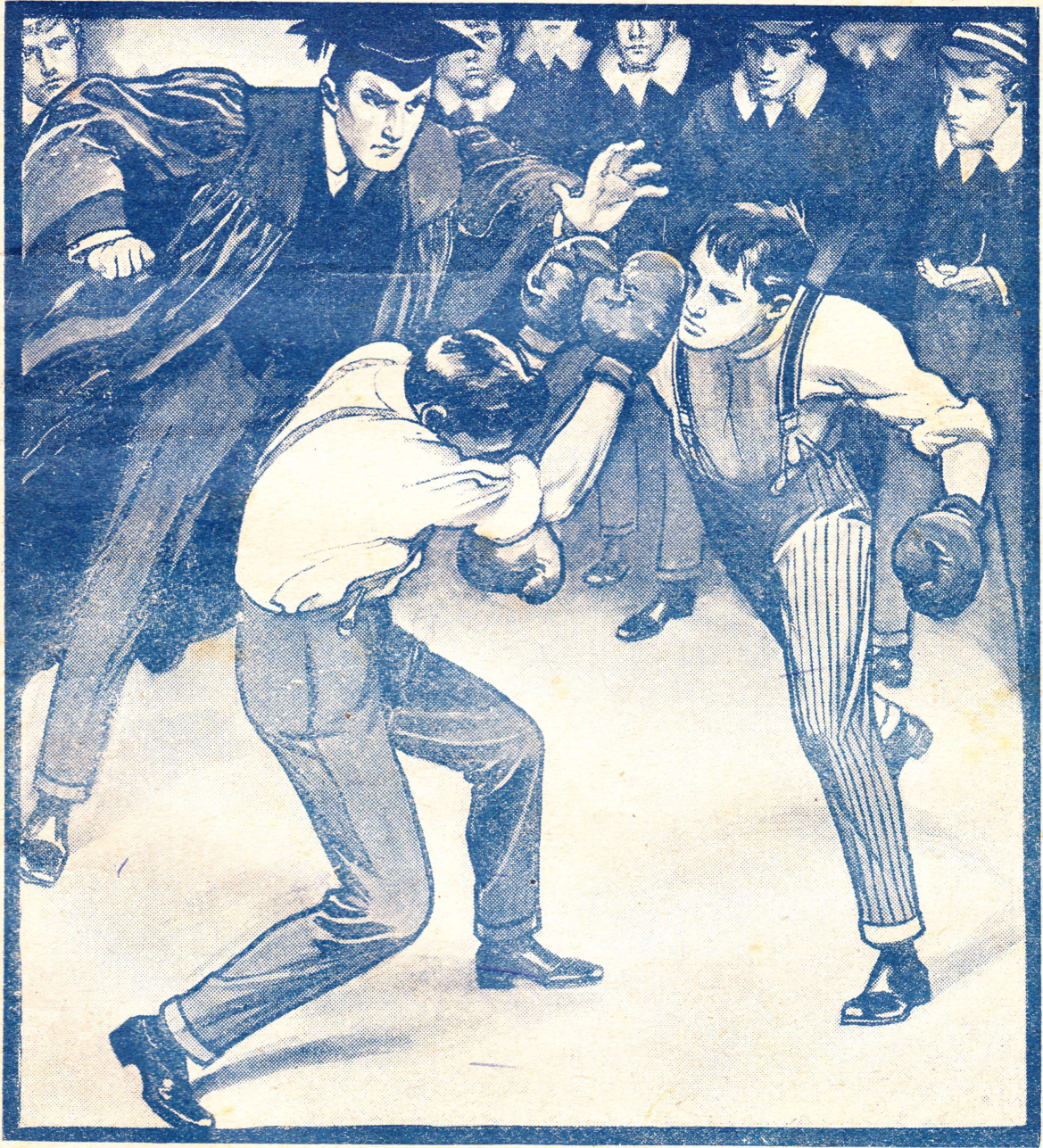
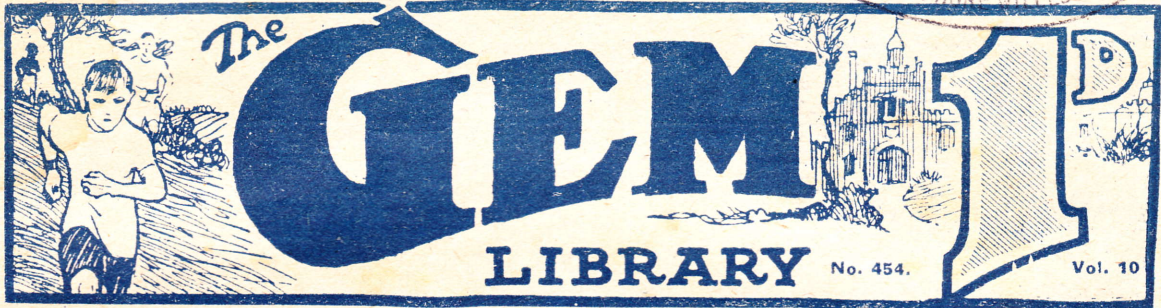


454

93, HILLSIDE, STONEBRIDGE PARK, N. J.
BOOKS BOUGHT, SOLD & EXCHANGED
WILLIAM MARTIN
OLD BOYS BOOK SPECIALIST
PHONE VILLESDEP 10

ON HIS HONOUR!

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



“STOP!”

(A Dramatic Scene in the Magnificent Long, Complete School Tale in this issue.)

B



THIS WEEK'S CHAT



Whom to Write to —
EDITOR "THE GEM" LIBRARY.
 THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGTON ST. LONDON, E.C.
 OUR · · THREE · · COMPANION · · PAPERS!
 "THE MAGNET" THE "PENNY CHUCKLES."
 — LIBRARY — — POPULAR — — 1/2"
 EVERY MONDAY | EVERY FRIDAY | EVERY SATURDAY.

For Next Wednesday :

"A SURPRISE FOR ST. JIM'S."

By Martin Clifford.

At the time of writing this "Chat," the number of the "Gem" which contains "Levison Minor" is not out, and so I have not heard from any of my readers as to what they think of that fine story, which, to my mind, is one of the very best that Mr. Clifford has ever given us. But I am not in any real doubt as to the sort of reception it will get. By this time I think I should know fairly well the tastes of my readers generally, and I am well aware that they can recognise a good yarn when they get it—which is every week—and an extra good one when it comes along. Next week's story is in some sort a sequel to "Levison Minor," though plucky, loyal, little Frank Levison scarcely plays so big a part in it as in that great yarn. The later story chiefly concerns Levison major, and his hard struggle towards something like reformation. For, though Ernest Levison may reform, let no one suppose that his upward path will be an easy one. It would be untrue to human nature if Mr. Clifford depicted it as being so, and that famous author would not have captured the hearts of many thousands of boys and girls if his knowledge of human nature had not been quite out of the ordinary. I am not telling you much about what is in next week's story, you will see, but that is because to tell you much would be to spoil it for you. Something original and unlike other fellows may fairly be expected of Ernest Levison when he starts in to become decent, and the line he takes is indeed

"A SURPRISE FOR ST. JIM'S"

A REQUEST.

I want my readers to tell their chums about these fine new stories. To my thinking we have had nothing quite so good since those great yarns of "Toff" Talbot, which gained us many new adherents.

There is something in the picture of a fellow struggling hard against the worst in him, whether it is due to early training, as in Talbot's case, or to a natural disposition to the wrong thing, as in that of Levison, which is irresistibly appealing to most lovers of fiction. The black sheep who yet has some real good in him, some generous impulses—the seed of far better things—what character is more interesting than such a one? There is in the situation all the elements of drama, and Mr. Clifford has given us in Frank Levison a complete and telling foil to the elder brother whom Frank loves so well. You will find no end of the very best sort of reading in future stories of these two. So tell your friends about these stories, and add a few thousands more to our family circle.

A CHAMPION OF OUR PAPER.

A reader has been kind enough to send me a very interesting cutting from the "Aberdeen Evening Express" in the form of a letter from a newsagent, who is evidently capable of holding his own in a controversy of this sort.

I do not know what the Rev. Donald McIntosh had been saying, and I don't very much mind. While "Kirkgate" keeps the lists for me in the Granite City, I need not concern myself about a defence. Here is his letter, less the last paragraph, which deals with a matter outside our scope:

"Dear Sir,—In justice to myself, who am a seller of penny books for boys, I must take exception to some of the statements of the Rev. Donald McIntosh, as published in Monday's issue of your valuable paper. I know of no penny weekly for boys that can in any sense be called a 'dreadful,' and certainly no one that is either 'vulgar' or 'brutalising.' Such papers as the 'Gem,' 'Magnet,' 'Union Jack,' 'Maryel,' and 'Penny Popular'—specimens of which I would be pleased

to submit should he evince a desire to ascertain the true character of this much maligned species of literature—inculcate a love of truth, fair play, and honourable dealing, and a detestation of bullying, sneaking, and meanness.—I am, etc., "KIRK-GATE."

NOTICES.

Football.

[In order to get in as many notices as possible, those included have been cut down to the shortest possible limits. It should be understood that the figures in brackets always refer to age, and that "r." means "radius." Where these particulars are omitted they were not supplied by sender of notice. All applications may be taken for home and away matches.]

Matches Wanted by:

PARKFIELD RANGERS F.C. (14-15)—4-mile r. Willesden.—C. Cook, 25, Parkfield Rd., Willesden, N.W.

D. Cowen, 1, Newington Green Parade, N., wants matches for the club he is forming (13½).

ST. JOHN'S F.C. (17).—V. W. Judd, 2A, Russell Place, Blackheath, S.E.

IVYDALE F.C. (16)—6-mile r. W. Norwood.—A. Daniels, jun., 34, Chapel Rd., West Norwood, S.E.

CENTRAL JUNIORS F.C.—6-mile r. Sheffield.—H. F. Parkinson, 40, Ellin St., Sheffield.

MEMORIAL A.F.C. (17)—Cardiff, Newport, Aberavon, or South Wales generally.—E. C. Phillips, 4, Whyndham St., Swansea.

DEANS U.M.A.F.C. (16-17).—South Shields district.—Chas. Traynor, 82, Chichester Rd., South Shields.

CRESCENT ATHLETIC F.C. (17½); also players for first and second teams, including good goalkeeper for first. First team play for Charlton Charity Cup.—V. G. Stevens, 265, Sydenham Rd., Sydenham, S.E.

POULTON ST. LUKE'S Y.M.S. (12)—Wallasey, New Brighton, Birkenhead district.—G. Wilson, St. Luke's Y.M.S., Poulton, Wallasey, Cheshire.

R.F.C.—6-mile r. Clapham.—A. Clark, 54, Holden St., Lavender Hill, S.W.

BENJAMIN ATHLETIC F.C. (16)—ground Finsbury Park.—Hon. Sec., 7, Warner St., Barnsbury, N.

BRISLINGTON JUNIORS F.C. (14-15)—5-mile r.—F. W. McLauchlan, 107, Bloomfield Rd., Brislington, Bristol.

CONDER ATHLETIC JUNIOR F.C. (15½)—3-mile r. Stepney.—J. Donovan, 26, Brenton St., Stepney.

FAIRBERNE F.C. (15).—W. Donovan, 102, Fairfoot Rd., Bow, E.

VICTORIA UNITED.—M. Tighe, 41, Marlow Rd., Homerton, E.

Leagues, Correspondence, &c.

Miss Dorothy Adams, 265, Swan Lane, Coventry, would like to hear of any "Gem" or "Magnet" League in her neighbourhood.

Walter Green, 155, Oxford St., Church Gresley, Burton-on-Trent, would like to correspond with boy readers (16-17) in Australia or Canada.

E. L. Boucher, 5, Greenhill Rd., Moseley, Birmingham, wants to form a Stamp Exchange Club among readers of this paper, and will be glad to hear from anyone interested.

Bandsman (boy) G. Bennett, 3rd Black Watch, Nigg Camp, Ross-shire, would be glad to have letters from some of our boy readers, as he is very lonely.

Your Editor

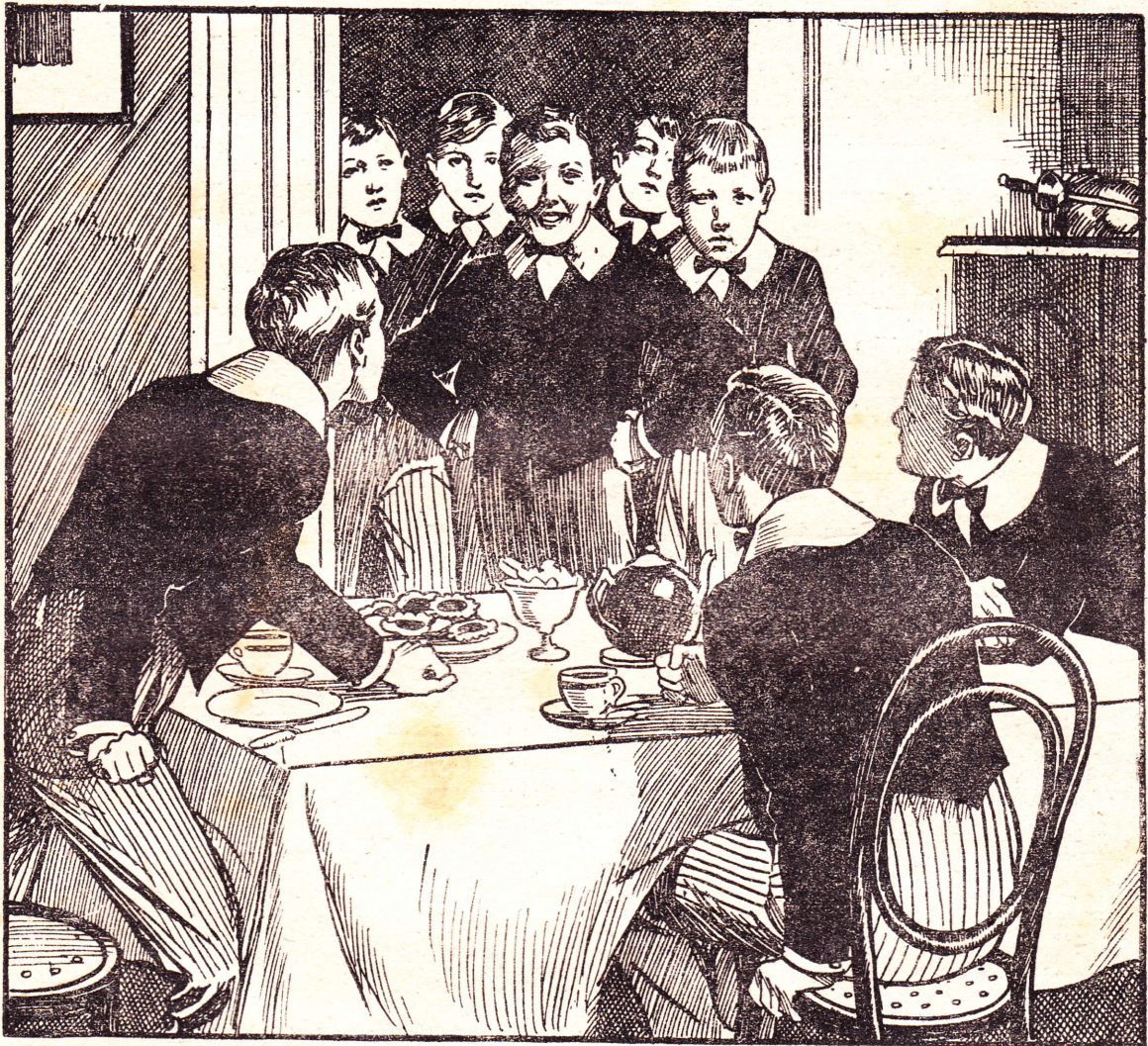
PUBLISHED IN TOWN
AND COUNTRY EVERY
WEDNESDAY MORNING



COMPLETE STORIES
FOR ALL, AND EVERY
STORY A GEM!

ON HIS HONOUR!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



Wally D'Arcy kicked open the study door, and marched in with his followers. "What the dickens do you want?" exclaimed Grundy. "We've come to tea," announced Wally. (See Chapter 10.)

CHAPTER 1.

Grundy's Programme.

GET out!" Half a dozen voices shouted at once, in emphatic tones, as Grundy of the Shell put his head into Study No. 6.

It was a meeting of the junior football committee.

Committee meetings were serious matters. Interruptions were unwelcome. And an interruption by Grundy of the

Shell was the limit. For all the junior committee knew what Grundy wanted before he opened his mouth. They all knew what a marvellous footballer he was—according to himself. They all knew that he had urged his claims upon Tom Merry in vain. They all knew that he intended to urge them upon the footer committee with all the eloquence at his command. And they were not in the least inclined to listen to the eloquence of George Alfred Grundy.

Every member of the committee pointed to the door at once as George Alfred's rugged face looked in. Jack Blake

Next Wednesday:

"A SURPRISE FOR ST. JIM'S!" AND "CORNSTALK BOB!"

No. 454. (New Series.) Vol. 10.

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picked up a cushion, and Figgins of the New House reached for the poker.

"Outside!" rapped out Tom Merry, as Grundy stood his ground.

"Buzz off!" said Talbot.

"Clear!" rapped out Figgins.

"Bunk!"

"Scoot!"

The variety of orders had no more effect upon Grundy of the Shell than the proverbial effect of water on a duck's back. He simply waited a moment for the storm to pass, and then he spoke quite calmly.

"I've looked in to see you fellows——"

"Look out again!" suggested Kerr.

"About the football——"

"Buzz off!"

"I understand that this is a meeting of the committee——"

"Well, that's right," said Blake. "It's rather a surprise that you understand anything. Now try to understand that you are superfluous, and buzz out!"

"You are interrupting the business, Grundy," said Tom Merry, as patiently as he could. "We've got a lot of things to settle this evening, you know."

"I understand——"

"Get out!"

"That you are making arrangements for the footer season——"

"Outside!"

"And I want to point out to you——"

"Do you want this cushion?"

"That I don't intend to be left out of the footer as I've been left out of the cricket——"

"Brain him, somebody!"

"Owing to the crass stupidity of the silly duffer you're fatheaded enough to have for junior skipper."

"Thanks," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Nothing against you, Merry, personally. Some fellows are born fools in football matters."

"They are!" said Blake, with conviction.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And you're one of them, Merry! It appears from what I hear, that my claims to play for St. Jim's are to be overlooked!"

"You haven't any claims, you know," Tom Merry explained. "When we play an infants' school, or a lunatic asylum, we'll give you a chance. But you must wait till then."

"I only want to point out to the committee that I refuse to be passed over, and that I insist upon playing in the eleven!"

"Oh, you insist?" grinned Blake. "It doesn't matter what the committee decides on the subject?"

"Not at all. Not that I'm a pushing chap in any way; but I've got the honour of the school at heart," said Grundy loftily. "I simply can't stand by idly and see the football record queered by a set of incompetent asses!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I have a sense of duty," explained Grundy. "If I could trust you chaps to keep our end up on the footer field without my help, I'd stand out. But I can't! Your football simply makes me weep!"

"My fist will make you weep pretty soon, if you don't clear out!" said Blake ferociously.

"With me in the team, the junior eleven will have a chance. For that reason, I simply want to point out to the committee that I'm going to be played, and I want no silly rot about it either!"

The committee stared at Grundy of the Shell. He almost took their breath away. There were, of course, many footballers in the Lower Forms who wanted to play for the House or the Junior School, and there was sometimes a considerable amount of grumbling over the selections made. In the harder matches, Tom Merry made up the best team available. In easier matches, he gave the second-rate players a chance. But players like Grundy had no chance whatever of figuring in a match that counted in the school record. Tom did his best to give everybody a show sooner or later, and hand out fair play all round; but a skipper's business, first of all, was to win matches. And Grundy was a player of a kind to make the angels weep.

Fellows sometimes grumbled, and sometimes made bitter remarks about fat-headed skippers, when they were left out. But this was the first time that an aspirant had announced that he was going to play, whether the football captain and the football committee liked it or not!

But George Alfred Grundy was a fellow a bit out of the common. He rather prided himself on it. His ways were not the ways of common mortals.

Grundy smiled with satisfaction as the committee stared

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blankly at him, feeling that he had made an impression at last.

"So you're going to be played?" ejaculated Tom Merry at last.

"Exactly!"

"Against my will, and against the will of the committee?"

"Yes, if necessary."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Figgins. "Take him away to a lunatic asylum."

"May I respectfully inquire how you are going to manage it, Grundy?" asked Tom Merry politely. "I'm quite interested to know."

"I've come here to tell you," said Grundy calmly. "In the first place, I'm going to point out to you, as reasonable chaps, that you'd better play me. I should be perfectly willing to captain the team!"

"Go hon!"

"But I won't insist upon that," added Grundy magnanimously.

"Thanks, awfully!"

"But I insist upon playing. Any position you like. I think I may say that I'm equally good in any part of the field," said Grundy modestly.

"You are," agreed Tom Merry cordially, "and a howling idiot anywhere!"

"You can try me in goal, if you like. I should be whole streets ahead of that fat duffer Wynn, or Herries!"

"Well, of all the silly chumps——"

"Or, say, at back. Compare my play at back with Herries, or Reilly, or Dane, or Glyn—or any of them, in fact—why, there's no comparison!"

"Quite right, there isn't," agreed Tom Merry, "not in the very least!"

"Or at half," pursued Grundy warmly. "Do you mean to say that Redfern, or Noble, or Lowther, or Manners play half like I do?"

"No jolly fear! They'd never be in the team if they did."

"Or take the front line," said Grundy. "I'm best at centre-forward—that's really my place. It's simply conceit makes you stick to my place in the team, Tom Merry. Still, I'm open to play on the wing. Put me in Talbot's place, say, or outside right, and you'll see something."

"We should," said Tom, "we should see a burbling duffer mulling every blessed pass!"

"Or in D'Arcy's place, outside left!"

"Left outside is your mark," grinned Figgins.

"I didn't come here for funny remarks, Figgins."

"You've made nothing else since you came," observed Blake. "If you're finished with your humorous turn, you may as well clear."

"Yes; go and look for a job on the front page of 'Chuckles,'" suggested Figgins, "and for goodness' sake give us a rest!"

"So you refuse to admit my claims?" asked Grundy darkly.

"Yes. Get out!"

"I haven't finished yet."

"Yes, you have. Clear off!"

"I'm going to point out to you that I decline to be overlooked. When I was at Redclyffe——"

"Blow Redclyffe!"

"The skipper didn't want to put me in. I licked him, whopped him till he fairly squirmed," said Grundy. "I did that from a sense of duty. He played me after that. I wouldn't have left a whole bone in him if he hadn't. Even then, they used to lose matches, through fellows getting in my way, and all that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So you see what I've decided. Either I'm played in the eleven, both for the House and the Junior School, or else I'm going to whop the whole committee——"

"What?"

"I shall take you one at a time, and whop you all round," explained Grundy. "After I've whopped the lot of you, I dare say you'll see reason. If you don't, I shall begin again at the beginning, and whop the whole lot of you over again."

"Great Scott!"

"I shall keep this up till I'm in the eleven, or till you're all in the school hospital," said Grundy calmly. "That's the programme."

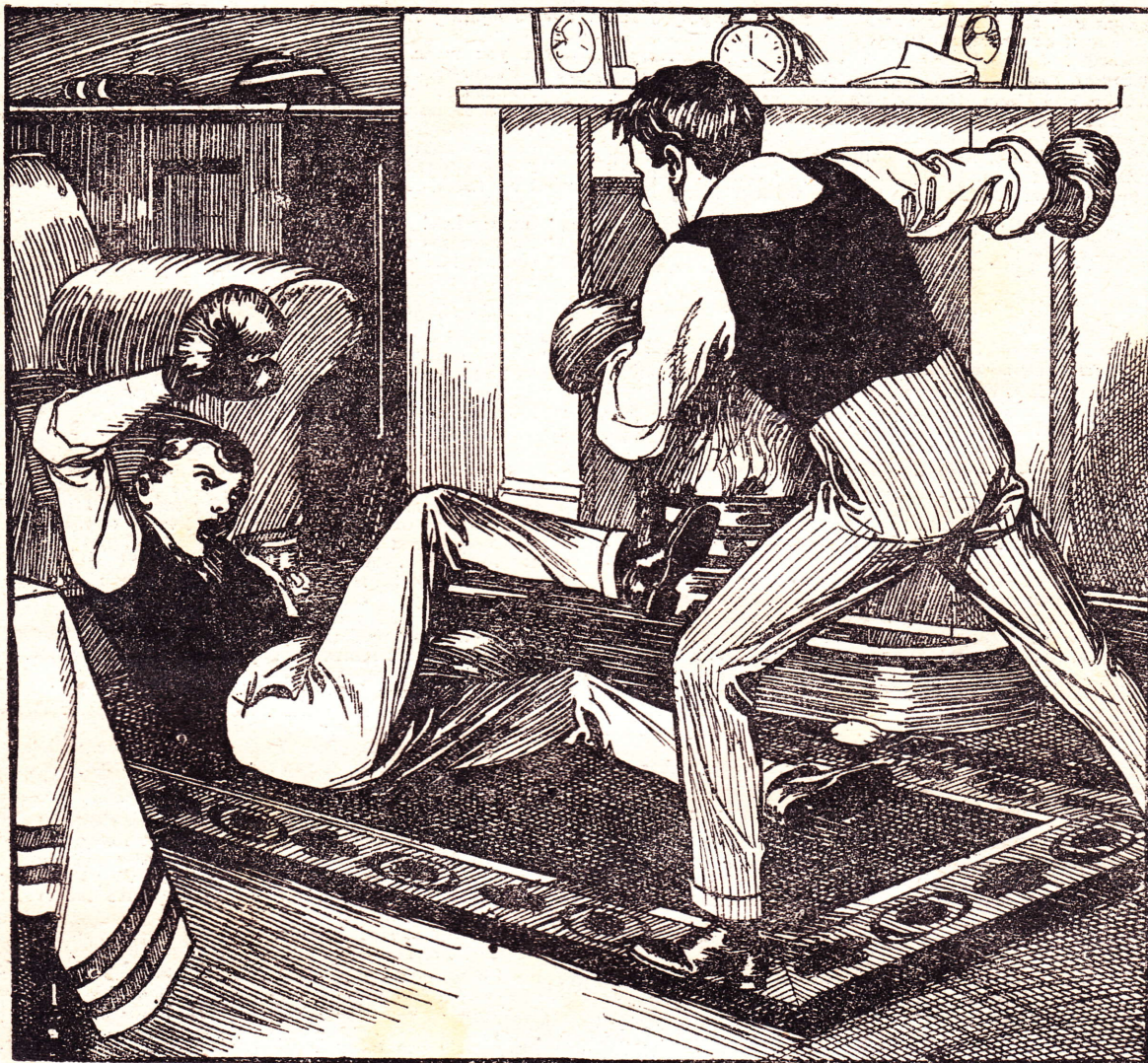
The committee looked at one another. They had never heard of such a method of over-persuading a football committee before. George Alfred Grundy was full of surprises.

"So that's the programme?" said Tom Merry, with a chuckle.

"That's it."

"I seem to remember that you started whopping me once before," remarked Tom. "I don't remember that I was the fellow who was whopped, though."

TUCK HAMPERS ARE GIVEN AWAY TO READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1^D.



Gunn looked forward to that special upper-cut with well-grounded apprehension. He got it in a few minutes, and went down on the hearthrug with a wild howl. (See Chapter 2.)

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I've been doing some special training, with this in view," explained Grundy. "I admit you are rather a handful, and so is Talbot; but I can lick you both. As for the others, I could lick them with one hand."

"Could you, by Jove?" ejaculated Blake.

"Oh, yes!"

"I'll give you a chance!" roared Figgins.

"You won't have any choice about that, Figgins, if you don't do the right thing. Now I'll leave you to think it over, and you can let me have your decision later," said Grundy.

Tom Merry jumped up.

"No need to think it over," he said. "We'll decide at once. Gentlemen, I put it to the meeting that Grundy be forthwith bumped on his neck for his confounded cheek—"

"Hear, hear!"

The resolution was passed unanimously, and immediately acted upon. Like one man, the football committee rushed upon Grundy.

"Here, hold on!" roared Grundy, putting up his big hands. "Look here— Yaroooooh!"

Grundy was big and powerful—the biggest fellow in the Shell. But he was swept off the floor in the grasp of the indignant committee, struggling vainly. He came down in the doorway with a heavy bump, and a loud roar.

"Yoop! Groooh! Yah!"

"Now take him home!" said Tom Merry.

Grundy was taken home. He proceeded along the passage to his own study, in a succession of terrific bumps.

Bump, bump, bump! rang along the Shell passage.

Fellows looked out of their studies in wonder, and roared with laughter at the sight of Grundy of the Shell being taken home.

Wilkins and Gunn, Grundy's study-mates, looked out, and stared. Grundy came bumping up to the door, and bumped in. Wilkins and Gunn cleared out of the way, and the committee swarmed in with Grundy. They bumped him in the doorway, they bumped him on the floor, they bumped him on the hearthrug. Finally, they swung him into the air, and brought him down on the table with a last terrific bump. Leaving him sprawling there, they crowded out of the study, laughing.

The football committee resumed business in No. 6, un-interrupted further by Grundy of the Shell.

CHAPTER 2.

Getting to Business.

"MY hat!" murmured Wilkins.

"Holy smoke!" ejaculated Gunn.

They stared at Grundy. That great man was sprawling on his back on the study table, gasping for breath. For several minutes Grundy lay and gasped, and his study-mates gazed and giggled. Finally Grundy sat up on the table. His face was crimson, his collar

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

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was torn out, and his hair was like a mop. He gasped and gasped as if he would never leave off gasping.

"Groooh! Groooh! Oh! Ow! Ah! Yah! Wharrer you cackling at, you silly dummies? Groooh!"

Wilkins and Gunn, Grundy's study-mates, were grinning. They had been wondering how Grundy's programme would be received by the football committee, and they knew now.

"Hurt?" asked Wilkins sympathetically.

"Hurt, your fathead? Groooh! Do you think a chap can be squashed on the floor fifty times without being hurt? Gerroooh!"

"I rather thought they'd cut up rusty," said Gunn, with a shake of the head.

Grundy slid off the table and collapsed into the armchair. Grundy was a warlike youth, but he was quite fed up for the present. He did not feel inclined to return and argue matters out further with the football committee.

He had recovered by teatime, however, though he still had a few remaining aches and pains.

He was, in fact, the same old Grundy when he sat down at the tea-table, and referred to his programme, which was apparently still unaltered.

"I've been treated in a rotten way," he remarked. "I dare say they think I shall give up my claim now to be played in the eleven."

"Better chuck it, old chap," murmured Wilkins. "They're not—not reasonable on that subject, you know."

"I know that. I'm going to bring 'em to reason. I never stand any rot."

"But they won't, either," remarked Gunn.

"Don't be an ass, Gunn! Of course, I'm bound to stick to my guns—I can't let the footer season be mucked up simply because the game happens to be in the hands of a set of dashed duffers. I've got my position in the Form to think of."

Wilkins and Gunn wondered in what way Grundy's position in the Form differed from that of any other member of the Shell. But they did not say so. Evidently George Alfred was unique in his own eyes.

"What's happened," resumed Grundy, "only makes me more determined. I'm a determined chap, you know. I make it a point never to give in. When I was at Redclyffe—"

Wilkins and Gunn groaned. They were quite satisfied with the amount of knowledge they already possessed of Grundy's doings when he was at Redclyffe. Sometimes, indeed, they wished fervently that the great Grundy was still at Redclyffe. But Grundy went on remorselessly.

"When I was at Redclyffe I never stood any rot. I thumped the junior skipper till he put me in the team. Even then I couldn't always save the matches, though I did my best. I think I've mentioned that I had to leave Redclyffe for whopping a prefect—"

"I think you have," groaned Gunn—"lots of times!"

"Hundreds of times," said Wilkins pathetically.

Grundy frowned.

"Well, that shows that I never stand any rot. After whopping a prefect, I'm not likely to stand any rot from juniors. I've told those asses my programme, and they've replied in an insulting way. Now all that remains to be done is to carry out the programme."

"Oh, dear!"

"I suppose you fellows are going to back me up?"

"Oh, yes! Any old thing! Shall we fall on the footer committee and smite them hip and thigh, and strew the hungry churchyard with their bones?" asked Gunn flippantly.

"Don't be a silly ass, Gunn—more than you can help. I mean! You can be my second, Wilkins, and Gunn can come and cheer."

"Your second?" blinked Wilkins.

"Yes; I've got a number of fights on, you know. I'm going to thrash the whole footer committee, one after another. On reflection, I shall keep Tom Merry and Talbot till the last, as they are rather tough."

"They are—rather!" assented Wilkins, with a grin. Wilkins' secret opinion was that even the burly Grundy would find the task of thrashing Tom Merry and Talbot rather above his weight.

"I've got a list of 'em here," said Grundy, referring to a paper. "I'm going to begin with Figgins. He's a New House bouncer, and it will be rather popular to wallop him—on this side, I mean. After Figgins, Kerr—another New House waster. Then Blake of the Fourth, and then Noble. Tom Merry and Talbot will come later. Those four will keep me busy for a bit."

"They will!" said Wilkins, with conviction, "especially Kangaroo. I rather think he will keep you very busy."

"There may be a row, you know," said Gunn. "You're

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always fighting somebody, Grundy, and Railton has his eye on you."

"If you mean that I'm a quarrelsome chap, Gunn—"

roared Grundy.

"Not at all!" said Gunn hastily. "Oh, no, not in the least! Quite the reverse. But you can't deny that you have had two or three fights every week, owing to—circumstances, I suppose, and that Railton has spoken to you about it."

"I've explained to Railton that a fellow is bound to do what he considers his duty, as a prominent member of the House."

"Oh, my hat! What did Railton say?"

"He gave me a hundred lines—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at, George Wilkins," said Grundy, frowning. "I didn't argue with Railton—no good arguing with a Housemaster; he can always give you lines, and it's against the rules to whop him."

"Whop him!" murmured Gunn. "Whop the Housemaster! Oh, crumbs!"

"As for fighting," went on Grundy indignantly. "It's well known that I'm a peaceable chap. I suppose you're alluding to my thumping Levison of the Fourth. The cad was smoking—I don't approve of kids smoking. Then Crooke of the Shell—he was punching a fag—I don't approve of bullying. Then Racke—I gave Racke a terrific whopping, I admit—but he's a howling cad, and his father made enormous war profits, which ought to be stopped. As for Clampe, he's a New House rotter; and Piggott, he's a cheeky little beast. And about Gore, we had a row—I forget how it started, but I remember I had some reason for whopping him, though I can't remember what it was. And as for Reilly, he said something I didn't like; and as for Kerruish—he was making jokes about my footer. I don't allow that. I can't remember anybody else I've fought with lately."

"Well, that's enough to go on with," grinned Gunn. "And if you start a fresh lot you'll have the Housemaster down on you as safe as houses."

"I shall decline to allow Railton to interfere with my personal actions. Now, if you've done tea, you may as well go over and take my challenge to Figgins."

Wilkins looked helplessly at Gunn. They were faithful followers of the great Grundy, they were generally prepared to acquiesce in all that he said and did, but really Grundy seemed to be going a little too far this time.

"I—I say," stammered Wilkins. "Hadn't you better think it over? You can't bully your way into the footer team, you know."

"Bully!" ejaculated Grundy.

"Yes. You see—"

Wilkins broke off as Grundy jumped up and pushed back his cuffs in a business-like way.

"Come on!" said Grundy.

"Eh?"

"If there's one thing I pride myself on," said Grundy, "it's that I've never been guilty of such a caddish thing as bullying. Being a strong chap, and a splendid boxer, I could bully if I liked; but I should be ashamed to do anything of the sort. I don't allow anybody to call me a bully, George Wilkins. If you're ready—"

"I—I didn't exactly mean that!" gasped Wilkins. "What I meant was, it might look like that to—to unreasonable chaps."

"Oh, I see! Well, I'm afraid I can't neglect what I regard as a duty for the sake of unreasonable chaps," said Grundy, sitting down again. "I don't mind you making the suggestion, Wilkins, if that's what you meant—but it doesn't make any difference. Will you go over and see Figgins now?"

"I—I—"

"Tell him I'm ready for him any time he likes, with or without gloves, in the gym or anywhere, and that I'm going to whop him!" said Grundy.

"Oh, dear!"

"And the sooner the quicker, Wilkins. I don't believe in wasting time. I believe in being efficient."

Wilkins looked at Gunn again, but Gunn could not help him. Wilkins rose slowly.

"Well, I'll go," he said. "If Figgins refuses—"

"In that case, I shall come over and pull his nose!" said Grundy darkly. "You may as well mention that. Buck up—it's time we got to business, you know! I want the whole matter settled before the Grammar School match comes off."

Wilkins left the study. Grundy pushed the tea-table back against the wall, and took a couple of pairs of boxing-gloves from the bookcase—a proceeding that Gunn observed with some alarm. He tossed a pair over to Gunn.

"Eh! What's the game?" asked Gunn.

"Put 'em on! I want a bit of training before I tackle Figgins—just to see the form I'm in. Don't mind if I hit you a bit hard—I want to get my hand in. I've got rather a special upper-cut with the left I intend for Figgins, and I want to try it on somebody!"

"Look here, you're not going to try your blessed upper-cuts on me!" roared Gunn.

"Oh, don't be a slacker! Put 'em on!"

Grundy squared up to his chum, and Gunn unwillingly started. A friendly round with the gloves on was all very well; but Grundy was a dreadfully hard hitter, and Gunn looked forward to that special upper-cut with well-grounded apprehension. He got it in a few minutes, and went down on the hearthrug with a wild howl.

"Ripping!" exclaimed Grundy enthusiastically.

"Yow-wow-oww!" moaned Gunn, sitting on the hearthrug and holding his jaw with both hands.

"Splendid!" said Grundy, his eyes sparkling. "Caught you a treat, didn't it?"

"Yow-wo-wow!"

"Did it feel as if a mule had kicked you?" asked Grundy, with interest.

"Yow-ow! Yes, you silly idiot! Yow-ow!"

"Feel as if your chin had been pushed up into your head?"

"Grooh! Yes."

"Good!" exclaimed Grundy heartily. "That's what I want. Get up, and we'll try it again!"

Gunn got up, but he did not intend to try it again. He had had quite enough of having his chin pushed up into his head. It was possible to have too much of a good thing, in Gunn's opinion. He gave Grundy a Hunnish look and a violent shove, and stamped out of the study.

"Hallo! What's the row?" exclaimed Grundy in astonishment. "Come back, Gunny! I haven't finished yet!"

But Grundy had finished, so far as Gunn was concerned. Gunn did not come back, and George Alfred had to expend his superfluous energy on the punch-ball, while he waited for Wilkins to return from the New House.

CHAPTER 3. The First Fight.

FIGGINS & Co. were in their study, beginning prep., when Wilkins tapped at the door and looked in. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were all in high good-humour. They were all in the Junior School team for the forthcoming match with the Grammar School—Fatty Wynn as goalkeeper, Kerr and Figgins at back. Although Figgins & Co.'s opinion of the School House was generally a disparaging one, they admitted freely just now that Tom Merry was an exceptionally intelligent football skipper.

They regarded Wilkins inquiringly.

"I've got a message for you, Figgins," said Wilkins, in rather a dispirited tone. "Grundy's sent you a challenge."

"Blow Grundy!"

"Will you meet him in the gym this evening?"

"Yes, after prep.," said Figgins at once.

"Hold on!" said Kerr. "You won't, Figgy. Tell Grundy to go and eat coke, Wilkins!"

"Can't refuse a challenge from the School House," said Figgins decidedly. "Tell him I'll be there, Wilkins."

"All serene," said Wilkins.

He quitted the study.

"Look here!" said Kerr sharply. "It won't do, Figgy. Grundy's too big for you. He's older, bigger, heavier, and in a higher Form. It's not fair play."

"Well, I don't suppose I shall enjoy it," said Figgins.

"But it can't be helped. I can't refuse. The School House cads would snigger."

"That's all very well——"

"Besides, Grundy's a determined chap—you've heard him say so," grinned Figgins. "If I refused, he would meet me in the quad, and punch my nose, and then I should have to tackle him. So it comes to the same thing."

Kerr frowned.

"But it's all rot! You might as well tackle one of the Fifth. Grundy's as big as most of the Fifth."

"Can't be helped!"

"I suppose it will be my turn next," said Kerr angrily. "I don't see the sense of tackling a chap who's got every advantage. It isn't fair play."

"Well, it isn't," said Figgins, with a nod. "But a chap can't refuse. I don't say I can lick a tremendous hooligan like Grundy, but I shall make him sit up a bit, even if he licks me. But as for tackling him afterwards, Kerr, that's rot! You're not big enough, and I won't have it!"

"If you do—I can——"

"Oh, rot! One of us is enough to stand up for the honour of the study. If he won't let it stop there, we'll take him together and rag him."

Kerr shook his head.

"Let's rag him anyway," said Fatty Wynn.

"After I've tackled him," said Figgins. "I tell you we can't have the School House saying that the New House funks anybody on that side."

Figgins & Co. settled down to their prep. with very thoughtful faces. Figgins was a great fighting man in the Fourth, and more than equal to most of the Shell; but it was very doubtful whether he could hold his own against a tremendous fellow like Grundy. It was not a fair contest, though Grundy certainly did not intend to be guilty of unfairness. But Figgy's pride was aroused, and he did not think for a moment of refusing.

When prep. was over Figgins & Co. proceeded to the gym, and a crowd of New House fellows, having heard the news, went with them. Redfern sought to dissuade Figgy from the contest, but in vain. Figgy was determined. The Terrible Three and the chums of Study No. 6 were in the gym, and they had evidently heard of what was toward. Tom Merry was looking angry.

"You're not going to fight Grundy, Figgins?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I jolly well am!" replied Figgins at once.

"He's too big for you."

"We shall see."

"Leave him to me!" said Tom. "It's about the footer, of course, and as footer captain it's up to me."

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth. "Leave him to Tom Mewwy, Figgins, dear boy. Gwunday is wathah above the weight of a New House chap!"

Figgins snorted.

"The New House will undertake to lick anything the School House can turn out," he said disdainfully.

"Weally, Figgins——"

"Shut up, Gussy!" said Blake. "Always putting your blessed foot in it!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Leave him to me," urged Tom. "I don't say I'm anxious to tackle the beast, but it's up to me. I'm bigger than you, Figgy, old chap."

"How much?" said Figgins. "I'm taller!"

"Yaas, but you are wathah skinway, old chap," remarked Arthur Augustus.

"You silly ass!"

"Weally, Figgins——"

"Can't somebody get a gag for Gussy?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah, I was only pointin' out——"

"Here comes Grundy," said Digby.

Grundy of the Shell came in with Wilkins and Gunn. A crowd of juniors began to collect at once. Tom Merry strode towards the great George Alfred.

"Look here, Grundy, this won't do!" he exclaimed.

Grundy looked at him loftily.

"If you're spoiling for a fight, you can pick out a fellow near your own size and age," continued Tom. "I'm ready to oblige you, and so is Talbot—or Kangaroo——"

"All in good time!" said Grundy calmly. "I'm going to thrash the lot of you. I'm only beginning with Figgins."

"I wogard this as a wascally pwoceedin', Gwunday! You cannot bully your way into the eleven!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy indignantly.

Grundy took out his pocket-book, and made a pencil note.

"What on earth are you up to?" asked Wilkins.

"Only making a note," said Grundy calmly. "Putting D'Arcy on the list, you know. I don't allow anybody to call me a bully!"

"Bai Jove!"

"What do you call it, then?" demanded Tom Merry.

"I call it doing my duty by the school," said Grundy.

"But I'm not going to argue about it. I've decided, and that's enough. Are you ready, Figgins?"

"Quite!" said Figgins promptly.

"Figgy, you ass, leave him to a bigger chap!" urged Talbot of the Shell.

"Rats!" said Figgins. The hero of the New House was already slipping off his jacket. "Got the gloves, Kerr? I'm ready, Grundy!"

"Same here!" said Grundy. "I hope you understand, Figgins, that there's nothing personal about this. I simply regard it as a duty."

"And I simply regard you as a silly idiot!" said Figgins politely. "Come on!"

There was evidently nothing to be done in the way of interference. But there were some very dark looks cast at Grundy

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as he faced Figgins for the fight. Grundy was quite satisfied with his programme, but his satisfaction was not shared by anybody else. Even Wilkins and Gunn were very lukewarm.

Wilkins seconded Grundy, and Kerr acted for Figgins. The juniors crowded round in a ring, and their remarks showed that all their sympathy was with Figgins—even the School House fellows fervently wished for the victory of the New House champion.

"Time!" said Tom Merry reluctantly.

"Two to one on Grundy!" remarked Levison of the Fourth. And Blake promptly elbowed Levison out of the ring.

"Go it, Figgins!"

"Thwash the wottah, deah boy!"

Figgins stood up gallantly to his bulky adversary. In size and weight and strength and length of reach Grundy had every advantage. But Figgins was a first-rate boxer, and he had heaps of pluck. In the first round Grundy got as good as he sent. In the second round he tried the special upper-cut which had proved so disastrous to Gunn, but he found Figgins quite wide awake, and the upper-cut did not come off. Instead of that, Grundy found Figgins' right planted fairly on his nose, and it was Grundy who went down, feeling as if a mule had kicked him.

"By gum!" gasped Grundy.

"Bwavo!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Good old Figgins!"

"Time!"

Third round and fourth were hard and fast. It was a surprise to Grundy to find the Fourth-Former standing up to him for a fifth round. But Figgins stood up like a rock, and Grundy was looking quite as damaged as the New House fellow. In the sixth round the upper-cut worked at last, and Figgins went down like an ox. Kerr picked him up very anxiously. Figgins sat on Kerr's knee, and blinked rather ruefully at his second.

"Going on?" asked Kerr dubiously, as Tom Merry glanced at his watch.

Figgins set his teeth.

"I'm going on while I can stand," he said.

"Bravo, Figgins!"

"Pile in, deah boy!"

Figgins was looking groggy in the seventh round. So was Grundy. Figgie had put up a splendid fight, but he was over-matched. But he did not admit defeat. Certainly, if Figgins was licked, Grundy was not likely to be in a much better state at the end of the fight.

"Time!"

The eighth round began. Figgins stood to it gallantly, but he was getting severe punishment now. The contest was too unequal. But the eighth round did not finish. A sharp voice broke in suddenly:

"Stop at once!"

It was the voice of Mr. Railton, the master of the School House. He had come into the gym, unnoticed in the general excitement. And at the Housemaster's voice the combatants dropped their hands, and stood panting.

CHAPTER 4.

Blake's Turn.

MR. RAILTON looked sternly at the panting juniors and the silent ring of spectators. His brows were knitted.

"Tom Merry put his watch back into his pocket. It was not needed any longer.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Railton angrily.

"How dare you fight in such a way?"

Silence.

"There is no objection to a few rounds with the gloves," said the Housemaster. "But a fight carried on to this extent is against the rules, and you are aware of it. Neither of you is in a fit state to be seen. How dare you! Take those gloves off at once!"

"Yes, sir!" mumbled Figgins.

"Grundy, you will take five hundred lines!"

"Oh!" said Grundy.

"As for you, Figgins, I shall report your conduct to your Housemaster."

Figgins did not speak.

Grundy peeled off the gloves.

"If you please, sir—" he began.

"Have you anything to say, Grundy?"

"Yes, sir. I challenged Figgins, and he couldn't refuse, so perhaps you won't report him to Mr. Ratcliff, sir. He hadn't any choice in the matter."

"Indeed! Am I to understand that you are wholly to blame in this matter, Grundy?" asked Mr. Railton, with a curious glance at the burly Shell fellow.

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"Oh, no, sir! I considered it my duty to whop Figgins. I don't see that there's any blame in the matter at all."

There was a suppressed giggle in the crowd.

"You are a very quarrelsome boy, Grundy," said Mr. Railton.

"I, sir!" ejaculated Grundy. "Oh, no, sir! I'm a very peaceable chap. Any of the fellows will tell you that, sir. Of course, I never stand any rot."

"Go back to your House at once, Grundy, and write your lines. Figgins, I shall not report you, as Grundy tells me you were not to blame."

Mr. Railton walked away. Figgins slowly put on his jacket, with Kerr's assistance. Wilkins helped Grundy.

"Well, that's rather rotten," remarked Grundy. "We were getting on nicely when Mr. Railton chipped in. I wonder what he's given me five hundred lines for? Fancy calling me a quarrelsome chap, too. Me, you know!"

"It was wathah decent of you to own up, Gwunday! Othahwise I should have insisted upon givin' you a feahful waggin'," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, you're a silly ass!" said Grundy. And he walked off with Wilkins and Gunn.

Kerr and Fatty Wynn marched Figgins off, to help him attend to his damages. The crowd broke up.

"The silly idiot is rather decent, in his fatheaded way," Kerr remarked. "If you had been reported to Ratty, old chap, there would have been trouble."

Figgins nodded.

"Yes, he's decent, and I suppose he can't help being a dangerous lunatic," he said. "My hat, I do feel bad!"

"So does Grundy. That's one comfort!"

Grundy had been universally condemned while the fight was on, but his frank confession to save Figgins from punishment disarmed the juniors. They had to acknowledge that Grundy wasn't a bad chap really—in his own way.

Grundy was "feeling bad" that evening, as well as Figgins. He had had the better of the unfinished fight, but he had been sorely handled. His head ached, and his eyes blinked as he ground out lines in his study. Grundy was a slow hand with lines, and by the time he had written the twentieth he struck.

"I'll take this lot to Levison," he said. "He can do them in my fist, and it's worth five bob. I can't waste my time on lines. Does my nose look bad, Wilkins?"

"Like an over-ripe strawberry," said Wilkins.

"It feels rather bad. Still, I think I've brought Figgins to his senses. On the whole, I shall leave Blake till to-morrow."

"I think you'd better!" grinned Wilkins.

Levison of the Fourth kindly relieved Grundy of his lines, for a consideration. Levison had the dangerous gift of being able to imitate any hand—a gift that had got him into trouble more than once; and as he was generally hard up, he frequently turned a more or less honest penny by doing other fellows' lines—at a shilling a hundred. Grundy had plenty of money, and five shillings more or less made no difference to him. Instead of doing lines that evening, he spent most of the time rubbing his swollen nose. He was "feeling bad," but his determination was unshaken. He had now put Jack Blake next on the list, and Blake's turn was to come on the morrow.

When Grundy appeared in the junior Common-room before bed-time, he was eyed very curiously on all sides. His astounding scheme of "whopping" his way into the football eleven made the juniors gasp. It was quite certain that if Tom Merry were to play him, Tom Merry would not remain football skipper much longer. But it was also quite certain that Tom would do nothing of the sort—even if the egregious Grundy whopped him black and blue. But there was consolation in the reflection that, when Tom Merry's turn came, it would be Grundy who would receive the whopping.

Wilkins and Gunn made a feeble attempt to reason with Grundy; but they only wasted their breath. They gave it up in time to avoid a fight in the study. For a fellow who was not quarrelsome, Grundy was remarkably ready to fight anybody, friend or foe.

The next day, Figgins was looking very groggy at football practice. Grundy had recovered, however, save for a swelling on his nose, and a shade round one of his eyes. He was ready for further business.

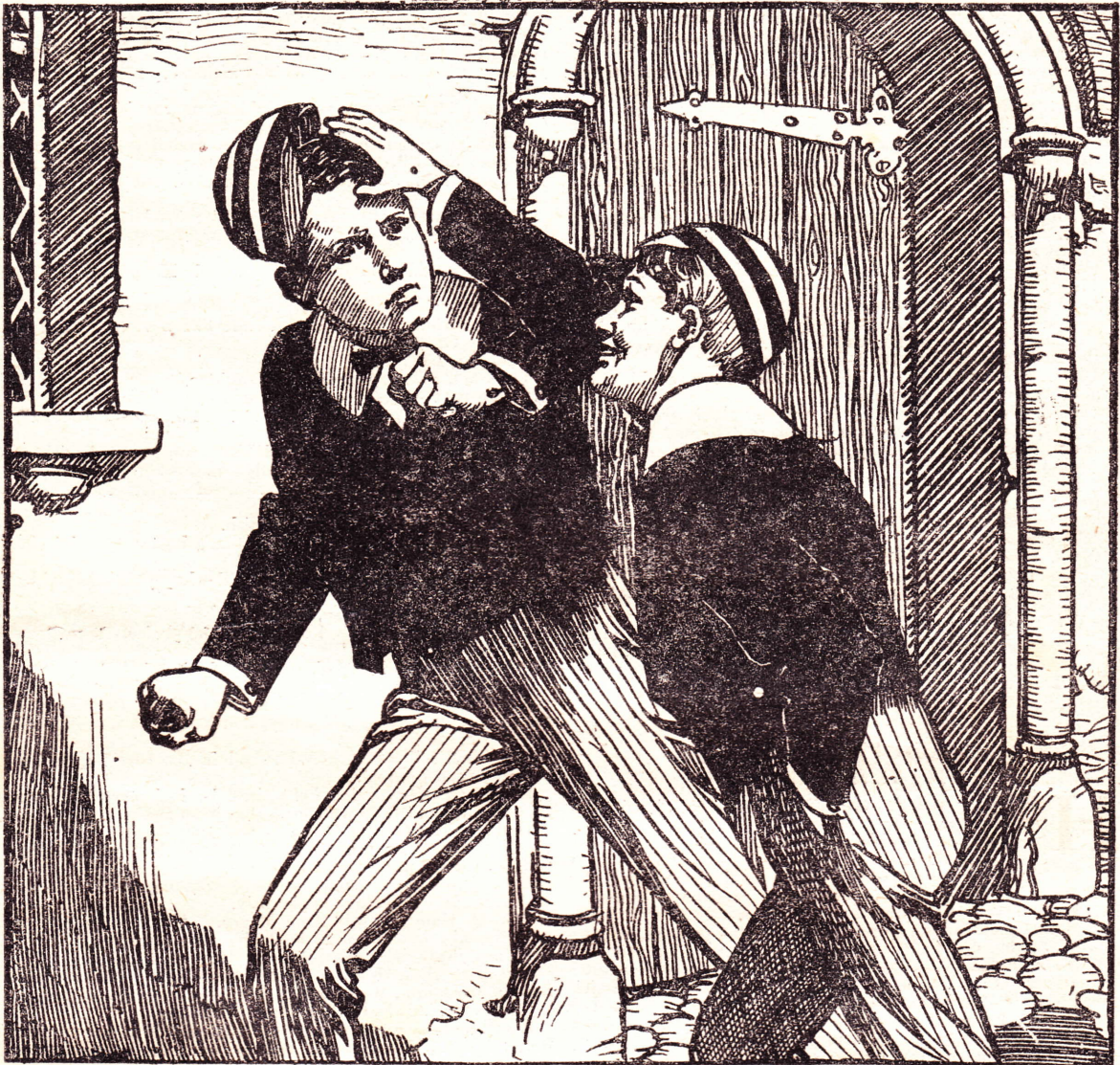
After tea, he directed Wilkins to carry his challenge to Jack Blake. Wilkins flatly declined.

"Look here, I'm fed-up!" he announced. "You can't keep this up, Grundy! You'll have the whole House down on you, and this study will get ragged. Chuck it, and don't be a silly ass!"

Wilkins left the study before the astonished Grundy could reply.

"Well, my hat!" said Grundy at last. "Never mind; you go, Gummy! Where are you going, you ass?"

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Piggott of the Third, knocked Grundy's cap off whenever they met. (See Chapter 11.)

But Gunn was gone.

Grundy snorted. He had been deserted by his unfaithful followers; but that made no difference to him. He repaired to Study No. 6 himself. He found Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy at tea there.

They glared at the cheerful Grundy.

"Don't hurry on my account," said Grundy magnanimously.

"But when you're finished, Blake, I'd like you to step into the gym with me."

"Go and eat coke!" growled Blake.

"Weally, Gwunday—"

"You shut up, D'Arcy! You're seventh on my list."

"Bai Jove!"

"Can I rely on you, Blake?"

"I'll come and knock some of the conceit out of you, if you like," said Blake.

"Right-ho!" And Grundy left the study satisfied.

"Bai Jove! I weally think you had better leave him to me, Blake," remarked Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "He is wathah too stwong for you."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake and Herries and Dig.

"Weally, deah boys, I fail to see anythin' to cackle at. I wathah think I could liek Gwunday."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you are goin' to cackle at my wemarks, you asses—"

"Bow-wow!" said Blake. "Grundy would squash you, Gussy!"

"I should uttably wefuse to be squashed, Blake," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity; "and I weally considah that you had better leave him to me."

But Blake only chuckled, and declined to leave Grundy to Arthur Augustus. After tea the four Fourth-Formers repaired to the gym, and the scene of the previous evening was repeated—till Kildare of the Sixth, coming in, stopped the fight. Blake's friends were glad enough to see it stopped, for the Fourth-Former, plucky as he was, was hardly a match for the burly Shell fellow. But Grundy was wrathful. However, Kildare was not to be argued with. He gave Blake a hundred lines, and took Grundy by the collar and marched him off to the Housemaster.

Mr. Railton looked very grim as the untidy junior was marched into his study.

"More fighting?" he said.

"Yes, sir," said Kildare. "I thought I'd better bring Grundy to you. He is the most quarrelsome junior in the House."

"Well, I like that!" said Grundy indignantly.

"I have given you lines, Grundy," said Mr. Railton quietly. "I shall cane you this time. Hold out your hand!"

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"The fact is, sir——"

"Hold out your hand!" thundered Mr. Railton.

Grundy unwillingly obeyed, and the cane came down. Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

"Now you may go," said Mr. Railton; "and the next time you are reported to me for fighting, Grundy, I shall deal with you much more severely."

"Yow-wow!" groaned Grundy.

He left the Housemaster's study with his hands tucked under his arms, and went down the passage looking as if he were trying to fold himself up like a pocket-knife. Wilkins and Gunn met him at the end of the passage.

"Hard cheese!" said Wilkins sympathetically. "I suppose you're going to chuck up that game now, Grundy?"

Grundy gave a snort.

"Certainly not! Railton's an unreasonable chap; he seems to think I am to blame, somehow——"

"Go hon!" murmured Gunn.

"But persecution of this sort only puts my back up. I didn't finish licking Blake, but I think he's had enough. Noble comes next; I shall tackle him to-morrow."

"Oh, my hat!" was all Wilkins and Gunn could say. Grundy was evidently a stickler.

In Study No. 6, Jack Blake was working at his prep under difficulties. One of his eyes was closed, and he had to leave off work occasionally to mop his nose. His chums were sympathetic.

"You jolly nearly licked him," said Herries consolingly. "After all, he's a head taller than you are, old chap; you couldn't expect much."

Blake grunted.

"Yaas, I weally wish you had left him to me, deah boy," remarked Arthur Augustus. "I don't want to say 'I told you so,' but weally you must admit that I recommended you to leave him to me."

Blake's reply to that consolatory remark came in the form of a Latin dictionary hurtling through the air—much to Arthur Augustus' surprise. And after that Arthur Augustus forbore from any attempts at consolation.

CHAPTER 5.

The Third Victim!

"HALLO! What's the trouble now?" ejaculated Manners.

Lowther chuckled.

"Grundy again!"

It was the following day, and the Shell had come out of their Form-room after morning lessons. Mr. Linton, the Form-master, had walked away, and most of the Shell fellows were chatting in the passage, when Grundy strode up to Harry Noble, otherwise known as Kangaroo. Noble looked at him with a grin, guessing what was coming, as he was a member of the junior football committee. Clifton Dane and Glyn, his chums, drew towards him at once, prepared to back him up. But Kangaroo did not need any backing up. The big, sturdy Australian junior was not a bad match even for the tremendous Grundy. And certainly he wasn't nervous about it.

"Just a word with you, Noble," said Grundy quite amicably.

"Go ahead!" said the Cornstalk.

"After tea suit you?"

"What for?" grinned Kangaroo.

"To be licked, of course."

Kangaroo shook his head.

"No, it won't! Not any time."

"Look here, Noble——"

"But if you want to be licked, I'll lick you after tea, or any time you like," said Kangaroo cheerfully. "Now, if you like!"

The Terrible Three came up, and Tom Merry dropped his hand on Grundy's shoulder. Grundy stared round at him.

"Hallo! What do you want?"

"This kind of thing has gone far enough," said Tom sternly. "You've got to stop it!"

"Got to?" ejaculated Grundy, in astonishment.

"Yes, got to! You'll get a Form ragging if you don't!"

"So you'd go as far as that, in your rotten jealousy of my form as a footballer?" said Grundy bitterly. "Well, it wouldn't make any difference! I've marked out what I'm going to do, and I never stand any rot. You shut up, will you, if you don't mind? I'm really sorry about this, Noble, in a way——"

"You'll be sorrier before you're through, perhaps!" grinned Kangaroo.

"You see, I rather like you personally——"

"Thanks! If I hadn't been brought up to be so truthful, I'd say the same to you!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I'm specially sorry to have to whop you, as you're a Colonial, and the Colonials are backing up the Empire so rippingly in these times," went on Grundy, unheeding. "But you see, it's a matter of principle with me. I'm rather strict on principle."

"Don't let it worry you," said Kangaroo kindly. "It's just barely possible, you know, that you may get the licking. It's like your thumping cheek to go round asking chaps to lick you, but I'll do my best to oblige you. It's about time you had some of the idiocy knocked out of your silly head!"

"I don't want any rotten cheek!" roared Grundy wrathfully. "If you want me to pull your nose, you've only got to say so!"

"How would you pull it?" asked Kangaroo. "Like that?"

"Gurrrrrg!" spluttered Grundy wildly, as the Cornstalk's finger and thumb closed on his nose like a vice. "Let do! Booh! Groooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Shell fellows roared with laughter.

"Like that—what?" asked Kangaroo genially.

"Burrgh! Gurrrgh! Let do! Yow-ow-woop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy hit out furiously, and Kangaroo guarded with one hand, while he held on to Grundy's nose with the other, and he had a grip that brought a rush of water to Grundy's eyes.

Grundy fairly danced with anguish.

He got his nose away at last, red as a beetroot, and feeling as if it had been caught in a door.

"You rotter!" he bellowed. "I'll whop you bald-headed! Come on!"

Kangaroo backed away.

"Not here, you ass! You'll have the prefects here!"

"Blow the prefects!"

"Oh, all right, if you choose! I don't mind!"

Grundy was too furious to care for prefects just then. He wanted vengeance, and he wanted it badly. He rushed on the Cornstalk, hitting out wildly, and Kangaroo met him with equal vim.

The Shell fellows gathered round in the corridor, looking on with keen interest.

It was Grundy's third fight since he had started his new programme, and they wondered that even the warlike George Alfred was not getting fed-up. Certainly he had had rather the best of the encounters so far; but he had received very nearly as much punishment in each case as he had handed out, and the cumulative effect, so to speak, ought to have told on him. But it hadn't, apparently.

"Go it, Kangy!" said Tom Merry. "For goodness' sake mop the silly idiot up, and he'll give us a rest!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in D'Arcy of the Fourth, as a crowd of the Fourth came up to see the fight. "Give him a feahful thwashin', deah boy!"

"Advance, Australia!" grinned Lowther.

Australia was advancing. Grundy, much to his surprise, found himself driven back, and he went down on the floor with a crash. But he was up again like a jack-in-the-box, and rushing on.

He was a good deal bigger than the Kangaroo; but the Cornstalk was a good boxer, cool as a cucumber, and fit all through. He held his own well against the burly Grundy. He took severe punishment without flinching, and he handed out as much as he received; and as the combatants had no gloves on, the damage was considerable on both sides.

It was a decidedly reckless proceeding to start a fight in the Form-room passage, within hearing of masters and prefects. It was certain to be interrupted before very long, with dire results to both parties.

Kangaroo received the benefit of Grundy's special uppercut, and went back against the wall with a crash; but he came forward again like a bullet, and before Grundy knew what was happening Noble's knuckles crashed on his jaw, and he went down with a tremendous bump.

"Huwway!" chirruped Arthur Augustus.

"Well hit!" exclaimed Blake heartily. "Right on the wicket!"

Wilkins ran to help Grundy up.

There was a call along the passage.

"Cave!"

"Look out! Railton!"

The Housemaster strode on the scene.

"Grundy again!" he exclaimed angrily. "Upon my word, this passes all tolerance!"

Grundy sat up dazedly.

"Grundy, you are fighting again!"

"Grooogh!"

"You appear this time to have picked out Noble, whom I

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know to be a peaceable boy!" exclaimed the Housemaster. "I warn you, Grundy, that you are exhausting my patience!"

"Gerrooogh!"

"Get up, and follow me to my study! I shall endeavour to impress upon your mind, Grundy, that you must keep your quarrelsome temper in check!"

Wilkins helped Grundy up.

"I—I say, sir," gasped Grundy, "I ain't quarrelsome, you know! I haven't quarrelled with Noble!"

"You have fought with him without quarrelling with him!" exclaimed the Housemaster.

"Yes, sir."

"And why have you done so ridiculous a thing, Grundy?"

"On principle, sir."

"What!"

"Principle, sir."

"I begin to fear that you are little better than an idiot, Grundy!" said Mr. Railton. "You are certainly the stupidest boy in the House! Follow me to my study at once!"

Grundy followed him.

Some of the juniors who followed on behind heard a rhythmical sound of swishing from the Housemaster's study, accompanied by suppressed groans from Grundy. When George Alfred came out he was looking quite pale. Mr. Railton was not often severe, but he felt that this case demanded severity, as undoubtedly it did, and Grundy had been through it.

Grundy did not speak a word. He limped away to his study.

"Grundy's luck is out!" grinned Lowther. "He never gets a chance of finishing a fight!"

"Lucky for him in this case," remarked Bernard Glyn.

"Kangy would have licked him, I think!"

"The silly ass!" growled Tom Merry. "I hope this will be the end of it! If the howling idiot begins again, we'll give him a Form ragging!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

That day, however, Grundy did not begin again. Grundy was tough, but the caning he had had, had taken it out even of Grundy.

He was quite subdued for the rest of the day and the evening, and the School House fellows concluded that Grundy of the Shell had dropped his precious programme. But they did not yet know their Grundy!

CHAPTER 6.

Up to Arthur Augustus!

"RAILTON'S an ass!" Grundy delivered himself of that opinion in the study on Thursday. Twenty-four hours had made a great difference to George Alfred, who was decidedly tough, and he was quite himself again now.

"Is he?" yawned Wilkins. "Pass the jam!"

"A Housemaster's business isn't to keep on interfering with a chap who's doing his duty—a painful duty," said Grundy. "Railton has no fact. He wouldn't even let me explain my view of the matter—just laid into me with a cane! I came jolly near dotting him in the eye yesterday, I can tell you!"

"Oh!"

"But I didn't do it," said Grundy magnanimously. "He's a tactless ass, but I felt I couldn't, seeing that he's got a gummy arm from fighting the Germans!"

"And—and that's the only reason why you didn't dot him in the eye?" ejaculated Wilkins.

"Well, that was the chief reason. Still, I'm glad I kept my temper, on the whole. I had to leave Redclyffe for whopping a prefect, and I suppose it would be considered rather serious whopping a Housemaster!"

"I—I rather think it would!" gasped Wilkins.

"Still, I sha'n't stand much more from Railton," said Grundy darkly. "He seems to have made a dead set at me! I can't get into a fight now without Railton turning up like a bad penny and coming down on me! Sickening, I call it!"

"Awful!" said Gunn. "Pass the pickles!"

Grundy did not heed. He was too busy with great thoughts to think of such commonplace things as pickles.

"The only thing is, I shall have to keep Railton out of it," he said. "I sha'n't whop the next one in the school. When you take my challenge to Talbot, Wilkins—"

"Oh, you're sending a challenge to Talbot?"

"Of course! This evening!"

"Don't you think you'd better chuck it, old chap?" urged Wilkins. "You'll be had up before the Head for a flogging next, you know!"

"I think I've already mentioned, Wilkins, that this is a matter of principle with me!" said Grundy, frowning. "I'm acting for the good of the school, in the long run, though those duffers can't see it at present! I've thrashed three of them. I haven't been allowed to finish the job, owing to Railton chipping in in that inconsiderate way! But they were practically whopped! But I'm going to make a thorough job of Talbot. You'll ask him to come down behind the boathouse for our little scrap. Railton won't spot us there!"

"I say, Talbot's awfully hot stuff in a scrap!" urged Wilkins. "He hardly ever gets into a scrap, but when he does—"

"I know. I'm glad of it," said Grundy. "Fellows have been saying things about me because Blake and Figgins are younger than I am, and not so big. They won't understand that I'm acting on principle. But they can't say anything about my whopping Talbot. All the Shell thinks he's a match for me. So he would be, you know, only I'm a remarkably good boxer—as good at boxing as I am at football, really—something a bit out of the common, you know!"

"You're a bit out of the common in a good many ways, old scout!" grinned Gunn.

Grundy nodded complacently.

"Yes; I'm not the kind of fellow you'd pass in a crowd without noticing him, Gunn. I pride myself on that!"

"Oh, no!" agreed Gunn. "You see, your face—"

"Eh?"

"I—I mean—ahem—"

"If you're being funny, Gunn—" roared Grundy.

"Not at all," said Gunn hastily. Gunn had no desire to be put on Grundy's list. "I—I meant, your distinguished look—"

"Oh, I see! Yes, I've been told, before I'm a bit distinguished," said Grundy, with a nod. "I don't brag of it—it just happens, you know. I've got rather more gifts in most ways than the usual run of chaps; it happens like that, you know. Have you got a cold, Wilkins?"

"Nunno," gasped Wilkins, who was gurgling painfully. "A—a bit of jam the wrong way!"

"You should eat more carefully," said Grundy admonishingly. "Well, when you've done tea, go to Talbot with my message? Any time to-morrow behind the boat-house will suit me."

And Wilkins carried that message to Talbot's study after tea. He found Talbot and Gore and Skimpole at prep, and delivered his message.

Talbot laughed.

"Right-ho! After lessons," he said.

"Sorry, you know!" remarked Wilkins. "It's no use arguing with Grundy; I've tried it. But he's fairly off his dot, you know."

"Yes, I know," said Talbot, laughing.

"I dare say you'll lick him," said Wilkins. "He's my pal, and a good chap; but I must say a licking would do him good, and I hope he'll get it."

"He will!" grinned Gore. "And you can tell him we'll come and see him get it."

Before long all the School House juniors knew that a meeting was arranged between Talbot and Grundy for the morrow.

Tom Merry heard it with intense exasperation.

"Something will have to be done with that thumping ass!" he told his chums. "It would be comic, if it wasn't such a worry. But the silly chump is crocking all the footer team one after another."

"He will get crocked this time," remarked Manners. "If he licks Talbot, we'll give him a Form ragging to cure him. But a thrashing will do him more good, and I think Talbot can handle him. It will be worth watching; I'll jolly well take my camera and get some snaps!"

The news was received in Study No. 6 with mixed feelings.

"Talbot's turn now!" growled Herries. "Still, Talbot may lick him."

"I scarcely think Talbot is up to Gwunday's weight, dear boys," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "He's a tremendous chap, you know. I should be sorry to see poor old Talbot knocked about like poor old Blake."

"Not so much of your poor old Blake!" growled that youth. "Do you think I'm made of putty, and can't stand a thump or two, you fathead?"

"Weally, Blake, I was bein' sympathetic—"

"Well, don't!" said Blake ungratefully.

"I regard you as a wathah unfeelin' ass, Blake. Howevah, I was goin' to remark that it was up to me."

"Eh?"

"Gwunday is goin' altogether too far. I think I had better wemonstwat with him, and if that is no use, give him a feahful thwashing!"

"You silly ass!" roared Blake exasperated. "If I can't

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NEXT WEDNESDAY:

"A SURPRISE FOR ST. JIM'S!"

lick the beast, how do you think you're going to handle him?"

"It's wathah a diffewent mattah, Blake."

"What?"

"I am wathah a wippin' boxah."

"You shrieking ass—"

"I wefuse to be called a shwiekin' ass, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I wegard it as an oppwobvious expression."

Blake glared at his noble chum. He had failed to lick the tremendous Grundy, tough fighting-man as he certainly was. It was decidedly exasperating to hear the slim, elegant swell of St. Jim's expressing the opinion that he could do it.

"You frabjous ass!" said Blake witheringly. "I've told you a hundred times that I could make shavings of you with one hand, so—"

"Yaas, you have told me so, deah boy, and I have allowed you to wun on out of politeness," explained Arthur Augustus. "But you couldn't really, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Herries and Dig, greatly tickled by the expression on Jack Blake's face at that moment.

"You—you—you jabberwock!" gasped Blake. "I've a jolly good mind to lick you, just to stop your burbling!"

"I wefuse to heah my remarks chawactewised as burblin', Blake! And I decline to be bothahed with lickin' you now, as I am goin' to lick Gwunday! I wegard it as bein' up to me to put a stoppah on his wot."

And Arthur Augustus walked to the door with a very determined expression on his face.

"You awful ass!" shrieked Blake. "Grundy will eat you!"

"I shall wefuse to allow him to do anythin' of the sort."

"You—you—you—"

"Pway come with me and see fair-play, deah boys! It will be all wight. You can wely on me," said Arthur Augustus reassuringly.

And he walked out of the study. Blake and Herries and Digby regarded one another with helpless looks.

"Come after him and drag him back," said Blake at last.

"Why, that big beast wouldn't leave a whole bone in the silly duffer!"

The three juniors rushed out of the study. But Arthur Augustus was gone.

He had gone to the Common-room in search of George Alfred Grundy, and his chums, with great misgivings, followed him there.

CHAPTER 7. Thrashing Grundy!

"G

WUNDAY!"

"Hallo!"

"A word with you, Gwunday!"

"Two, if you like," said Grundy affably.

Grundy was sprawling on a sofa in the Common-room when the swell of St. Jim's found him. The determined expression on Arthur Augustus' noble countenance attracted some attention, and when he marched up to George Alfred Grundy a good many glances followed him.

"I am goin' to speak to you vewy plainly, Gwunday," said Arthur Augustus, in measured tones. "The whole House is gettin' fed-up with your silly wot!"

"Eh?"

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther heartily. "That's right on the wicket, at any rate! Endorsed and passed unanimously, also nem con!"

"I am goin' to speak like a candid friend to you, Gwunday. You are no footballah, and your play is more than enough to make a Hun cackle. It is quite impos for you to play in any match unless we were playin' a home for idiots! If Tom Mewwy put you in the team, we should scalp Tom Mewwy. I want you to undahstand that cleahly, so that you will realise that the soonah you chuck up playin' the giddy ox the wisah it will be. There has been quite enough of your wot. You are goin' to stop it!"

"Ain I?" said Grundy, blinking.

"And who's going to make me?"

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"I am!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grundy.

"I would wathah wemonstwate with you in a fwriendly way and bwing you to weason," said Arthur Augustus. "But if you wefuse to come to weason, I shall have no weource but to administah a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Grundy.

There was a general grin round the Common-room. The slim and elegant swell of St. Jim's did not look much like thrashing the burly Grundy.

"I see no weason for laughtah, Gwunday. You will not find it a laughin' mattah if I begin thwashin' you!" said Arthur Augustus warmly.

"I think I shall, rather!" chuckled Grundy. "Here, Blake, take this silly idiot away and keep him quiet! I don't want to hurt him!"

"Come away, Gussy," said Blake.

"I wefuse to come away, Blake! Gwunday has not yet assuahed me that he is goin' to stop playin' the giddy ox."

"He couldn't," said Lowthah. "Grundy was born a silly ox. Weren't you, Grundy?"

"I suppose that's meant for a joke," remarked Grundy. "I shall put you on my list, Lowther. You'll come next after Tom Merry!"

"All serene!" said Lowther. "Tommy, dear boy, you'll leave a bit for me, won't you, when you've finished with Grundy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gwunday, I take that wemark to mean that you are goin' on. I have already wemarked that you leave me no weource but to thwash you. I wegard it as bein' up to me to bwing you to your senses. You are becomin' a genewal nuisance to the whole House. Will you come into the gym or have it heah?"

Grundy rolled on the sofa in mirth.

Arthur Augustus' noble eye gleamed at him through his eyeglass. Arthur Augustus was in deadly earnest.

"Leave him to me, Gussy!" called out Talbot. "It's my turn next, you know, and I'm booked for the slaughter to-morrow!"

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"No, deah boy! I am goin' to stop Gwunday makin' himself a genewal nuisance in the House. It's time some-thin' was done, and I'm goin' to do it! Gwunday, I will twouble you to follah me to the gym!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Grundy.

"Will you follah me to the gym, Gwunday, or will you compel me to chawactewise you as a wotten funk?" demanded D'Arcy.

"Take him away!" gasped Grundy. "He's too funny to live; but I don't want the job of slaughtering him! Take him away, somebody!"

"Gussy, old chap, don't bite off more than you can chew!" said Kangaroo.

"Let him run on," chuckled Mellish. "Go it, Gussy! This will be worth seeing!"

"Weally, Mellish—"

"Play you at chess, Gussy!" said Julian of the Fourth.

"Yaas, dear boy. Aftah I have thwashed Gwunday."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grundy, in a paroxysm of mirth. "Take him away—Hallo! Groogh! Wharrer you at? Grooogh!"

Arthur Augustus seized one of Grundy's ears, and jerked him off the sofa. Grundy roared, but not with laughter, as he bumped on the floor.

"Now will you come on, you wottah?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, dropping his eyeglass, throwing his jacket to Blake, and squaring up very scientifically.

Grundy jumped up in towering wrath.

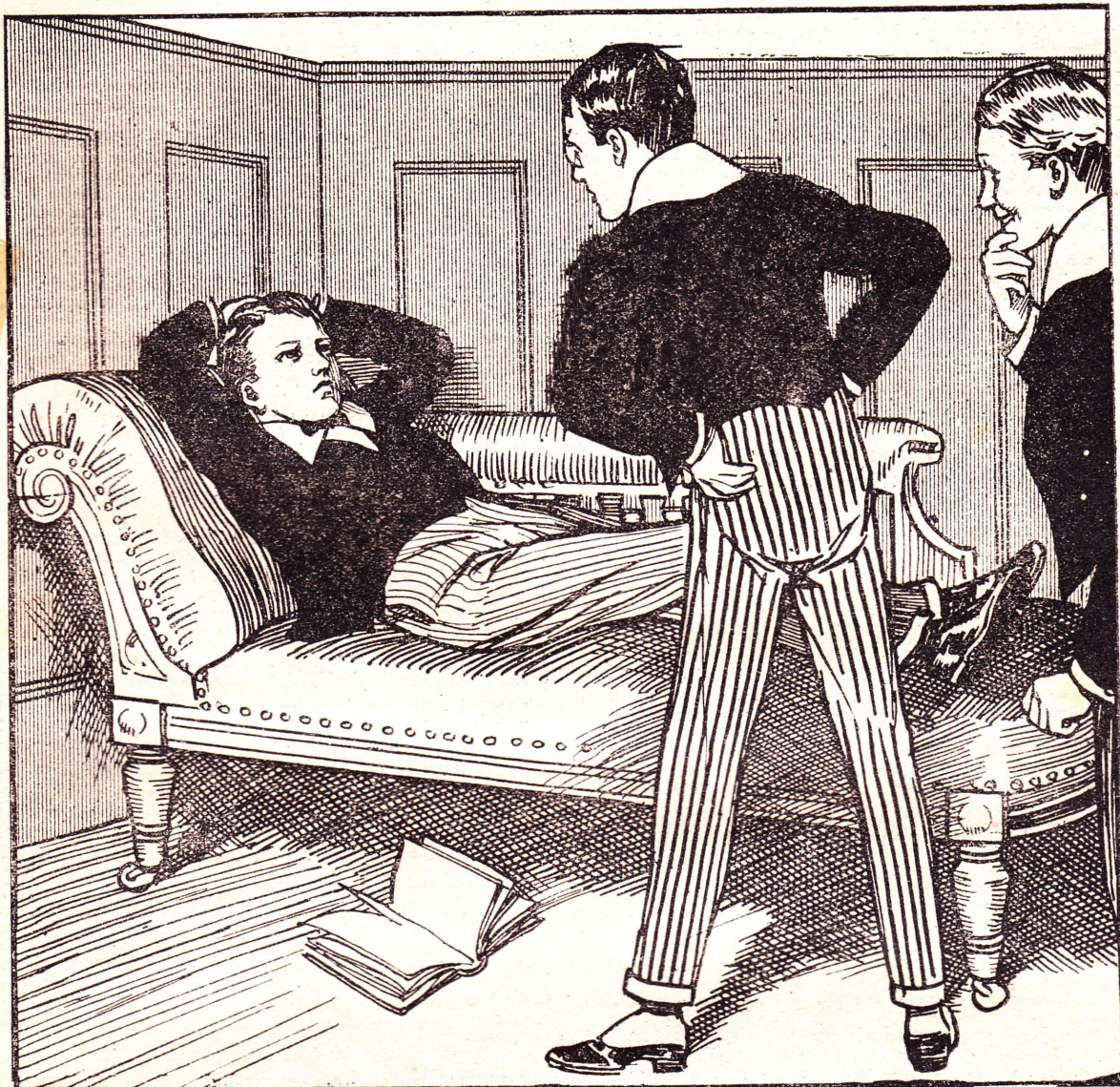
"You blessed tailor's dummy!" he gasped. "I won't fight you, but I'll shove you across my knee and spank you, by gum!"

"I wefuse to be spanked, Gwunday! Oh, bai Jove, I'm weady for you, you wottah!"

Grundy was rushing on like a whirlwind.

The juniors looked on grimly. As Arthur Augustus had started the row, fairly thrusting himself into the lion's jaws, as it were, his chums were not entitled to interfere. He had to fight it out. That he was

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ONE PENNY.



Grundy was sprawling on a sofa in the Common-room when the swell of St. Jim's found him. "I am goin' to speak to you vewy plainly, Gwunday," said Arthur Augustus. (See Chapter 7.)

fully prepared to do. And, though he was physically no match for the burly Grundy, he was wonderfully active, he had plenty of science, and his pluck was simply unlimited. He stood up to Grundy like David to Goliath. And as Grundy came on like a bull, the slim Fourth-Former wound round him, parrying his heavy drives, and drove in his right on the side of Grundy's square jaw and sent him spinning.

Grundy staggered over the sofa, and sprawled on it, in great surprise.

"Well hit!" shouted Blake, in great delight.

"Bravo, Gussy!"

"Shut the door!" exclaimed Wilkins. "We don't want a prefect here."

Grundy rolled off the sofa and jumped up. He rubbed his jaw for a moment. He would never have suspected the swell of St. Jim's of possessing the strength to deliver a drive like that.

"My hat!" gasped Grundy.

"Have you had enough, Gwunday?"

"Enough! My hat! I'll show you in a minute! Why, I'll make shavings of you!" yelled Grundy.

He rushed on again.

This time D'Arcy's skill did not save him. He caught a tremendous drive on his chest, with all Grundy's great strength behind it, and it fairly lifted him off his feet. He flew away backwards, and bumped down on the floor.

"Ow!"

Blake ran forward anxiously.

"Gussy, old man—"

Gussy blinked up at him.

"Bai Jove! Was that an earthquake?" he gasped.

Grundy grinned.

"Take him away," he said. "I don't want to hurt him."

"Gwooh!"

Blake and Digby raised up the swell of St. Jim's. That tremendous blow had told on Arthur Augustus. He stood limply and unsteadily.

"Come on!" said Blake.

"Wats!"

"Look here, Gussy—" urged Dig.

"Gwoogh! I am goin' to thwash Gwunday!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"But look here, old chap—"

"Wats! I am goin' to thwash Gwunday! Are you weady, Gwunday?"

"Oh, quite!" grinned Grundy. "I warn you that you'll be laid up afterwards. But if you ask for it, you can have it."

"Pwaw stand aside, Blake!"

"Gussy—"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus shoved past his anxious chums, and advanced upon Grundy of the Shell. In a moment more they were fighting hammer and tongs. To Grundy's surprise, he received a good many hard knocks; but the two were

altogether too unequally matched, and Arthur Augustus went down again.

He was gasping on the floor, when the door opened and Darrel of the Sixth came in.

"Bed-time!" said Darrel. "Hallo! Fighting again, Grundy?"

"Oh, no," said Grundy. "This isn't really a fight. Only a little game."

"Gwoogh!"

"Get up, D'Arcy!" said Darrel, frowning.

"Gwoogh! It's all wight, Dawwel! I'm only thwashin' Gwunday!"

The prefect grinned.

"Grundy and D'Arcy, go to Mr. Railton's study!" he said. "The rest of you get off to bed!"

"Weally, Dawwel—"

"Orders are for Grundy to be reported every time he is found fighting," said Darrel. "You hear me, Grundy?"

"Oh, all right!" said Grundy.

Grundy and Arthur Augustus left the Common-room to report themselves, and the rest of the juniors made their way to the dormitories.

CHAPTER 8.

Put on His Honour.

MR. RAILTON looked inquiringly at the two juniors as they presented themselves.

"Well?" he asked.

"Dawwel has wequsted us to weport ourselves to you, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "I am sowwy to twouble you, but a wequest fwom a pwefect—"

"Quite so!" said Mr. Railton. "You have been fighting, I judge by your appearance."

"Yaas, sir."

"You may go, D'Arcy. You will remain, Grundy."

"Pway allow me to speak, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"I challenged Gwunday, and pulled his eah, sir—"

"You deliberately provoked a boy so much bigger than yourself, D'Arcy?" exclaimed the Housemaster.

"Yaas, sir. I considahed it was time he was thwashed. I was thwashin' him when Dawwel wathah unfortunately came in."

Grundy chuckled.

"Very good! You may go now, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, sir."

Arthur Augustus left the study. Grundy remained, in a rather uneasy mood. He remembered his last licking in that study. But Mr. Railton did not reach out for his cane. He looked very seriously at Grundy.

"It appears, Grundy, that for once you were not the beginner in a quarrel," he said. "I have very little doubt, however, that you were really to blame."

"Not at all, sir," said Grundy. "I'm a very peaceable chap."

"Why did D'Arcy quarrel with you?"

"He thought he could lick me, the young ass!" said Grundy disdainfully. "He thought he was going to stop me—Ahem!"

"Stop you?"

"I—I mean—"

"I think I understand. D'Arcy appears to have over-rated his physical powers, but his object was to stop you from continuing your course of fighting and bullying," said Mr. Railton sternly. "As I said, you were really to blame."

"I hope you don't think I would bully, sir," said Grundy warmly. "It's a thing I despise more than anything else. I thrashed Piggot of the Third for calling me a bully—"

"Listen to me, Grundy! You are unusually big and strong for your age, and also, I think, unusually stupid—"

"Oh!" ejaculated Grundy.

"That you do not intend to be a bully, I believe, but your actions are those of an overbearing bully," said Mr. Railton.

"There must be an end of this. You are more quarrelsome than any other boy in the school—you are incessantly fighting—and there must be an end. I have punished you severely, but it makes no difference. The time has come to take more drastic measures. I shall not cane you."

"Thank you, sir!"

"You need not thank me," said Mr. Railton drily. "I intend to report your conduct to Dr. Holmes, and request him to administer a public flogging."

Grundy jumped. He could scarcely believe his ears.

"A—a—a flogging! Me!" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"What for, sir?" demanded Grundy warmly.

"You will be flogged in the presence of the assembled school for bullying and using your strength against younger boys," said Mr. Railton. "That kind of thing must be put down with a firm hand."

Grundy turned crimson.

"But you haven't got it right, sir!" he exclaimed, quite distressed. "You really mustn't think of me like that! It's not fair! I can't help Blake and Figgins being younger than I am. Talbot's nearly as old as I am, anyway, and—"

"So you have been fighting Talbot, the most peaceable boy in the House?" said Mr. Railton sternly.

"Oh, no, sir. I'm going to fight him to-morrow. And Tom Merry, too. He's supposed to be a match for me. You can't call that bullying."

"Tom Merry, too? Have you arranged fights with any more juniors?"

"Only Lowther, and Manners, and Clifton Dane, and—"

"Enough!" said Mr. Railton. "More than enough! Grundy, I trust that a public flogging will bring you to your senses. Otherwise, I warn you, you are in danger of being expelled from the school."

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

"I believe you are not really a bad-hearted boy," said Mr. Railton, more kindly. "I think you are stupid, obstinate, and self-willed chiefly. I will offer you an alternative. If you give me your word of honour not to engage in any fight, under any circumstances, for a whole week; I will reconsider the flogging. That will show whether you are capable of self-control."

Grundy looked utterly dismayed.

It was not so much the flogging itself that worried him, but the disgrace of being publicly flogged as an incorrigible bully was too much. Grundy felt that he was misunderstood; but the disgrace would be there all the same. But to promise not to fight anybody for a week was ruin to the masterly programme he had mapped out for getting into the junior eleven.

"I—I say, sir—"

"I give you the choice," said Mr. Railton quietly. "Unless you prove, Grundy, that you are capable of controlling your pugnacious impulses, you will have to leave this school. I will not have the House kept in a constant turmoil by your quarrelsome folly. I shall put you on your honour for a week, and judge by the result. If you should

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be dishonourable enough to break your promise, you will leave St. Jim's the next day—my representations to the Head will be amply sufficient. Unless you give your promise, you will be flogged in public to-morrow morning, and flogged again on every occasion you are found fighting; and if that does not cure you, you will be expelled!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Well?" rapped out Mr. Railton.

"You—you see, sir, I—I'm not a quarrelsome chap at all," faltered Grundy, vainly seeking to make himself understood. "I feel bound to whop the football committee for leaving a player like me outside the team—"

"You young ruffian!" exclaimed the Housemaster.

"Eh?"

"You seem to have no sense of propriety at all, Grundy! I fear that this school is no place for a boy of your disposition."

"I—I—I— You misunderstand, sir—you do really! I'm acting on principle all the time!" stammered Grundy.

"Reasoning appears to be lost upon you, Grundy. Will you give me your word of honour not to enter into any fight for a week from this date, under any circumstances whatever? Otherwise, you will now come with me to the Head."

"If—if you insist, sir—"

"I certainly insist!"

"Well, I haven't any choice, then!" said Grundy lugubriously. "I've always been misunderstood. I was misunderstood at Redelyffe before I came here. People seem to go out of their way to misunderstand me."

"You give me your promise on your honour?"

"Yes, sir!" groaned Grundy.

"I think, Grundy, that, in spite of your stupidity, you are honourable enough to keep a promise. I shall trust you."

"I've never broken my word yet, sir!" said Grundy loftily.

"Very good! You may go."

Grundy left the study in a very disconsolate mood. He had had no choice about making the promise; it was either that or a succession of floggings, to be followed by expulsion from the school—and all owing to the way Grundy was misunderstood.

But he was dismayed. It was absolutely certain that the foster committee wouldn't entertain his claims for a moment unless they were whopped into it. It was certain enough, anyway, for that matter, if Grundy had only known it. And he was booked for a fight with Talbot and Tom Merry—that would have to be called off now. And he hadn't finished whopping Blake and Figgins and Kangaroo—now he couldn't finish.

Grundy was not the kind of fellow to break his word. But, even if he had been willing to do so, it was not good enough, with floggings and expulsion looming in the distance.

Grundy felt that he was very hardly treated and cruelly misunderstood; but there was nothing for it but to grin and bear it as best he could.

He came lugubriously into the Shell dormitory.

"Licked?" asked Wilkins.

Grundy snorted.

"Worse than that!" he said. "Railton's an ass—an awful ass! He's got the idea fairly fixed in his head that I'm a quarrelsome chap—"

"Go' hon!" said Lowther, with an air of surprise.

"Yes, he has. And he thinks I'm a bully—me, you know!" said Grundy, with breathless indignation.

"Now, I wonder what could possibly have put that idea into his head?" said Monty Lowther reflectively; and there was a chuckle from the Shell.

"Yes, I wonder," said Grundy. "I've often been misunderstood, but Railton fairly takes the cake. I always rather liked old Railton, especially the way he went out and helped mop up the Germans, and got winged. He's a good sort in his way. But I must say he's a fool—an absolute fool! He doesn't understand me in the least. Now, I shan't be able to whop Talbot to-morrow, and Tom Merry the next day, and Lowther on Monday. It's rotten!"

"Well, you wouldn't be able to do all that, anyway," grinned Tom Merry. "But what's happened to stop you trying to do it?"

"Railton's made me promise not to fight anybody for a week!" groaned Grundy.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"He says it will show whether I can control my temper—me, you know, the best-tempered and most peaceable chap in the House!" hooted Grundy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall have to ask you to excuse me to-morrow, Talbot. Railton had no right to make me give my word; but a promise is a promise."

"All serene!" said Talbot, laughing.

"Same with you, Merry, and Lowther and Manners and—"

"And half the giddy House!" said Tom, laughing. "Railton's a jolly sensible chap. This has saved you from a dozen or so lickings and a Form ragging, Grundy."

"Oh, rats!"

"Turn in!" said Darrel, looking in at the door.

"Right-ho, Darrel!"

The Shell fellows turned in, and Darrel put out the light and retired. Then the voice of Croke was heard:

"I say, Grundy!"

"Hallo!"

"You've promised Railton not to fight anybody for a week?" asked Croke.

"Yes!" grunted George Alfred.

"And you're going to keep your word?"

Grundy sat up in bed.

"If you want a whopping, Croke, you smoky cad, you've only got to ask me that question again!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Is that how you do it, Grundy?"

"Oh! I—I forgot!"

"What's going to happen if you don't keep your word?" persisted Croke. "You might—ahem!—forget, you know."

"I might," assented Grundy. "You chaps might remind me if you catch me forgetting, because if I don't stick to it I'm to be flogged in Hall—"

"Great Scott!"

"And very likely expelled, Railton said."

"Expelled!" ejaculated Croke. "What ripping fun! Splendid thing for the House if you got sacked, Grundy!"

"Why, you sneaking worm—"

"Oh, shut up, you silly cad!"

"What!" yelled Grundy, in wrath.

Croke, the cad and funk of the Shell, had never ventured to call Grundy names before. He felt that he could do so now with freedom. Grundy had called him names often enough. Indeed, sometimes when he found Croke smoking, he took the liberty of shaking him and throwing away his smokes. Which was certainly no more than Croke deserved, but rather cool of Grundy, all the same.

"Dry up!" said Croke coolly. "We're all fed up with you, Grundy, and I'd give a week's pocket-money to see you sacked."

"I'd give a fiver!" chimed in Racke.

"Do you want me to come to you?" roared Grundy, kicking off the bedclothes.

"Yes, if you're going to get sacked for getting into a fight!" chuckled Croke.

"Oh!" ejaculated Grundy.

He pulled the bedclothes over him again. Another consequence of his unhappy promise dawned upon him. He was at the mercy of fellows who had hitherto trembled at his frown. Grundy had always expressed his contempt in the most emphatic way for Croke, and Racke, and Levison, and Mellish, and the other black sheep of the House; for Grundy, with all his weird ways, was a healthy-minded fellow, and had no vices at all. It was their turn now. They would have been glad to see him flogged and sacked. And Croke, funk as he was, would have ventured to tackle him if that object could be effected thereby.

It dawned upon George Alfred Grundy that his programme had landed him into a very serious scrape. A single fight during the ensuing week would have the most direful results; and he was unable to raise his hand in defence of himself, and every mean fellow in the House was sure to take advantage of that fact. It was an appalling prospect.

"Well, why don't you come?" chortled Croke. "I'm waiting for you, you funk!"

"What!" gasped Grundy.

"Funk!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Rotten funk!" chortled Racke.

"I—I—I—" Grundy spluttered. "Oh, you wait till next week, you rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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Crooke and Racke ran on, with great enjoyment, calling Grundy all the offensive names they could think of, while the Shell fellows chuckled with merriment. Grundy fairly writhed; but there was too much at stake, and he did not leave his bed. He was already learning the lesson of self-control that Mr. Railton had so kindly mapped out for him.

His tormentors were not silent till Wilkins and Gunn rose and smote them with pillows, and silenced them at last.

But it was some time before George Alfred Grundy slept. He was thinking of the morrow with sickening apprehensions.

CHAPTER 9. A Painful Predicament.

WHIZ! "Yoop!" The rising-bell was clanging out in the morning, and as George Alfred Grundy turned out of bed a hurtling pillow caught him on one ear.

Grundy rolled off the bed, and came down on the floor with a bump.

He was on his feet again in a twinkling, his big fists clenched and a Hunnish look on his face.

"Who chucked that pillow?" he roared.

"I did," said Gore coolly.

"You cheeky rotter!" shouted Grundy. "I licked you last week! I suppose you want another licking?"

"Exactly!" said Gore. "Come on!"

Grundy came on furiously. Wilkins caught him by the arm.

"Hold on, Grundy!"

"Leggo, fathead!"

"Suppose Railton hears you?"

Grundy stopped suddenly. He had forgotten his unfortunate promise. He remembered it now.

"Oh!" he ejaculated. "My hat!"

"Come on!" said Gore invitingly.

"Yes, come on, funk!" yelled Crooke. "Mop him up, Gore! Yah! Funk!"

"Rotten funk!" chortled Racke.

"Go for him, Gore!"

"I—I—I can't mop you up now!" stammered Grundy. "I've promised Railton, and—and I don't want to be sacked!"

"Any excuse is better than none!" grinned Crooke.

"It isn't an excuse, you rotter! You wait till next week!"

"Well, I sha'n't wait till next week if I have any of your cheek!" said Gore. "I've a jolly good mind to mop up the dorm with you now!"

"Why, you—you—you—" stuttered Grundy.

"Shut up!" commanded Gore.

"Wha-a-a-at!"

"Shut up!"

Grundy gasped, and shut up. He couldn't fight Gore under the circumstances, and he began to be worried by the apprehension that Gore would insist upon fighting him. He had to keep the peace, and he wondered dazedly what he would do if another fellow "began it."

The extraordinary tameness of the burly, overbearing Grundy made the Shell fellows chuckle.

George Alfred was in a subdued mood that morning. While he bathed and dressed he was the recipient of many personal remarks from Crooke and Racke and Gore, and he did not reply to any of them.

Wilkins and Gunn were sympathetic, and at last they splashed water over Crooke and Racke and shut them up, but they did not trouble Gore. Gore was almost as burly a fellow as Grundy himself, and was not to be tackled lightly. Wilkins and Gunn, too, had to admit that Grundy had only himself to blame.

He had had rather more than his just allowance of scuffling, and it was his own fault if scuffling was barred to him. He had, in fact, fairly asked for it, and now he had got it, and his chums charitably hoped that it would do him good.

Grundy left the dormitory quite early, breathing hard through his nose. His promise to Mr. Railton held good for seven days, and this was only the morning of the first day. How was he to get through the whole seven?

It was a kind of discipline to which the great Grundy had never been subjected, and he looked forward to the prospect with dismay.

Every fellow who had felt Grundy's heavy hand would have his chance now if he chose to take advantage of it. And Grundy could not doubt that a good many would take advantage of it.

Even the fags! Grundy had rather a high-handed way

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with fags. He had whopped Piggot of the Third for being a smoky little beast; he had cuffed Levison minor for looking cheeky; he had licked D'Arcy minor on general principles, because lickings were good for cheeky fags, in Grundy's opinion. Suppose D'Arcy minor of the Third took it into his head that a licking would be good for him—Grundy? It was an appalling possibility.

The Shell fellows at breakfast regarded Grundy with amused interest. Grundy's awful predicament tickled them immensely.

Monty Lowther remarked that he had never suspected old Railton of being such a humorist. If Railton had specially wanted to "make the punishment fit the crime," he could not have thought of a better plan.

Grundy was accustomed to falling out with anybody, and getting into a scrap with anybody, without stopping to think. Thinking was not much in his line. But he had to stop and think now with a vengeance. He would punch a fellow's nose in the most free-and-easy way. His own nose was now at the mercy of anybody who chose to punch it, and it was a strange and almost unnerving experience for Grundy.

It was evident that only excessive civility and control of temper could save Grundy from a most unpleasant time. And excessive civility and self-control would come very hard to George Alfred—very hard indeed.

Even Wilkins and Gunn, his own faithful chums, assumed a freedom of speech towards Grundy that they had never shown before. They had always been very careful with Grundy, partly because they really liked him for his good qualities, but chiefly because it was too much trouble to be always rowing and scrapping in the study. But now that scrapping was barred to the great Grundy, Wilkins and Gunn did not take so much trouble—not at all. When Grundy called Wilkins a "fathead," Wilkins promptly called him a "frabjous idiot," and indeed went on to express his genuine opinion of Grundy's intellectual powers in terms that made Grundy first open his eyes wide, and then clench his fists hard. But he unclenched them again. He was already learning his lesson.

The story of Grundy's peculiar predicament was soon known all over the school, and both Houses chuckled over it.

Cutts of the Fifth looked for Grundy after lessons. Grundy was so big and reckless and truculent that Fifth-Formers had generally found it expedient to show him a civility they seldom wasted on juniors. But they did not like it. And Cutts of the Fifth immediately took advantage of the new state of affairs. He met Grundy in the Form-room passage and stopped him.

"Hold on, Grundy!" he said, in a bullying tone.

Grundy stopped in sheer amazement. He was not the kind of fellow to be bullied by a senior—not as a rule.

"Hallo, you ass!" was his reply.

"Don't swagger about like that!" said Cutts.

"What!"

"I don't like that kind of thing in a junior! Stop it!"

"My hat!" ejaculated the astounded Grundy.

"I don't like these airs in a fag!" explained Cutts.

"A—a—a fag!" howled Grundy. "Me a fag! Why, you silly cuckoo—"

"Do you want your ear pulled?"

"Eh—my ear?"

"Because you'll get it, if you're not jolly civil!" said Cutts sharply. "Now cut off! Get out of my sight!"

"Cut off!" repeated Grundy. "Why, you Fifth-Form dummy, do you think you can order me about? What the dickens do you think I care for the Fifth? For two pins I'd mop up the passage with you!"

Cutts advanced upon him, with hands outstretched, to seize his ears. Grundy doubled his fists.

Then he backed away, remembering.

"You rotter!" he howled. "You know I can't lick you just now! Keep off, you cad! Oh, crumbs!"

Cutts laid hold of his ear.

Grundy jerked it away, without hitting out. A fight in the Form-room passage was not to be thought of. Mr. Railton would have been on the scene in a couple of minutes, and then—the Head's study, the flogging, the sack! Grundy had to make the best of it pacifically!

He backed away hurriedly, Cutts grinning, and following him up. Kangaroo put out his foot, and Cutts stumbled over it and fell. Grundy dodged out into the quadrangle, but he had escaped out of the frying-pan into the fire. Levison and Mellish and Trimble of the Fourth were waiting for him there.

"Here he is!" called out Mellish.

Grundy stopped, and stared at them angrily. All three of the Fourth-Formers had felt his heavy hand, and now, evidently, they meant to turn the tables.

"Hallo, you cheeky cad!" said Levison. "You took a packet of cigarettes away from me the other day! You owe me a bob for them! Pay up!"

"Go and eat coke!" growled Grundy. "I don't believe in fags smoking!"

"Are you going to pay up?"

"No, you young ass!"

"Then put up your hands!" said Levison, advancing upon him.

Grundy backed away. Trimble and Mellish burst into a howl of laughter at the sight of the truculent Grundy backing away from a combat with Levison of the Fourth.

"Keep off, you young cad!" howled Grundy. "You know I can't lick you now!"

"I know I can lick you," said Levison calmly. "Are you going to pay up the bob you owe me, or are you going to take a hiding?"

"A—a—a hiding! Oh, my hat! Keep off!" yelled Grundy, jumping back as Levison began to hit out.

They were in sight of the Housemaster's windows, and Grundy was in terror of seeing Mr. Railton at his window any moment.

"I—I—I'll pay up!" he stammered.

"Sharp's the word, then!"

Grundy, with feelings too deep for words, handed out a shilling.

"Good!" said Levison. "I'll let you off, as you're so funky, Grundy. But don't let it occur again, mind."

"Oh!" gasped Grundy.

"Grundy has been on the high horse for a long time, and now he's come down off his perch. We're going to talk to him as he used to talk to us!"

"And he's goin' to stand us a tea," grinned Frayne; "and if it ain't a good tea, I'm sorry for him!"

"Oh!" said Tom.

The fags marched on to Grundy's study. It was tea-time, and Grundy and Wilkins and Gunn were there. Wally kicked open the study door, and marched in with his followers. Tom Merry looked after them and laughed. The tables were turned now, and it was not surprising that the heroes of the Third should seek to repay the rather long debt they owed to George Alfred Grundy.

Grundy & Co. stared at the fags as they came in.

"What the dickens do you want?" exclaimed Grundy.

"We've come to tea," announced Wally.

"To—to—to tea!"

"Yes. Get out of that chair!"

"What-at?"

"I want it. Get up!"

Grundy got up in a white heat.

"My hat! Why, I'll make mincemeat of the lot of you!" he shouted. "Blessed if I ever heard of such cheek! I'll—"

"Better not let Railton hear you!" grinned Manners minor.

Grundy paused suddenly.

"You're rather a bullying beast, Grundy," said D'Arcy minor. "It would serve you right if we walloped you.

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"And there's another thing. You cuffed my minor the other day," said Levison. "I don't allow that."

"You—you—you don't allow it!" stuttered Grundy.

"No. If it happens again, I shall thrash you, mind that! Now cut off!"

Grundy almost staggered away, leaving the Fourth Formers howling with laughter. Like Lucifer, Son of the Morning, the great Grundy had fallen from his high estate, and great was the fall thereof!

CHAPTER 10.

Grundy's Guests.

"HALLO, what do you kids want?"

Tom Merry asked that question. He was going to his study to tea, when he came upon a party of the Third in the Shell passage. The party consisted of D'Arcy minor, Joe Frayne,

Jameson, Manners minor, and Levison minor. The five fags were grinning as if in possession of an uncommonly good joke.

"We're going to Grundy's to tea," said Wally cheerfully. "My hat! Has Grundy taken to asking the fags to tea?" inquired Tom Merry, in surprise.

"Oh, no! Not at all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're going without being asked, then?" asked Tom.

"We've asked ourselves," explained Reggie Manners.

But we won't take advantage—if you behave yourself. But, mind, you've got to behave yourself! We never stand any rot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the fags.

Grundy's face was a study.

"We've come to tea, and we want rather a good tea," said Wally calmly. "We shall expect you to wait on us, Grundy!"

"Wait on you!" stuttered Grundy.

"Yes; and if you don't do it properly, you'll get a thick ear!"

"A—a—a thick ear! I—I suppose I'm dreaming!" Grundy gasped.

"You'd better wake up and get to work," said Wally. "We're hungry. Don't stand there mooning!"

"Get a move on you, Grundy!"

"Buck up, fathead!"

Grundy seemed to experience some difficulty in breathing. Wilkins and Gunn were grinning. But they ceased to grin as the fags surrounded the table, and began to help themselves.

"Look here, you fags clear out!" said Wilkins. "Grundy may be standing this, but we're not!"

"No jolly fear," said Gunn. "You clear off before I take a stump to you."

"Two can play at that game," remarked Wally. "You take a stump, and I'll take the poker, I can tell you! If you're spoiling for a scrap, you can come on. There are enough of us to handle you, I fancy."

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"And we're ready," said Jameson. "Now, then, are you coming on? P'raps Grundy wants a fight in his study? I hope it won't bring Railton here, for Grundy's sake!"

"You're jolly well not going to plant yourselves here for tea, you cheeky little scoundrels!" growled Wilkins.

"Come on," said Gunn. "Kick them out!"
The fags lined up defensively. Evidently they intended to give battle. Five fags were a match for two Shell fellows, anyway—Grundy being barred from taking a hand in the conflict.

"Hold on!" gasped Grundy.
"You don't want those cheeky young cads to tea, I suppose?" bawled Wilkins.

"Nunno! B-b-but I don't want a fight here," faltered the unhappy Grundy. "Suppose Railton hears?"

"I suppose Railton can't object to us kicking these inky little villains out of the study!"

"Nunno! But—but I don't want a row. You can't do it without my help, either."

"Well, wire in, then, and help!"

"I—I can't!"

"You can, if you like," said Wally sweetly. "By the way, we passed Railton in the lower passage. He will hear it if there's a row here. But we don't mind. Come on, the lot of you! I may as well explain, Grundy, that if you don't keep your study-mates in order, I'm going to thrash you!"

"Eh?"
"I've thought a lot of times that a thrashing would do you good. Now, we expect civility in this study. If we don't get it, you're going to be thrashed, Grundy!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Look here—"

"Shut up!" said Wally commandingly. "You talk too much, Grundy!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"We're ready for tea, and we want a bit better spread than this. You can send Wilkins for something."

"I—I—I'll go!" mumbled Grundy.

"You won't," said Wally, barring his way to the door. "You'll stay where you are, my pippin. You're not getting away so easily as all that."

"No jolly fear!" chuckled Frank Levison. "You cuffed me the other day, Grundy. Well, if you come near this door, I'll cuff you. See?"

"Cuff him, anyway!" said Jameson.

Grundy almost groaned. Wilkins and Gunn were non-plussed. It would not have been easy for the two of them to eject the fags, anyway. But it was clear that if there was a fight, Grundy was to be dragged into it, whether he liked it or not. Wally & Co. had the whip-hand!

"I—I say, let 'em alone, you chaps!" mumbled Grundy.

"I—I don't want a fight here. Railton would be sure to misunderstand. He always misunderstands me. I—I—I don't mind the little beasts having tea here, once in a way."

"The what?" demanded Wally sharply. "I've told you, Grundy, that you've got to be civil! Do you want a licking? I suppose you were meaning to say the young gentlemen of the Third?"

"You—you—"

"Did you mean the young gentlemen of the Third, or did you not?" rapped out Wally.

"I—I—yes!" gasped Grundy.

"That's better. We'll teach you manners in the long run. Now set about getting tea—something decent, mind. Wilkins can go and get the stuff in."

"Dashed if I will!" said Wilkins wrathfully.

"I—I say, go, old chap!" said Grundy. "Oblige me, you know."

"But look here—"

"Oh, don't jaw, Wilkins!" said Grundy irritably. "I tell you I'm not going to have any scrapping in this study. Perhaps you want me to be sacked, you ass?"

"Well, it wouldn't be much loss!" snapped Wilkins.

"You cheeky ass!"

"You silly burler!" retorted Wilkins independently.

"Why, I—I—I—"

"Oh, dry up!" said Wilkins. "I'll go and get the stuff, if you like; but I think you're a silly chump, Grundy, and a good bit of a funk, if you ask me!"

Grundy did not reply; he was at a loss for words. Wilkins departed to do the shopping—with a five-shilling-piece from Grundy—and the fags sat down round the table in great spirits. They called to Grundy to wait on them—and he waited on them. He made the tea, at Wally's order; he poured it out; and he listened in infuriated silence while Wally called him a clumsy ass, and Levison minor told him he was a burbling cuckoo, and Reggie Manners remarked that if he didn't leave off spilling the tea he would box his ears. Probably the fear of a flogging, and even of the sack, would not have restrained Grundy; but he was on his honour,

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and Grundy was a fellow of his word. He had made his promise, and, apart from all question of consequences, the promise had to be kept. And as the only alternative to fagging for the fags was fighting with them, Grundy had to fag.

He was only reaping the reward of his previous high-handedness, and undoubtedly it served him right; but it was decidedly unpleasant all the same.

When Wilkins returned with the provisions the fags fairly revelled. Grundy was kept very busy waiting on them. And, as it was getting abroad that Grundy was entertaining a party of the Third—against his will—fellows came from far and near to look into the study and see him doing it. They howled with laughter at the sight of Grundy waiting on the fags.

"Bai Jove! It's weally too bad!" chuckled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Wally, you young wascal, I wegard this as wathah too bad!"

"Bow-wow!" said D'Arcy minor.

"Come in and have tea, Ernie," called out Levison minor as he caught sight of his major in the crowd. "There's plenty!"

And Levison of the Fourth grinned, and came in to join the party.

"Get out, you cad!" shouted Grundy.

Levison picked up a tart from the table, and hurled it across at Grundy, catching him fairly on the nose.

"Take that, and shut up!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy came round the table like a flash, but Mellish yelled from the passage:

"Look out! Here comes Railton."

And Grundy dropped his hands.

It was only a false alarm, but it reminded Grundy of what was at stake. He did not handle Levison of the Fourth.

Grundy's amazing submission encouraged the fags. As they satisfied their appetites they utilised the remaining fragments of the feed to pelt Grundy, and he spent half his time dodging chunks of cake and fragments of sardines. It was not till the guests were tired of that cheery amusement that they departed and left the unhappy Grundy in peace.

Grundy mopped his perspiring brow when they were gone.

"I—I say, I can't stand much more of this!" he gasped. Wilkins snorted angrily.

"Look at the study! Like a blessed bear-garden! Look here, Grundy, if you're going to have your fag friends to tea often, you'd better change into another study!"

"I—I didn't want 'em, did I?" groaned Grundy. "I—I say, this is only the first day—there's another week of it! It was rotten of Railton, wasn't it?"

"Serve you right!" said Gunn. "It was your own fault. If you hadn't always been getting into rows, Railton wouldn't have chipped in. It's all your own fault for being such a dashed hooligan!"

"Such a—a what?" gasped Grundy.

"Hooligan!" growled Gunn. "Picking rows with everybody—"

"I was licking the Football Committee from a sense of duty. I explained that to you, Gunn."

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Yes, shut up and don't talk silly rot, Grundy, for goodness sake!" said Wilkins peevishly.

Grundy blinked at his study-mates. Never had there been such plain speaking in Grundy's study before. Grundy began to wonder dazedly whether he was, after all, to blame in the very slightest possible degree.

CHAPTER 11.

Grundy is Not Required.

TOM MERRY & Co. were playing the Grammar School on Saturday afternoon. Grundy of the Shell came down to see the match. Grundy had hoped, by his drastic measures with the Football Committee, to get into the junior eleven for that match. But his drastic measures had been brought to a sudden end owing to the intervention of the Housemaster—not that they would have been of any use, if Grundy had only known it.

"Railton doesn't know what his silly rot means to the football record!" Grundy remarked bitterly to his chums. "Without me, what chance do you think we shall have against the Grammar School, what?"

"Oh, rats!" said Wilkins.

"Did you say rats to me, George Wilkins?" roared Grundy, in angry astonishment.

"Yes, I did!"

"And I say the same!" chimed in Gunn heartily. "You can't play footer for toffee, Grundy!"

"I—I can't play footer!"

"No, you can't! Marbles is about your mark!"

"Mum-mum-marbles;" stuttered Grundy.

"And if Tom Merry played you, I'd vote for turning him out of the captaincy!" said Wilkins. "Dash it all, we can't afford to throw away matches to please you, Grundy! Who are you, anyway?"

"Who—who—who am I?" said Grundy dazedly.

And Monty Lowther, who heard that cheery colloquy, chimed in with a very apt quotation from the immortal William:

"But yesterday the word of Cæsar might
Have stood against the world: Now lies he here,
And none so poor to do him reverence!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Gwunday!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I wathah think he is hearin' a lot more plain truth than he is used to."

Grundy did not reply to Wilkins' impertinent question as to who he was anyway. He crossed over to Tom Merry, who was chatting with Talbot and Kangaroo.

"Just a word with you, Merry, before the Grammarians come," said Grundy.

"Two if you like. Cut it short!"

"You know how Railton's interfered with me in a fat-headed way!" said Grundy. "I haven't been able to carry out my programme."

Tom Merry laughed.

"You couldn't have done that anyway," he explained.

"Now, I'm not going to thrash you!" said Grundy.

"Thanks awfully!"

"I've promised Railton, and I can't break a promise——"

"Perhaps you couldn't hand out the thrashing either," suggested Tom Merry gently. "It's barely possible, you know."

"I'm not going to thrash you," pursued Grundy unheeding. "I'm just going to put it to you as a sensible chap. Owing to Railton chipping in, I can't bring the Football Committee to their senses as I intended. My programme is put off. But I suppose you want to beat Gordon Gay's team, don't you?"

Tom nodded, with a smile.

"Well, put me in! I put it to you as a sensible chap!" urged Grundy. "You can't afford to leave out the best junior player in the school! This isn't a time for petty personal jealousy—the first big match of the season! I put it to you—do the sensible thing!"

"I will!" said Tom.

"You will!" exclaimed Grundy eagerly.

"Certainly!"

"Good egg! Shall I change, then?"

"Change! What for?"

"For the match, of course."

"What match?"

"This match—the match this afternoon," said Grundy, puzzled. "Didn't you just say you were playing me?"

"My dear chap, you're dreaming," said Tom Merry pleasantly. "I said I'd do the sensible thing. The sensible thing is to leave a silly, fumbling idiot out of the eleven, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here——" roared Grundy furiously.

"Sorry—no time!" said Tom politely, and he moved away to meet the Grammarians, who had just arrived.

Grundy snorted. He remained on the ground to watch the match, with considerable apprehensions for St. Jim's. Without his valuable assistance, he did not see how the St. Jim's footballers were to keep their end up against the Grammar School.

To his surprise they did it. The match was a hard-fought one, but it ended with two goals to one for St. Jim's.

"Fool's luck, you know!" Grundy remarked to Wilkins and Gunn.

A few days before his chums would have assented—with mental reservations—for the sake of peace and quietness. But it was no longer necessary for the sake of peace and quietness to assent to Grundy's lofty pronouncements. So they didn't.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Wilkins. "It was jolly good play that won the match—first-rate."

"What on earth do you know about footer, Grundy?" urged Gunn. "Talk about something you understand, old chap!"

"Something I—I—I understand!" stuttered Grundy.

"Yes. You don't know anything about footer, you know!"

And Wilkins and Gunn strolled away, leaving their chum to digest that. Grundy stood rooted to the ground for some moments. His own familiar friends had raised their heel against him, along with the rest. It really seemed to Grundy that it was time for the skies to fall.

He drove his hands deep into his pockets, and tramped away to the School House. An apple whizzed through the air from the direction of the tuck-shop, and knocked his cap off. Grundy fielded the cap, and charged towards the tuck-shop with a face red with fury. And Croke, who had hurled the apple and was grinning over his success, left off grinning suddenly.

But at that moment Mr. Railton came from under the elms, and at the sight of him Grundy halted.

"Well, Grundy!" said Mr. Railton, fixing his eyes on him. "Ah, oh!" stuttered Grundy. "I—I—I was just going to—to speak to Croke, sir."

Mr. Railton gave him a severe glance, and walked on. Grundy strode away, simmering with wrath. Croke chuckled, and a second apple caught Grundy on the back of the head.

Grundy did not even look round.

CHAPTER 12.

Grundy's New Programme.

"I T'S simply awful!"

Thus Grundy, pathetically.

Wednesday had come round—a half-holiday at St. Jim's; but Grundy of the Shell was not likely to enjoy his half-holiday.

Grundy's existence for the past few days had been full of incident. If he had ever wanted an exciting time, he had it now.

Grundy of the heavy hand had been experiencing the heavy hand—of others—upon his unfortunate self.

Some of the fellows admired the way Grundy was sticking to his word. Certainly it could not be denied that Grundy, with all his faults—and their name was legion—was an honourable chap, and that he was the slave of his word. His promise to the Housemaster held good, in spite of all his trials—which were, as he pathetically told Wilkins and Gunn, enough to turn his hair grey.

Whether it was his strict regard for his word, or the dreadful consequences of breaking his word in this instance, or both together, certain it was that Grundy kept it.

To do that, it was necessary to keep his temper. Grundy learned by hard experience to keep his temper. From the loudest and most truculent fellow in the House, he became the most civil and soft-spoken. It was an astounding change in Grundy, and it made the fellows grin.

Grundy, indeed, dropped into a habit of kind civility and politeness, so that in a few days he was barely recognisable.

Most of the fellows were disarmed by Grundy's painful predicament, and by his unaccustomed civility. But some weren't—some became only worse. Wally & Co., of the Third magnanimously forgave him. Gore of the Shell ceased to worry him. But meaner fellows, like Croke, and Mellish, and Racker, persecuted him without ceasing. Grundy promised them all sorts of things when the fatal week was up, but they expected heavy-handedness from Grundy anyway, so that did not make much difference. Besides, as Levison sagely pointed out, the Housemaster's eye was specially on Grundy now, and any scrapping on his part would be followed by trouble, even after the week for which his promise held good. It was, in fact, safe to worry Grundy, and he was paid with tenfold interest for the way he had worried others. Grundy's intentions, certainly, had always been good. But there was a plentiful lack of gratitude for his good intentions.

It was really remarkable to see the burly, warlike Grundy—warlike once—sneaking quietly round a corner to avoid a meeting with Piggott of the Third. That young rascal knocked Grundy's cap off whenever he met him—which was awfully humiliating for the big Shell fellow—but couldn't be stopped without a fight. Grundy would move quietly out of the Common-room when Croke came in—a well-known funk like Croke. He would give up the armchair if Levison demanded it—he would allow himself to be contradicted point-blank by Mellish or Clampe. Once upon a time it was scarcely possible to contradict Grundy, even in the gentlest way, without great risk. Now the biggest funks in the house would tell him he was a dummy, and command him to shut up—and Grundy would shut up!

No wonder he declared pathetically that it was awful!

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Wilkins and Gunn agreed that it was; but they agreed also that it served Grundy right, and they told him that it was doing him good.

"You see, the study's much more pleasant now," Wilkins remarked. "When a chap tells you what he thinks of you, there isn't a row as there used to be."

"That's so," said Gunn, with a nod. "For instance, what would you have said last week, Grundy, if I'd pointed out to you what your footer's really like? There'd have been a row. Now, with us giving you plain tips about your footer, you may improve your game, and not be such a fumbling ass, you know."

"It's too jolly bad, you chaps, turning against me like this," said Grundy pathetically. "I did think you were real pals."

Wilkins' heart smote him. He was really attached to old Grundy after all, though he had found him hard to bear at times.

"Well, old chap, you're so jolly obstreperous," he said. "You fill the study, you know, and you won't let a chap call his soul his own. You're overwhelming, you know."

"I never meant to be," said Grundy. "I've been thinking about it a bit lately, and perhaps I've been a bit too—too drastic. That mongrel Levison punched my nose this morning—my nose, you know! I—I never thought it was so rotten for a fellow's nose to be punched before! I've punched his often enough. Somehow, it seemed different."

"By gad, it is doing you good!" said Gunn. "Old Railton knows something, he does. Fancy you beginning to think, Grundy!"

"Amazing!" said Wilkins.

Grundy was on the verge of an outbreak once more, but he controlled himself. He was quite getting into the habit of controlling himself of late.

"Well, I don't think it's pally for my own study-mates to round on me," he said, with unexpected patience. "I've got enough to stand outside this study. Look at me—it's a half-holiday, and I'm bunged up in this study."

"Come out," said Wilkins; "we're going out."

"Can't!" groaned Grundy. "Piggott's waiting in the passage."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wilkins and Gunn.

The bare idea of the great Grundy skulking in his study because a fag of the Third was waiting for him in the passage made Wilkins and Gunn roar. But it was not a laughing matter for Grundy. He did not laugh.

"Well, what can a chap do?" he said. "I could slaughter Piggott with one finger; but if I touch him he'll yell, and up comes Railton and finds me fighting a Third Form kid. Bullying again, he'll call it. And there's my promise, too! I'm always being misunderstood. If I go down the passage, Piggott's going to pull my nose—he's been bragging that he's going to do it. And—and I can't stop him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All very well for you to cackle!" snapped Grundy. "Jolly funny, ain't it?"

"Yes, rather! Ha, ha!"

"You'd better turn pacifist, and not get Railton down on you again!" chuckled Gunn. "Tain't good enough, Grundy."

"I—I—I've chucked up my programme that I mentioned to you," said Grundy. "I—I can see it won't do. I shall stand out of the football until the committee come to their senses, and put me in on my merits."

Wilkins and Gunn roared again. They thought it was likely to be a long time before Grundy was put into the team on his merits—about as long, in fact, as it would have taken him to get in by "whopping" the football committee.

"Cackle away!" said Grundy sarcastically. "Don't mind me! They say a chap never knows what his pals are like till he's in trouble. I've found out now."

"Well, you ain't an easy chap to pal with," said Wilkins. "You want too much of the kow-tow bizney. Still, we're your pals, and we're going to stand by you now you seem to have a bit more sense. You can't wallop Piggott, but I can—Railton isn't down on me; I haven't been fighting every chap in the House. Come on, Grundy, old scout, and we'll look after you!"

"Come on!" said Gunn. "I think you've been ragged enough, Grundy—not that you didn't need it, you know! Come on!"

Grundy & Co. left the study, Grundy feeling rather dubious. Piggott of the Third came up grinning, and Wilkins took him by the collar, and proceeded to bang his head against the passage wall, while Grundy grinned and walked on with THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 454.

Gunn. The unfortunate Piggott's yells rang along the passage.

"What on earth's the row?" exclaimed Tom Merry, coming out of his study with a footer under his arm.

"Little beast cheeking my pal Grundy," explained Wilkins. "We're looking after Grundy now; we think he's had enough."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Piggott tore himself away and fled. He had quite relinquished his designs on Grundy's nose now.

Crooke and Racke were chatting outside the School House, and they hailed Grundy as he came out with his friends.

"Hallo, funny face!"

"Come and have your ear pulled, Grundy!"

"Come on, Gunny!" said Wilkins.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grundy, as his chums started on Crooke and Racke. Those two cheery youths fled wildly across the quad, Wilkins and Gunn dribbling them like footballs.

Grundy was quite cheery when his chums rejoined him. His week of probation was likely to finish much less uncomfortably with Wilkins and Gunn looking after him in this pally manner. It was, he told them, the case of the mouse and the lion over again—Grundy being the lion, and Wilkins and Gunn the mice. Wilkins remarked that it seemed to him more like the case of the ass in the lion's skin—Grundy being the ass. And Grundy took Wilkins' remark quite good-temperedly. There was no doubt that a change had come over the great Grundy—a change very much for the better.

Grundy's persecution was over now, his loyal pals making it a point to chip in every time. And Grundy was grateful—really grateful! A day or two later Mr. Railton called Grundy into his study.

"I am glad to see that you have kept your word, Grundy," he said. "And I hope that you have learned the lesson of self-control. I trust it will be of benefit to you. And I trust, Grundy, that I shall hear no more unfavourable reports regarding you."

"The fact is, sir," said Grundy, "you've rather misunderstood me all along—"

"You may go, Grundy."

"I was going to say, sir—"

Mr. Railton made a movement towards his cane, and Grundy retired from the study with his remarks unfinished.

In the Common-room he found the whole football committee waiting for him.

"Here he is," said Blake.

Grundy looked eager.

"You want me?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tom Merry.

"You've decided to put me in the eleven after all?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"Oh! Then what the merry thunder do you want?" growled Grundy.

"We want to know about that precious programme of yours," explained Tom Merry. "Is it going on? If it is, we're going to bump you now, and bump you regularly every time you send a challenge to anybody."

"Oh!" said Grundy.

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus. "Upon the whole, Gwunday, it is wathah a feahful fag to thwash you, and it is not worth while. We have decided to deal with you wathah dwastically instead."

Grundy snorted.

"Well, you can all go and eat coke!" he said. "I've given up the idea of trying to knock any sense into your silly heads. I'm going to wait patiently till St. Jim's has been licked in a dozen or so football matches. Then I expect the fellows will insist upon my playing, Tom Merry, for the sake of the school record. That's my programme now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, got anything to say?" snorted Grundy.

Tom Merry & Co. hadn't anything to say. Grundy's new programme had thrown them into hysterics, and they only shrieked.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co.—"A SURPRISE FOR ST. JIM'S!" by MARTIN CLIFFORD.)

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OUR GREAT NEW AUSTRALIAN SERIAL!

CORNSTALK BOB**The Previous Instalments Told How**

Old TOM HILDER, a cattle-farmer of Katfarit, Australia, is faced with ruin for the want of £1,000. He goes to a friend in Sydney, HENRY NORMAN, from whom he obtains the money, but is afterwards robbed, and, in recovering the notes, becomes mixed up, in the eyes of the police, with a gang of scoundrels.

His son BOB receives the money from his father, and takes it to SUMMERS, the bank manager, who is in league with BOARDMAN, a scoundrel who has plotted to ruin old Hilder.

Bob is afterwards arrested, and charged with passing false notes at the bank, but is liberated from his prison-cell by CAPTAIN DASHWOOD, a notorious outlaw.

Bob learns from him that his father was robbed by a man named SUTHERLAND, the leader of another gang of outlaws, and he sets out in pursuit of him. He traces the villain to an hotel, where he also sees his father. A fight ensues, and the place is burnt down. Bob narrowly escapes with his life, believing his father to be dead.

Later, old Hilder appears upon the scene, pursued by troopers, just as Dashwood and Bob are returning stolen property to the house of a squatter; Dashwood having recovered it from Sutherland. They all succeed in getting away, and later capture Sutherland. In doing so, however, Dashwood is caught by the police, but by a clever plan of old Hilder's, and with the help of BOGONG, Dashwood's black servant, he is released. They make for Dashwood's hiding-place, taking Sutherland with them. The latter, finding that Boardman has played him false, tells them where GELL, another accomplice of Boardman's, is in hiding.

(Now read on.)

The Old Home.

Old Tom Hilder looked upset.

"But Boardman may take Gell away," he said.

"I don't suggest that we give him much rope," Dashwood explained. "But you can't leave here to-day. For one thing, the horses must have a thorough rest. We'll send Bogong out often to reconnoitre. If in two days' time he finds the coast clear, then one of you could make the journey at night-time. And one would be enough. Two might not be able to slip through."

For some time old Tom demurred, but at last his innate shrewdness got the better of his eagerness, and he agreed to this proposal. Also, it was arranged that Bob should be given the job. This being settled, the friends settled down to while away the time as pleasantly as possible.

The two days passed thus, and Bogong constantly sallied forth. The night came when Bob was to start, and, two hours before, Bogong went ahead. In the meantime the lad had learned his way through the maze. Now he bade his father and Dashwood good-bye, and, mounting Brave Bess, he rode up the path. The gallant mare was again in splendid fettle, and he felt certain that if pursued no trooper could ride him down.

Very slowly he wended his way through the maze, expect-

ing every moment to meet Bogong with the latest tidings. He got to the end of it without meeting him. Surprised and a trifle disconcerted, he dismounted, and, leading Brave Bess, he went out into the bush. Standing under a tree, he looked around. It would not be safe to go on until Bogong reported that all was safe.

Where was Bogong? Bob chafed at the delay. For twenty minutes he waited, eager to take all risks, but remembering a promise he had made his father that he would not start on the journey until Bogong had told him he could do so. Another ten minutes passed. He was now becoming anxious, when, thirty yards away, he saw him.

Or he thought he did. A black boy, certainly, was making for the maze, but he was on the ground, wriggling along! And at that instant Bob heard gruff voices and the rattle of accoutrements. His heart seemed to stop.

Was this another black tracker? Was he leading the police to the lair? The lad remembered Dashwood's remark and his hesitation. Had it been the outlaw's thought that the party was safe only so long as the police did not employ a black man?

Ay, that was it! And now they had got one! They would get through!

Bob's senses began to reel. How could he save them? What was he to do?

Too late, too late! Was that indeed the case? He could hear the tramp of horse-hoofs. There must be scores of police.

And then the black tracker saw him!

"Cooee, cooee!" he called. And the thud of hoofs grew louder.

Behind were the troopers, galloping fast, and only thirty yards away the black tracker was standing, shouting to them to hurry up. He was ready to lead them through the maze into the lair where Bob's father and Dashwood the outlaw believed they were in complete safety.

"Cooee! Cooee!" the black boy cried again.

Bob stood almost bereft of thought in this appalling crisis. Where was Bogong? How was it he had let this fellow slip past? It was impossible for the two in the lair to escape; they would be surrounded, and caught like rats in a trap.

Dashwood would certainly be shot; old Tom Hilder would be sent to penal servitude for the rest of his life. And even now they did not know the imminent danger in which they stood. Perhaps they were chatting light-heartedly and joking together. To warn them was impossible.

All these thoughts took but a very few moments to race through Bob's mind, and at the end he felt as helpless as at the start. And then an idea sprang into his brain. Jumping off Brave Bess, he dashed forward, covering the ground at great speed.

So unexpected was the rush that the black tracker, looking in the direction from which he expected the troopers to come, was unaware of the lad's sudden movement until the latter was upon him. One blow of the whip, and the man tumbled in a heap. With extraordinary strength Bob clutched him by the coat-collar and trailed him back. In even greater

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"A SURPRISE FOR ST. JIM'S!"

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of
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desperation he managed to hoist him across the saddle, the gallant steed standing docile at the sound of his voice, and then, putting his foot into the stirrup, he managed to mount.

Shaking up the reins, he cantered away in a direction opposite to the one in which the police were approaching. He had no thought at the moment but to get from the scene with his captive. Without him they could never pierce the intricacies of the maze. No white man had ever succeeded in doing that. Bob knew the way through it, it is true, and so did Dashwood, but both had been shown it by Bogong.

On and on the lad cantered, without meeting with any opposition, but knowing that at any moment he might be checked.

He was riding from the recesses of the bush into more open country, and to carry the black far without being noticed would be impossible. But at first he did not think of this. His whole mind was taken up with those in the lair. They were safe for the time, but the troopers would not retire. There they would stay, searching at first for their guide; and when they failed to find him, they would send back for another.

And old Tom, or Dashwood, knowing nothing of all this, might walk out into their grip. It could be only a matter of days at the most before they were caught.

When he had covered five miles, he decided that he could not risk going further. There was a deep gully here, and he rode down it. The black tracker was still unconscious. Bob lifted him off the horse, and got water from a creek. First he tied the man's arms behind his back, and then he splashed his face. His eyelids soon began to flicker. In a few minutes he was quite conscious, and staring in sullen silence at the lad.

Bob made him as comfortable as possible, and then sat down to puzzle out everything. He must discontinue the journey on which he had started. It was impossible now to ride to his home and try to get hold of Gell. Could he with safety leave the black tracker here? These fellows could wriggle like a snake; they could extricate themselves from almost any bonds.

Yet to chance that and return, hoping to warn his companions in time, seemed the only chance. So he bound the man more securely, gagged him, and jumped into the saddle again. He would ride back three miles, and then leave Brave Bess where he could find her without trouble later on.

He had gone but two miles, when suddenly a figure dashed out from behind a tree and ran to catch his horse's bridle. Bob, unable to turn in time, raised his stick, but a warning voice stopped the coming blow.

"Yah! Do not hit Bogong!" it cried.

"Bogong!" Bob repeated, his heart delighted.

"Yah! Me came this way!"

"Then you don't know what has happened?" the lad said eagerly. "I was afraid the police had caught you!"

"Police never catch me!" the black laughed. "Me too cunning! I come because—"

But Bob would not allow him to continue; he was too anxious to tell all.

"The maze is surrounded by scores of troopers," he said. "They were led there by one of your tribe. I had the luck to nab him, and they can't find their way in. I was riding back to warn your master and my father, but you can get through the maze quicker than I can!"

For a moment consternation sprang into the black tracker's face, but the next moment he was grinning again.

"Me go there!" he said. "That's all right! Me take them out another way, and us all meet by-and-by!"

"But why didn't you wait for me, or return and tell me that the troopers were approaching?" Bob asked.

"Me very busy when I left," Bogong explained. "Yah, but I did much! A man riding in the bush, and I followed for your sake!"

"What ever do you mean? Who was the man?"

"One of them you all call villains! Him with the black beard!"

"Boardman!" Bob cried.

"That was him! He was very tricky, and up to no good. That I saw, and so I follow. He ride hard, and soon meet an inspector. They talkee talkee, and then he go off slow. I keep up with him for long time, then I return and meet you!"

Bob sat his horse in deep thought.

"It looks as if Boardman had got the police together, and had put them on our track," he murmured. "He knows that the net is being drawn tight around him, and he feels that his only chance is to have us caught before his infamy is exposed. Perhaps he has heard that Sutherland is in our hands. And if we get Gell, too, then we will have all the evidence we need against him. Bogong," he continued,

raising his voice, "you have done good work to-night, and now, if you can get the others out of the lair in time, we will hold the winning cards!"

"That I can do! Poof! The task is easy!" Bogong laughed.

"I believe you'll manage it," Bob heartily agreed. "Then there is no use in my going with you, so I'll push on to my old home in Katfarit. It's a long ride, and will take me a couple of days; but I'll manage that easily enough, for once I get fifty miles from here I'll be outside the police cordon, and the last place they would expect me to turn up at is my home. Tell my father I have gone. We shall be separated for some time now, and I shall be very anxious, not knowing what has happened to him, but that can't be helped."

"We meet all right," Bogong said.

"I hope so. They will know where to find me, and I must rely on their sending a message," Bob replied. "I sha'n't know where to look for them, so at all risks I will hang round Katfarit until I hear. Ask them to come along as quickly as they can."

"That I will do," Bogong replied.

"And just one thing before we part," Bob continued. "In which direction was Boardman going when you left him?"

"He was travelling east."

"And my way is west. I will get to Katfarit before him, and that is all in my favour. And, by the way, what about the black tracker I've gagged and bound some miles from here? He can't be left in that way, and if I release him he may be a danger!"

"Let him go free. He can't do evil," Bogong replied lightheartedly. "I can hide our tracks even from him!"

"All right. Keep on the move, and he will never be able to overtake you," Bob said. "If I left him where he is, he might die before anyone chanced to pass near. I'll release him now, and do you hurry on!"

They parted, and Bob rode back to the gully. Having set the black tracker free, he continued his journey. A sense of great relief had come to him. Bogong, no doubt, would be able to warn his father and Dashwood, and lead them into safety.

The lad laughed aloud now, as he thought of the predicament of the police. They would stay around the maze until their black tracker returned; under his guidance they would discover the lair, only to find that their quarry had slipped away. By the time they could take to the road again the others would have had a long start.

He rode on till daybreak. Then he off-saddled, had his breakfast—for he had come well stocked with provisions—and lay down to sleep. At nightfall he started again, and rode steadily. Before morning he had arrived at the chain of hills forty miles from Katfarit. There he spent the following day, and then started on the last stage of the journey.

As he drew near home, old scenes stirred his thoughts deeply. Less than a year before, he had been happy here, without a cloud on the horizon of his life. Then Boardman's villainy had brought ruin on his father and himself.

From being respected, they had been driven away as penniless outcasts, and hunted all over the continent with a price upon their capture. They had suffered much, and often had been in the jaws of death; but now things were coming right again. Before long they would be back in the old home, with their names vindicated. The thought thrilled his heart.

He had come to the hill from which, in daylight, he could look down on Katfarit. No light shone in the home-stead. He could hear the tinkling of the bells as the cattle roamed through the paddock—the cattle that had once been his father's, and that now belonged to the villain.

"But not for long!" the lad muttered, as he sat looking down the hill, Brave Bess pawing the ground in her impatience to return to her old stable. "Perhaps on your return, Boardman, you scoundrel, you may find that the gaol awaits you, instead of the fruits of your villainy. In half an hour from now I may find Gell, and your doom may be sealed."

He stroked the gallant mare's neck.

"Not to-night," he said. "You must wait, like us, until you visit the old home. Now we go to find Gell."

And, turning to the left, he rode along the crest of the hill to Dead Man's Cloof.

Bob Finds Gell.

Dead Man's Cloof was a great cliff at the far end of old Tom Hilder's property, and in bygone days had been a settlement of the Australian aborigines. In the cliff were natural tunnels, some running for long distances. When Bob

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CORNSTALK BOB!

(Continued from page 20.)

dismounted he was at a loss to know where to begin his search for Gell.

There was nothing to do but to start at the first tunnel and go through them all, if necessary. Striking a match and lighting a candle which he had taken with him, he began. For a full hour he continued, and at last, when fifty yards down one, he saw evidence of a man's recent visit. He came upon shavings of wood, and, much surprised, he pressed on.

Of a sudden he was brought to a stop. A wall had been built, and a door and a window. He looked through the window. There was a small table and a lamp, and before the table Gell was seated.

Bob began to feel exultant. He tapped at the window, and Gell raised his head. Never had the lad seen a more piteous object. Gell's face was livid, his eyes lustreless. At first the lad thought he was being starved to death, but on closer inspection he observed some viands in a corner of the cell.

Gell did not stir; he looked indifferent as to his fate. The lad tried to force the door, but found that impossible. At the top was an opening between it and the roof of the cliff, through which the air was able to reach Gell; but the opening was so small that it was impossible even for a child to squeeze through. Bob raised himself by his arms and spoke.

"Hallo!" he began.

Gell looked at him without emotion.

"What are you doing here?" the lad continued. "Wouldn't you like to come out?"

Gell shook his head.

"I'm doomed to stay here," he replied, in a monotonous voice. "I've brought this on myself."

"Do you know me?" the lad asked.

"I can't see your face," the poor wretch answered; "but I seem to remember your voice."

"My name is Hilder!"

At once a terrible change came over the prisoner. He pushed the stool away and staggered back. Putting his hands to his face he uttered a piercing shriek, and when the lad saw his face again, it was distorted by fear.

"Go away! Don't haunt me!" Gell yelled. "Your blood is on my head! That is why I am here; but I am making atonement! Spare me! Spare me!"

He had become demented.

Bob dropped to the floor of the cave again, horrified by the tragedy he had just seen. So this, then, was the reason Gell had allowed himself to be imprisoned by Boardman. He was atoning for the crime of which he had believed himself guilty. Truly he had tried to compass Bob's ruin, but fortunately he had not succeeded.

What was to be done? In his present state Gell could not give evidence against Boardman. Yet there was a chance that some day he might recover. To leave him here was impossible, but to secure him seemed equally so. Bob thought hard for some moments, then he turned and left.

He must get help. There was a risk in asking for it, but all the folk around Katfarit had respected him and his father, and he felt that they would not betray him. Besides, if he could induce anyone to come hither, Gell's imprisonment, so deliberately contrived, would be evidence of Boardman's villainy. Anyhow, the risk would be taken.

He mounted Brave Bess and rode pensively away, turning the names of the neighbours over in his mind. There was a man named Bruce, rough but good-natured, who lived five miles away, and to him the lad finally decided to go. Old Tom Hilder had helped him along when first he had started farming; Bob hoped he would remember that kindness.

When he came near to the homestead he alighted and proceeded on foot. He was about to knock at the door, when it was flung open, and he saw a man about to leave. With a thrill of delight the lad recognised him. The man was Kerr, who for years had been bullock-driver to Bob's father.

"Kerr!" Bob cried.

At the sound of the voice Kerr started. He bent forward, recognised the lad, and at once put a finger to his lips. Banging the door, he grasped Bob's shoulder and hurried him to a thicket a few yards distant.

"Great Scott!" he then ejaculated. "This is the surprise of my life! I'm overjoyed to see you again, Bob; but why have you taken such a risk as coming here?"

"I had to, Kerr!"

"All right! Let's get out of this, and then we can talk. I'm glad to see you, I needn't say. Here, down this way! I've just come out to fix up the horses for the night."

He walked quickly, his arm linked in the lad's.

"Then you've come back to settle down," Bob remarked.

"The last time we met was at the shearing at Mr. Coulter's. Do you remember?"

"Ay, I do, and I've seen Mr. Coulter since! I've heard about the robbery of the silver there, and how it was returned by Dashwood and you. Mr. Coulter would befriend you if he could. But why ever did you mix yourself up so much with Dashwood? My lad, you would swing, too, if the police could catch you now."

"Then you've heard a lot?"

"All the continent is talking about you; all the papers have written columns about you. No one has a good word to say for you. They talk of you and Dashwood in the same breath. Bob, what ever made you pal on with him?"

"You don't know him as I do," Bob explained. "He's not what people think, and over and over again he's helped me out of desperate straits, and he's helped father, and—"

"Your father is in with him, too!" Kerr gasped in dismay.

"Yes; and father will stick to him through thick and thin until he manages to clear out of Australia," Bob replied, with a touch of heat. "And so will I, whatever happens. And so would you, if you were placed as we are. But I had no idea there was such talk as this."

"Talk!" Kerr replied bitterly. "They're calling for your head, my lad! They're abusing the police for not rounding you up long ago. The stories that have been in the papers are amazing, and I don't believe a quarter of them are true; but you've been seen with Dashwood here, there, and everywhere. Why, only the other night he was caught, and they say it was you who freed him. If you can't clear yourself of that—"

"I can't, and I don't want to!" Bob cut in stoutly. "I'll stand or fall by Dashwood as he stood by us. But when I explain everything, you change your mind. You'll agree that I'm only playing the game."

"I know you always do that. It's amazed at your recklessness I am," Kerr replied, with sorrow. "And whatever can have come over your father? He was one of the shrewdest men I ever met."

"And he's just as shrewd still, and Dashwood and father are together still, and I hope they'll both soon turn up here," Bob answered. "And now, hadn't we better get well away from here so that we can have a long yarn, for I want your advice and assistance to-night."

Kerr sighed.

"I'll help you any way I can," he replied. "But I'm thinking there's not much that anyone can do for you. The police will have you, sure as fate. Let's get a move on!"

They walked to where Brave Bess was standing.

"You've got the mare still," Kerr remarked, as he patted her, "and her picture is in every paper. Like as not, it's through her you'll be nabbed. Well, now, fire away. I'm listening!"

Very rapidly Bob told all that had happened since they had parted. As the story was unfolded Kerr's expression changed. Sometimes he nodded his head in assent; often he murmured in astonishment.

"You couldn't do less by Dashwood than you have done," he agreed heartily, when Bob stopped. "Though that won't save you if you're caught. The law will condemn you, for the law hasn't any heart. The only satisfaction, so far, is that your father's name hasn't got mixed up with him yet. And now, why did you come here?"

"Because we think we stand a good chance still," Bob replied. "You remember that night my father went to Sydney, and was robbed by Sutherland and his gang?"

"Ay, that was the beginning of the big trouble. And you followed your father to Sydney, and Sutherland had given him forged notes, and you lodged them in the bank, and that was how you came into it."

"We've nabbed Sutherland!"

"You have!" Kerr cried, his eyes shining with delight.

"Yes; father and Dashwood have him, and he's not likely to escape. And now we're after Boardman!"

"Boardman! He's too smart for the lot of you, my lad, and he holds the strong hand."

"It's weaker than you think. You remember that fellow Gell, of whom I told you? He and Boardman tried to murder father and myself. If we could prove that against Boardman he would be gaoled, and all his wickedness would be exposed. It is because I hope to do that, that I am here. For Gell is only a few miles from where we are standing, and Gell would own up if he could. I'm certain of that!"

Kerr whistled.

"This is great news!" he said. "If others have been hunting you, you haven't been idle, either. All would come right yet, if you could do what you say; but it sounds a bit big. Where, then, is Gell?"

"He's in Dead Man's Cloof. He's a prisoner there. Boardman is afraid he will talk, and—"

"What's he doing in Dead Man's Cloof, of all places?"

(Continued on page iv of cover.)

CORNSTALK BOB!

(Continued from previous page.)

"He can't get out, and I can't rescue him alone. I want you to help me."

"Do you mean to tell me that Boardman has him bound hand and foot?"

"He's built him into one of the tunnels. I've just come from there, and I've seen him. We'll have to take a stout post, and force in the door. And we had better look sharp, for somehow or other I must get him away before Boardman returns, and he's due at any moment, I fancy."

Kerr stood half dazed for some moments. Then, bidding Bob wait, he hurried to the stable, and soon returned with a post. Bob carried it across his shoulder as he rode, and they set off for the cliff.

On the way Kerr did not speak. He, clearly, was very sceptical. All that Bob had told him seemed too wonderful to be true. And this thing about Gell—well, he would believe his own eyes, and nothing less. He followed Bob into the tunnel.

"Great Scott, it's true!" the bullock-driver murmured. "Of all the low scoundrels, that Boardman takes the biscuit. To think of any human creature being walled up like that! Here, give me the post!"

He clutched it firmly, and, with a powerful lurch, he rammed at the door. It burst open. Kerr's jaws dropped.

For Gell had jumped to his feet, and was beating the air with his hands as if in despair.

A Blow for Boardman.

Kerr stood rooted to the spot, the post still in his hand, staring at Gell. As Bob advanced, the miserable creature shouted:

"Don't harm me! I'm sorry!" he cried. "Night and day I have suffered!"

"I don't intend to harm you in any way. See here, Gell; I'm ready to forget all that if you play the straight game now," the lad replied, speaking in a pleasant voice. "This is Kerr. You knew him when you used to work round here years ago. We want you to come out of this, and we'll look after you."

Gell began talking incoherently in his excitement. Kerr had laid the post down, and, with his hands on his hips, he stood eyeing him in a puzzled way. Bob turned.

"What are we to do?" he asked. "He looks very strange, doesn't he?"

"That's what I'm thinking," the bullock-driver replied. "There's no getting any sense out of him, and if we're not careful he'll go from bad to worse, and be no use to you at all. But we'll have to coax him along somehow."

Bob went closer to Gell. He patted his shoulder and spoke. "You see, we haven't come here to injure you," he explained. "Won't you shake hands, and we'll forget the past?—And isn't this a rotten place to stick in? Outside, there's the sun and fresh air and real life, and—"

"But Boardman!" Gell interjected, with a shiver.

"He can't harm you now. You needn't worry about him. We'll protect you. Come along!"

He put his hand on Gell's arm. The latter hesitated, but he was yielding. Kerr took out a cake of tobacco, and lit his pipe. As the smoke swept through the cell, a hungry light came into Gell's face. He held out his hand.

"Want a whiff—eh?" Kerr asked. "You're welcome to it. I guess Boardman didn't keep you in tobacco. Come outside and light up. We would be choked here if we all started smoking together."

Kerr turned, and Bob drew gently on Gell's arm.

"Come on!" Kerr suggested, looking over his shoulder.

Gell followed. They went thus along the tunnel, and stepped into the open. The fresh air seemed to send a thrill through Gell. His nostrils dilated; he drew a deep breath; he looked around. Taking a pipe from his pocket, he fingered it meditatively. Kerr handed over the tobacco cake, and in silence Gell began to fill his pipe. Kerr and Bob spoke together.

"Where can we take him?" the lad asked.

"As far from this as you can get," the other replied.

"But I must stay hereabouts. Father is to meet me here, or send word. I don't know where he is."

"Humph! You're taking a risk in that. Still, I know a shanty where you'll be fairly safe. It's down by Swan Hill."

"That's only two miles away, and a splendid place for hiding, but I didn't know there was a shanty there."

"There's an old one that hasn't been used for twenty years, but it will serve your turn. I dropped on it once by chance, and few could tell you about it, it's been that forgotten. And— But what is up with him now?"

Gell had uttered a low moan. He was bending forward, and pointing with shaking finger across the valley. They stared in the same direction.

"Boardman!" Kerr whispered. "He's come home! A light has sprung up yonder; that's his house. And the sight of it has frightened the life out of this man. He must be in mortal terror of the scoundrel. Now's our chance. Live him up!"

"Boardman can't hurt you if you come out of this with us," Bob urged, clutching Gell's arm. "Come along whilst there's the chance!"

He spoke with such confidence and energy that Gell yielded. Muttering, and glancing with terror across the valley occasionally, he allowed himself to be led away. Walking quickly, Bob leading Brave Bess by the rein, they skirted the valley, went round a hill, and entered a wild part of the bush. Still pushing on, they came to a stream, and, following it, they stopped at last at a spot where some trees grew just behind the water.

In the middle of these was an old wooden shanty, so covered with creepers and surrounded by brushwood as to look more like a mound than a hut. A rickety door yielded to the lad's touch, and they walked in. Kerr looked around.

"I'll fetch an axe, and you'll be able to knock up a couple of bunks," he remarked. "I'll bring the other things you need, too. You ought to be safe enough here for a few days. Keep this chap quiet till I get back."

In an hour he returned, and Bob soon had a tree felled, the branches cut, and a bunk ready for Gell to lie down on. Tired out, the latter fell asleep almost as soon as he stretched himself. Kerr and Bob stood by the stream talking for a few minutes.

"He'll be calmer when he wakes up," Kerr said; "but a bit more of that confinement, and he would have gone off his head altogether. He's in terror of Boardman; that cur could lead him like a dog! It'll be days before he's fit for anything. Feed him up well. I'll keep fetching the grub along. And don't let him out of your sight, night or day."

Gell was sleeping soundly, and Bob turned in, too. The afternoon had come before he awoke, and he prepared a hearty meal. Gell enjoyed it, and sat looking dreamily out on the stream. Already his mind was becoming more calm. Bob busied himself making the shanty more comfortable, and thus the day passed.

It was very late when Kerr came that night, and he had startling news to tell. There were fresh tidings about Dashwood in the papers, for one thing.

"What is there about him?" Bob asked, in great anxiety.

"There are columns. There's the paper, and you can read all for yourself," Kerr answered. "They found a wonderful lair he had, and at last the police have discovered how he always managed to elude pursuit. He got away again, and two others are with him. There's a good bit about you, too. I tell you what, Bob, I wouldn't be in your shoes—no, not for all the money in Australia!"

"It's father and Sutherland who are with Dashwood, of course!" Bob remarked. "They're racing for their lives now, and like as not they'll be headed off from here. And I can't join them and take Gell out of this."

"I'm afraid you'll have to shunt, anyhow," Kerr said gloomily. "Boardman is busting round no end."

"What's he doing?"

"He's all over the place. I thought well to keep an eye on him, and glad I am that I did. After leaving you last night, I hung around for a bit. He wasn't long before he started off for the cliff. He went into the tunnel, and you should have seen his face when he came out. His eyes were jumping out of his head, and his mouth was all twisted. I guess he got the biggest fright of his life. I saw him home, and heard him bolt the door!"

"Yes?" Bob urged, in painful suspense.

"I managed to keep a watch on him off and on to-day," Kerr continued. "I don't believe he slept a wink last night, he looked so bad. He was at the tunnel soon after daybreak, and searching around there for tracks. He's been up and down half a dozen times. There's murder in his heart, if he can drop across the man who spirited Gell away."

"He'll stop at nothing to save himself. I know enough already to be certain of that," Bob commented. "But just think of the fix I'm in. I can't clear out with Gell; he might refuse to come, or he might change his mind, and kick up such a shindy on the road that I would be spotted and caught. And I can't leave him here alone. He would wander off, or perhaps he might take it into his head to return to Boardman."

"I've an idea, though," Bob continued. "If the worst comes, and I have to clear out, wouldn't it stand to us, and be proof of Boardman's villainy, if we get Gell to sign a confession?"

(Another fine instalment of this exciting serial next week.)