"Oh!" stuttered Grundy, at last.

"Get on with the walloping!" smiled Talbot.

"Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gore. "Get on with the walloping, Grundy."

"Grooooh!"

Grundy simply curled up in Talbot's arms. He collapsed totally at last, and Talbot laid him on the floor, quite breathless and spent. The handsome Shell fellow had not turned a hair.

Grundy lay on the carpet and gasped, and gasped, and gasped. It was three or four minutes before he was able to stagger up. Then, without a word, he walked out of the study.

Talbot of the Shell had not joined the new eleven; but the wallowing had not come off. It did not really seem likely that it would.

Grundy looked quite subdued as he went down the passage with his two faithful followers. Wilkins and Gunn looked as serious as they could. They wondered how long even the determined George Alfred would stick it.

Grundy had only lately arrived at St. Jim's from Redclyffe School. At Redclyffe, as it appeared from his personal narratives, he had been monarch of all he surveyed. He had been cook of the walk in his own Form, and Fifth-Formers had trembled at his frown. He had been "requested" to leave Redclyffe for whopping a prefect of the Sixth.

But it was slowly dawning upon Grundy that the St. Jim's fellows were a little tougher than he had supposed. He had been quite unable to "wallop" his way into the junior eleven. It appeared equally certain that he would not be able to wallop recruits into his new eleven. But Grundy was not easily beaten. He had heaps of pluck, and no end of determination. His hopes were still high as he headed for Study No. 6 to interview Jack Blake.

But Wilkins and Gunn disappeared en route. They had a keener sense of the ridiculous than their leader; and they dropped into their study to tea, leaving Grundy to carry on his recruiting march on his "lonesome."

CHAPTER 4.

Great News!

"TWUST all you fellahs will come!"

Thus spoke Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. It was tea-time in Study No. 6; and the Terrible Three had come in, on Arthur Augustus's special invitation. There was a plentiful spread, funds being high. But it was not only for tea that the chums of the Shell had come. Arthur Augustus had told them that he had a very important communication to make.

It is barely possible that Tom Merry & Co. might not have come simply to hear the important communication. But they had no objection to getting the important communication along with the feed.

But when Arthur Augustus announced that he was going over to Abbotsford on the morrow to see a cricket-match there, and "twusted" that they would all come, the Terrible Three gave him glances like three basilisks.

"To-morrow!" said Tom Merry.
"Yaas. It's a half-holiday, you know, and I have a wippin' suggestion to make. We might make a wequest to the Head for a whole holiday. See?" Then we should be able to see the match froom start to finish."

"Fathead!"
"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
"We're playing the New House to-morrow afternoon."
"That will have to be postponed, deah boy."
"Yes; you'll catch me postponing a House match to go and see somebody else playing cricket—I don't think!"
"This is vevy important! Figgins & Co. will come, too, I have no doubt whatever."
"Bow-wow!"

"It will be a vevy intewestin' match—"
"Boah! We've seen Abbotsford play before, and I don't think so jolly much of them," said Monty Lowther.
"This isn't Abbotsford School, deah boy; it's Abbotsford Twojans," explained Arthur Augustus. "They have played the county."

"They can play the M.C.C. if they like, but they won't get us to cut a House match to see them," said Tom Merry.

"So fah as that goes, deah boy, you are quite wight," said Arthur Augustus. "But I have not yet weffered to the weally important part. They are playin' a khaki eleven."

"Pass the jam!"
"Wats! The khaki eleven belongs to the Loamshires, who are now twainin' neah Abbotsford, and are undah ordahs for the fwoot," said D'Arcy.

"I wish them luck," said Tom Merry. "But it won't do them any good to have us watching them, and House matches are House matches, my son."

"You do not compwehend, deah boy. If you do not want to see old Waitton again—"

"Railton!" shouted all the juniors at once.

"Yaas, watah!"
"Ye fathead!" said Tom Merry. "Why didn't you say that at first? Do you mean to say that old Railton will be there?"

"Yaas, watah, as he is captainin' the khaki eleven. I have seen it in the countay papah," said Arthur Augustus triumphantly.

"Hurrah!"

"Then you will all be comin', deah boys?"

"What-ho!"

It was great news for Tom Merry & Co. They had not forgotten Mr. Railton, their old Housemaster. At the call of duty, Mr. Railton had enlisted in Kitchener's Army as a private soldier. The Housemaster of the School had been in training some months now with "Kitchener's Boys," and the School House fellows had heard with pride that he had become a corporal, and afterwards a sergeant. They were prouder of Sergeant Railton than they would have been of Captain or Colonel Railton. It was not every man in Mr. Railton's position who was ready and willing to do his duty side by side with men of humbler station, and to rough it in the ranks. All St. Jim's had thrilled with pride in "Private Railton."

There was another Housemaster now in the School House—a very agreeable and popular gentleman from Australia; but the juniors, though they liked Mr. Carrington, were not likely to forget their old Housemaster. They were always keen for news of Mr. Railton.

"My ideah," pursued Arthur Augustus victoriously, "is to go and see the Head, and put it to him as an old sport."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"He will undahstand how anxious we are to back up old Waitton, and he weally cannot do less than give us a whole holiday instead of a half to-morrow."

"Ahem! Perhaps."
"No harm in asking, anyway," said Blake. "Gussy might offer to take the Head along with him, behind him on his bike."

"I am afwaid the Head would not agree to that, Blake. He would considah it watah undignified."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you are wottin', you wottah!"

Thump!
Grundy of the Shell came in. The tea-party looked at him affably. They were prepared to give him another frog-march if he wanted it.

"Bai Jove, Gwunday shall come too!" said Arthur Augustus generously. "As he is a new kid, he has nevah seen old Waitton. Gwunday, deah boy, our old House-mastah is playin' cwicket in the Loamshire Wifles team, at Abbotsford to-morrow. We are makin' up a partay to go, and we will take you, if you like. You will be able to see some good cwicket, and you weally need to see what good cwicket is like, considewin' the way you play—"

"I've come here to see Blake," said Grundy.
"No charge," said Blake affably. "Feast your eyes!"
"I'm making up a new eleven—"

"My only hat! Aren't you fed up yet?" exclaimed Lowther.

"I offer you a place in my eleven, Blake."

"Ye gods!"
"With a little lickin' into shape, you would make a good cricketer," said Grundy. "I promise in advance to

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NEXT WEDNESDAY!

"LEVISON'S LAST CARD!"

spend as much as I can of my spare time in coaching you."

"You—coach—me!" said Blake faintly.
"Certainly! You've the making of a batsman!" said Grundy.

"Only the makings of one!" gasped Blake.
"Yes, as I look at it. I'm accustomed to a rather higher standard of cricket than is played here at present. I hope to change all that, however, in time."

"A drastic change," suggested Lowther—"with a K?"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"This is a good chance for you, Blake," said Grundy. "Tom Merry's here, so you can tell him at once that you resign from his team of fumbling duffers. This is your chance of getting some really valuable coaching from a chap who knows cricket inside-out. I undertake to make a really good bat of you."

"Oh, go away," said Blake, in a feeble voice—"go away, Grundy! You are too much for me—you are, really!"

"Well, what do you say?"
"I can't say anything. You've taken my breath away!"

"Gwunday, I regard you as a thunderin' ass.. Pway wetaik how the studay, uness," added Arthur Augustus, with crushing sarcasm—"unless you are goin' to ofiah me a place in your precious eleven also."

"No fear!" said Grundy promptly. "You're no good."

"Eh?"
"No tailor's dummies in my eleven," said Grundy. "I've picked Blake, because I think that with care I could make a cricketer of him. Not much good trying to make a cricketer of you, D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove!"
"You see, I've an eye for a fellow's form," explained Grundy. "Knowing the game as I do—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You uttah ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Will you wetaik?"

"I'm waiting for Blake's answer," said Grundy. "I may mention, Blake, that if you refuse my offer, I shall wallop you."

Blake rose to his feet, and pushed back his cuffs. The rest of the juniors also rose. They were fed up with Grundy and his "drastick" methods.

"Collar him!" said Tom Merry.
"Now, then, hands off—Ow! Why, I'll—Yah! Will you—Yooop!"

Seven pairs of hands fastened on Grundy of the Shell. It was useless for him to wriggle. He could hardly move a limb.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Tom Merry took a whipcord from his pocket, and rapped out directions to his chums, which were promptly obeyed. Grundy's right leg was bent up at the knee, and Tom Merry passed the whipcord round his ankle and knotted it there, and then fastened it securely round his waist. Then Grundy's necktie was jerked off, and used to tie his wrists together.

It had not taken two minutes. Tom Merry opened the door, and the juniors released Grundy, who stood on one leg, hopping frantically to keep from pitching over.

"Clear off!" said Tom.
"Yass, wavel, deah boy!"

"How can I go like this?" roared Grundy, making a desperate hop. "Lemme loose, you silly duffers! I—I'll let Blake off that wallop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I—I—I'll give you a chance in my eleven, D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove! I would not be found dead in your eleven, deah boy!"

"Hop! Hop! Hop!"
"Are you going?" demanded Tom Merry.

"I tell you—Oh dear! I can't walk, can I?" yelled Grundy. "Oh, let my leg loose! Untie my hands! Oh, crumbs!"

"Hop! Hop! Hop!"
"All together!" said Tom. "Kick when I say three. One!"

"Wight-ho!"
"Two!"

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"Look here," roared Grundy, "I—I—I'll go if you like! I—"

"Three!"
Grundy made a desperate hop into the passage to escape seven boots that came towards him in a bunch. He landed there, and hopped again to keep his balance, and reeled against the opposite wall. He had a peculiar, stork-like appearance as he stood on one leg, and the juniors yelled with laughter. The unfortunate Grundy was crimson with rage.

Tom Merry closed the door of the study. Grundy gasped for some moments, and then hopped away from the wall. Reilly and Kerruish and Hammond looked out of No. 5, and yelled at the strange sight.

"Let me loose, you kids!" gasped Grundy.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sure, you look swate as ye are!" said Reilly. "Keep like that while I call the fellows to look."

Grundy did not wait for the fellows to come and look. He hopped away desperately towards his own study. He lurched against one wall, and then against another; he burst open several study doors with his weight as he tumbled against them; he rolled over twice, and picked himself up with extraordinary difficulty and hopped on.

And every fellow who beheld his weird gymnastic performances on one leg yelled with laughter instead of coming to his aid.

He was very warm—in fact, streaming with perspiration—when he reached his own study door. He bumped against it; he could not knock.

"Come in!" called out Wilkins.
Bump!

"Come in, I say!"
"Open the door, you idiot!" yelled Grundy.

Wilkins opened the door. He almost fell down in his astonishment as Grundy hopped into the study on one leg. Gunn, who was cooking, dropped the frying-pan with a crash. They gazed at Grundy as if they were mesmerised.

"Goo-goo-good heavens!" stuttered Wilkins. "What's that? Is that a new game?"

"Oh dear!" Grundy collapsed into the armchair with a crash. "Oh, my hat! Oh!"

"Been playing hop-scotch?" said Gunn, in wonder.
"You silly chump!"

"Eh?"
"Lemme loose! What are you giggling at? Can't you let a fellow loose?" gasped Grundy.

And Wilkins and Gunn, nobly stifling their laughter, proceeded to let him loose. They did not ask him how the recruiting campaign had prospered. They did not need to ask about that.

CHAPTER 5.

Monty Lowther Has An Idea!

THAT evening there was rejoicing among the chums of the School House.

Tom Merry & Co. had called on the Head, and preferred their request to be allowed a whole holiday instead of the usual half on Wednesday, for the laudable purpose of seeing their old Housemaster once more.

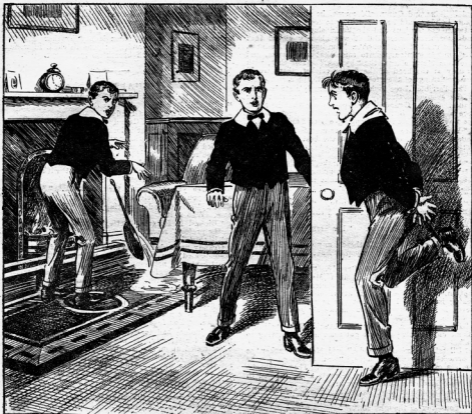
Arthur Augustus had wished to put it to the Head as an old sport; but Arthur Augustus had been forcibly suppressed, and Tom Merry had done the talking. And Dr. Holmes had kindly given his consent.

The desire of the juniors to see the popular School House master again was very natural, and, fortunately, the Head had seen it in that light. The Terrible Thru and Study No. 6 had leave to quit the Form-rooms after first lesson the next morning.

When the news spread a large number of the other fellows were suddenly smitten with an affectionate desire to see their old Housemaster again.

Mr. Railton had been very popular, certainly, and most of the fellows had liked him. But certainly he had never been so popular at St. Jim's as he was at the present moment. The possibility of a whole holiday instead of a half made Mr. Railton's popularity increase by leaps and bounds.

Kangaroo and Dane and Glyn were the first to follow



Wilkins almost fell down in his astonishment as Grundy hopped into the study on one leg. Gunn, who was cooking, dropped the frying-pan with a crash. They gazed at Grundy as if they were mesmerised. "G-oo-goo-good heavens!" stammered Wilkins, "what's that? Is that a new game?" (See Chapter 4.)

in Tom Merry's footsteps. They announced afterwards that the Head had looked a little grave. However, he had given them permission to join the party. Then Grundy and Wilkins and Gunn called on the Head. Wilkins and Gunn had an intense longing to see their old Housemaster, and Grundy had an intense longing to see him for the first time, being a new boy. And they received permission too. After that there was a regular procession to the Head's study. It was, as Monty Lowther remarked, exactly like the animals going into the Ark.

It was very probable that before long the kind old Head sincerely regretted that he had given Tom Merry & Co. that permission. Having given it to them, he could scarcely deny it to the others. However, it soon came out that he was referring applicants to their Form-masters.

The Form-masters gave leave to the fellows who were satisfactory in classes. Slickers like Mellish and Crooke were refused leave, and talked loudly in the common-room about beastly favouritism.

But quite an army of juniors had leave. Figgins & Co. of the New House heard of it, and held a debate in their study as to whether they could work up sufficient affection for the master of the rival House to entitle them to leave. But they felt that it would not do. If the marvellous popularity of Mr. Railton had spread to the New House, the Head would certainly have become

suspicious. There was no morning off for the New House, and the New House fellows agreed that it was rotten.

The School House fellows told them that they should have a Housemaster in the ranks of Kitchener's Army, the same as the School House had. But Mr. Ratcliff, the master of the New House, was turned fifty, and he was not an athlete, so it was very doubtful whether Lord Kitchener would have had any use for him even if he had offered himself. Figgins & Co., indeed, would have been very glad to send their Housemaster to Kitchener's Army, and they would not have wept if the Huns had taken him prisoner. Mr. Ratcliff was not popular.

That evening there was little talked of in the School House but the khaki match at Abbotsford, and Mr. Railton, Housemaster, sergeant, and skipper of the khaki team. The fact that the Leicestershire Battalion to which Mr. Railton belonged was under orders for the front added to the interest. Within a week after that cricket match Mr. Railton would be in the fighting-line facing a savage foe to keep the old flag flying. The St. Jim's fellows' hearts thrilled with pride as they thought of it.

But there was one fellow who was thinking about other matters. That was George Alfred Grundy. Grundy had never seen Mr. Railton, so perhaps his lack of enthusiasm was excusable. Besides, very important matters were occupying the mighty brain of Grundy of the Shell. His new eleven still consisted only of himself

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and Wilkins and Gunn. Of course, he was glad of the whole holiday, and he was willing to look on the match between the Trojans and the khaki eleven with a lofty and patronising eye. But it was his new eleven that occupied most of his thoughts. The important business, in Grundy's opinion, was to raise that new eleven, and give Tom Merry's team the "kyboosh." After that, with Grundy at the head of the junior cricket, there would be a golden age of the great game at St. Jim's.

The Terrible Three looked in at Grundy's study early in the evening. Grundy gave them a somewhat sour glance. One of Grundy's good points was that he never bore a grudge. But he could not quite forget so soon the way he had been sent hopping out of Study No. 6.

"You chaps are in the party to-morrow," said Tom amiably, quite as if he were on the best terms in the world with Grundy.

"Yes," growled Grundy.

"We're standing in to get a brake," explained Tom Merry. "There's a regular army going, and for about a bob a head we can make it a brake instead of biking it. You chaps standing in?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Ahem!" said Wilkins dubiously. "Unless you can bring my whack down to a tanner, I shall have to stand out."

"Oh, rot!" said Grundy. "I'm standing in for this study. There's three bob."

"Good!" said Tom. "If there's any change left over it will be expended in ginger-pop at Abbotsford. Manners is keeping the accounts."

"That's all right," said Grundy. "But about my eleven. I've been thinking, Tom Merry. Upon the whole, you're not such a bad cricketer—no good as a captain, of course—no good at all—but with a little licking into shape I could put you in my eleven. Your eleven is going, anyway, you know—as good as gone. What do you think?"

"I think you're a silly ass!" said Tom politely.

"Come on, you chaps, we've got some more collecting to do."

"I'll tell you what, Grundy," said Monty Lowther, as if struck by a sudden idea, "you might offer your services over at Abbotsford to-morrow. They might be in need of a player, and it only wants a look at you to see what kind of a cricketer you are."

"I've thought of that," said Grundy calmly.

Lowther jumped.

"You—you've thought of it!"

"Yes. If I knew Mr. Railton, I should certainly speak to him over there, and mention that I'm at his service if he needed a substitute."

"Oh, my hat!"

The Terrible Three quitted the study, almost overcome. Monty Lowther complained that his finest humour was wasted on Grundy. The fellow was such an ass that his leg could not be pulled.

But Lowther looked very thoughtful as the three chums went round collecting shillings. The required sum having been made up, Kildare was asked for a pass out of gates, so that they could cycle over to Wayland and order the brake. They wheeled their machines out, and pedalled away. Monty Lowther still wearing that thoughtful expression.

"What is it?" Tom Merry asked at last. He knew what that expression on the face of the humorist of the Shell implied. "Get it off your chest, Monty."

Monty Lowther grinned.

"I'm thinking of Grundy," he replied. "Are you fellows fed up with his rot?"

"Up to the chin," said Tom.

"He's fair game, isn't he, for a little joke?"

"Yes, if you can get a joke into his wooden head."

"Well, I'm going to try," said Lowther. "Let's see about the brake first. Then we'll go to the telephone office."

"The telephone!" exclaimed Manners and Tom Merry together.

"Yes."

"Whom are you going to telephone to?"

"Grundy!"

"Oh!"

Tom Merry asked no more questions. The Terrible Three arrived at Hanney's in Wayland, and engaged the brake for the morrow, and then wheeled their bikes down to the post-office. Then Monty Lowther proceeded to use the telephone, and his chums listened, in wonder at first, and then with breathless merriment.

CHAPTER 6.

A Talk on the Telephone.

"GRUNDY!"

"Where's Grundy?"

"That ass Grundy is wanted!"

Kangaroo of the Shell looked into Grundy's study. The new fellow was working at his prep, with a somewhat worried brow. Grundy was not great on lessons.

"You're wanted," said Kangaroo.

"Can't come!" said Grundy. "I'm at work. Bad enough to have to grind over this rot without being interrupted by silly asses!"

"Please yourself," said the Cornstalk. "Somebody's calling you on the telephone, that's all."

"Oh!" said Grundy, getting up. "That alters the case. Who is it?"

"Blessed if I know. Better go and see. Telephone in the prefects' room."

"Righto!"

Grundy proceeded downstairs, and some of the juniors accompanied him to the prefects' room. That sacred apartment was not supposed to be entered by juniors, excepting on fagging business for the high and mighty prefects of the Sixth. But as a great favour they were allowed to use the telephone on important occasions. Kildare and Darrel were chatting in the room, and the two great men frowned as half a dozen juniors came in.

"Somebody wants you on the telephone, Grundy," said Kildare. "You fags clear off."

The juniors had to clear off, but they waited in the passage for Grundy. It was very unusual for a junior to be called up on the telephone, and they were curious. Grundy went into the telephone cabinet, and took up the receiver. He was somewhat surprised himself. Still, a call on the telephone was a tribute to his importance, so he was feeling pleased.

"Hallo!"

"Hallo!" came a voice along the wires, which Grundy did not recognise. "I've been waiting for you. Is that Grundy?"

"I'm Grundy."

"Grundy of the Shell at St. Jim's?"

"Yes."

"Are you the same Grundy who was at Redclyffe School, in Kent, and who was known as the finest junior cricketer in the school?"

"Yes."

"Good! Are you free to-morrow?"

"Yes, I've got a whole holiday," said Grundy eagerly.

"That is very fortunate. Are you willing to lend your services in a match? A really first-class cricketer is required, as the match is against Abbotsford Trojans."

Grundy jumped.

"Yes," he breathed.

"I suppose you have heard of Mr. Railton, formerly Housemaster in your House at St. Jim's?"

"Oh, yes!"

"You know that he is captaining a khaki team to play Abbotsford to-morrow, perhaps?"

"Yes, I've heard of it."

"Very good! You do not recognise my voice, of course, as you were not at St. Jim's at the time."

"Is that Mr. Railton speaking?"

"Why, who do you think it was?"

"I guessed it was you, sir," said Grundy. "I shall be delighted to make your acquaintance, and to help you to the very best in my power in the match. I suppose you've heard something about my cricket at Redclyffe?"

"Yes, indeed. I have heard a good deal about it from a chap who was at Redclyffe. He says that you were simply wonderful."

"Yes, that's so."

"That you were far and away the best cricketer in the school, not even barring the seniors."

"Yes, that's about right."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Wha-a-t?" ejaculated Grundy. Grundy wasn't a suspicious fellow, but he could not help thinking that "Oh crumbs!" was a very peculiar exclamation for a Housemaster and a sergeant in Kitchener's Army.

"I—I— Oh, nothing! I suppose that all I've heard about you is true. You are really a first-class bat?"

"Well, I don't want to brag," said Grundy, "but I don't think you'd find a better one outside the Zingari or M.C.C."

"And you are a really reliable bowler?"

"Oh, yes! Bowling is my strong point."

"Fast or slow?"

"I'm considered first-class at both."

"And useful in the field, too—a good catch?"

"I think I can say that I've brought off some first-class catches, sir. In fact, anybody who knows me will tell you that you couldn't put a better man in any part of the field."

"That's just what I want. You are sure you can play for the khaki team to-morrow?"

"Quite sure, and very pleased."

"Would you be willing to captain the team?"

"Certainly. But I should not like to put you out—"

"Oh, that's all right! According to what I have heard of you—from a Redclyffe fellow, too—you are a better man at cricket than I am. What I want is a really first-class, all-round man to captain the team. If you're willing to take the place, that's all I want."

"With pleasure."

"Very well. The stumps will be pitched at ten to-morrow. Can you arrange to be in Abbotsford at ten?"

"Yes; there's a party of us coming over in a brake, and we shall be there by ten," said Grundy, his eyes dancing.

"You'll come up to the pavilion and ask for Mr. Railton."

"Yes."

"As you are not one of his old boys, you must announce yourself by name. Simply say that you want to see Mr. Railton, and tell him that you are Grundy, and have come over to captain the team. Then he—I mean, then I shall know you."

"I understand."

"Come in your cricketing things, and bring your best bat. I'm much obliged to you, Grundy."

"Not at all, sir. Delighted!"

"You will do a really good turn, my boy. And the experience may be useful to you, perhaps. Well, thanks again, and good-bye!"

"Good-bye, Mr. Railton!"

"One moment. Are you there, Grundy?"

"Yes."

"You need not mention this to your schoolfellows. I have heard that some of them have belittled your powers as a cricketer. Is that correct?"

"Yes, there's a good deal of jealousy here on that subject, I'm sorry to say."

"Ahem! Yes, exactly. Well, this is my idea. A crowd of St. Jim's fellows will be over here to see the match. I want them to see you at your very best, without any warning beforehand. It will come as a complete surprise to them, and will open their eyes to what you are really like. Do not say a word about it. Let them make the discovery for themselves."

Grundy chuckled.

"Certainly, sir. That'll take the wind out of their sails, and no mistake!"

"It will be a pleasant surprise for them, Grundy. After what happens to-morrow they will not fail to do you justice."

"Quite right, sir. By the way, what's the name of the Redclyffe fellow who mentioned me to you— Daah it all, he's rung off!" muttered Grundy.

Grundy hung up the receiver. His interlocutor was gone, without mentioning the name of the Redclyffe fellow who had praised Grundy so highly. Grundy knew the name, as a matter of fact—it was his own—but naturally that did not occur to him.

Grundy left the telephone-box as if he were treading on air.

About the same time Monty Lowther was leaving a telephone-box in Wayland town, and three merry juniors, almost doubled up with laughter, staggered away to their bikes.

CHAPTER 7.

Happy Anticipations.

THE irradiated countenance of George Alfred Grundy attracted general attention in the School House that evening.

Fellows looked at him in great surprise.

They could not see anything for Grundy of the Shell to be particularly joyful about, unless he enjoyed frog-marches, and delighted in hopping about on one leg. Grundy did not explain.

He chuckled gleefully over that really ripping idea of Mr. Railton's. It would be a dramatic situation at Abbotsford the next day. Tom Merry & Co. and a whole army of St. Jim's fellows would be there. After all their scoffing, after all their contumely, the great Grundy would suddenly dawn upon them as a tremendous cricketer, who had been asked, not only to play in the khaki eleven, but to captain it—to take the place of Mr. Railton himself.

Grundy had heard the fellows talking about Mr. Railton's prowess as a cricketer. And Mr. Railton had admitted that he was not up to Grundy's form—admitted it himself on the telephone.

No wonder Grundy was in the seventh heaven—no wonder he almost touched the stars with his sublime head.

What would the fellows say when they saw him there, batting for a grown-up side, captaining in the place of their own Housemaster—he, George Alfred Grundy, skipper of the Loamshire Rifles Eleven?

What could they say—the fellows who had laughed at his cricket, scorned his claims to play in a miserable junior school eleven, refused rudely to enter his new team? They would be dumbfounded. Delightful visions floated before Grundy's mind. He saw himself—in his mind's eye—carried shoulder-high by enthusiastic men in khaki, cheered to the echo by an enthusiastic and repentant St. Jim's crowd. He saw himself the hero of a brakeload of admiring fellows rolling homewards; he saw himself greeted by all St. Jim's with wonder and awe. He saw Tom Merry begging him, fairly on his knees, to accept the captaincy of the junior eleven. He saw Kildare dropping into his study to ask him to play for the First Eleven on all occasions when there were specially tough matches. He saw all this with his mind's eye. He was never likely to see it with any other eye.

He was strongly tempted to tell at least Wilkins and Gunn his good luck—or, rather, of the Loamshire men's good luck—for that was how it ought really to be regarded. True, Mr. Railton had shown wonderful judgment in picking him out; but he was lucky to have heard of Grundy, and to have secured him. It meant a dead cert for the khaki side. He was almost bursting to tell Wilkins and Gunn. They were his faithful followers, and they admired him when all the rest were scoffers. But he kept the secret. The arrangement had been made, and he could not break it. Wilkins and Gunn would have to make the tremendous discovery along with the rest on the morrow.

Wilkins and Gunn eyed him very oddly in the study that evening. Smiles broke out involuntarily over Grundy's face. His eyes twinkled, and sometimes he laughed without apparent cause. His affectionate chums began to fear that there was something wrong with his head. Then they found him oiling his cricket-bat. Then they discovered him getting out his flannels.

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NEXT WEDNESDAY:

"LEVISON'S LAST CARD!"

"You won't want these things to-morrow, old chap," said Gunn, in a subdued voice, for he was really getting alarmed at Grundy's peculiar looks and conduct. "You're coming along to Abbotsford to-morrow, you know."

Grundy laughed genially.

"I'm thinking of taking my bat along," he said.

"Taking your bat!"

"Yes. And I shall go in flannels."

"Wha-a-at for?"

"Oh, you never know what may happen, you know," said Grundy carelessly. Again he was tempted to tell the great secret; but again he refrained. He must keep faith with Mr. Railton. Besides, he looked forward to enjoying the astonishment of his chums when the big event came off. How they would stare, and how they would cheer, when they saw Grundy walk into the field with the khaki team!

Down in the common-room later Grundy met the Terrible Three, who had come home from Wayland. His happy and elated looks did not surprise them so much as they surprised the other fellows.

"Hallo! You're looking chippy!" said Lowther affably. "How is your new eleven getting on? Filled up yet?"

"I'm not bothering about that at present. It may not be necessary, after all," said Grundy. "I think that shortly you fellows will be singing a different tune. I may be mistaken, but I think so."

"Yes, you might be mistaken," assented Lowther thoughtfully.

"Well, we shall see," said Grundy. "I may say, though, that I shall decline to play in the junior eleven unless I am made skipper. I could not consent to play second fiddle."

"That's all right," said Tom Merry. "You won't play second fiddle. You won't play at all."

"The club may take it out of your hands after to-morrow," remarked Grundy.

"Anything special happening to-morrow?" asked Lowther innocently.

"You'll see."

"Only the khaki match that I know of," said Manners. "You're going to be there, Grundy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grundy. Under the circumstances he considered Manners's remark funny. He would certainly be there—all there!

"What's the joke?" asked Manners, looking surprised.

"Oh, you'll see!" said Grundy. "You live and learn, you know. There are some things that even you fellows don't know, you know. Ha, ha, ha!" And Grundy walked away chuckling.

"Bal Jove, you know, I've got a strong suspicion that that chap it goes off his wookah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in a low voice. "He has been chucklin' and grinnin' like anythin' evah since he was called up on the telephone."

"Mad as a hatter!" said Levison of the Fourth, who was one of the curious youths who had followed Grundy to the prefects' room. "Stark, staring dotty! Dotty as the Kaiser! He's been called up on the telephone, and he wouldn't say a word, not a syllable, about it. Said we'd know all about it to-morrow. Not that I care twopence about it, but it shows he's potty."

The Terrible Three nodded seriously. But when they called in on Study No. 6 for roast chestnuts before bed sounds of loud laughter might have been heard from that famous study. They were heard, in fact, and Talbot and Kangaroo dropped in to ask after the joke. Apparently the joke was explained to them, for they joined in the merriment.

Grundy looked about an inch taller than usual as he sailed into the Shell dormitory that night. His nose, which was somewhat upward inclined, by Nature, was elevated more than ever now. It had seemed impossible that Grundy could think more of himself than hitherto—but he did. For some mysterious reason, George Alfred had gone up in his own estimation.

The fellows wondered blankly as they heard him chuckle after he had turned in. Wilkins and Gunn were quite worried.

"Do you feel well, Grundy, old chap?" Wilkins inquired, after Darrel had turned out the light and gone.

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"Never better," said Grundy.

"You—you don't feel any bad effects from the frog-march?" asked Gunn.

"Only a bump or two. Why?"

"Oh, n-nothing."

"Is there madness in your family, Grundy?" came an inquiring voice from Gore's bed.

"Certainly not!"

"Nor idioocy?"

"No, you fathead! What are you asking fatheaded questions for?"

"Oh, I thought there might be," said Gore.

Gore was not the only fellow who thought there might be. Half the Shell at least, had strong doubts about Grundy's sanity by this time.

Grundy rose like a lark in the morning. He was heard to hum a tune as he swamped himself with cold water. Evidently he was not downhearted.

Thirty fellows at least were looking very cheerful at breakfast; but Grundy was the cheerfulness of all.

First lesson being over, the party on leave marched out of their Form-rooms, and prepared for the journey over to Abbotsford. A big brake, with three horses, came round prompt to time. Tom Merry & Co. marched out in a body—Grundy being a little late. He came springing across the quadrangle after them, however, and rejoined them at the gates.

There was a buzz of surprise from the fellows as they saw that Grundy was in flannels, and had a bat under his arm.

"What the thunder is that for?" asked Gore of the Shell. "Have you been asked to play for Abbotsford, by any chance, Grundy?"

"Ha, ha! No; not for Abbotsford."

"For the Loamshires, perhaps?" grinned Reilly.

"Perhaps," said Grundy, also grinning.

"Tumble in!" said Tom Merry. "Hallo! What are you going to do with that bat, Grundy?"

"You'll see presently," said Grundy.

And Grundy sat in the brake with his bat between his knees, and a grin on his face, unheeding the grins on the other faces. In the midst of his happy anticipations Grundy could afford to let them grin.

CHAPTER 8.

Services Not Required.

IT was a sunny summer morning, and the School House juniors enjoyed the drive over to Abbotsford. It was a good distance, but the brake bowled along at a rattling speed. The drive was enlivened by chipping Grundy. His flannels and his bat caused all sorts of remarks to be passed, but Grundy did not mind. He was looking forward to his triumph—now close at hand.

Why on earth Grundy should take a bat with him to see a cricket-match was a puzzle to everybody who was not in the secret. Wilkins and Gunn were much exercised in their minds, and more than a little doubtful about the state of Grundy's sanity.

It was really an extraordinary proceeding on the part of Grundy; and his evident high spirits were still more extraordinary. It could not be merely the prospect of seeing the School Housemaster that had enlivened him to that extent—he did not even know Mr. Railton. What was the matter with him was a mystery.

The brake rolled into the quaint old streets of Abbotsford under the bright sunshine, with a merry party in it, and the merriest of all was George Alfred Grundy.

It rolled on through the town to the cricket-ground—an extensive enclosure, where important matches were sometimes played. The war having killed King Cricket temporarily, big matches at Abbotsford were "off" for the time being—left over till the Great Game had been played and won.

The Abbotsford Trojans themselves were in depleted force, many of their members being at the Front, and others in training; but the club had got together a team to play the Loamshire Risks. The Loamshire second battalion was in training on Abbotsford Plain. The old

streets of Abbotsford were dotted with figures in khaki—a crowd of Kitchener's Boys had leave to see the regimental match, and khaki was thick in the enclosure.

Tom Merry and Co. crowded out of the brake, and marched in, paying at the gate. The gate-money was for the Red Cross Fund, and it looked, from the crowd, as if a substantial sum would be raised.

The ground was already pretty well filled when the juniors arrived, as the stumps were already pitched. The cricketers could be seen chatting in and around the pavilion.

"Hallo! Where are you going?" exclaimed Wilkins, as Grundy moved off from the rest of the party.

"I've got to see Railton," said Grundy.

Wilkins blinked at him.

"See Railton?"

"Yes."

"But—but you don't know Railton. You'll see him in the match."

"I'm going to make his acquaintance."

"I—I say, Grundy, old chap, come and sit down," said Wilkins, persuasively and anxiously. "Do come in and be quiet."

"Point-out Railton to me, if he's in sight," said Grundy.

Wilkins looked over towards the pavilion. Mr. Railton was there, chatting with Thompson, the Trojan skipper.

"That's the chap," said Wilkins, "that's our old Housemaster—the chap with a bat under his arm."

"Oh, good!" said Grundy. "Looks like a cricketer."

"Topping cricketer," said Wilkins. "You wait till you see him play. I say, where are you going?"

"I'm going to speak to him."

"But—but you can't, you know," said the alarmed Wilkins. "The public ain't allowed there."

Grundy chuckled.

"I'm not exactly the public," he explained; "I'm allowed there. The fact is, Mr. Railton is expecting me."

"Eh! Why—how—which—"

"He's waiting for me, in fact. You fellows can come along with me, if you like," said Grundy. "I can take you two. I'll get you seats outside the pavilion along with the big guns, you know. I've got a bit of influence here."

"You—you have!" stammered Gunn.

"I fancy so, as I'm going to captain the khaki team," said Grundy.

It was out at last.

Wilkins and Gunn almost staggered. If Grundy had said that he was going to command the Army in Flanders it could not have surprised them more.

"You're going to what?" gasped Wilkins.

"You're going to which!" stammered Gunn.

"I can tell you now," said Grundy. "Railton rang me up yesterday, and asked me. Come on; there's no time to waste—they're ready to start, and I dare say they're only waiting for me."

Grundy strode away.

"He's mad!" ejaculated Wilkins, looking at Gunn.

"Mad as a March hatter!" stammered Gunn, looking at Wilkins.

"Where's Grundy gone?" roared Gore. "He'll get chucked out."

"He says he's going to captain the khaki eleven!" babbled Wilkins. "It must be sunstroke or something."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The St. Jim's fellows, packed in a compact body in the grand stand, burst into a roar of delight. Monty Lowther had been explaining, and they were in a state of great expectancy. The sight of George Grundy striding away to offer his services to Mr. Railton seemed too good to be true.

Wilkins and Gunn were rooted to the planks at first. But they felt that it was up to them to look after their chum, who had so suddenly taken leave of his senses. They rushed after him. An attendant tried to keep Grundy out of the players' enclosure. But Grundy did not stop to argue with him; he shoved the man aside, and strode on to where Mr. Railton was speaking to Thompson.

Very fit and handsome the Housemaster of St. Jim., looked in his flannels, and his face was bronzed by the wind and the sun since he had been in training.

Grundy came striding up, with an angry attendant striding after him, pursued by the alarmed Wilkins and Gunn. From the grand stand the St. Jim's crowd watched in huge delight.

"Mr. Railton!" exclaimed Grundy.

The former master of the School House of St. Jim's looked round.

"Tell this silly chump to mind his own business," said Grundy, indicating the attendant, who was almost foaming. "He tried to keep me out."

"Quite right, too!" said Mr. Railton, puzzled. "The public are not allowed here."

"I'm Grundy."

"Eh! You mean your name is Grundy?"

"Yes."

"I do not see that that makes any difference. Please go back."

"But—but— Don't you understand? I've been asked specially to come here, that's why I've come."

"Oh! This is a friend of yours, Mr. Thompson?" asked the Housemaster, addressing the Trojan skipper.

Thompson shook his head.

"I don't know the kid," he said. "Who are you, young shaver, and what do you want?"

Grundy stared.

"I've come here to see Mr. Railton," he said.

"Well, I am Mr. Railton," said the Housemaster-sergeant. "What is it? You should not come here. But what is it—quick?"

"I'm Grundy."

"Yes; you have said so. Well? Have you a message for me?"

"Message be blowed! I'm Grundy—Grundy of the Shell."

"Oh!" said Mr. Railton. "Do you mean that you belong to St. Jim's?"

"Of course I do."

"You are a new boy, then. I do not remember you. You wanted to see me? Thank you; but, please, go back now. You are in the way here."

"But—but—but—" stammered the unfortunate Shell fellow. "But I—I'm Grundy."

"Is he dotty?" asked the Trojan skipper. "His friends ought to be looking after him. Here"—he beckoned to Wilkins and Gunn, who were hovering nervously in the offing—"does this kid belong to you? Take him away!"

"Come on, Grundy, old chap," murmured Wilkins.

"Please go away, my boy," said Mr. Railton, not unkindly, though he was very much surprised. "You can see that you are in the way here."

"But—but I've come to play!" roared Grundy.

"What?"

"What do you think I'm in flannels for? What do you think I've brought my bat for?" demanded Grundy indignantly. "I'm here to play!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Railton. "But—but—cannot you see that—that you cannot play here? It is not a schoolboy match. You have doubtless made some mistake—you have come to the wrong ground perhaps?"

"This is Abbotsford Trojan ground, isn't it?"

"Certainly!"

"You're Mr. Railton?"

"Yes."

"And the Loamshire Rifles are playing the Trojans here?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Then there's no mistake. I'm here to captain the team."

"To—to what?"

"Captain your team!"

"Dear me! The boy must be insane!" said Mr. Railton. "Do not be rough with him, my man!" This was to the angry attendant, who looked inclined to make a frontal attack on Grundy. "His friends will take him away."

"Do you mean to say you don't want me?" shouted Grundy.

"Ahem!" Mr. Railton tried not to laugh. "You—you see, our team is quite—quite full up, and I am

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captaining my eleven myself. I am afraid it has not even occurred to me to ask a schoolboy to take my place. Now, run away with your friends!"

"Then why did you ask me?" demanded Grundy wrathfully.

"I?"

"Yes, you! If you don't want my services, why did you ask me to come here and captain your team?" bawled Grundy furiously.

"B-b-but—my dear boy, I did not!" gasped Mr. Railton in bewilderment.

"Didn't you ring me up on the telephone yesterday, and tell me you wanted me for this match?" roared Grundy.

"Good heavens! No!"

"You—you—you didn't?"

"Certainly not!"

Grundy looked quite dazed.

"You didn't ring me up on the telephone? You didn't tell me you'd heard about my cricket from a Redclyffe chap, and wanted me to captain the khaki team, because you knew I was a better player than yourself?"

"Oh dear! Ha, ha! No, assuredly not! It appears to me that someone has been playing a practical joke on you, Grundy, if that is your name!"

"A j-j-joke?" stammered Grundy.

"Apparently. But you must be an extremely foolish and conceited boy to be deceived by so absurd a story. Now please go away at once!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Grundy almost staggered away. There was evidently nothing doing! Wilkins and Gunn, understanding at last the cause of Grundy's apparent insanity, accompanied him, almost suffocating. If Grundy had told them about that talk on the telephone, they would have guessed that his leg was being pulled, and might have succeeded in convincing him that such was the case. But they had known nothing—till now. They were almost in hysterics as they marched Grundy back to the grand-stand.

Grundy walked away like a fellow in a dream. For a moment he was completely crushed. The grins with which the St. Jim's party received him did not enlighten him. He sank into the seat that had been kept for him and gasped. Wilkins and Gunn sat down, nobly struggling with their emotions. Monty Lowther gave Grundy a look of sweet and kind inquiry.

"Seen Railton?" he asked affably.

"Yes," gasped Grundy.

"How do you like him?"

"Like him! I don't like him! Like master, like pupil," said Grundy bitterly. "Or, I should say, like pupil, like master! The same rotten jealousy of a good player!"

"What!" yelled the juniors.

"I may as well tell you now," said Grundy, breathing wrath and indignation. "I was rung up on the telephone yesterday—"

"Were you?" murmured Lowther.

"Railton rang me up, and told me he'd heard about my cricket from a Redclyffe chap, and asked me to play in this match!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He told me, very reasonably, I thought, that he knew I was a better player than he was, and asked me to captain the team—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at. I was willing to oblige him, and I gave him my promise. I came over here to play!"

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

"Now the silly ass has changed his mind, and tries to make out that he never phoned me at all, and that it's a practical joke!" said Grundy furiously.

"Oh, crumbs! And isn't it!" gasped Tom Merry.

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"Isn't it? Of course it isn't! The silly chump has changed his mind. Jealousy, of course!"

"Jealousy!" stutted Blake.

"It can't be anything else. He was simply set on having me yesterday. Now he pretends he never even asked me. I suppose he's thought it over, and doesn't like being put in the shade by a fellow of my age. Disgusting, I call it! The jealousy I've met with at St. Jim's has opened my eyes. I'd never have believed it if I hadn't seen it myself. Now I see it's the same with the masters as with the kids—rotten jealousy all along the line. If I hadn't been quite taken aback, I'd have told him what I thought of him, too. It's—it's revolting!" Grundy snorted with indignation. "Why couldn't he say he'd changed his mind? But to try to make out that he never asked me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"To tell me a silly yarn about a practical joke—well, that's the limit! I'm not the kind of fellow to have my leg pulled, I fancy!"

"Oh dear!" moaned Tom Merry. "Don't, Grundy! Can't you see you're killing us by inches?"

"G'wreat Scott! And wasn't it a practical joke, G'wunday?"

"Of course not!"

"You—you weally think Railton telephoned to you?"

"I know he did!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Look here, Grundy," said Lowther, taking the Shell fellow by the shoulder and fixing his attention. "Listen! Hearken! Lend me your ears! It was I who telephoned to you, to pull your leg, because you're a conceited ass! See? I did it! Little me!"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Grundy.

"You—you don't believe it?" stammered Lowther, taken aback.

"Oh course I don't! You can't pull my leg! Railton telephoned to me!"

"I tell you I telephoned to you!" shrieked Lowther.

"Oh, cheese it!"

"I tell you I—I—"

"You can't pull my leg, I tell you! I'm not the sort of chap to be taken in! Don't repeat that silly yarn, Lowther, it's not funny!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Monty Lowther was quite overcome. He had expected wrath and indignation from Grundy when the truth was revealed; instead of which, Grundy declined to believe the truth, and persisted that he could not be taken in. It was evident that nothing would convince Grundy that Lowther, and not Mr. Railton, had telephoned to him. The great Grundy was a living example of the truth of the German proverb, "Mit der Dummheit kumpfen Gotter selbst vergebens,"

which Monty Lowther would have translated, "Against fathedness the gods themselves haven't an earthly!" So the juniors gave it up.

Grundy sat and watched the match with a frowning brow. He looked upon Mr. Railton with a morose eye. In a hundred years Grundy could not have been convinced that he had been the victim of a practical joke. He was not the sort of fellow to be taken in!

CHAPTER 9.

The Khaki Match!

MR. RAILTON was quite in his old form in the khaki match. Tom Merry & Co. cheered to the echo a score of fifty from the Housemaster's bat.

Loud cheers followed Mr. Railton's innings, loudest of all from the corner of the grand-stand where the St. Jim's juniors were packed.

Sergeant Railton glanced towards them as he went back to the pavilion, and waved his hand and smiled,

FOR NEXT WEEK:

LEVISON'S LAST CARD!

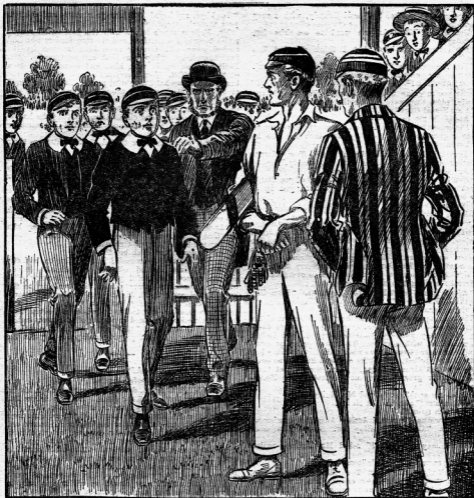
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PRICE ONE PENNY.



"Mr. Railton! Tell this silly chump to mind his own business," said Grundy, indicating the attendant, who was almost foaming. "He tried to keep me out." "Quite right too," said Mr. Railton, puzzled, "the public are not allowed here." (See Chapter 8.)

and the juniors roared louder than ever. Herries was heard to express a regret that he had not brought his mouth-organ. Enthusiasm for Sergeant Railton was at its greatest point—except for Grundy. Grundy was not enthusiastic.

"Khaki will win!" said Tom Merry. "That's a solid fifty for them. Old Railton is at the top of his form."

Grundy sniffed.

"Might have been a century," he said.

"How could it, ass?"

"I mean, if he'd had sense enough to keep his word, and put me in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At lunch-time the juniors streamed out into the town of Abbotsoford, where Arthur Augustus, who was rolling in money, stood a handsome feed at the bunshop. They returned in time for the resumption of play.

The Leamshire first innings had totalled 150, and the Trojans had just topped the 100. In their second innings the khaki eleven went ahead, Mr. Railton

securing 60 for his side, amid loud cheers, especially from the St. Jim's crowd.

"Hundred and forty for the innings," said Tom Merry when the last man was down. "Total, two hundred and ninety. Trojans will have to buck up to get anything near that."

"The Twojans won't get neah it, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus was right. The "hat trick" by Mr. Railton dashed the last hopes of the Trojans, and though they struggled on gallantly to the finish, they were 60 runs short when the chopper came down.

There was a roar of cheering and a ripple of hand-clapping for the khaki team. Leamshire Rifles had won hands down.

"We've got to see Railton before we go, and have a word with him," said Tom Merry, as the crowd began to file out. "He's off to the front next week, and we've got to say good-bye, and wish him luck."

"Yase, wathah!"

"I've got to see him, too," said Grundy, with a very determined look.

"Bai Jove! What do you want to see him for, Grundy?"

"I'm going to tell him what I think of what he's done."

"You thumping ass!" roared Monty Lowther. "Don't I keep telling you that I did the telephone trick?"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"So you're going to see Railton?" asked Tom Merry grimly, when they were outside the enclosure.

"I am!" said Grundy.

"And talk rot to him—what?"

"I'm going to tell him I think it's pretty low-down to bring a chap over here to play, and then tell him he isn't wanted!"

"You hear that, you chaps?" said Tom Merry. "Gather round! Come along with us, Grundy."

"Are you going to see Railton now?"

"Not just yet. We're going to take care of you first!" chuckled Tom Merry. "We're going to tie you up in the brake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here, hold him! Stop him!"

Grundy made a sudden bound, and dashed away at top speed. After him in a shouting crowd went the St. Jim's juniors. As it happened, Mr. Railton and the soldier team had just come out of the gate to go down to the station, and return to the camp on the plain. Grundy was heading for Mr. Railton, and Tom Merry & Co. ran as if they had been on the cinder-path to overtake him before he could get to the Housemaster.

"Aftah him!" panted Arthur Augustus. "Wun like anythin', deah boys!"

"Collar him!"

The rushing crowd of juniors drew the attention of the man in khaki. Mr. Railton, supposing they were dashing up to say good-bye to him, stopped, and looked towards them with a smile. He was surprised at what happened next. Grundy was within six feet of him when Tom Merry, Talbot, and Blake overtook him all at once. They grasped Grundy instantly, and the four of them rolled on the ground, fairly at the feet of the Housemaster.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"Sit on him!" panted Tom Merry.

"Pin him down!"

"Yaas, wathah!" panted Arthur Augustus, coming up breathless. "Collah the sillay ass! Squash him, deah boys!"

"What may this mean?" asked Mr. Railton, rather grimly.

"Pwax excuse us, Mr. Wailton—"

"It's all right, sir," said Tom Merry, jumping up, panting. "Sit on him, you chaps. It's Grundy, sir. He—he's a bit doty, and we're taking care of him."

"Ah, that very odd boy who spoke to me!" said Mr. Railton. "Treat him gently; do not be rough with him. He ought to be taken care of, the unfortunate lad!"

"Yaas, we're goin' to take care of him, sir."

The juniors took care of Grundy. Talbot and Gore and Blake and Kangaroo whipped him off the ground by his arms and legs, and rushed him away, struggling wildly. He disappeared round the corner of the enclosure. They rushed him away to the brake, which was waiting in the road.

"We wanted to see you to say good-bye, sir," said Tom Merry, gasping. "We hear you are off next week, sir."

"Yes, we are under orders for the front," said Mr. Railton. "I am very glad to see you once more, my boys, before I go. I hope you are keeping up your cricket."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"And working hard at your lessons?"

"Ye-e-es, sir"—less enthusiastically.

"I hope you will come home safe and sound, sir, aftah lickin' the Huns, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "It will be a greet day when you come back to St. Jim's, sir. I am awwan'g to ewest a twiumphal arch!"

Mr. Railton laughed.

"Well, I am glad to have seen you," he said.

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"Good-bye, my boys! Stick to your work, and stick to your cricket. Good-bye!"

Mr. Railton shook hands with the juniors all round, which took him some time, and the four juniors who had rushed away with Grundy came back in time for the final handshake. They came back without Grundy. Mr. Railton shook hands with him, and marched his men off to the station. Tom Merry & Co. walked away to the brake in a somewhat thoughtful mood. They were proud of their old Housemaster, proud to know that he was going into the fighting-line, but what might be his fate out there on the shell-swept plains of Flanders? The fight was for liberty and civilisation, but the price had to be paid. Would they ever see their old Housemaster again?

But they strove to drive that dark thought from their minds.

After watching the men in khaki off they went to the brake. From the brake strange sounds were proceeding.

"Gwaat Scott!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, as he stepped into the vehicle.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy of the Shell was extended in the brake, with his wrists tied to two of the seats.

"It was the only way," said Blake. "We'll keep him like that for a bit as he seems excited somehow."

"Lemme loose!" roared Grundy.

"All in good time, deah boy!"

The St. Jim's party crowded into the brake, and the grinning driver started off for the distant school. Grundy served the useful purpose of a foot-rest. He uttered threats that were almost bloodcurdling as the brake rolled away to St. Jim's. But by the time nearly all the boots in the party had been wiped on him, and the brake was half-way to the school, even the truculent George Alfred was reduced to a state of sweet reasonableness, and he demanded "pax" in a feeble voice. So he was untied, and he sat gasping and glowering for the rest of the journey.

CHAPTER 10.

Professionals!

TOM MERRY & Co., during the next few days, almost forgot Grundy of the Shell. The new fellow had a way of keeping himself in evidence, true, but the heroes of St. Jim's were busy. Cricket matches were coming thick and fast now as the season advanced, and cricket kept them busy, either playing or practising. Then they had Mr. Railton to think of, and plans to make for seeing him off when the troop-train bore him away the following week with a huge detachment of men in khaki. And so they had no time to bother about Grundy, and if they thought of that determined youth and his threatened new eleven at all it was only to suppose that he had learned sense at last.

But Grundy hadn't.

All the Lower School had howled with merriment over Grundy's adventure at Abbotsford, and Grundy was the only fellow who fancied that it was really Mr. Railton who had rung him up on that famous occasion. Grundy kept to his own opinion.

But he was getting more subdued. There was no more talk of "walloping" fellows who declined to volunteer for his new eleven. Grundy had learned to his cost that walloping was no use. It was Grundy who had received most of the walloping. But Wilkins and Gunn, his study-mates, knew that he had not given up the idea.

Frequently they found him in the study with wrinkled brows, thinking it over. They wondered what would be the end of his deep cogitations. That he would ever get an eleven together did not seem likely. After nearly a week it still consisted only of three.

But on Monday there came a change. Grundy had been lying low a little while he thought it out. Apparently his thinking had led at last to some tangible result, for at tea-time in the study on Monday he was cheery and expansive.

"I've got it!" he announced.

"Pass it this way when you've done with it," said Wilkins cordially.

Grundy stared at him.

"Eh! I mean my idea."

"Oh, I thought you were speaking of the jam!" said Wilkins innocently.

"Don't be an ass, Wilkins! I've got the idea for my new eleven."

"Tell me all about it, old scout," said Wilkins. "You pass the jam, Gunn."

Gunn passed the jam, and the two Shell fellows went on with their tea, cheerfully making up their minds to stand Grundy's new idea. It was a handsome spread in the study that evening, and Grundy was standing it. As he was standing their tea they could stand his new idea; that was only fair.

"I've asked a lot of fellows," went on Grundy. "But they don't seem to care about playing in my eleven. Tom Merry's influencing them against me, of course. It's a regular conspiracy. But I'm not standing it. I've told you fellows more than once that I never stand any rot."

"You have," agreed Wilkins; "some hundreds of times, in fact! Pass those muffins this way, Gunn."

"It's a conspiracy," repeated Grundy. "That fellow Lowther's in it; that's why he's been telling that idiotic yarn about telephoning to me. He would like to make me believe that it was he did it, you know, and not Ralton. I fancy I'm a bit too sharp to swallow a yarn like that. Well, I've thought of a way to frustrate their knavish tricks, you know. I'm going to get my eleven all right. There's a proverb that says it's money makes the mare go. Now, I've got lots of money. Money talks, you know."

"It's a useful article," said Wilkins. "But—but you can't buy a cricket eleven in a shop, you know, like—like toy soldiers."

"You know the way they run these things in county cricket," said Grundy. "Not so much of it this summer, of course, because the war's knocked it on the head, and cricket's only a ghost this year."

"Quite right, too," said Gunn. "Better things for men to do than to play cricket just now. All right for us; we're not old enough to go out with Kitchener's men."

"Yes, I know that," said Grundy. "But I was going to explain— You know how they make up the county teams. Amateur players for ornament, you know, and professionals to win. Well, I'm going to do the same."

"Eh!"

"What?"

"That's the idea," said Grundy triumphantly. "Why shouldn't I employ professionals in my eleven, the same as the county clubs do?"

"Great Julius Cæsar!"

"I'll bag their players that way," said Grundy. "I've got lots of oof. I'm willing to spend it in a good cause."

"A good cause?" said Wilkins.

"It's a good cause, to save the game from going to the dogs in this school, isn't it?" demanded Grundy. "Worth a bit of trouble to stop the rot that's set in. Cricket is on its last legs here, and I'm going to save it. As a sportsman, I mark that out as my special duty, and I shall leave no stone unturned."

"Oh dear!"

"The clubs pay a professional so much per match," said Grundy. "Two or three quid, or something like that, and a bit extra if it's a win. Why can't I do the same?"

"But—but they'll lynch you if you offer 'em money!" gasped Wilkins.

Grundy snorted.

"I'll bet you I'll get my professionals easy enough," he replied. "I'll put a notice on the board—"

"If the prefects see it, they'll stop you."

"I shouldn't allow them to stop me," said Grundy, frowning. "I whopped a prefect at Redclyffe. That's why I had to leave."

"Well, you don't want to have to leave St. Jim's in the same way, do you?" said Wilkins. "You don't want to spend your giddy life going to one school after another whopping prefects, and getting the order of the boot!"

"Well, no," agreed Grundy. "I'll put the notice up in the junior common-room, where only the juniors will see it. And I'll bet you I'll have a regular procession of applicants after tea."

"Oh!" said Wilkins quite faintly. "But—but you

won't get any of Tom Merry's men away on those lines."

"I don't really need 'em. They're not really much class as cricketers; they'd want a lot of licking into shape if I took 'em in hand."

"Oh dear! I— I say, Grundy, old man, better think it over," urged Wilkins. "If you get any recruits, they'll be measly fellows like Levison and Mellish and Crooke, who'll be after the money, you know, and—"

"That doesn't matter. With my knowledge of the game, I shall soon turn them into good cricketers. I'm a splendid coach!"

Wilkins said no more. He couldn't; he was overcome. He went on mechanically eating cake; while Grundy jabbed a pen into the ink, and proceeded to draw up his notice on a sheet of impot paper.

Leaving Wilkins and Gunn at tea, Grundy hurried downstairs when the notice was finished, and pinned it up in the common-room. Then he came back to the study looking very satisfied. He was more than pleased with his latest idea. It was true, perhaps, that if he got any recruits, they would only be juniors who were hard up, and were after the loaves and fishes, so to speak; but he had perfect confidence in his ability to lick any player into good shape, with his thorough knowledge of the game.

In the junior common-room, Blake of the Fourth was the first fellow to spot the notice hanging on the wall. Blake's yell drew a crowd, and soon fellows were pressing from far and near to read "Grundy's latest." They read it with gasps of astonishment and merriment. Certainly no such notice had ever before been posted up within the walls of St. Jim's. It ran:

"GRUNDY'S ELEVEN! NOTICE!"

"Players required for the above.

"Not necessarily good players, as all recruits for Grundy's eleven will be specially coached by their captain and licked into shape. They will be expected to turn up to regular practice, at hours specified by their skipper.

"Amateurs welcomed, but professionals accepted. Rate of pay for professionals, retaining fee of 5s. per week, and bonus of 10s. for each match played, £1 in case of a win.

"Applications to be made this evening to G. A. Grundy, in his study in the Shell passage. No likely applicant refused, as reserves will be wanted.

"GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY."

"Bai Jove, that takes the cake!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in amazement. "The uttah as is thinkin' of waisin' professional cricketahs heah, bai Jove!"

"That's the limit," grinned Monty Lowther. "What offers for Grundy's five bob a week? Did I catch your eye, Tommy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you rushing to offer your services, Blake? Five bob a week isn't to be sneezed at—and ten bob for a match, too. Needn't mention the quid in case of a win; there won't be any wins."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, this beats it," said Levison of the Fourth. "This is corn in Egypt in one of the lean years! I'm stony!"

"Same here," grinned Mellish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, you'd be an ornament to any cricket team, Mellish," chuckled Blake. "Quite worthy of Grundy's eleven."

"Well, I suppose I can play cricket as well as Grundy, anyway," said Mellish.

"Ha, ha! That's so!"

"Walk up, gentlemen!" sang out Monty Lowther. "Anybody who has fallen upon stony places, walk up! Five bob a week and free coaching."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy, in his study, could not hear the roars of laughter his new departure had caused. He was hoping that his announcement had made an impression. It had; there was no doubt about that. There were quite a number of fellows in the School House who were hard up,

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and they had no objection to spending Grundy's money, if he chose to hand it over. They weren't much in the way of cricketers, perhaps; but then, Grundy had undertaken to lick them into shape. At last, Grundy's celebrated eleven, which had been in the air so long, was about to take shape and form.

CHAPTER 11. Grundy's Eleven!

LEIVISON of the Fourth was the first to arrive in Grundy's study. He tapped politely at the door and came in. Grundy received him with a genial grin. Wilkins and Gunn grinned too. They knew what Leivison was after. Leivison, as a rule, was satirical towards Grundy. But just now he was exceedingly polite and respectful. It appeared that at last he realised the full importance of George Alfred Grundy.

"Come in!" said Grundy. "You've seen my notice?"
"Yes. Any chance for me?" asked Leivison.
"Certainly! You're not much of a cricketer, but I'll soon alter all that. I'll put your name down." Grundy opened his pocket-book. "Lemme see. What's your name?"

"Ernest Leivison."
"Ernest Leivison. Good!" said Grundy. "That's settled. You're a member of my eleven. Amateur or professional?"

"Professional, please," said Leivison demurely.
"Right!"
"Five bob a week, and ten bob for a match," said Leivison.

"Yes; and a pound for a win."
Leivison smiled. He was not particular about that. He could easily guess how many wins there were likely to be.
"Pay in advance?" he asked.

"Well, I hadn't thought about that."
"It's a good wheeze," said Leivison. "It will show the fellows that you mean business, you know."

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Grundy. "There's five bob. Sign a receipt. Put down that you undertake to turn up at regular practice for at least one hour every day, and play in matches as required."

Leivison signed that receipt cheerfully. At least four hours' cricket every week was compulsory in the school, so it only meant another two hours for Grundy. It was worth that, even for a slacker like Leivison.

Leivison slipped the five shillings into his pocket, and strolled out of the study. He met his pal Mellish in the passage.

"Signed on?" grinned Mellish.
"You bet! Look at that!"
Leivison held up five shillings to view.

"He must be potty!" said Mellish.
"Of course he is! Go in and rope in five bob while you've got the chance."

"What-ho!"
Mellish promptly presented himself in Grundy's study and signed on, and received his five shillings.

"First practice to-morrow after lessons," said Grundy. "No excuses accepted. I'm going to get my eleven into form to play Tom Merry's eleven on Saturday. The first job on hand is to knock that silly eleven out of the running. After that we'll see."

"Oh, we'll beat 'em!" said Mellish solemnly. "With a skipper like you, Grundy, I fancy we shall put up a game that will surprise some of the fellows."

"That's just what I expect," said Grundy.
Mellish retired, grinning in his sleeve. Pigott of the Third was the next to apply. Grundy looked at the tag rather doubtfully.

"I'm little but good," Pigott explained. "And, after all, Grundy, with you as skipper, it will be all right, anyway."

"Yes, that's so," agreed Grundy.
So Pigott signed on, and received his five shillings.

Then came Gore of the Shell, with a grin on his face. Gore could play cricket, and he was a reserve for Tom Merry's eleven; but he was hard-up. If there was so much money knocking about in Grundy's study, Gore

didn't see why he shouldn't have some. Gore signed on, with a grin, and pocketed five shillings.

"Four already," said Grundy, when Gore was gone. "That makes seven with us three. Only four more wanted to make up the eleven. If I don't get 'em all on this side, I'll pick up some in the New House."

But there were more to come. Pigott had shown his five shillings in the Third Form-room, and told the tale, and advised the other fags to go and do likewise. Wally D'Arcy, the great chief of the fags, had sniffed disdainfully at the idea, but some of the fags, who were hard-up, thought it an excellent wheeze. Hobbs and Hooley came along to Grundy's study and signed on. That evening there was plenty in the halls of the Third. When Mr. Selby came in to take his Form in evening preparation a strong smell of cooking greeted him. Grundy's advance pay for the professionals had gone the way of most fag pocket-money.

"Nine!" said Grundy triumphantly.
"But what a nine!" murmured Wilkins.
"Oh, that's all right! I shall jolly soon lick 'em into shape," said Grundy confidently. "Besides, I shall be in the match, you know. With a century from me in each innings, perhaps—"

"Perhaps!" murmured Gunn.
"And the hat-trick, you know. I'm a topping bowler! I don't think we shall need all our wickets, really."

"Oh, dear!"
There was a pause in the proceedings for some time, and the three Shell fellows went on with their prep. But later on there came a knock at the door. It was Clampe of the Shell this time, a New House fellow. The news of Grundy's latest departure had evidently spread to the New House by this time.

Clampe was a weedy fellow, much given to cigarette-smoking and to putting surreptitious "bobs" on "gees." His latest "gee-gee" had run away with all his spare cash, and Clampe no sooner heard of Grundy's munificent offer than he was "on" it.

"Put my name down," said Clampe. "Five bob in advance, I understand?"

"Sign on," said Grundy. "First practice to-morrow at five."

"I may be engaged then," said Clampe, slipping the silver into his pocket.

Grundy frowned.
"No other engagements are allowed to interfere with the practice of my eleven," he explained. "If you don't turn up, I shall look for you and wallop you!"

"Oh!" said Clampe, with a stare.
He looked at Grundy's burly figure and big fists, and decided that he would turn up to practice.

Next came Dibbs of the Fourth, also from the New House, and Pratt came with him. Grundy signed them on with great satisfaction. He had now a total of twelve, including himself.

"That gives us one reserve," he remarked. "If one of them is cheeky—Gore looked rather cheeky—I shall whop him and kick him out, as an example to the others. I've got my eleven now to play Tom Merry on Saturday."

"You've paid out two-pound-ten," said Wilkins.
"Pooh! What's that?"

"And ten bob each for the match. My hat!"
"Oh, that's all right! I've got lots of tin. I'm going to fix up that match for Saturday, and, after I've thoroughly thrashed Tom Merry's eleven, I shall be the head of junior cricket here. Then there won't be any more need for professionals."

"Oh dear!" said Wilkins. "You—you think that scrappy lot will beat Tom Merry's eleven?"

"With my leadership, yes."

"Suppose—suppose Merry won't play them?"

"I shall make him!"

"Oh!"

Grundy finished his prep. He was not interrupted again. Apparently all the "stony" juniors had visited him. Then he went along to Tom Merry's study, where he found the Terrible Three and Talbot discussing plans for the following Saturday. The contingent of the Loamshires to which Mr. Raitton belonged was entraining for Southampton on Saturday, and naturally the juniors

wished to see them start, and give them a cheer as the troop-train bore them away.

"I've made up my eleven," said Grundy, interrupting the chums of the Shell without ceremony. He had no time to waste bothering about Mr. Ralston. "I understand that there's no fixture for Saturday, Merry?"

"No," said Tom.

"Good! I've got a fixture for you. I want you to meet my eleven with the junior school eleven."

"No time for jokes on Saturday," said Tom, laughing. "We're going over to Abbotsford to see the soldiers start."

"What about next Wednesday, then?"

"Playing Grammar School next Wednesday."

"The following Saturday?"

"Playing Abbotsford School."

"Then it must be this Saturday," said Grundy firmly. "I can't have the matter hanging about half the season. I'm anxious to get down to work. I want to stop the rot in St. Jim's cricket before it goes any further."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at—nothing whatever," said Grundy, frowning. "I know there's a conspiracy to keep me in the shade, but I'm not taking any. I never stand any rot. You're meeting my eleven on Saturday. If you don't—"

"You'll wallop me?" asked Tom Merry, grinning.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy paused. He had already made one great effort to "whop" Tom Merry, and he had felt the painful results himself for a week. Whopping was out of the question.

"You see," said Tom, "one must think about the look of the thing. The junior eleven has to keep up a certain amount of dignity. Cricket isn't exactly a serious and solemn bizney, but I don't believe in turning it into a joke. What's your eleven? Let's look at the names."

"Here you are!"

The chums of the Shell read the list of names, and chuckled. It ran: Grundy, Wilkins, Gunn, Clampe, Levison, Mellish, Gore, Pigott, Hobbs, Hooley, Dibbs, Pratt. Of those dozen, Pratt and Wilkins and Gunn and Levison were passable players, but only passable. The rest were much on a par with the great Grundy.

"That's your eleven, is it?" said Tom Merry. "Well, perhaps next season we may find you a date, or the season after!"

"Now, look here—"

"Hold on!" said Lowther. "No need to start for Abbotsford till half-past three on Saturday. We could give them an hour."

"What's the good of an hour?" demanded Grundy. "It will take us more than an hour to beat you, I suppose?"

"More than your lifetime, old son!" grinned Lowther. "I wasn't thinking of that; I was thinking of the time it would take us to beat you! Play 'em, Tom. Besides, I've got an idea."

"That's all very well, but we don't want to miss seeing Ralston off," said Tom.

"We sha'n't miss him. Play 'em."

Tom Merry gave in.

"Right-ho! We'll play you on Saturday, Grundy, if you pitch stumps immediately after dinner."

"That suits me," said Grundy. "Look out for a thumping good licking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle now. You'll sing a rather different tune next Saturday," said Grundy darkly. And he retired from the study, and slammed the door.

"It won't take an hour to beat them," said Talbot, laughing.

"But there's the time it'll take to change, and all that," said Tom. "It will be cutting it pretty close, and we can't miss our train for Abbotsford. It goes at three-thirty. If we had to leave the match unfinished those chumps would count it as a win."

"We sha'n't need to change," said Monty Lowther. "That's my idea. We're going to put on our best bib and tucker to see Ralston off. Well, we'll start, and just drop in at the cricket-ground to lick Grundy's eleven—Etons and toppers."

"Ha, ha, ha! Same as Kildare did to us once in a

footer match, the cheeky bouncer!" chuckled Tom Merry. "You remember the time we made the first eleven play us, and they played us in tail-coats and toppers?"

"Rats!" said Lowther warmly. "This is my idea—a really original wheeze. We're not going to play in tail-coats. Blow their tail-coats! We're going to play in Etons and nice white collars."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Only don't tell Grundy. He can find that out on Saturday."

And the chums of the Shell chuckled gleefully over that little scheme for "rotting" Grundy's egregious eleven; and the rest of the junior team, when they heard the "wheeze," chuckled too, with great glee. The junior cricketers would, as it were, pause in their walk down to the gates to beat Grundy's eleven, and then go on their way as if nothing had happened; and if that did not make George Alfred Grundy sing small it was evident that nothing would.

CHAPTER 12.

Kept Up to the Mark.

TOM MERRY & CO. were much interested the next day in the progress of Grundy's eleven.

First practice had been fixed for five o'clock; and at five o'clock precisely Grundy came down to the practice-nets with Wilkins and Gunn.

He found a crowd of juniors there, some at practice and some chatting. But not one member of the new team was present. Grundy looked over the crowd in some surprise, and seemed puzzled.

"They're not here!" he said.

"Seems not," agreed Wilkins.

"But I told them five," said Grundy. "I told them distinctly. You chaps heard me."

"We heard you," assented Gunn.

Grundy frowned as a ripple of laughter came to his ears. Tom Merry & Co. were not surprised that the new eleven had not turned up to practice. It was barely possible that the new eleven were not taking their captain seriously. But, of course, that did not occur to Grundy.

"Slackness!" said Grundy, with a sniff. "There's a slackness right through this school from end to end. Shows that it's time some fellow of push and go took the matter in hand. I really believe this school was simply going into a state of dry rot when I came here. I hope I shall be able to buck things up—if they're not too far gone. Clear off and fetch the fellows here."

The three started in search of the team. Levison and Mellish and Clampe were discovered in the tuckshop, expending the remnant of their professional fees in refreshing ginger-pop.

"Hallo! Why aren't you on the ground?" demanded Grundy.

"I prefer this stool," said Levison. "Why should I sit on the ground when there's a stool to be had?"

"I mean the cricket-ground, you young ass! It's turned five."

Levison nodded.

"It generally has about this time of day," he remarked.

"First practice was fixed for five," said Grundy. "Get down to the ground at once. I'm not standing any rot in my eleven."

"Oh, you go and eat coke," said Clampe warmly. "We don't need all that practice. You go and practice—you need it."

"I sha'n't have much time for practice," said Grundy. "I've got to put in a lot of time coaching you fellows."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't cackle at your skipper, Clampe, or you'll get walloped! We're playing Tom Merry's eleven on Saturday, and if you're in form it means a quid each for all the professionals."

"Win or lose?" asked Levison.

"No; win."

"Then I won't bother about the quid," yawned Levison. "You'll get down to the ground sharp, or I'll run you down there by the scruff of your neck!" said Grundy.

"I'd like to see you do it!" remarked Clampe. Clampe was a big fellow, though he was weedy, and he had just

disposed of so many tarts and so much ginger-pop that he felt disinclined for cricket practice, or, indeed, for any form of exertion. "You begin any rot, Grundy, and we'll rag you. Shoulder to shoulder, you chaps."

"Hear, hear!" said Levison and Mellish.

Grundy glared.

"Mutiny, by George! Mutiny in my team! Why, I'll pulverise you!" Grundy's hand rose in lordly command and pointed to the door. "Get on the ground at once!"

"Bow-wow!"

It was evidently mutiny. But Grundy, as he had declared, was not going to stand any rot. He started business at once, with a rush at the three mutineers. They stood together to meet the rush, but Grundy was not to be stopped. His right swept Clampe off his feet, and his left knocked Mellish into a corner. Levison dodged for the door, but Grundy collared him promptly and swung him back.

"Are you going down to the cricket?" he demanded wrathfully.

"No!" yelled Levison.

"Then I'll jolly well carry you. Are you going, Mellish?"

"No, blow you!"

"I'll carry you, too!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Levison. "Leggo! Lend a hand, Clampe! Back up! Yooop!"

Clampe did not back up. He was sitting on the floor caressing his jaw, hardly sure that it was still there. George Alfred Grundy was a hard hitter. Grundy grasped Levison and Mellish, tucked them under his powerful arms, and started from the tuckshop.

They had to go! With their heads and legs trailing as the burly Shell fellow held them round the waist, they were carried along, wriggling and roaring.

"Hallo!" roared Lowther, as he sighted them in the distance. "Here they come!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Good old Grundy! Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors shrieked as Grundy came up with the two members of his eleven. Never had cricketers arrived upon the cricket-ground in that extraordinary manner before. Grundy was evidently a fellow of determination, and the unlucky slackers who had enlisted in his eleven were destined to learn it.

Grundy pitched the two breathless, crimson, yelling juniors into the grass. They sprawled there, panting.

"Now are you going to practise?" demanded Grundy.

"Oh, ow—yes!" stammered Mellish. "Keep off, you beast!"

"No, I'm not!" howled Levison. "I'll—why, you rotter—stop kicking me! Help! Rescue! Oh crumbs! Tom Merry, lend a hand, you cackling rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Professionals have to obey orders, Levison! You shouldn't have joined the team. Give Grundy his money back and resign, if you don't like it."

"I've spent it!" howled Levison.

"Then you're booked!"

"Yas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Are you going to practise, Levison?" asked Grundy breathlessly.

"Yow—ow—ow—ow! Yes!" stammered Levison.

"Good! Keep an eye on them, Gunn, while I collect the others. If they try to get away, lay into them with that bat! And, mind, Levison, you clear off before practice, and I'll look for you and give you such a hiding you won't be able to crawl! I'm not standing any rot!" Grundy strode away in search of the other members of his team. Levison and Mellish sat up and blinked at one another.

"Let's go to the Housemaster!" gasped Mellish. "We're not going to be bullied!"

"He would make us give the beast his money back!" said Levison.

"Oh dear!"

"Well, you are a pair of blessed swindlers!" said Blake. "You've taken the chap's money. Now do what you've agreed!"

"Oh, you go and eat coke!" growled Levison.

"Here the conquering hero comes!" sang out Lowther. There was a fresh roar as Grundy arrived with Pigott

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and Hooley of the Third. He was rushing them along at top speed by their collars. They arrived on Little Side in a rumpled and furious state.

"That's four!" said Grundy breathlessly. "Wilkins, you can go and tell the others. Tell 'em I'm going to wallop every fellow that isn't here in five minutes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The rest of the team turned up, with one exception. Gore of the Shell was in his study, and he stayed there. The great Grundy had to go personally for Gore. Tom Merry & Co. waited with great interest to see what would happen. Gore was a burly fellow, and a good deal of a bully, and he was not likely to stand much nonsense from Grundy. Ten minutes elapsed, and then Grundy came back to the cricket-ground. His nose was swollen, and his left eye half-closed, and his lip was cut. He came alone.

"Where's your man?" asked Lowther amicably.

"Lying on the floor in his study!" gasped Grundy. "He actually had the cheek to chuck five bob at me—said he'd had a remittance, and I could go and eat coke! Of course I wasn't standing that. I've kicked him out of my team. Of course I've given him a lesson first. If he can see out of either of his eyes to-morrow I shall be surprised—and his nose won't be much good to smell with for a week. He stood up to me for nearly ten minutes, by gum! But I'm game for some more, if any of you chaps want to argue!" added Grundy, surveying his professionals.

None of them wanted to argue. From the state Grundy was in, they could guess the state Gore was in. Grundy was only claiming his rights—what he had paid for. As the professionals were not in a position to hand the retaining fee back, they had to stand it.

"Now, buck up and look cheery," said Grundy, encouragingly. "I'm going to give you some really good coaching, and after practice there's going to be the first-class spread in my study for all the team."

"Oh!" said Mellish; "why didn't you say that before?"

"Same every day, after practice," said Grundy generously. "I believe in a skipper treating his team well. And after the match on Saturday the biggest celebration you've ever seen in your lives. Now buck up, and I'll coach you."

The team bucked up wonderfully. Whether it was the promise of coaching from Grundy, or the prospect of a first-class spread, certainly Grundy's professionals became much more willing. They wired into practice with quite a zest.

After practice, there was a crowd in Grundy's study. Grundy's study was a land flowing with milk and honey. In spite of his "drastick" methods with his team, he was quite popular. And, as Monty Lowther remarked, his popularity with his new eleven was likely to last just as long as the feeds continued—exactly as long, and no longer.

CHAPTER 13.

O-O!

SATURDAY, the red-letter day in the history of the Grundy eleven, arrived at last.

After morning lessons, all thoughts were turned to cricket.

During the week Grundy had kept his men up to practice. Whether their practice had done them much good was another matter. Grundy had insisted upon coaching them, severely and collectively; and what Grundy did not know about cricket would have filled huge volumes.

The team had been reduced to order. As a walloping inevitably followed a refusal to attend practice, and as a big feed, free of charge, was open to all the team after practice, the choice was easy. There were no more mutineers, and no more deserters. Indeed, several more impudacious juniors had begged Grundy to put their names down as reserves. Grundy could have made up a twenty-two if he had liked, on those terms. Whether any of the twenty-two could play cricket, was a question they did not trouble their heads about. They weren't thinking much about cricket.

What Grundy expected to do with that scratchy, scrubby lot was a mystery to the other fellows. Grundy seemed quite satisfied. In the privacy of his study he admitted to Wilkins and Gunn that his men were rather a "job lot." But he explained that even a second-rate team would do well with a first-class captain to pull them together and set them a splendid example. Besides, many runs wouldn't be needed, in addition to the enormous total Grundy was going to make.

A single-innings match had been arranged. Grundy did not mind—indeed, considering the time he intended to remain at the wickets, these would hardly be time in an afternoon for two innings a side. Grundy expected Tom Merry's eleven to put up a hard fight, and hang it out as long as they could, putting off their inevitable defeat to the latest possible moment.

After dinner on Saturday Grundy was early on the ground with his eleven, in flannels, and all ready for the fray. Grundy was full of confidence, and his team were smiling. They had not the remotest expectation of a win or a tie, or anything but the most utterly crushing defeat. But according to the terms of their engagement, there was half-a-sovereign each for them as their fee for professional services in the match. That was all Grundy was likely to be called upon to pay. The double fee for a win was not likely to be wanted.

Wilkins and Gunn were doing their best to keep serious. They were loyally backing up their leader.

"Those fellows not here yet?" said Grundy, frowning, as two o'clock struck. "Slackers—nothing but slacking here, all round. I'll change all that when I've had time to get fairly to work."

The stumps were pitched, and the cricketers were waiting. But Tom Merry & Co. were sighted at last. A crowd of juniors of Both Houses were going over to Abbotsford by the three-thirty, to cheer the departing troops. They came out into the quad, in Etons and silk hats, Tom Merry & Co. among them. Instead of heading for the gates, however, they came down to the cricket-ground.

Grundy stared at them.

"What's this mean, Tom Merry?" he demanded.

"We're going to see old Railton off," said Tom Merry.

"What! You're going to play my eleven!" roared Grundy.

"Yes, yes, that's all right. We don't have to start walking to the station till three—that gives us nearly an hour," said Tom soothingly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But—but what does that clobber mean?"

"We're in our best bib and tucker in honour of Railton," said Blake.

"But you can't play like that!" yelled Grundy. "Do you think you can play good cricket in that clobber, you fatheads?"

"Not good, but good enough," explained Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you go and change at once!" bellowed Grundy.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"We're ready," he said. "If you're not ready to play, the match is off, and it counts as a win for us."

"Why, you—you—you—"

Tom Merry took a coin from his pocket.

"Ready?" he asked.

"Fray don't waste time, Grundy. We mustn't lose our train."

Grundy swallowed his wrath with a great effort. He put this remarkable conduct of the junior eleven down to over-confidence. It did not even dawn upon his mighty brain that he was being guyed. He determined to teach Tom Merry & Co. a lesson they would never forget so long as they played cricket.

"I'm ready," he snapped.

The two skippers tossed. Tom Merry won the toss, and elected to bat. Grundy led his eleven into the field.

Round the ground St. Jim's fellows had come from far and near, and they were packed. It was such a match as they had never seen before, and nobody wanted to miss it. As Lowther remarked, it would not last long, but while it lasted it would be worth watching.



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Tom Merry and Talbot went on to open the innings. The sight of two juniors in beautifully-pressed Etons, with gleaming white collars, nicely-tied ties, and shiny silk hats, at the wickets, made the crowd roar. Grundy went on to bowl. He was determined to make an impression in the first over.

He did! Half the balls, certainly, were too wide for the batsman to get near them. But three were knocked away for four runs each. The batsmen did not run very fast. They were not clad for fast running. But they did not need to hurry; in fact, they almost sauntered.

"Twelve for over!" chuckled Blake.

The field did not cross over in the usual way. Tom Merry called to Grundy, after speaking to the umpire.

"Your turn to bat," he said.

"Eh? You're not out!"

"Innings declared closed," said Tom Merry.

"Wha-a-at!"

"I declare the innings," explained Tom. "I'm satisfied with the score—the huge score—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you—your silly ass!" roared Grundy. "You've only made twelve runs."

"Oh, I'm not greedy! I know when I've had enough," said Tom Merry affably.

Grundy was on the verge of an explosion. But Wilkins gripped him by the arm and whispered:

"Jump at it, you duffer. If we can make thirteen runs, they're beaten, and we may—there's a sporting chance."

"May!" stuttered Grundy. "Why, I am going to make a century."

"Ahem! Anyway, he's declared."

"I suppose you fellows are trying to guy my eleven!" said Grundy, at last.

"Has that dawned on him at last?" gasped Monty Lowther. "What a brain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, we'll bat," said Grundy. "I sha'n't need to make a century now, but so long as you're licked, I don't care much."

A field in Etons and topers was a new sight at St. Jim's, and there was a howl of laughter as Tom Merry placed his men for the Grundy innings. Grundy and Wilkins started the batting, Grundy getting first ball.

Fatty Wynn of the New House was put on to bowl. The fat Fourth-Former grinned as he went to the crease. There was not a batsman in the new eleven who had the faintest chance of standing up to the champion junior bowler of St. Jim's. It was not likely, in fact, that Tom Merry's twelve runs would be all wanted. Tom had taken them to be on the safe side.

(Continued on page 26, col. 2.)

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co., by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

THE CITY OF FLAME

By ALEC G. PEARSON.

A Great New Story of Thrilling Adventure.

That crafty plotter retreated hastily out of harm's way, his dark face turning grey with fear. If the big Irishman, in his present mood, laid hands on him, Anubis realised that he might sustain considerable damage ere guards or priests could interfere.

Swiftly he made a sign to Argolis, the chief priest, which the latter acknowledged by a glance of understanding. But it was not he who quelled the excitement and confusion, but the queen.

"Peace!" she cried, and her voice rang clearly above the tumult. "Will you dare to brawl in my presence?"

Silence fell upon the temple. Queen Clytemna gazed at the Irishman and Anubis with flashing eyes. She certainly did not stand in awe of the red-headed "saint." Perhaps she had her own opinion concerning his title to that distinction.

"Let the words of this—Holy One—be translated!" she ordered. "He spoke in a language which I do not understand."

For the time she seemed to have forgotten the accusation brought by Anubis against Mackenzie and his comrades—that they had prevented an order of execution made by her being carried out, and of killing some of her guards.

Now, O'Hara could have translated his own remarks quite easily, for he had gained a fair knowledge of the Shoon tongue during his two years' residence in the temple, but the queen did not want him to be his own interpreter.

Here Anubis saw his opportunity, and was about to speak, when Mackenzie interrupted him.

"You will do well, O Queen," he said, "to pay no heed to that man. He is a liar, a coward, and a would-be murderer! He schemes and plots, but dares not fight openly. Of what I say I can bring proofs. But you want the words of the red man interpreted, and I will do so that you may learn the truth."

Queen Clytemna seemed at first inclined to resent Hal Mackenzie's speech, but she could read character, and she knew she could trust him to give a correct rendering of O'Hara's words.

"Let me hear your interpretation," she said. "Just the words he spoke. No more, no less."

Whereupon Mackenzie gave an exact translation, though the word "spalpeen" hung him up at first, for there was no equivalent for it in the Arabic language. However, he translated it as "rascal," which was near enough.

"So this man with the red hair was a captive of slave traders," exclaimed Queen Clytemna, "and sold to the priests of this temple as a slave. How comes it, then, that he was set up as a holy man—one who had lived before, and had returned to life to bring prosperity to the land?"

She turned to the high priest for an explanation.

"There's a lot of our own Good Queen Boss of the Drake and Frobbisher days about Clytemna," whispered Jim Holdsworth to his chum, "except that she's better-looking than Boss was, though a bit more careless of human life. Strikes me she's floored Argolis with her questions."

But the chief priest was not so easily "floored."

"You know the legend, O Queen," he answered, "as well as the priests do. This man, if he is not what he pretends to be, is the exact image of the One who dwelt here when Shoa was a mighty nation. His description was handed down from one generation of priests to another. That he came into the land as a slave is nothing. Who are we to judge the ways of those favoured by the gods? He performed deeds of magic—"

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Harold Mackenzie and Jim Holdsworth, while cruising in their yacht the Isis in the Red Sea, laid on one of the barren Haniash Islands, where they discover information relating to a mysterious City of Flame.

An Arab suddenly appears, and says he is Anubis of Shoa, the country in which is situated the City of Flame. He warns the comrades of awful dangers they will encounter if they attempt to reach the unknown city, and then vanishes.

Harold Mackenzie, Jim Holdsworth, and Bob Sigbee, an American member of the crew, form themselves into an expedition for discovering the City of Flame.

After many exciting adventures, they at last reach the land of Shoa, and after crossing a great desert, reach the Temple of the Sun. There they meet Patrick O'Hara, a tall, red-headed Irishman, who is being kept prisoner by the natives, and regarded as a saint; and the comrades also come into collision with Argolis, the chief priest, who wishes their deaths.

A few days later the temple is visited by Queen Clytemna of Shoa, with an enormous retinue. While she is holding an audience in the great hall of the temple, Anubis of Shoa is announced.

Pat O'Hara electrifies everybody by shouting, as soon as he sees Anubis:

"This spalpeen who sold me to the slave-traders of Shoa!" And he stepped down from the dais and strode towards the centre of the hall.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Ordeal.

It is difficult to find words to describe the effect of the Irishman's sudden and dramatic denunciation of Anubis as the man who had sold him into slavery. The guards, who seldom visited the temple, regarded him with a certain amount of awe, as a being who, although he had assumed a human form, the like of which they had never seen before, did not really belong to the world of mortal men.

No doubt the Irishman, unknown to himself, had been the means of bringing a goodly revenue to the temple at first, but when the novelty wore off, the income from this source may have ceased. At all events, there was now a section of the priests who, for reasons of their own, wished to get rid of him.

It was this faction which remained silent when O'Hara unceremoniously broke in upon the proceedings, for they were astute enough to realise that he was going the right way to work out his own destruction. But among the rest of the assembly there was amazement and fear. They stared aghast at the "holy man," whose eyes were blazing wrathfully, and who looked so threatening.

That he had roared out a denunciation in a strange tongue they fully realised, but among the Shoans it was only Anubis who understood what he had said.

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"How! Moses!" interjected O'Hara. "Sleight of hand tricks!"

"And himself announced that he was Megara, the Great One of the past," continued Argolis.

"'Twas O'Hara I told you me name was!" shouted the Irishman.

The queen commanded him to be silent.

"We believed him," the chief priest went on; "but of late I have had my doubts. It has occurred to me that he is an impostor. Yet it is not for me to pass judgment. That must be done by the sun god. There is the ordeal by which servants of the temple may be judged—whether they be true or false."

"And do you count this red one a servant of the temple?" asked the queen, indicating O'Hara.

"Unless he is greater than the sun god he must be," was the answer.

"And what is the ordeal?"

"It is simple," replied Argolis. "It is but to face the sun god, standing close to him. A true worshipper will come to no harm, but he who is false will perish where he stands. Behold, I will myself go through the ordeal, so that all may see. No true man need fear it."

There was a marble dais, or platform, which projected in front of the great idol, and was raised about a foot from the ground. The chief priest stepped on to this, and, raising his hands, caught hold of the figure's partially outstretched arms.

Instantly the eyes of the monstrous image glowed with so intense a light that they looked like orbs of living fire, and a tongue of bright flame leaped from its mouth.

A gasp of astonishment and awe broke from the onlookers, the white men only excepted. Then the chief priest stepped down from the platform, and the fire slowly faded from the eyes of the sun god.

"These priests evidently know something of electricity," murmured Hal Mackenzie.

"That is the ordeal," said Argolis. "There is nothing difficult about it. It is for you, Megara, to go through it as I did. Why should you fear if you are what you pretend to be?" he added craftily. "But if you refuse, it will be proof that you are an impostor."

All eyes were now turned upon the Irishman, who realised that a trap had been cunningly set for him, from which no escape seemed possible. He had proclaimed that he was not Megara the Holy One, but had merely been posing in that character for the past two years, in order to save himself from an unpleasant death, he would have but a short shrift. Equally his fate would be sealed whether he accepted the ordeal or refused it. For he was quite certain that, although the chief priest came safely out of it, he would not. Though precisely what would happen if he stepped on to the dais he had no idea.

The queen was regarding him with cold suspicion, Argolis and myrmidons smiled with ill-concealed triumph.

"You hesitate," said the queen. "Do you, then, fear?"

That settled Patrick O'Hara. He feared nothing, and for anyone to suggest that he was afraid immediately roused him.

"I do not fear, O Queen," he replied. "I am going to face the sun god."

"Don't be a fool, O'Hara!" whispered Mackenzie, in English. "It is all trickery. You'll be caught in some death-trap which that artful priest knew how to avoid. We'll stand by you if you refuse."

There was a suspicion of a grin on O'Hara's face as he answered:

"Leave us to me. I'll face that ugly baste in me own way. If I've got to die, be glad, I'll die fighting!"

He made three steps towards the figure, and paused. The onlookers held their breath. Even Queen Clytemna, cold and unemotional as she was, leaned forward slightly in her chair of state, the arms of which she was clenching tightly with her jewelled hands.

Pat O'Hara looked slowly round the assembly, as though reckoning up the number of his enemies. Then he deliberately removed the flowing and befringed robe that he wore, for it was a garment that would impede his movements, and stood forth in the tight-fitting clothing which he wore underneath.

It had been provided for him by the priests—as, of course, all his clothes were—and was dead black in colour. Had he

but worn a mask he would have looked like an old-time headman.

As it was, he made a striking figure, for he had a great girth of chest, and his limbs were well proportioned. His sinews were like ropes, and his muscles stood out cleanly. In the days when he was a ship's fireman Pat O'Hara had also been a heavy-weight boxer, and he had known how to keep himself in condition during his enforced sojourn in the temple.

"What's his game?" muttered Sigbee, shifting his rifle so that it could be brought instantly into use. It occurred to him that he might have to use it very soon.

He learnt the next minute what O'Hara's "game" was. With a shout that echoed from end to end of the great temple, the Irishman snatched a heavy, long-handled battle-axe from the marble pedestal against which it had been leaning, and, whirling it round his head, sprang towards the sun god.

That battle-axe was a mighty weapon, which had belonged to a famous warrior, and had never been wielded by man since he had gone to the land of spirits.

"'Tis this way I face the sun god as these haythins!" cried the Irishman, in a great voice.

Then, with one tremendous swing, he brought the great axe down with awful force on the breast of the terrible-looking idol. And such was the amazing strength of the blow that the body of the great image was split into a score of pieces, while of the battle-axe there remained nothing but some fragments of steel and a portion of the handle, which O'Hara still gripped.

Down with a crash fell the shattered idol, one vivid electric flame leaping up from it. But a portion of the body had been hollow, and contained some intricate mechanism, which was now revealed to sight, though damaged beyond hope of repair.

Crises of amazement and fear rose from all those who had witnessed this extraordinary sight. It was O'Hara's way of facing the ordeal!

Then a wail of anger and terror broke from a hundred throats:

"He has destroyed the sun god! He has destroyed the sun god!"

The Queen's Decision.

"Saints and sinners!" exclaimed Sigbee. "That mad Irishman has laid that old image out properly. And he's exposed the trickery—all those fixings for working the idol, so it could crush any man the priests wanted to get rid of in its arms. Guess we'd better line up alongside O'Hara, for there's no room to be trouble!"

It seemed like it; for O'Hara, looking about for another weapon, had wrenched a spear from the hands of a priest who was advancing upon him, and then floored his opponent with a blow of his fist. That priest was then in no condition to take any further interest in the proceedings.

But angry and threatening cries now resounded through the Great Hall of the temple, and the chief priest was urging everyone to:

"Kill the impostor! He has committed sacrilege! Kill! Kill!"

But the guards hesitated, for it seemed to them that here was a man who was greater than the sun god. For had he not destroyed that deity? Moreover, they looked to the queen for orders.

But Queen Clytemna had her eyes fixed on the shattered image and the mechanism which was now exposed. There was a dark frown on her brow. She realised that she, in common with her subjects, had been tricked by the priests. They were powerful, but she would show them she had greater power.

Meantime, the priests, numbering about fifty, had gathered together, and were advancing threateningly on the gallant quartette of whites.

Hal Mackenzie levelled his rifle and pointed it at the chief priest.

"If any man raises a hand against us," he said, "you will be the first to die, Argolis."

It was then that the queen looked up.

There was an expression in her dark, flashing eyes, which froze priests and councillors into silence; it checked the threatened conflict, which must have brought about much bloodshed whatever the result, and it left a very evident uneasy feeling all round. The guards now formed up on each side of their sovereign, ready to carry out any orders that she might give.

Slowly she rose from her seat, and as she gazed around her she seemed less like a woman and more like a monarch who could wield unlimited power.

"My visit to the Temple of the Sun seems to have brought about strange and unlooked-for results," she said, with biting sarcasm. And again she looked down at the shattered idol.

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A Magnificent New Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



NEXT WEDNESDAY:

"LEVISION'S LAST CARD!"

"There are matters which will need a strict inquiry when we reach the city. To-morrow I shall return. You, Argolis, will accompany me, with certain of your priests. These strangers also will return with me, for they appear to be brave men, and I am in need of warriors, for there are traitors in the land who are plotting against me."

The chief priest was livid with rage and mortification, and these feelings got the better of his usual cunning.

"Would you protect these strangers, who have broken the law of the land by their mere presence here?" he cried.

"They are in league with that scelerious dog who has imposed upon us too long! Beware, O Queen, lest the anger of the gods—"

"Do you dare to threaten me?"

The chief priest, cunning returned, and he saw the advisability of becoming submissive.

"You mistake, O Queen," he said. "I was merely about to warn you."

"It seems that the gods are unable to take care of themselves," retorted Clytemna.

Evidently she was no blind worshipper of the deities of Shoa, but had more belief in herself.

"You also will accompany us to the city, Megara," she said to the Irishman, addressing him by the name which he had borne in the temple; "for methinks you are more of a fighting-man than a saint. Lodging will be found for you and these other white men in a tent outside the temple walls, where the rest of my escort are encamped. For there has been too much strife within this sacred building, and I will have no more of it."

With that she swept majestically out of the Great Hall, accompanied by her guards. Argolis bowed low with pretended humility, but his face was as the face of a fiend.

"All's well that ends well," said Jim Holdsworth cheerfully, as he and his comrades also quitted the temple. "And as we are taken into the queen's favour for the time being we shall be able to explore the City of Flame under the best possible conditions."

"We ought to be thankful that matters have turned out as they have," admitted Hal Mackenzie. "Also when we have seen the city we shall have accomplished the object of our journey. But getting away from the city afterwards won't be such an easy matter. That chief priest will do his level best to revenge himself upon us somehow or other."

"Which reminds me," put in O'Hara, "that I haven't thanked you yet for coming to my rescue. It's me lolla you've saved, sure enough; for if you hadn't stood by me I'd be as dead as a bar!"

"Never mind about thanking us, old saint," replied Jim. "We're all bound to stand by each other through thick and thin."

"Seems to me," observed Sigbee, "that Clytemna has the notion to enlist us in her company of guards. From the way she spoke, that's how I fit it. I've been a middlin' few things in my time, but to be a guardsman would be something fresh."

"Bedad, I'd like that!" explained O'Hara. "T'would suit me better than being a saint!"

"I don't doubt you!" laughed Mackenzie. "For my part, I'm glad so sure that I want to enlist in Queen Clytemna's company of guards. I can imagine that there are some orders she would give which I should refuse to carry out. Remember the girl Zenobia, at the Lake of Crocodiles. The guards—or some of them—were carrying out the terrible sentence which had been passed upon her."

"Zenobia? Who was she?" asked O'Hara.

Hal Mackenzie told him of the adventure on the lake and the rescue of the girl. Also that Anubis, the councillor, and Valmiras, a captain of the guard, whom they had wounded, were on the point of denouncing them to the queen for that affair when O'Hara's dramatic interruption had checked the story before it was half told.

"All the other happenings have thrust that affair into the background for the time being," Hal concluded.

"Faith, let's hope it will stop there!" said O'Hara. "Tis 'wigs on the green' when anywan crosses Queen Clytemna! But I've put a spoke in the wheel at that slave-trading scoundrel Anubis, though the score ain't quite settled yet."

"You seem to have done yourself pretty well during the time you were a saint," Jim put in dryly.

Pat O'Hara grinned.

"T'would have been all right if I'd had more freedom," he replied. "Twas not that I was thinking of, but the indignity put upon a O'Hara by being sold, like a pig in a market-place. Then, when I was being brought up-country by those slave-traders, I was chained up wid a lot of evil-smelling niggers; an' I mabe to get a bit of me own back over that."

"Just then an official who seemed to have charge of the camping arrangements came up to them and said that by

the queen's orders a tent had been prepared for them, and he would lead them to it.

There were over a hundred tents of all shapes and sizes pitched in the mountain-pass, and about fifty camp-fires were alight. These were principally for cooking purposes, though they served also to warm the camp, as the air was keen at night up on the mountain.

The material of which the tents were made was a sort of thick, coarse, brown canvas, which was stretched over a ridge-pole about eight feet in length, this pole having crossed supports at each end. The sides of the tent were pegged down to the ground in the ordinary way.

It was fairly roomy inside, and quite comfortable, as several tiger and leopard-skins and some rugs had been laid on the ground. Indeed, the whole arrangements of the camp were excellent, but that may have been because it was a Royal camp.

"Food and drink will presently be brought to you," said the official, who then withdrew.

"This is luxury!" exclaimed Hal. "For until last night we have had to sleep either on the bare ground or in the bottom of a canoe for weeks past."

Half an hour later they were served with an excellent meal, to which they all did full justice. To wash it down there was a large jug of a thin red wine of excellent flavour. O'Hara was familiar with it, but did not regard the beverage with much favour.

"If I could only get a drop of the craythur, now," he said—"just the least taste av whisky to keep the cold out—I'd be content. Leastways, if I had some tobacco to smoke afterwards. This is surely the low country in all the world where they don't know the use av tobacco!"

"Wal, I do miss my smoke, I'll allow," replied Sigbee. "And I reckon the men of Shoa would be a sight more cheerful-looking if they only had tobacco. But this wine ain't half bad, and I don't think it's the stuff that would ever fly to your head."

"There isn't a fight in a gallon av it!" said O'Hara, with perhaps a keen recollection of Donnybrook Fair and other "lively" festivities in "Old Ireland."

Night had fallen, dark and starless, when they had finished their repast; and then Mackenzie reminded O'Hara that he had spoken of having often seen the "reflection" of the City of Flame after dark, and asked him whether it was likely they could see it now.

"Shure, 'tis just the sort av night!" replied the Irishman. "The darker the better, so long as ut's clear av mist. I'll be afther taking you where you'll see the reflection aisy!"

From the tent he led the way up the mountain-side to a spur of the rock, from which in the daytime the whole of the western valley and plain could be seen.

Now the valley was invisible, but away on the skyline to the west there was a dull-red, wavering glow, like the reflection on the clouds of a huge conflagration. Sometimes it died down until nothing but the faintest light was visible, then it would increase until the redness in the sky gave the impression that half a city was burning.

It was strange and weird, and they gazed at the reddened sky with curiously mixed feelings.

"Twenty-five miles away, observed Sigbee. "I guess that city is rightly named. There must be a middlin' amount of flame to produce that glare at such a distance."

"You have never been to the city, O'Hara!" said Hal Mackenzie.

"No."

"Have you any idea of the cause of the fire, flame, or what ever it is!"

"Sorra was av me!" replied O'Hara. "I've asked the priests, an' they tould me 'twas a sacred fire, which would burn for ever, an' a lot more av that sort av talk. 'Twas a story for children."

"Can you make a guess at it, Hal?" asked Jim. His cheek shook his head.

"No use making guesses," he replied. "We shall learn all about it in a few days' time. It is a mystery to me at present, and I should say there is no other city in the wide world that is ringed in by fire, as we must suppose the City of Shoa is."

The Amazing City.

It was late on the evening of the second day of their journey from the temple that the queen, her guests, and her escort arrived at the outskirts of the City of Flame.

Dusk had fallen, there was a brief twilight, and then darkness set in. And it was the darkness which revealed the wonders of that marvellous city.

Hal Mackenzie had suggested that the city was "ringed in by fire," but this was not actually the case. On two sides



With a shout that echoed from end to end of the great temple, the Irishman snatched up a mighty battle-axe. Then with a great swing he brought it down with terrific force on the idol's breast.

only did the flames appear, the other two sides being, by comparison, in darkness.

These flames leaped out of the earth from small, crater-like orifices, at irregular distances from each other. There were seventy of them, though from some only tiny jets of flame spurted forth, from others flames varying from five to ten feet in height, while from a few the jet of flame roared up to a height of fifty or sixty feet.

But the pressure varied considerably from time to time, as there were periods when the flames died down to a third of their greatest height; yet even at the lowest ebb of the mysterious fire the whole of the city and its outskirts were brightly illuminated.

The shape of the city was rectangular, and it was enclosed within walls twelve feet in height, and ten feet in thickness. The spouting flames were a full half-mile outside these walls.

"Natural gas!" exclaimed Hal Mackenzie, as he and his comrades, walking immediately behind the queen's palanquin, passed along the line of flames.

They were not more than five hundred yards from them, and although the heat thrown out was great, it was not so much as they had expected. Sigbee remarked upon it, saying that he had thought the dwellers in the city must have the nature of salamanders, or they'd be fried up; but now he concluded that the strong breeze which was blowing kept the atmosphere cool.

"That's just it," said Mackenzie. "If we were a couple of hundred yards nearer to those flames the heat would be so intense that our flesh would be scorched and blistered, for the wind would have become as hot as the blast of a furnace. You will find, when we enter the city, that there is a current of air drawn in from all points of the compass towards the intensely hot section where the gas is burning. When the air enters that section it becomes instantly heated. Hot air always rises, and the result is that the cold air from outside rushes in to fill the vacuum. It is a common natural phenomenon. The constant current

of air passing over the city keeps it cool. Were it not for that it would not be possible to live in the place."

Mackenzie's explanation was perfectly correct, as they afterwards found out for themselves. Sometimes the rush of air almost amounted to a gale, at others it was a mere zephyr, according to the height and volume of the flames, and the heat thereby produced.

"There must be a considerable store of gas down under," observed Sigbee.

"The fires that are always burning in the earth's centre," replied Mackenzie, "create a never ceasing supply of gas. It happens, I suppose, that in this part of the world there are immense cavities deep down underground where it stores itself. It is bound to find an outlet somewhere and somehow, and in this instance it has forced its way up through a number of little craters. A mere flying spark may have lighted the gas in the first instance, and there is no reason why it should not go on burning for years. I am not a scientific chap, and that is as clear an explanation as I can give you."

"Of course, those priests make the most of the phenomenon," said Jim, "so as to work on the superstitions of the people. Call it sacred fire, and all that sort of tosh."

"Wal, I hope those reservoirs of gas won't blow up while we're in the neighbourhood," said the American. "I figure, if they did, this blame city would be spread around some."

By this time the procession was passing along a well-paved causeway which led to the main gate of the city. The gates had been flung open when the Royal heralds had announced the approach of Queen Clytemna.

The great arched entrance was a massive structure, built of white stone, as were the majority of the buildings in the city. But the palace and the temples were of white marble.

There were guards at the gate, who saluted the queen in Shoon fashion as she passed through, by raising their spears above their heads.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 304.

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co., By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT WEDNESDAY

"LEVISON'S LAST CARD I"

A crowd of the inhabitants lined both sides of the route from the main gate to the palace, as is the custom in cities the world over when Royalty is passing along in State; but there was no cheering, no shouts, no particular enthusiasm, such as would have been the case, for instance, under similar circumstances in London.

Possibly they often saw the queen, but when it became known that there were white strangers in her retinue there was a stir of excitement and curiosity. Men and women pressed forward to stare at the four adventurers as they marched abreast along the road, immediately behind the queen's palanquin.

On the part of the men it was a sullen curiosity, not unmingled with glances of antagonism. They were a joyless race, those men of Shoa, whose lives were darkened by superstition.

The palace was on a slight eminence, which raised it above the other buildings, and had a flight of fifty broad marble steps leading up to the main entrance, and extending the whole width of the front. It was from the terrace at the top of these steps that our adventurers had their first clear view of the City of Flame.

It was a sight which none of them can ever forget, the like of which they will surely never see again.

Shoa had no straggling suburbs like modern cities, but was all enclosed within the four massive walls. Each wall was a trifle over two English miles in length—this they found out afterwards—with a square tower at each angle, for purposes of defence. Only one half of the dwelling-houses in the city were occupied, for the inhabitants were few—so compared to their numbers when Shoa was a powerful nation, which was in the far-off days when its queen, the once famous Queen of Sheba, went in state to visit King Solomon at Jerusalem.

Every building was of white stone or white marble, and the reflection of the gas flames was hung up in a thousand flashes of fire. Some of the buildings, which perhaps had not been occupied for centuries, were falling in ruins through neglect, for no dwelling was ever rebuilt, or even repaired, in Shoa.

"Well, what think you of my city? Have you ever seen the like?"

It was the queen who had addressed them. They turned and saluted her, and Mackenzie replied:

"Never. But it speaks of a dead and glorious past Now—"

Queen Clytemnda interrupted him with an impatient movement of her hand.

"I dream-often of reviving its glories," she said. "It is a wonderful city, but where are the people? The streets, the market-place, should be full of men and women at this hour. Yet, look down that broad avenue which leads straight through the city to the Gate of the Seven Stars. You could count the people in it."

She said no more, for the subject was evidently a painful one with her, but, leaving them, she entered the palace. They followed soon after to a chamber which had been prepared for them, and where an appetising supper was presently brought to them. The room was of considerable size, with windows that looked out upon a courtyard of the palace.

"I'm glad the master of the ceremonies, or whatever the chap with the silver wand is, has put us all together," said Jim. "I was afraid they might separate us, and that would have spoiled my appetite. What is that in front of you, Hal? It looks good. Give me a platter full."

"Spoil your appetite," laughed Hal. "I should like to know what would."

"'Tis royal feedin'!" said O'Hara, surveying the well-stocked table. "Better than I got in the temple, which same place I never want to see again. D'y'e think now, Mackenzie, that the queen will be after making us officers of her guard?"

"Wal," said Sigbee, "I guess we've got to make the most."

He paused abruptly, with a startled expression in his eyes.

"What's the matter?" asked Jim. "The rifles 'ere!"

"The rifles!" exclaimed Sigbee. "They're gone!" They had stacked them in a corner when they entered the room, but they were no longer there. Supper was forgotten. They searched all through the chamber, but the rifles had disappeared.

(Next Wednesday's "GEM" will contain a further thrilling instalment of this stirring yarn. Make certain of obtaining your copy regularly if you haven't already done so, by placing a standing order with your newsagent.)

This Gem Library, No. 304.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE BOYS' FRIEND," Every Monday.

GRUNDY'S DOWNFALL!

(Continued from page 21.)

Grundy received the first ball, or, rather, his wicket received it. What Grundy intended to do with his bat was known to Grundy alone. To the spectators it seemed that he was trying to describe magic circles with it. The middle stump went out of the ground while Grundy was still gyrating.

"How's that?" sang out Fatty Wynn.

"Out! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, that beats it!" said Grundy, in blank astonishment. "I'm out! Yes—out! Out, you know! Out, by gum!"

It was no dream, though it seemed like one. He was undoubtedly, indubitably out! He walked off in a dazed condition.

A peculiar procession followed Grundy's performance. Mellish, Clampe, Pratt, Diggs, and Pigott came to that wicket in turn, and retired gracefully without having broken their duck. Fatty Wynn had performed the double hat-trick, but he only grinned as the crowd cheered him. It had not cost him any effort.

Talbot bowled the second over. Talbot was a topping bowler—not quite so good as the Welsh bowler, but rather too deadly for Grundy's unfortunate eleven. Wilkins dropped to the first ball, and Gunn followed, and then Levison. It was the hat-trick again.

"Hat-tricks are cheap to-day," murmured Monty Lowther—"as cheap as ducks'-eggs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hooley received Talbot's next ball, and miraculously hit it. Unfortunately he hit it directly into the palm of Jack Blake's hand. Blake held up the ball.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Out!"

The match was over!

St. Jim's junior eleven had won by 12 runs and all their wickets! Grundy's score was 0-0 for the whole team!

Tom Merry & Co. walked off the field towards the school gates. Grundy gazed after them like a fellow mesmerised. The juniors sauntered down to the gates; they had plenty of time to catch their train. They had "dropped in" for the match; they had taken it in on their way from the School House to the gates! Grundy stood rooted to the ground.

"It was my fault," he said at last. "I shouldn't have agreed to a single innings match. In the second innings, I should have made my century, and it would have been all serene. Cricket is an uncertain game, and the best players are at a loss sometimes. My century in the second innings would have done it all right. What are you cackling at, Wilkins? What are you gurgling about, Gunn?"

But Wilkins and Gunn could not explain what they were cackling about. They were past words.

Tom Merry & Co. were in good time at Abbotsford to catch the departure of the troop-train, and to cheer Sergeant Railton and the gallant lads in khaki on their way to the front. When they returned to St. Jim's they were curious to see Grundy—they expected to find him a little subdued. But they didn't! George Alfred Grundy held his head as high as ever. He was perfectly satisfied with himself. He was only sorry that, owing to the failure of his team, in spite of their splendid coaching, he would not be able to take the junior cricket in hand and buck it up as he had intended. But—though nothing more was heard of the St. Jim's professionals—Grundy remained serenely convinced that that match would have ended very differently if only he had been given a chance to make his century in a second innings!

THE END.

(Next Wednesday "Levison's Last Card!" Order The Gem in advance. Price One Penny.)

"THE MAGNET," "THE PENNY POPULAR," "CHUCKLES," "ID," Every Monday. Every Friday. Every Saturday, 2

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HOW TO WIN THEM.

All you have to do is to introduce "THE GEM" LIBRARY to your chums. Show this copy to them and let them read it. Then get them to sign their names. You can rule a sheet of paper in the manner shown below, and the readers who send in the largest list of names will win these magnificent prizes. This Competition is being run together with our companion papers, "The Union Jack," "Boys' Friend," "Boys' Realm," "Magnet," "Nelson Lee Library," "Puck," "Penny Popular" and "Marvel." It must be understood that this is one Competition, and that the decision of the Editor of the "NELSON LEE LIBRARY" must be accepted as final and binding in all matters concerning the contest. It does not matter which, or how many of these you get your chums to read. While one chum is reading the "NELSON LEE LIBRARY," get another to read the "Boys' Friend," and so on.

WRITE YOUR SHEET OUT IN THIS FORM.

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have shown the papers mentioned to my chums, who have signed their names on my list, and I have got them to read them.

Let your chums sign their names and addresses on one side of the column, like this.

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THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to —
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For Next Wednesday—

"LEVISON'S LAST CARD!"

By **Martin Clifford,**

In the grand, long complete story of St. Jim's which comes into prominence next Wednesday, *Levison*, the rascal of the Fourth, falls into the clutches of an unscrupulous moneylender, and is haunted by the fear of exposure. As a last desperate resource, he purloins a five-pound note from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, wherewith to pay his debt, and resolves to brazen out the consequences.

"LEVISON'S LAST CARD"

is played in a particularly daring manner, and the outcome of his reckless deed is graphically described in Martin Clifford's inimitable style.

DO NOT DROP "THE PENNY POP."

Thousands of my readers all over the Empire will be looking forward with eager impatience to Friday of this week, which brings with it a grand summer issue of

"THE PENNY POPULAR."

This wonderful budget of THE BEST stories could not have been more aptly named. Its title fits it to perfection, and this week's number upholds the highest traditions of our popular companion paper. The varying tastes of fiction lovers have been specially studied, and most thoroughly catered for, and everyone who appreciates really first-class reading matter will heartily welcome the splendid variety of the fine tales, dealing as they do with the widely-different, yet equally interesting, adventures of

TOM MERRY & CO.,

the most popular schoolboy characters of all time;

SEXTON BLAKE,

the world-renowned detective; and

JACK, SAM, AND PETE,

the three famous and adventurous comrades.

With such a matchless list of contents, "The Penny Pop" must prove an irresistible attraction for a vast number of my Gemite chums, who will at once recognise our great all-story paper as

THE IDEAL COMPANION FOR THE WEEK-END.

In conclusion, I would quote one of the verses of a stirring poem recently sent in by a reader:

"Gemites, filled with splendid zeal,
 Free and faithful, true as steel,
 Put your shoulders to the wheel;
RALLY ROUND 'THE PENNY POP'!"

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

H. W. H. (Darlington).—Thanks for your post-card of appreciation.

J. L. B. (West Kirby).—You have my full permission to do as you suggest.

"Contented" (Queen's Gate).—I wish there were a few more like you, "Contented." Such letters as yours smooth an Editor's thorny path. Best wishes.

"A Naval Reader" (Devonport).—Very many thanks to you for your letter and loyalty.

N. J. Steele (Clapham).—Tom Merry's two best chums are Manners and Lowther.

John H. Smale (South Wales).—The characters you mention are all about fifteen years of age.

Walter Foster (Sheffield).—You are quite right. There is no reason why such excellent concerns as "The Boys' Brigade" and "The Boys' Life Brigade" should always be left in the shade. I will see what I can do in the matter.

Frances Dale (Liverpool).—Thank you for your nice letter. I will keep your suggestion by me.

J. S. Staveley and Chums (Bridlington).—A very excellent suggestion, which shall be duly considered.

David Dickenson (Blackpool).—Sorry I cannot help you, as I do not know the circumstances.

Harold Darnell (Clapham).—As the masters of the Forms you mention never come into our stories, it is unnecessary for me to supply their names.

"Fidelity" (Rhondda).—I will keep your letter by me. Very many thanks for your loyalty to the companion papers.

A. B. (Sorry I can't agree with you that the stories now running in the "Gem" are monotonous.

"The Girl Chums" (Bournemouth).—The book in question is a splendid work, and I should be the last to jeer at it, as you suggest. Its author—formerly an assistant master at Harrow—was a keen lover of boys; and although it is considered fashionable to scoff at his books as being morbid and moralising, yet I should not hesitate to recommend them to any of my readers.

W. H. O.—Will see what I can do for you.

J. N. Coultis (Dublin).—I am afraid your view is an isolated one. Most of my chums highly approve of the character about whom you voice your grumble.

Daisy Duggan (Kilkenny).—Joke already published. Have another try!

C. F. Brookington (Leicester).—Talbot's old confederates were the Professor, Hookey Walker, and Tickey Tapp. The gang has now been entirely dissolved, the Professor having joined the Army.

Glady and Phyllis.—Send me your names and addresses, and I will endeavour to answer your long string of questions personally. Believe me, I am sincerely grateful to you both for your loyalty.

"A Grammar School Claim" (Chichester).—I have the book in question, and will send it on to you on receipt of your name and address.

J. Stephenson (South Shields).—I will bear your suggestion in mind.

"Schoolboy Gemite" (Manchester).—Talbot is fifteen years of age. How old Lord Eastwood is I am unable to say.

"A Fighting Soldier."—Thank you very much for your cheery note from the trenches.

"Loyal" (Birmingham).—Mr. Railton will make his reappearance shortly. Look out for the great story heralding his return from the front.

E. E. (Watford).—The reader in question sent in his story-ette before yours came to hand. Although your joke was submitted seven weeks ago, the winner's effort had been in this office nearly ten weeks!

"8064 Gerrard" (Acton).—The error you are at such pains to point out is very trivial. It is, in fact, hardly worth making a song about. To see is human, and the journal which can run on from week to week without little blunders of this sort must indeed be a paragon among papers!

Will junior teams in London who would like a match with the Willesden Thursday Cricket Club (average age 15½ years) please apply to the Hon. Secretary, F. Hodson, 13, Gowan Road, Willesden Green, N.W.? Matches may only be contested on Thursdays, and the club's ground is at Gladstone Park, Willesden.

YOUR EDITOR.



NOW ON SALE

CONTAINS

"The Bagshot Bounders!"

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood.

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A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.



Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

NOT ENCOURAGING.

A patient schoolmistress was one day trying to explain to her class the meaning of the word "sufficient," and tried the effect of a small illustration.

"Take, for instance," she said, "a cat having drunk greedily at a basin of milk until she couldn't drink any more, and then curling up and going to sleep, leaving in the basin the remainder of the milk. Wouldn't that show that the cat had had sufficient?"

The class appeared duly impressed.

"Now, Tommy," said the teacher hopefully, "can you tell me the meaning of the word 'sufficient'?"

"Yes, teacher. A cat full of milk," replied Tommy.—Sent in by D. Watts, Stopney, E.

MISTAKEN.

A young man was being shown round a very large London office. Suddenly he asked if any of the clerks had recently died.

The man who was showing him round said:

"No. Why do you ask?"

"Oh," said the visitor, "I was wondering what was the meaning of that piece of crap on the wall."

"Crap be blessed!" replied his conductor. "That's the office towel!"—Sent in by John Combe, Kidderminster, Wores.

HOPELESS.

Officer (interrogating recruit): "Where do you belong to?"

Recruit: "'B' Company, sir."

O.: "I mean, where are you a native of?"

R.: "I'm not a native at all, sir."

O.: "Where is your home?"

R.: "In the Royal Cumberland."

O.: "Where is your birthplace?"

R. (pointing to a birthmark on his neck): "Here, sir."

O. (exasperated): "Where were you attested?"

R.: "Eysaught was attested at Carlisle, sir."

O. (appreciatively): "Dask it all, man, where were your enlistment papers signed?"

R.: "At the bottom, sir."

Officer cannot stand the strain, so faints away forthwith.—Sent in by G. L. Judge, Coventry.

HE REMEMBERED.

Some people never realise that there are more ways than one of arriving at the same result. They are like the shock-headed boy who was asked to add six and four. He guessed nine, eleven, and twelve.

"No, no; you are only guessing!" expostulated the teacher.

"But why didn't you guess ten while you were about it? Six and four make ten."

"Oh, no, they don't!" triumphantly replied the urchin.

"You told me yesterday that five and five make ten."—Sent in by R. J. Febery, Stratford-on-Avon.

GOOD BIZ!

Tradesman (for the fourteenth time): "For Heaven's sake, go away! I do not want to see your samples! Your everlasting persistence is enough to make a fellow cut his throat!"

Commercial: "Ah, now, sir, we can do a bit of business! I also represent a first-class firm of Sheffield cutlers. Let me show you a few samples of our razors."—Sent in by I. Smith, Grimsby.

PAY UP!

It was at the Eccentricity Club in the West End, where it was the custom for a member to forfeit a sovereign if he asked a question that he could not answer himself.

1st Member: "How is it, when a rabbit digs its burrow, he does not leave any earth piled round the entrance?"

2nd Member: "That's impossible."

1st Member: "It's not impossible, because he starts at the bottom."

2nd Member: "Ah, but how does he get to the bottom first?"

1st Member: "That's your question. You're fined a sovereign."

Exit 2nd Member, looking very bored.—Sent in by Matthew Bader, South Hackney, N.E.

HELPED HIMSELF.

The lady's headgear consisted of a bowl-like foundation, from which protruded magnificent plumes mounted on slender wires.

She sauntered slowly to her stall in the theatre to see the great tragedy. At last she was comfortably settled.

"Ah! Someone tugging at my hat." Loftily she turned.

"Does my hat annoy you?" she asked.

"Not at all," replied the man behind her.

She thought for a time. She feared she had been ungracious, and she turned round again.

"Perhaps my plumes interfere with your view?"

"Oh, no, thank you!" replied the victim in the rear seat.

"They're all right now. I've bent 'em back."—Sent in by F. Wheeler, Acton, W.

HER LITTLE MISTAKE.

It was in a darkened cinema theatre. Suddenly the show was interrupted by a woman's anguished shriek.

"Oh, I've been robbed! Somebody's taken my purse, and left a bottle in its place!"

A stolid man sitting next to her broke in:

"Excuse me, mum, but would you mind taking your hand out of my pocket?"—Sent in by A. Roberts, Liverpool.

THE BETTER WAY.

A private of a British squadron, intending to make an Irish stew, had procured all the ingredients necessary except potatoes.

Unable to speak French, he asked his section-commander what was French for potatoes.

His superior officer, being a bit of a wit, and scenting some fun, told him that the French for potatoes was "bon-soir," which of course really means "good-evening."

The private, in perfect good faith, knocked at a house door, and was answered by a Frenchwoman. The following comical conversation took place:

Private: "Bon-soir."

Frenchwoman: "Bon-soir, monsieur!"

Private: "Yes, bon-soir."

Frenchwoman: "Bon-soir, monsieur!"

Private: "Yes, yes. Some bon-soirs, please."

Thomas Atkins, Esq., thinking he had better adopt different tactics, picked up a potato from the roadway, and, showing it to the woman, said:

"Here, mother, give us some o' these 'bloomin' spuds!"—Sent in by G. H. Martin, Dublin.

As the "GEM" Storyette Competition has proved so popular, it has been decided to run this novel feature in conjunction with our new Companion Paper,

THE BOYS' FRIEND, 1d.,
Published every Monday,

in order to give more of our readers a chance of winning one of our useful Money Prizes. If you know a really funny joke, or a short, interesting paragraph, send it along (on a post-card) before you forget it, and address it to: **The Editor, THE BOYS' FRIEND and GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, E.C.** Look out for YOUR Prize Storyette in next week's GEM or BOYS' FRIEND.