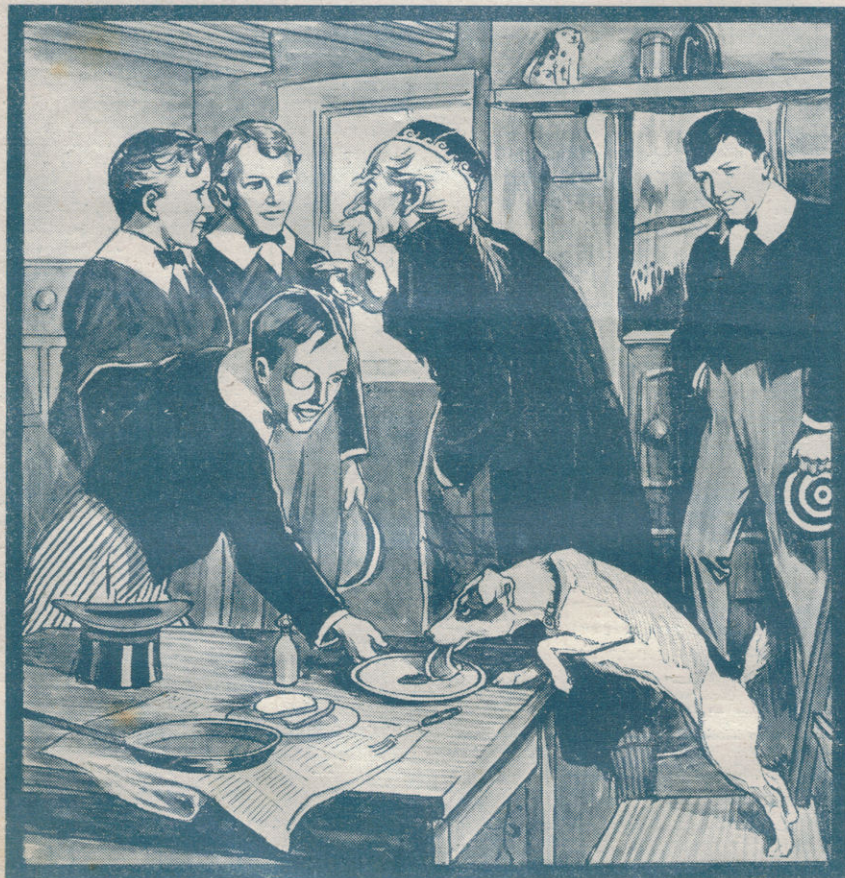


# THE ST. JIM'S PARLIAMENT!

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



## IN THE HOUSE OF PEPPER!

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# THE ST. JIM'S PARLIAMENT

A Magnificent  
New, Long, Complete Story of  
Tom Merry and Co. at St. Jim's.

By  
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

## CHAPTER 1.

Quite a Brilliant Idea!

"Bury 'em! I've got a wally wippin' ideah!"

So spake Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, looking up from his prep in Study No. 6.

"Bury 'em! Gustavus! We've had some," replied Jack Blake.

"But this is—"

"They all are!" said Herries. "There never were such ideas—outside a lunatic asylum!"

"Weally. Hewies!"

"Oh, let him tell it, you chaps!" Digby said. "If he don't let off steam there'll be a giddy explosion."

"Ring off, you asses!" growled Blake.

"I haven't finished my English into Greek yet. How would you put 'strong palisades,' Herries?"

"Any way you like, old scout," answered Herries generously. "I don't mind."

"How have you put it?"

"That won't help, because I'm wrong, and I know it. Have a shot for yourself, and you may be right—though it's a hundred to one against. Rotten language. Greek! The people who speak such a lingo very nearly deserved to have a king like Tino—but not quite."

"How have you got it, Dig?"

"I haven't got it at all. I left a blank to put it in if anybody else happened to know."

"I can tell you, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus.

"He told them. And he seemed to be right, too—or nearly enough right for the Greek words to pass muster with Mr. Lathom."

"Gustavus, you're not quite the absolute ass you look," said Blake kindly.

"I can now give you exactly one minute thirty-five and one-tenth seconds for the telling of your latest luno-ahem!—idea."

"Wats, Blake! I have a great mind—"

"There's no evidence of that," said Dig, shaking his head.

"But I didn't mean—"

"Right-ho! Glad you're willing to take back such an unsupported statement."

"Do not be idiotic, I pway, Digby! I do not wettact, an' you are vewy well awaah that I nevah intended to wettact. What I have said, I have said."

"Won't do, Gussy. The only point of resemblance is the monole," remarked Monty Lowther of the Shell, looking in at this moment, and catching the last sentence.

"Resemblance to what?" asked Herries.

"Say rather whom. Who was it that said 'What I have said, I have said'?"

"Who, Gustavus did, you ass! You heard him," replied Dig.

"D'Arcy merely quoted."

"Oh! Might have known he'd cribbed it somewhere!"

"You are positively pweive, Digby! It is impos to conduct a weasonable conversation with you!"

"It is—for you," retorted Dig pointedly.

"But Lowthah has got it. Bwavo. Lowthah! You have tumbled while all these othah asses are wefusin' to listen!"

"What have I got, Gussy? Nothing catching. I do hope and trust! Don't say it's German measles. I could never begin to respect myself again if I had anything so frightfully Hunnish as that!"

"You've got my ideah, I mean, Lowthah!"

"I can't help that. I didn't ask for it, and I'm not responsible for the consequences. I hope the other fellows won't be too rough on me for an accident like that. These things are like the rain, they fall alike on the just and the unjust. But I'm awfully sorry for you, old fellow—you may never have another!"

"Oh, wing off, Lowthah! I believe you are even a biggah idiot than these fellahs," rapped out Arthur Augustus, while Blake and Herries and Digby roared.

"That's the result—the dreadful result—of having your idea," said Lowther sadly. "I'm not sure that the Hunny measles wouldn't have been better after all."

"Weally you are positively wide! Did you not mention a certain vewy famous statesman as you came in?"

"Did I? I don't remember. Who was it? Titus Oates, Bill Bailey, or Harry Lauder?"

"It was Chambahlain."

"Ah, now I see! As a matter of fact, I didn't mention him. I merely alluded to him—made that our dusky friend at Greyfriars calls a suggestive remark. But that is quite in accordance with your usual charming inaccuracy, Gussy."

"What about Chamberlain? Are you in possession of his mantle, so to speak?"

"Remember that he left a son in the same line of business—and a good man, too!"

"Well, it's just this, Lowthah. I have been thinkin'—"

"Say no more! That is enough! That accounts for everything! You poor head was never designed to stand such a strain."

"I have been thinkin' that it would be a wippin' good ideah to have a St. Jim's parliament!" blurted out the indignant swell, in sheer desperation.

"Rot!" snorted Digby.

"Played out!" said Blake.

"You would only be a rotten debating society," added Herries. "And who wants that?"

"Hold on!" put in Lowther. "I'm not so sure that there's not something in it. You don't mean a mere debating society, do you, Gussy?"

"Wathah not! A pwoaph Parliament, with elections, an'—an'—an' all that, you know!"

"A Cabinet and a Speaker and a

Prime Minister and an Opposition," went on Lowther.

"Plenty of opposition. If old ass Gustavus thinks he's going to be Prime Minister," said Digby.

"It's Gussy's sort of do—it ain't my sort, by long chalks," Herries said.

"Gussy ain't happy unless his jaws are going like clappers. Much better start a band!"

"You can be a silent member, Herries," Lowther said.

"What? So that you can gas all the time Gustavus ain't doing it? But you wouldn't wait for him to stop. I know that. Duet on asses' jawbones—Messrs. D'Arcy and Lowther!"

"It's a wippin' good ideah," said Gussy stammering. "Lowthah sees it."

"I have no doubt whatever that Fou Mewy an' Talbot an' the west will see it also."

"If you're going to hand over your giddy idea to the Shell—"

"begun Blake warmly.

"Oh, let 'em have it! It's the sort of mouidy notion that ought to suit the giddy Shellish," said Dig.

"Wait till the elections, my boy," said Lowther. "Then we shall have you fairly boiling over with excitement—pushing down the corridors, shouting, 'Vote for Lowther!' and—"

"Vote for the merry old Kaiser, you mean, ass!"

"Oh, certainly, Dig, if he's a friend of yours! But I didn't know you'd turned pro-Hun."

"You bounded!" snapped Dig. "I'll give you pro-Hun!"

"Don't get giving yourself away like that, old scout," replied Lowther soothingly.

"Elections ain't half a bad notion," said Herries. "There's nothing much except footer going on this term. Footer's all right, but it isn't everything."

Digby groaned. Here was Herries going over to the enemy!

"Premier's about my line," said Lowther modestly. "I'll give you a place in my Cabinet, Gussy, even if you have to come in without a portfolio."

"Oh, weally! That is altogether too thick, Lowthah! You will not be allowed to butt in like that, let me tell you."

"Of course he won't. Like his blessed cheek!" growled Blake. "I shall take that job, naturally."

"You will do nothin' of the sort, Blake!"

"Why not, Gustavus? The idea came from this study, so it's only right that a member of this study should have the Premier's job. Dig ain't keen, Herries is quite impossible—"

"Oh, is he?" roared Herries.

"Of course you are! Do have a little sense! As for our Gussy—"

"An' what about me, pway, Blake?"

"Ask yourself, old scout! If you are going to carry this wangle through, we must start by getting the school to take it seriously. And who could possibly take it seriously if we let the biggest

as at St. Jim's—well, no, I ain't sure about that; I don't want to be unfair to Grundy—"

"Wats! I am sowwy that I evah said a word about the scheme to a set of howlin' idiots like you fellahs, and if you do not change your tone, Blake, I shall intabally refuse to have anythin' whatevah to do with it!"

"Hooray! There'll be a chance for the giddy scheme, then!" yelled Herries. "Come and talk it over with Tommy and Talbot, Gussy," said Lowther. "Manners won't try to bag all the offices, because he's out with his camera."

"If Gustarus goes, we all go," said Blake firmly. "We know you Shellfish. You'd bag our scheme, and swear blind you'd thought of it yourselves."

So they all went.

## CHAPTER 2.

### A Slight Mishap to Grundy.

DIGBY crept on tiptoe to the door. He opened it quickly, and seized by the neck someone who was crouching outside.

"Yoooop! Yaroooh! Oh, don't, Digby! That hurts!" howled Baggy Trimble.

"Listening at the keyhole, the rotten!" growled Dig, shaking the hapless Baggy till his fat cheeks quivered like pale jollies.

"I—I never even dreamed of such a thing. I was only tying up my boot-lace. Groooh! Stoppit, Digby!"

"Let this be a lesson to you not to have your bootlaces coming undone in the Shell passage," Trimble said Monty Lowther solemnly. "Nothing at all loose is allowed in these proper precincts."

"Yah! I suppose I can walk along here if I choose?"

"You suppose wrongly. At some time in the past you may have been capable of walking, Baggy; but that time was before you came to St. Jim's. No one here has ever seen you do anything but waddle."

"Does the blessed passage belong to you, I'd like to know?" demanded Baggy, puffing out his cheeks and trying to look defiant.

"Well, it does in a way," replied Tom Merry, the junior captain of the school. "But we ain't a bit greedy about it. You shall have the use of the floor, anyway. Bump him, you fellows!"

And Digby and Blake and Lowther and Herries bumped Baggy with zeal and vigour.

"Yaroooh! Cads!" burred Baggy, as he meeked in favour. "Who cares about your rotten, piffing old parliaments? Silly kids' game, I call it!"

But Gussy's idea was not thus contemptuously regarded by most of the members of the Shell and Fourth. Talbot, whose opinion carried weight, said that it wasn't half bad notice—much more in than in the ordinary debating society wheeze. Manners, coming in, gave it his support. Noble and Dane and Glyn were summoned to the conclave, and pronounced it good. Later on some of the now enthusiastic disciples of the great Arthur Augustus saw Levison & Co. in No. 9, and Julian & Co. in No. 5.

Levison and Clive said it was all right, and Cardew added that it ought to be "doosid comic," anyhow—an opinion which caused Gussy to frown upon him severely. The fellows in No. 5 were unanimously in favour.

No one thought of asking Grundy's opinion. That was a deplorable omission, for George Alfred Grundy was quite the greatest man in the Shell—in his own estimation, at least. And he did not forget to let others know it.

And the New House juniors were not told. They would be told later, for already they were cast for parts in the minds of some of the promoters of the scheme.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a little bit disgruntled when a crowded second meeting was held later in the day. Tom Merry and Lowther and Blake appeared to think the scheme quite as much theirs as his—rather more so, if anything. It had proceeded from his massive brain; but already everyone seemed to have forgotten that fact, and he feared that there would be no unanimous movement to make him Premier. In fact, it seemed likely that if there were to be any movement at all in that direction, he would have to start it himself. No one else showed any signs of doing so.

thin' so howwid as that!" said Arthur Augustus, with a shocked look upon his face. "We must awnawge mattahs so that it is quite impos."

"No, no!" said Clifton Dane. "We must have a square deal, Gussy. No wangling."

"I should not think of suggestin' anythin' that could faially be called a wangle. Dane; but I must say that it would be wathah wuff if my administration should be turned out—"

"Who says it's going to be your administration, Gustarus?" asked Digby, who stood near the door. He had stood there all the time, and he had something hidden under his jacket. It looked rather as if he were anticipating another visit from the inquisitive Baggy.

"Weally, Dig—"



Grundy's Mishap.  
(See Chapter 3.)

Even Dig, who had poured scorn upon the idea at first, now talked as though he were at least an equal partner in it, and had as much right to be cast for the Premier's part as anyone else!

"What about the New House crowd?" asked Kangaroo. "Do we take them in?"

"Oh, rather! Let's get everything fixed up, and then invite Piggy & Co. to be the Opposition," replied Tom.

"Oh, good egg!" cried Blake. "I was wondering where we could get our Opposition from; and, of course, there would be no fun without it."

"This is not funny, Blake. You are takin' it entirely in the w'ong spiwit," said Arthur Augustus severely. "If it isn't funny, it won't be a bit like the merry House of Commons," remarked Lowther. "That's funnier than a giddy circus, if you look at it the right way. There's real humour in the notion of paying some of the members £200 a year to impede business by spouting rot. I think."

"Suppose the Opposition arises in its strength and chucks out the Government?" asked Talbot, smiling.

"Oh, weally, I nevah dremved of any-

But Digby had turned, taken from under his jacket what he had concealed there, and placed it against the keyhole.

Two or three of those nearest had heard steps in the passage. Now they saw Digby's right elbow move more quickly forward.

There followed a roar like the roar of a bull. The door burst open, and Grundy rushed into the room.

The waistcoat and trousers of George Alfred Grundy were liberally splashed with red ink from the squirt which Digby had kept ready for Trimble.

But Digby did not appear at all taken aback.

"Who did that?" bellowed Grundy.

"I did," answered Dig, grinning.

"But, of course—"

He had no chance to say more. Grundy gripped him in a hug like the hug of a grizzly bear, bore him to the ground, and started upon what looked like a rough, scientific experiment designed to elucidate the question whether Dig's head or the floor was the harder.

But that scientific problem was never solved. Kangaroo, Herries, Levison, and Blake yanked Grundy off. And the four

of them, all pretty hefty, had their work cut out to do.

The great George Alfred was really angry. He struggled hard, and made various remarks by no means of a complimentary character.

When at last he had been wrenched off, and was suffered to stand without hands upon him, though a living barrier between him and Digby, his wrath was by no means appeased.

But no one had expected it to be, so no one was disappointed.

"I'll have an apology for that!" he roared. "You can't treat me, in that fashion—me, you know!"

"Hanged if I'll apologise!" retorted Dig.

"You've spoiled my bags, you silly ass!" hooted Grundy.

"Well, they weren't much before they were spoiled," replied Dig. "You ought to be grateful to me for making you get a new pair. You needed 'em."

"Yaas, Gwunday, you weally do dwess in a most shockin' slovenly style. An' there is no excuse for it in your case, as there was might be if you were poah—"

"Dry up, you tailor's dummy!"

"Don't grumble, Grundy," said Monty Lowther. "I'm not grumbling, and it was my ink that Dig used to decorate your clobber with. And it's war-time, you know, and ink's up, like everything else. Be a philosopher, Grundy—like me!"

"I'd sooner be dead!" howled Grundy. "You are the silliest ass I ever knew, bar none, Lowther! What did you do this for Digby, you utter idiot?"

"You do not appear to understand," Grundy said Lowther blandly. "It was my ink—"

"Hang your ink!"

"I have not the slightest objection to that course. It will entail hanging you, Grundy—unless you take off the bags, which might be considered improper. But I don't think anyone present will raise any difficulty about such a minor detail as hanging you with the bags."

"Ass! I want to know what you did this for, Digby?"

"It does not seem wholly an unreasonable query, Dig," remarked Talbot. "If you can make it clear to Grundy that it was done quite in a friendly way—"

Grundy snorted.

"Well, it was meant for Baggy," said Dig. "But Grundy's only got himself to thank. If he comes playing Baggy's tricks—"

"Playing Baggy's tricks? What do you mean, you raving lunatic?" hooted Grundy.

"Listening at doors, and all that sort—"

"You rooster! I'll teach you—"

"Gently, gently, Grundy!" said Kangaroo, interposing a stalwart frame just in time. Harry Noble was somewhere near Grundy's fighting weight, and was one of the few who could thrash him. Digby would have had no chance at all.

"Well, I'll admit you don't seem to have been listening at the keyhole," said Dig generously. "If you had been, you'd have got it in the neck instead of the bags."

"But there's so much neck about Grundy, Dig," said Lowther. "He cannot be judged by ordinary anatomical standards. Still, really, think he would have had to stoop in order to negotiate the keyhole."

"Oh, ring off! You're one of those funny merchants who want kicking badly!" snapped Grundy, who never could stand Lowther's japing, partly because he could not understand half of it.

"No job for you then, Grundy! You never do anything otherwise than well, do you?"

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"I say, Grundy, what did you toddle along for?" asked Tom Merry.

"I've come to the meeting," answered the great man of the Shell.

"Who invited you?" demanded Blake.

"And who told you anything about the meeting?" inquired Dig.

"This game," murmured Lowther, "is called Questions and Answers. But the answers are in the dim future. Everybody's asking questions. It says something for the inherent optimism of human nature that they all appear to be expecting answers."

"Baggy Trimble told me, if you want to know," said Grundy.

"The man has no manners," remarked Lowther slyly. "No sooner do I make an observation full of profound knowledge of human nature than he proceeds to controvert it."

"There you are!" cried Dig. "And you got what I meant for Baggy, and it serves you jolly well right for listening!"

"I asked you who invited you, Grundy," repeated Blake.

"Grundy," replied Blake. "This ain't a blessed teaparty, is it? I've as good a right here as anyone else, I suppose—eh?"

"Oh, let him stay!" said Manners.

"It's no use arguing with the chump!"

"Let me?" snorted Grundy. "I'd jolly well like to see anyone put me out!"

"Is that a challenge?" asked Tom Merry, with a glint in his blue eyes.

"Look here. I came—"

"So we perceive," said Lowther. "But you are not the great Julius, you know, Grundy. Caius Julius Cæsar might say, 'Veni, vidi, vici,' but Georgius Alfredus Grundius, though he has come and seen, cannot claim as yet to have conquered. Shall we put him out, Tommy?"

"No; let him stay," replied Tom Merry. "After all, he really has a right to be here if he wants to. There's no reason why we should make a deep, dark secret of this bizny. 'Tain't like old Grundy's secret society, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy scowled. He did not care much for being reminded of the secret society. It had not been a distinguished success.

But Grundy stayed, and added his powerful voice to the rest. In fact, Grundy did his share of the talking and a bit over. And, though they did their best to get the notion out of his head, and were certainly candid enough about it, Grundy went away at length, firm in the determination to be present in the projected St. Jim's Parliament—or to make it hot for everybody!

## CHAPTER 3.

### Not Wasted.

**B**AGGY TRIMBLE went rolling discontinuously down the Shell passage.

These were bad days for Baggy. No one loved him, and the war went on without any regard for his feelings.

Now and then he would peck down at his all too ample waistcoat, and see there signs of wasting that were quite invisible to others. Lowther, indeed, maintained that there was no vestige of waist about Baggy. But then, Lowther had no sympathy—none at all.

It was not the endeavour to keep inside the food ration that troubled Trimble. He did not try to. All his plans were for getting outside them—for circumventing them.

But money was the trouble. Baggy talked of his big remittances from Trimble Hall; but no one ever saw them—not even Baggy. In fact, no one—not even Baggy—had ever seen Trimble Hall!

With money, one could get round the regulations, and forget the war. Without

it— But what avails to discuss so sorrowful a case?

Baggy was determined not to remain without cash if by any means he could get it—any means that did not involve too much risk.

And before now it had chanced to Baggy to find out things which had a market value to someone.

Wherefore, hearing the sound of voices without the door, he stooped to the keyhole, impelled, doubtless, by inquisitiveness, and by greed of gain.

Probably it was not much of a secret. There seemed to be several fellows present besides the Terrible Three. But it might be saleable. And, anyway, Baggy wanted to know, you know.

So Baggy listened. Baggy heard something, and stayed to hear no more. Baggy rolled away, chucking fat chuckles.

"Old Grundy will like to hear this," he said to himself. "The worst of it is that you never know how Grundy will take things. He's as likely as not to chuck you out on your neck, when he ought to be grateful. But he ain't mean when you get on the right side of him. I'll say that of Grundy."

It did not occur to the very obtuse mind of Baggy Trimble that on the very rare occasions when he had managed to get on the right side of Grundy it had never been by retailing the proceeds of his eavesdropping.

With all his faults, George Alfred Grundy was as straight as a gun-barrel, and had an utterly honest and abounding contempt for sneaks, spies, informers, and all such creatures.

Trimble halted for a moment before the door of Study No. 3. Then he pushed it open.

"Yarroogh! Ow—yow!" he howled.

Three distinct streams of dark and abominably-smelling liquid had descended upon his round head.

"You silly ape! You've gone and spoiled our booby-trap!" hooted Grundy.

Trimble had certainly spoiled the booby-trap. But he had not done it intentionally, and it was insult added to injury to reproach him for it.

Wrath flared up in the breast of Baggy, and he made a dash at Grundy.

In another moment Trimble would as soon have thought of attacking a tiger in its native jungle as of going for Grundy.

And at another time George Alfred Grundy would as soon have thought of running away from a mouse as from Baggy Trimble.

And now Baggy dashed to the attack, with an evil-smelling liquid running down him, and Grundy ran.

"Here, you keep off, Trimble, you fat worm! I'll slaughter you if you don't! Keep off, I say! Don't come near me!"

Wilkins and Gunn had scuttled at once. They grinned as they saw the agitation of their great chief.

"Oh, ha, ha! You ain't running away from Baggy, surely, old ecout?" chortled Gunn.

Grundy, dodging round the table, gave no reply, save a scathing glance.

Gunn and Wilkins had to dodge, too. It was not safe to take it for granted that Baggy's ire was aroused solely against Grundy.

Wilkins came into collision with Grundy. Wilkins was offered as a sacrifice. Grundy pushed him into the arms of Baggy, and Baggy parted with a considerable whack of the horrible stuff. He rubbed his face against the face of Wilkins, and left it there.

"Ouch! Yooop!" yelled Wilkins. "Cheese it, you, fat beast! Cheese it, I say!"

Gunn dodged under the table. It



"Well, you do! You had something to start on, with a face like yours!"

"I hope you fellows are satisfied now?" said Grundy, with heavy sarcasm.

"We've had enough certainly," admitted Tom Merry. "We'll make it pax now, Grundy, and all go and clean up."

"I say, Grundy, was that little lot meant for me?" asked Digby. "Young Frayne said you wanted to see me in your study."

"Yes, you blessed fatted! Why didn't you come?"

"Because I ain't quite such a blessed fatted as you take me for, old chap! Who got it? For I suppose you weren't quite asses enough to walk under it yourselves. I dunno, though—you might be."

"Trimble got it," replied Grundy grimly.

"Good egg! Where is the bounding Baggy?"

"How should I know? I'm not worrying about Baggy."

Baggy was not in the bath-room, and he did not arrive there till some time after the rest. They left him still at it when they had finished, though that was some little time later, for the stuff clung.

"I shouldn't worry about doing any more, Baggy," said Monty Lowther. "It isn't really necessary, having regard to your ordinary standard of uncleanness. Nobody's likely to notice."

"Oh, it ain't so!" wailed Baggy.

"Oh, I didn't think you'd mind a little thing like that."

When Grundy & Co. returned to No. 3 they found a pencil scrawl on the table.

"Tom Merry and those rotters think they are going to hier the barne in the field between hear and Glyn House for there sily old Parliament. They immajen it to Mr. Rodwell, but it don't—old Pepper has it, that lives in the littel house behind the post-offs. Rodwell gave up the field at Midsummer. If you look sharpe you can ahed of them.—B. T."

Gunn read it out aloud. Grundy snatched it from his hand as soon as he had finished.

"So, that's what Baggy came to tell me," he growled. "Like his blessed cheek, I must say! We know well enough how he got hold of the news!"

"Well, that don't matter a heap, as I see it," said Wilkins, who had a practical mind. "And I don't see that the thing itself matters unless you really mean all the stuff you've been giving us about running an opposition show."

"Mean it? Of course I mean it, you fat-headed chump!" hooted Grundy. "Do I ever say anything I don't mean?"

"I should hope so," replied Wilkins. "If you mean the things you say sometimes you're a sillier abe than you—"

"None of your cheek, George Wilkins! I'm not jolly well going to stand it, so that's straight."

Grundy never had been able to get Gunn and Wilkins into a proper attitude of respectful awe towards him; but he still resented their treating him as if he were one of the common herd, and slinging at him the doubtful compliments that were so frequent among the juniors of St. Jim's.

"Hallo, Trimble, what do you want?"

So ferocious was the face that Grundy turned upon Baggy that that heroic youth wished he had not come along again.

"I—I—oh, it's nothing, Grundy. At least, nothing much," faltered Baggy, backing.

"Oh, you can say what you've got to. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 506.

say! I sha'n't eat you. I like my grub clean!"

"He, he, he! You're the wittiest chap I know, Grundy; but that ain't true, you know. I'm no dirty—not any dirtier than anyone else!"

"What? Mean to tell me that I'm no cleaner than you are?" hooted Grundy.

"Nun-nun-no! I wouldn't go so far as that, Grundy. But, then you're such an exceptionally particular chap. I'm as clean as Gunn or Wilkins, anyway!"

"Oh, are you?" roared Wilkins. "And Gunn moved forward in a threatening manner.

"Stopit, Wilky! Don't, Gunn! I—I never meant you fellows—I meant to say—er—Herries and Blake!"

"Go down on your knees and say that you're a dirty pig, and you apologise to us, and you'll never do it again, and we'll forgive you!" said Wilkins authoritatively.

"Here, stop that bullying, you two!" snapped Grundy.

"Wha-a-a-t?" gasped Wilkins and Gunn together.

"Stop that bullying, I say! I don't approve of bullying, and I won't have it in this study!"

The faces of George Wilkins and William Cuthbert Gunn were full of rebellion and wrath. It was quite true that Grundy always said that he objected to bullying; and there was no doubt that he meant what he said. Yet there were people at St. Jim's who called Grundy a bully—and meant what they said. And certainly the hand of Grundy had been heavy upon Wilkins and Gunn often enough, though his heavy-handedness had never disturbed their friendship badly.

"Yes, you stop it, you two!" said Baggy, taking heart. "Grundy ain't going to let you do as you like, you know. Beastly bullies, both of you! But my pal Grundy won't let—"

"If you call me your pal again I'll skin you alive! What do you want here, you bladder of lard?"

"I—I— Did you get my note, Grundy?"

"Yes. What about it?"

"I—I— Well, you know, it's what they call exclusive information, and—and it ought to be worth something. Don't you think so, Grundy? You were always a fair-minded chap. I'll say that for you!"

"Yes, I'm a fair-minded chap, Trimble," answered Grundy darkly.

"And your blessed information is worth something, and I'll give you what I think it's worth."

In his greedy obtuseness, grinned, and held out a podgy hand.

"That ain't where I'm going to give it to you!" hooted Grundy. "Turn round!"

Baggy turned. But it was to flee, and Grundy only got in one kick.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Mr. Pepper.

"**W**H O is this chap Pepper?" asked Grundy, after he had kicked the door to behind him.

He spoke as if his mind was made up to something.

"Don't know him," replied Wilkins.

"You never know anything, of any use," said Grundy scornfully. "I never saw such chaps as you are!"

"Yes, you do know him, Wilky," said Gunn. "So does old Grundy. I hadn't heard his name before; but he must be that weird merchant who gets his clobber out of a rag-bag."

"Oh, I know now, Gunny!" replied Wilkins. We saw him the other day—"

don't you remember, Grundy? The Johnny with the knickers that looked as if they had been made out of an old horse-rug, and a shiny frock-coat, and button boots, and a straw hat with the brim half gone!"

"And the bike, with one solid tyre and one pneumatic, and the spokes tinkered up with umbrella-ribs, or something of the sort," grinned Gunn.

"It can't be that chap," said Grundy. "That chap can't have any money, I'm sure."

"But you he has, though!" answered Gunn. "They say he's a miser, and has bags of sovereigns hidden away somewhere!"

"Who says so?"

"Folks in the village."

"It's rot!"

"Why? There have been misers before now," said Wilkins. "What is there against one of them coming to live at Rylcombe?"

"But he couldn't keep sovereigns like that! All the gold was called in long ago!"

"Yes; but they didn't search for it," said Gunn. "This ain't Germany. They trusted to people's honour. Well, a miser wouldn't have any honour—'tain't likely."

"I can't have anything to do with a man of that kind," said Grundy loftily. "He's got no patriotism!"

"But he's got a barn, and if you don't hire it, Tom Merry and that crowd will," replied Wilkins.

Wilkins and Gunn had not been consulted about the St. Jim's Parliament, or invited to the meetings, and they were by no means loth to stir up Grundy against the scheme.

Of course, any opposition scheme that Grundy tried to run would turn out a dismal failure. Grundy's schemes had a way of turning out dismal failures, though it was always the fault of someone else—according to Grundy.

But there would be some fun in it first. And it would be one up against Tom Merry & Co. if Grundy barged in and secured the barn before they had discovered about the change of ownership.

Wilkins and Gunn bore no malice against Tom Merry & Co., but they welcomed the opportunity of scoring over them, nevertheless.

"Yes; he's got a barn, as you say—that is, if he has got it," replied Grundy slowly. "And I ain't satisfied with Merry and that crowd. It's the old story over again. Everything goes by favouritism, not by merit. There's no chance of their electing me Premier—not a scrap!"

"But there might be if you hired the barn before they could get it," said Gunn. "There ain't another like it anywhere near. They began to build for a bungalow, you know. Everything goes by favouritism, not by merit. There's no chance of their electing me Premier—not a scrap!"

"Let's cut along and see this merchant Pepper at once," said Grundy. "I never saw such chaps as you two are for wasting time in gassing!"

They got out their bikes, and hurried off to the village.

Mr. Erasmus Zachariah Pepper was at home.

A rap at the door of the dirty little cottage behind the post-office brought him to it.

The knickers of which Wilkins had spoken were noticeable at once. Both in material and in cut they were quite unlike any other pair the three had ever seen.

But they were at least a pair, and there was more than could be said of his stockings or his boots. One of the boots was a boot of the heavy, nail-studded type worn by agricultural labourers, the other was a shoe. One of the stockings was heather

mixture, the other blue, with a chaste yellow turn-over.

His waistcoat appeared to have been made out of a piece of sack, and he wore a purple smoking-cap with a green tassel.

He was skinny, and sharp of nose. Dirt seemed engrained into the very pores of his skin. His little grey eyes, overhung by fierce grey eyebrows, gleamed with greed. His grey moustache was yellow with tobacco, and he was chewing as he stood there.

They did not like the look of Mr. E. Z. Pepper at all. But, after all, this was not a social call. They had merely come on business.

"What d'ye want?" he snapped.

"I say, about your barn—"

"Speak up, can't you? I'm a bit hard of hearing," said Mr. Pepper, with one hand curved behind his right ear.

"This was untrue. Mr. Z. Pepper's hearing was as good as his sight, and that had nothing to do with it. But it suited him to pretend deafness.

"I say, you know, that barn of yours, you know!" shouted Grundy.

"You needn't yell at me in that fashion. Speak clear, if you can, and I'll make shift to hear you. I must say boys' manners ain't what they used to be in my time."

"Ner their habits," whispered Gunn to Wilkins. "They've taken to washing their ears since that. Perhaps that will keep them from going deaf."

Grundy heard also, and guffawed. Mr. Pepper heard also, but his face remained quiet, staid. He would get even for that speech in his own way if the chance offered; but he was not going to argue the matter. Perhaps he knew that no argument would convince anyone who saw him that he was not dirty.

"Your barn, you know," said Grundy. "Barn? I haven't any. The Government won't let a man brew these days."

"Barn, I said—Barn!"

"What barn?"

"The one in the field near our show."

"Oh, you come from a show, do you? I took you for schoolboys. Don't you go telling me that you've burnt that barn of mine down, now!"

"We haven't burned your barn down, and we're not from any show," replied Grundy impatiently. "We're from St. Jim's—St. James's—the school, you know!"

"What show are you talking about, then?"

"I wasn't talking about any show. It's only a way of speaking."

"Well, I don't take to it. I like the plain truth. I may be deaf—"

"You jolly well are!" muttered Grundy.

But therein Grundy was wrong.

"And I may be poor—"

"But you ain't!" murmured Wilkins.

And therein Wilkins was right. Mr. Erasmus Zachariah Pepper was so far from being poor that he could have bought up half Rylcombe parish.

"But if I'm deaf and poor—"

"And dirty!" whispered Gunn.

"If I'm deaf and poor, I ain't to be insulted, nor to be told lies to! And you've been telling me lies. If you're from the school you can't be from a show; you ain't from the school, and contrariwise!"

"Q.E.D.," remarked Wilkins. "Go it, Barn."

"Oh, hang it, I've had enough!" snapped Grundy. "Come along, you chaps! This fellow's too—"

"Here! Hold hard!" said Mr. Pepper. "What was it about the barn? You can come inside if you want to talk about that—at least, if it's in the way of business. I've got no time to waste, and

nothing to give away, so you may as well understand that from the start."

"Oh, never mind about the old barn! We didn't come along to ask you to give us anything!" said Grundy huffily.

"Look here, don't go off like that!" pleaded Mr. Pepper. "My temper ain't what it might be to-day—I don't mind owning that. I had a bad sixpence given me in change this morning by some rascal; and when I tried to pass it, the baker was rude about it."

"I'm a bit of a rascal, but you were a rascal for trying," Grundy suggested.

"Eh? Why should he? That ain't reason. I couldn't afford to be a loser on it. But, come in—come in!"

## CHAPTER 6.

### A Deal with Mr. Pepper.

THEY went in. The place was dirty, but not dirtier than one might have expected after seeing its owner. A half-starved dog lay on the sacking which served as a hearth-rug. On a table lay a package of what the butchers call "bits," which were evidently intended for the evening meal of Mr. Pepper. One glance at the dog was sufficient to make one sure that he never fed so luxuriously.

Mr. Pepper thrust the dog aside with his foot, and planted himself in front of the cold, untidy grate, with his hands in the pockets of those very remarkable knickers.

"Well, what about my barn?" he said.

"I want to hire it," replied Grundy bluntly.

"Ah! And what for?"

"To hold meetings in."

Grundy did not care to attempt explaining to Mr. Pepper about the St. Jim's Parliament.

"Ho! Meetings—eh? Stop-the-war meetings, d'ye mean?"

"No!" hooted Grundy. "Do I look like that sort of thing?"

"I can't judge people by what they look like. For the matter of that, you look—best, never mind that! That barn, you know—well, properly speaking, that ain't a barn. You might call it a commodious and eligible residence. I was thinking about going to live in it myself. If I let it to you, that'll have to be considered in the price. I desay you've noticed that I've had a window or two put in?"

They had not. But, on the whole, they thought that the barn would certainly be a more desirable residence than Mr. Pepper's very dismal little cottage.

"How much do you want for it—by the week, I mean?" asked Grundy, going direct to the point.

"How much will you give?" asked Mr. Pepper.

"I'd rather you put a figure on it," said Grundy.

"Ah! But I might not ask enough!"

"Well, I shouldn't mind that."

"But I should," said Mr. Pepper.

"You found it easy to believe him."

"They might ask too much, you know!" said Gunn.

"That ain't likely. My conscience wouldn't let me. Besides, it couldn't be too much if you were willing to pay it. That's a beautiful barn—more like a mansion!"

"Shall we say ten bob a week, for four weeks certain?" inquired Grundy.

He had never from his Uncle Grundy in his pocket, and knew that more was easily obtainable from the same generous source.

"Ten bob a day?" asked Mr. Pepper, with hand to ear. "Yes, that's a fair price, I think!"

"Ten bob a week," I said!" howled Grundy.

"Yah! Why don't you say twopence-halfpenny?"

"I will, if you will!" replied Grundy promptly.

"Ah! You will have your little joke. But it's no good talking about ten bob a week. My conscience wouldn't let me lend at that."

"Same old conscience that made him try to pass the bad tanner," murmured Wilkins.

"Mr. Pepper means his conscience wouldn't let him take so much, I think!" said Gunn politely.

"Then you think wrong!" snapped Mr. Pepper. "Look here, young sir! I'm no hagglor. You're well-to-do; I can tell that from the cut of your job. I'm a poor man. You wouldn't try to drive a hard bargain, I'm sure. Done with you, for double the money, and two months certain!"

Wilkins nudged Grundy. But it was no use nudging Grundy when he had made up his mind to do anything. And now he had made up his mind to hire that barn, whatever it cost him.

"That will be eight pounds," he said.

"I suppose two on account will do you?"

Mr. Pepper's hearing seemed now to have improved wonderfully.

"You don't reckon right, young sir," he said. "Thirty-one and thirty-one make sixty-two nine weeks, as near as a teacher! Well, call it mine. And five in advance is a fair thing."

"Don't you be had like that, old chap!" whispered Gunn.

"Just you keep your breath to cool your porridge with!" snapped Mr. Pepper, who heard that quite well. "This affair is between me and the young gentleman opposite—I didn't catch your name, sir!"

"Grundy—George Alfred Grundy."

"Ah! And a very nice name, too—for them that like it. Now, let me put it all down in black and white. We don't need a lawyer—would make a five-guinea job of it. And I know as much as any of 'em."

Mr. Pepper produced a very scratchy pen, some pale and muddy ink, and the fly-leaf of an old book. He wrote quickly, and in a clear, good hand, an agreement as between Erasmus Zachariah Pepper on the one part, and George Alfred Grundy on the other, whereby the said Pepper did, on payment by the said Grundy of £5, being part—And so on, and so on.

Mr. Pepper evidently knew all about it. Grundy did not, and he was rather impressed. Wilkins and Gunn looked on sadly. They had not realised, when they urged upon Grundy the hiring of the barn, that it meant his parting with the five in his pocket at once, and thereafter a period of plain living in Study No. 3.

"I'd rather have gold," said Mr. Pepper, looking at the five-pound note doubtfully.

"What's the odds?" asked Grundy.

"That's a Bank of England note—as good as gold anywhere."

"Gold's good, but the world over!" said Mr. Pepper. "These things would be waste paper if the Germans came out on top."

"That's impossible; and if it happened nothing else would matter a scrap!" replied Grundy, who was, in his way, as staunch and thoroughgoing a patriot as could well be imagined.

"Nothing—except money," said Mr. Pepper. "Money always matters. But if you haven't the gold I must take this."

He took it, and rustled it, and looked at the water-mark, and behaved generally in a manner that put the great Grundy's back up.

"I don't like that chap. He's not much of a fellow."

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was another point in Mr. Pepper's favour. He did not intend to date this one unless he had to.

"Make it three months, cash down, and it's a deal," said Mr. Pepper. "But you drive a hard bargain with a poor man, I must say." As Tom had only two pounds, he could not make it three months, cash down. And he would not have done so in any case. It was very unlikely that the St. Jim's Parliament would have a life of three months.

"No," he said. "Four weeks down, and payment weekly after that, with a week's notice, good on either side." Mr. Pepper saw that he had to deal with a more businesslike fellow than Grundy, and he regretted it. But it was too much to hope for two Grundys in one day.

"We don't want a contract, I s'pose," he said. "That's a job for a lawyer, and they charge like—like the Light Brigade at Balaclava."

"A receipt ought to be enough," said Tom.

"I'll give you that, and you can give me an undertaking to pay for any damage done."

Mr. Pepper turned to get pen and ink and find a book with a blank flypage available as paper. He still failed to notice that his dog, for once in his poor, starved life, had had a meal. "I shouldn't sign any agreement to pay for damages, Tom," said Lowther. "He'll do you down some way if you do, I'm jolly sure. He's a shark!"

"That's actionable language, young man!" said Mr. Pepper sharply. "If I hear any more of it, my solicitor—"

"You'd better be deaf again," replied Monty Lowther. "Especially if it's the same solicitor who charges like the Light Brigade."

Mr. Pepper scowled. But he did not let his resentment stand in the way of business. In a few minutes he had drawn up a brief agreement as to damages, which Tom signed, and Blake witnessed, Lowther refusing point-blank to put his name to it in any way; and two pounds had passed, and a receipt for that sum had been given.

As he put the notes and silver carefully in his pocket, he turned and saw the empty dish.

## CHAPTER 8.

### And Yet Another Deal with Mr. Pepper.

WITH a howl of rage, Mr. Pepper rushed at the dog. The creature fled to a corner, and cowered there, quivering all over.

"Here, hold on!" cried Blake. "We're not going to have you knock that dog about, you know." "Who's going to stop me? He's my dog, I believe." Come here, Binks, your cur, and I'll thrash you within an inch of your life!"

But Binks had sense enough not to move. He looked at the four juniors in a way that appealed to all their hearts.

"Weally, Mr. Peppah, I do not considah that you should thrash the poor fellow for wolfin' his grub a twifle too soon," remonstrated Arthur Augustus.

"He's never been taught to say grace, I suppose?" added Lowther.

"His grub? Do you think I buy butcher's meat for a cur like that? That meat was cooked for my own eating, and it cost me sixpence!"

"If you will allow me to pay for it, I shall be happy to do so, Mr. Peppah," said Gussy politely. Gussy felt rather guilty, but he could not feel sorry. It was so evident that Binks had stood in real need of that meal; and, in spite of all the warnings of amateur Food Con-



Binks on Guard.

(See Chapter 10.)

troilers, Arthur Augustus was still of opinion that no one should keep a dog and starve him.

Mr. Pepper was gracious enough to accept the sixpence—without thanks. "I shall drown the brute!" he said vengefully. "That's the third lot of grub he's sneaked, and I've only had him a fortnight. I took him for a bad debt—chap going into the Army—but he'll never be any good to me. He's no watchdog. He'd as soon bite me as the next man!"

"He must have been feebly hungry, Mr. Peppah," pleaded the tender-hearted Arthur Augustus.

"If he tried to make a meal off that merchant he must have been in an acute state of starvation," murmured Monty Lowther.

"I do weally beg that you wootly down him, Mr. Peppah! It was weally more our fault than his. We encouraged him to eat the grub, you know."

"Ah! That's where you signed his death-warrant!" replied Mr. Pepper grimly.

It was more than Gussy could bear. He felt his responsibility acutely. Binks must not die!

"But, weally, Mr. Peppah—"

"You'd better buy him. That's the only way out of it!"

"But I do not want a dog. I like dogs no end; but it isn't pass. I am sware they will not allow anothah dog at the school just now."

There had been trouble with Mr. Ratcliff about Figgins' dog; and, though old Spot had escaped, it was pretty well understood that, while the food regulations lasted, the canine population of St. Jim's must not be added to.

"Ah, well, he ain't worth much—a mere common cur—cheap as dirt, his sort! He may just as well be got rid of."

But if Binks had no pedigree, if even his breed was a bit doubtful, he had a

pair of very eloquent brown eyes, and was quite a presentable dog, apart from his extreme thinness. And he had been the property of a man who had now gone to fight for his country—that counted, too. The man in khaki would not like to hear of the slaughter of Binks, D'Arcy felt sure.

"He don't mean it!" whispered Blake. "He wouldn't kill the dog while there was a chance of getting some ass to give tenpence-halfpenny for him!"

"But he is starvin' the poor fellow, the wretch!" answered Gussy.

"Are you going to buy him, or am I to drown the cur?" inquired Mr. Pepper.

"Well, at the present moment I am feebly hard up, Mr. Peppah; but if you will give me credit—"

"You're young D'Arcy, Lord Eastwood's son, ain't you? Yes, I'll give you credit, sir."

They stared, amazed that Mr. Pepper should know so much. But Mr. Pepper knew more about St. Jim's and the fellows there than they imagined.

"Very well, then, I'll buy him. Come here, Binks!"

Binks came at once, wagging his tail delightedly. He seemed quite to understand.

"Five pounds will pay for him," said Mr. Pepper pleasantly.

"Wha-a-at!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "You mean five bob?" said Blake bluntly.

"And that's a liberal price for a worthless cur," added Tom.

"That was only a manner of speaking," explained Mr. Pepper.

"I will give you ten shillins, though I considah you are showin' most unpincipled gweed, Mr. Peppah," said the swell of the Fourth, caressing Binks.

"I'd sooner drown him!" snapped the hard bargainer.

"Well, then—"

"Hold on, Gustavus!" chipped in

Blake. "Leave this to me! I'm Yorkshire, you know!"

"He turned to Mr. Pepper.

"Ten shillings, and that's the last word!" he said.

"Cash down, then!" was the reply.

"They had not that amount among them.

"Oh, weally, Mr. Peppah, I suppose you will take my I O U?" said Gussy.

"Yee—for fifteen. I wouldn't take his—his Yorkshire!" answered Mr. Pepper, with a wrathful look at Blake.

"I was done down by a Yorkshireman once!"

"Mum have been a long time ago," said Blake.

"I honour that Yorkshireman!" murmured Lowther.

Gussy signed an I O U for fifteen shillings, promising to redeem it within a week.

As Lowther pointed out, the interest was the mere trifle of 2,500 per cent. per annum, which was calculated to beggar a millionaire.

But Mr. Pepper said that was not the way to look at it, and, for his part, he would not mind beggaring all the millionaires in creation—which they found it easy to believe.

They departed. Binks seemed very willing to go. He never even looked back at his master of a fortnight.

Perhaps he had not forgotten that other master, now in khaki; but certainly he had taken to D'Arcy.

Arthur Augustus slipped into a shop to buy some dog-biscuits.

"That's a downy old bird, that Pepper," said Blake, while Tom Merry negotiated the entrance of the key of the barn—which key weighed nearly a pound—into a pocket.

"He's a vulture—a regular bird of prey," said Lowther. "I can't get rid of a dread suspicion that there's some do in all this. But Tommy has the key, and the barn's certainly there, so it's hard to see how there can be."

"I ought to have asked him whether Grundy had been to see him," said Blake, who could not forget the grins on the faces of Grundy & Co.

"Grundy wouldn't have come away without the key," said Tom. "Besides, what could Grundy want with the barn?"

But Grundy had forgotten all about the key.

D'Arcy came out of the shop, Binks trotting at his heels as if he had run there ever since puppyhood.

"Where are you going to lodge Binks?" asked Lowther.

"Oh, he will have to be put in the barn, I guess!" said Tom.

"But that will be frightfully lonely for him," protested Arthur Augustus.

"Well, you can go and sit with him," replied Tom, grinning. "You can't very well have him in your study—not that I mind."

"Or that it matters much in a menagerie like that," remarked Lowther blandly.

"Lowthah, I shall refuse any loughs to regard—"

"Ring off, Gustavus! They want to bag Binks for the monkey-house—otherwise No. 10, Shell passage," said Blake.

"But they can't. We won't have the manners of Binks spoiled by contact with Lowther."

"I thought you were going to say Manners, Blake. You missed a chance there."

"A Yorkshireman, old scout, prefers the truth to a pun," replied Blake.

## CHAPTER 9.

### Baggy Blabs!

THE Terrible Three were discussing arrangements for the election in Study No. 10 next day.

Thus far the united wisdom of all concerned had not managed to hit upon a feasible scheme.

"There's no one to stand for election but where were the voters coming from?"

Everyone would want to stand for election. Everyone, that is, in the Lower School—the Ferns below the Fifth. The Fifth and Sixth would look upon the whole scheme from a standpoint of lofty superiority, no doubt; but in matters of this sort nobody minded about the opinion of the two senior Forms.

The fags had caught on. A deputation consisting of Wally D'Arcy, Frank Lee, Reggy Manners, and Jameson had waited upon Tom Merry & Co. to put in a strong claim for representation for the Third—and plenty of it!

"Waited upon" sounds polite; but it cannot be said that Wally & Co. sounded specially polite, and in the event they had to be put out by force.

The New House had rallied well. Figgins was quite ready to lead the Opposition, and did not trouble to conceal his belief that the Opposition would soon become the Government if it had fair play.

Even Racke, Crooke, and their set were interested. There were rumours being proposed to form a party of Irreconcilables, pledged to give the Government all possible trouble, but not to support the official Opposition.

Grundy also was said to be trying to get together a party of his own. He had Wilkins and Gunn as a nucleus, of course. It had not transpired thus far that they had won any recruits.

But all this was no help towards settling the election problem. For that problem was just this—who were the voters to be when everyone proposed to stand for election? And, arising out of that question, as Monty Lowther said in his best parliamentary style, was this—who was to settle which of the horde of would-be candidates should be allowed to stand?

The Terrible Three were giving the knotty problem their very best attention—even Lowther taking it seriously—when there came a modest tap at the door.

"Come in, if you care to risk it!" yelled Tom. "But if you're anyone who don't want to see, you'll jolly well go out on your neck!"

It was Baggy Trimble who responded to this hospitable invitation.

"That's truly heroic, Baggy!" said Lowther. "But it won't save you. We don't want to see you—we never do—and you know that. So it wasn't a risk you were taking, which is foolish."

"Oh, I say Lowther, don't be an ass!" pleaded Baggy. "I've got something to tell you, you know—something it's important you should hear! He, he, he!"

"You can't have anything important," said Lowther, gripping him by the ear. "But if you have, tell it in three words, and bunk before you bewalls you!"

"Yaroooh! Leggo my ear!" howled Baggy.

"Got the earache?" inquired Lowther kindly.

"No, ass! Why should I have the earache?"

"Nonsense—also draughts through key-holes. Very much the same thing, come to that."

"I haven't—"

"In three words, fatty!"

"About the barn!" spluttered Trimble.

"What about the barn?" snapped Tom.

"Oh, leggo my ear, Lowther! That hurts!"

"Leave the worm alone, Monty, and let him tell what he's got to tell, will you?"

"To hear, Thomas, is to obey. Proceed, Bagley Trimble of Trimble Hall!"

The egregious Baggy smirked at that. "Look here, you know, if you chaps mean to get that barn you'd better hurry up," he said.

Now, it was rather remarkable, seeing how well-posted Baggy made it his business to be about other people's business, that he should not yet have discovered the hiring of the barn by either of the rival parties. But so it was.

"Why?" asked Tom, looking at him very hard.

Baggy was not very reliable; but he had a way of getting advance information, and it sometimes paid to give heed unto him.

And across Tom's mind there flitted the memory of Jack Blake's doubt about Grundy. Moreover, Tom was not inclined to trust the grasping Mr. Pepper a yard. Perhaps he had come to that frame of mind rather late; but that was how he felt now.

"If you haven't got it already, you'd better look sharp, or Grundy will be before you, you know. I thought I'd just give you a warning. He, he, he!"

"How does Grundy know anything about it?" rapped out Tom.

"I—I—well, you know, would I know? Somebody told him, I suppose," faltered Baggy.

"And how do you know he knows anything about it?" asked Manners. "He wouldn't tell you."

"I—I— Well, then, I heard him talking it over with Gunn and Wilkins."

"Where were you when you heard?"

"Never mind that, Manners. Don't care a lot for Baggy's ways of finding out things, I'll own. But if there's anything in this, I must say I think Grundy is playing it rather low on us," Tom said.

"It ain't like old Grundy to be spiteful!" Manners remarked. "But it's uncommonly like Baggy to tell whoppers."

"I'm not telling whoppers, Manners. I should scorn the action. You fellows know very well how truthful I am!"

"It wouldn't be spite," said Lowther. "Grundy would think it a fair score over us; and I'm not prepared to deny it myself. After all, we've rejected with deepness Grundy's offer to be Prime Minister, with half-a-dozen or so portfolios. It wasn't exact—a modest offer; but one doesn't expect figs from thistles!"

"That's what it is!" said Trimble, nodding. "Grundy says if you won't let him be Prime Minister you shan't have the barn."

"Did he tell you so?"

"Nan-no. Not exactly. But I heard him say so to Wilkins and Gunn."

"Baggy's knees are dusty. Grundy & Co. are slovenly beggars. Herlock Sholmes deduces that Baggy may be telling the truth, unlikely though it seems," said Lowther. "He has just come from under the table in No. 3."

"That's Grundy & Co. If there's dirt under the table it's the housemaids' fault," Manners replied. "We don't dust our own studies. I think it's because Baggy's too big a eloven to use the clothes-brush, and he's been down on his knees begging someone's pardon."

"Jotson, you amaze me! You are developing the rudiments of a brain!"

"Drop it, Monty. This may be serious!" said Tom.

"How so, Thomas? What does it matter what Grundy attempts when we—"

"Don't say too much! Baggy ain't to be trusted, you know that! Look here, you fellows, anything here at all in your giddy yarn, how did Grundy come to know anything about us meaning to hire the barn?"

"I—I—someone must have told him. Didn't I say so before?" stammered Baggy.

"Who? That's the question! There

ain't such a heap of chaps here who are mean enough to listen at keyholes. And we know jolly well that none of the fellows who were in the secret would go blurring it out to Grundy."

"There's Mellish," said Trimble sulkily.

And it was true that Percy Mellish of the Fourth was quite capable of conduct of that kind. He was a fitting study-mate for Baggy.

"You say Mellish told him. Manners, you go and look for Mellish. If he's not guilty he ought to know what Trimble's saying about him. And if he is, there's no use in putting off his execution!"

"Right-ho, Tommy!" said Manners.

"Here, I say, Manners, don't cut off like that! I never said it was Mellish, did I?"

The Terrible Three grinned. Baggy was the only fellow in the Fourth or Shell who could not lick Percy Mellish.

Even Baggy had accomplished that feat once. But that was under the spur of a misplaced affection. And evidently Baggy had no desire to be confronted with Mellish now in order to make an accusation to his face.

"It wasn't Trimble, by any chance?" asked Lowther.

"Nun-no! Of—of course not! If I had told Grundy, I should have come along to warn you chaps?"

"Just what you would do, you Hun!" snapped Manners.

"My hat, yes!" said Tom. "Of course, the worm tried to make Grundy pay for the news. He may have brought it off, or he may not."

"Not!" said Lowther decidedly. "Grundy don't care for that kind of thing. He has no use for sneaking eavesdroppers. I dare say he told you so, didn't he, Baggy?"

"Yes, he—I mean, no, he never said anything of the sort! How could he when—Oh, stoppit, Manners! Stoppit, Lowther! Ow—ow!"

Baggy had given himself away. If not Mellish, the eavesdropper must almost certainly have been Baggy; and Baggy refused to confront Mellish, which was suspicious. And now Baggy had as good as admitted the crime—at least, so the Terrible Three considered.

"Bump him!" said Tom.

"Yarroooh!"

"Hallo, deah boys! Bein' kind to Baggy?" asked the voice of Arthur Augustus at the door.

"You can go now, you fat worm!" said Manners.

Trimble went.

"How's Binks getting on, Gussy?" asked Lowther, who was a good deal taken with D'Arcy's latest purchase.

"He seems quite all right in the barn. He was no end pleased to see me; but he does not make a ridiculous fuss about bein' shut up in the barn between times. I say, deah boys, if you get any bones or gwishtle at dinnah that you can't eat—"

"We never get any bones or gwishtle that we can't eat," said Gussy.

"If you find that you can make away with such things, I should like to examine your teeth."

"Save them for Binks, will you? You can stick them in your pockets, you know!"

"Nice for our pockets—I don't think!" remarked Manners.

"That's all right, if you take an old envelope in. Oh, I say, Tom Mewwy, I must have cithah dropped the key somewhere or have left it in the lock; it isn't in any of my pockets!"

"Crowded out by the old envelopes—full of bones and gwishtle," suggested Lowther.

"Look here, Gussy, you idiot, this won't do!" snapped Tom. "Baggy says Grundy is after that barn, and Blake

rather fancies he saw Pepper before us. If he—"

"Now that I come to think of it, I remember that I did meet Grundy and Gunn and Wilkins on their way—"

"You chump! You fathead! Why didn't you say so before? Come on, you chaps!"

## CHAPTER 10.

## Disputed Possession.

"WHAT'S the row?" Blake hailed the four as they dashed across the quad, Tom Merry leading, Lowther, Manners, and D'Arcy close upon his heels.

"Grundy! Gone to the barn! You were right, Blake; he's after it! And this fraubious idiot has left the key there!"

"Oh, weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Ring off! There's nothing to be said for you, Gussy, so don't try to say it!"

"Dig! Herries!" roared Blake.

And Digby and Herries came rushing up, and added themselves to the little band.

At the gates stood Levison, Cardew, and Clive.

"Seen Grundy?" asked Tom.

"Yes. He went past a little while ago," replied Levison.

"Come along, then! You may be wanted!"

"Can't you seven handle Grundy without help?" asked Cardew lazily.

"Of course we can! Don't come if you don't want to, Cardew!"

"Oh, I'll come! Only Grundy an' I aren't on speaking terms, an' I wasn't sure that it would be strict etiquette to help in handlin' him, that bein' so. If you say it is, I've no more to say, by gad! But I hope you aren't goin' to run all the way. Runnin' don't suit my delicate constitution."

Cardew was running alongside as he talked, and talked easily as he ran. Cardew's delicate constitution did not prevent his being able to do things that most fellows could not. And there was no particular reason why it should, as its delicacy was only a figment of his imagination.

There were ten now, and they ran hard.

When the barn came into sight over the hedges there was no sign of Grundy & Co. But when Tom Merry's band reached the gate of the field they were visible at once.

They had not got inside the barn, and for this Binks was responsible.

Grundy had unlocked the door, in which Arthur Augustus had so carelessly left the key. But he had been halted on the threshold by Binks.

Every hair on Binks' small body bristled, and his white teeth showed in a grin that Grundy did not like at all. Binks evidently regarded himself as in

charge of the barn, and was not disposed to admit intruders.

"Ahoy there, St. Jim's bounder!" came a voice from down the road.

"Oh, hang it all, there are the Grammars, and we simply haven't got time to attend to them now!" said Tom.

"We'll collar the key, and then give them socks!" Blake replied.

"St. Jim's, ahoy!" sang out Gordon Gay, the leader of the Grammarian Juniors.

By Gordon Gay side were Frank Monk and the two Woottons, and behind them were Carboy, Mont Blanc, the French boy, and several more.

"Go to Jericho!" yelled Tom Merry. And he sped on through the field.

Grundy was trying to coax Binks. He appeared to have spent a considerable time in trying; but Grundy liked dogs, and was not so impatient as might have been expected. He would not have devoted so long to coaxing an inferior animal like Trimble.

"Good old doggie! Nice old boy!" said Grundy.

"Br-r-r-r," said Binks.

"Oh, come along, then! Good old fellow!"

"Br-r-r-r!"

Grundy took a step or two nearer.

Binks advanced to meet him.

Grundy took a step or two back. The good old doggie really had rather business-like teeth, and it would not do to risk too much, though Grundy was in a hurry for that key. He had unlocked the door; but then, Binks had gone for him, and Grundy had retreated, leaving the key in the lock.

Binks halted. He did not want to hurt Grundy & Co.; but they had to understand that there were limits.

"I say, Wilks, I'll draw him, and you can slip behind and grab the key," said Grundy.

"No jolly fair!" answered Wilkins promptly.

"Don't be a funk! He's only a little chap, and I can hold him all right."

"Well, I'd rather see you holding him before I slip in behind him, and I don't know that I should be keen then."

"Whose dog is he?" asked Gunn.

The other fellows were close up now, and they heard Grundy's reply.

"Dunno. Yes, I do, though. I saw him at that roster Pepper's cottage. The swindler needn't think I'm jolly well going to pay rent for his barn, and he jolly well kept out of it by his dog."

"There you are!" said Tom. "That proves it! Baggy was telling the truth for once!"

"And I hope the shock of doing it will make him ill," Lowther said charitably.

"It ought to."

Grundy heard, and faced round upon them, his massive brow glowing.

Binks allowed his wicked-looking teeth to go into retirement, and greeted Arthur Augustus with a friendly wag of his tail-stump. But he did not desert his post.

"What do you chaps want?" demanded Grundy, looking hostile.

"We've come for the key of our barn," said Blake. "Gustavus here had it to pay a visit to his dog, and, being a born silly ass, left it in the door."

"But the dog, not being a silly ass, plainly didn't intend to allow outsiders to annex it," added Lowther.

"Oh, weally, Blake—weally, Lowth—"

Grundy broke in upon Gussy without ruth.

"So it's D'Arcy's dog, is it?" he growled. "You'd better call your dog off, D'Arcy, or he'll be sorry for himself! As for the barn, that's mine—for the time being. I've paid rent for it, and I'll jolly well see that you chaps don't

*Eat less  
Bread*

intrude. "It's you who are the outsiders, you know."

"Better collect the key, as it's your barn," replied Lowther, grinning.

"Rot!" growled Grundy. "Just you call that dog off, D'Arcy."

"Off what, Grundy?" asked Arthur Augustus innocently. "I weally cannot perceive that Binks is meddlin' with anythin' or anyone watevah."

"I want to get that key, and I mean to get it, too!" hooted Grundy.

"Well, get it!" retorted Tom.

Grundy made a movement forward.

"Br-r-r!" said Binks warningly.

Grundy concluded that victory did not lie that way.

"What do you mean about its being your barn?" he snapped.

Arthur Augustus stepped past Binks, who made no objection, seized the key, and put in a pocket of his trousers.

"Now, Tom Mewey," he said, "we can discuss matthas with Gvunday on a propah an' amicable footin'."

But Grundy did not appear to see things in that light. The collaring of the key by D'Arcy seemed to make him feel even less amicable.

"Gimme the dashed key!" he hooted.

The Grammar School juniors were coming in at the gate now.

But Grundy, though he had been hard up against the Grammar School in his time, and had indeed suffered as much at their irreverent hands as most fellows at St. Jim's, paid no heed to that.

"Hold hard, Grundy!" said Tom Morley. "You can't convince us by bellowing, you know."

"It may be tansful, but it's not argument," remarked Lowther.

"I don't want to argue with you. I ain't going to argue with you!" yelled Grundy.

"I hired this barn, and paid the rent in advance. Is that good enough?"

"Not likely!" replied Tom. "We've hired it, and we've paid the rent in advance. And here's the giddy receipt!"

Grundy clutched at it.

"No fear!" said Tom, putting it behind him. "You may look, but I can't trust you to touch."

Herries, Digby, and Manners seized Grundy. He began to struggle.

"Don't do that, Grundy!" said Cardew, in his cool, mocking way. "It's really a compliment to your very determined character, by gad! If I were in your boots they wouldn't hold me. They would know that I hadn't resolution enough to tear the thing up."

Grundy seemed to understand. He ceased to wriggle, and looked hard at the receipt. His jaw fell when he saw it was in due form. He had thought Tom Morley & Co. might be bluffing.

But then his face lighted up again.

"Rot!" he said. "Not half good enough! A measly couple of quid-wily, I paid the swindler five!"

"Somebody's been had, then," said Blake.

"Show us your receipt, Grundy."

"It rather strikes me, do you know, that everybody's been had—except, of course, the dear Pepper," said Lowther.

"Show it, old scout," said Gunn.

"He's got it, you fellows; we saw it written. And we were first, too."

"We met you as we came back," added Wilkins.

"I'm not going to show these bounders any receipt," said Grundy obstinately.

"If they can't take my word for it—"

"We'll take your word all serene," said Tom Morley. "But we ain't going to let you take the barn. That ain't quite our notion of a fair exchange."

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 505.

#### CHAPTER 11.

#### United Against the Fo!

"YOU chaps had better submit the matter in dispute to arbitration," said Gordon Gay, coming up behind them. "We'll be pleased and proud to settle it for you, I'm sure."

The Grammararians were in force. More of the tribe had come along, and they now outnumbered the St. Jim's crowd, which totalled thirteen, if Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn could be relied upon to back up. There were fifteen of the Rylcombe juniors.

"Hear, hear, old chap!" cried Frank Monk. "They'd have been clawing each other's giddy hair in a moment. We've come up in time to play the kind uncles, and prevent that. Their little hands were never made—you know the rest."

Probably Gordon Gay & Co. had no belief that their kind offer would be accepted.

But if they had any such belief they were soon disillusioned.

"Oblige us by being pleased and proud elsewhere, Gay," said Monty Lowther politely.

"Hop it!" snapped Tom. "We've got business to attend to. Come along for a hiding later on, when we have the time to spare."

"Run away and play marbles," said Blake. "That's more in your line than snicking your little snubby noses into the affairs of your betters."

"Yes, run away and play, you silly louts!" hooted Grundy.

Grundy had declared himself. After that he could not shy at doing his bit for St. Jim's in the combat that was bound to follow.

"Oh, sock it into them!" roared Gordon Gay. "They've fairly asked for it!"

"Put them out, the interfering bounders!" shouted Tom.

And then the battle closed.

Grundy rushed straight at Frank Monk, locked his arms around him, and strove with might and main to bear him to the ground.

Tom Morley tackled Gordon Gay.

Ralph Reckless Cardew, with a cry of "Here's for you, Algy, dear boy!" went for Lacy, his school-fellow of old days at Wodehouse.

Arthur Augustus went for Wootton major, Manners for Wootton minor, and Levison for Carboy.

There began a succession of single combats, with the odd two on the Grammarian side hovering on flank and rear, whenever they saw a chance to help, and making themselves a nuisance.

Binks, at the open door of the barn, danced up and down, barking wildly. But he seemed to know that he must not take part in the fray.

The first success fell to St. Jim's. It was not a big one. No one on either side had any high opinion of the prowess of Carker, and when Gunn, deserting Morland, dashed at Carker and got him down, no one was surprised to hear Carter yell "Pax!" and announce that he had had enough.

So was disposed of one of the Grammarian skirmishers. And now Lacy was out of the fight. He had lashed out savagely at Cardew with fists— seldom resorted to in these battles, at least until tempers ran high—and Cardew had retaliated in kind. A little of that proved enough for Algernon Lacy, and Cardew proceeded to seek out and engage the other skirmisher.

"There's for you!" hooted Grundy, as Frank Monk staggered in his beaklike hug, and went over.

"Rescue!" yelled Manners.

Someone had tripped him up, and Wootton minor was sitting on him.

"Wesc!" panted Arthur Augustus. Wootton major had borne him to earth.

"Help, Gay!" sang out Carboy. He had found Levison an unexpectedly tough opponent, and was now struggling with him on the grass, with Levison on top.

But there was no help from Gordon Gay. He had his hands full.

Wilkins' antagonist had him down; but Grundy hurled himself into the fray, pulled the Grammararian off, yanked Wilkins to his feet, and returned in hot haste to renew his conflict with Monk, now on his feet once more.

Clive bundled over Wootton minor, and Manners argh. But Blake was down, with two of the rival school on top of him. And Digby had hit someone elbow with his nose, and had gone aside to staunch the flow of the red, red blood.

"Good old Grundy!" yelled Gunn, as Frank Monk sprawled again.

"Alas for the Entente Cordiale!" puffed Lowther, as he seated himself upon the heaving bosom of Mont Blake—or perhaps rather farther down than the word "bosom" can correctly be used to indicate.

"Arise off ze stomach of me!" urged Mont Blake.

"Non, non!" answered Lowther. "Parlez-vous Francais? Nah poo!"

"Pile in, St. Jim's!" shouted Tom.

"Keep it up, Grammararians! Sock them!" yelled Gordon Gay.

The two leaders were looked in deadly grey. They were so well matched that so far neither had been able to get the other down.

To add to the tide of battle swayed, and none might tell as yet to which side victory would incline.

Lacy had stalked off, and Carker had slunk away. The numbers were now equal. Digby was back in the battle.

He went to the help of D'Arcy, and Wootton major had to shift. But Levison had deserted Carboy to attend to someone else, and Carboy sailed in to the aid of the Australian junior. Then Wootton minor, having lost Manners somewhere, tackled Dig; and Gussy was borne back to the very door of the barn by two horns of superhuman weight.

He sprawled. It was more than Binks could bear. Binks had evidently become strongly attached to his now master already. He showed it now by attaching himself to the trousers of Wootton major in the region which may be described as the sit-downs.

"Yoop!" howled Wootton.

There followed a rending sound. Tom Merry and Gordon Gay, who had just rolled over together, relaxed their mutual grip, and sat up, roaring with laughter.

Wootton major was struggling frantically to tuck in his shirt-tail. Grundy, sitting near, with Frank Monk breathless beside him, had grabbed it.

"You two fellows!" yelled Wootton major. "Kill the beastly dog, somebody! Leggo of my shirt! Oh, it's you, is it, Grundy? I'll give you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Saints and the Grammararians in one great hilarious chorus as Binks capered around with a section of excellent grey trousers in his mouth, and Wootton major tried to drag himself away from Grundy and Grundy quite unsmiling, held on grimly.

"Oh, ring off, Grundy, you rotter! Oh, I say, this is too beastly thick! We didn't bargain for dogs, and it ain't a straight do!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The combat had ceased, and more than half the warriors were rolling on the ground in ecstasies of delight.

Only two faces were without grins. Wootton major didn't feel like grinning, and Grundy's face was as solemn as an owl's.

Lowther declared afterwards that Grundy did not see anything funny in it. He said Grundy had looked at his own countenance so often in the mirror that his sense of humour—if he had ever possessed one—had been killed, and he didn't know anything funny when he saw it. But that was doubtful. For Grundy held on, in spite of Wootton's frantic squirming. And Wootton could do no more than squirm, lest he should lose the tail of his shirt.

"Oh, chuck it, Grundy! Pax!" howled Wootton.  
"You own you're licked?" demanded Grundy.  
"No—yes! Anything you like—only logged!"

"Own you're licked Gay?" asked Tom Merry.

"Not likely, Tommy! We haven't begun to be. But we'd better chuck it—after poor old Wootton's awful loss! Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy let go, and Wootton major sat down at once.

"What on earth am I to do?" he moaned.

"Sit there till someone fetches you another pair of bags. Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Lowther.

"Collar D'Arcy's bags! Ho, ho, ho!" laughed Frank Monk.

"Take 'em off and borrow a needle," suggested Herries.

"Weally Monk, I am surprised at such a suggestion! I assuredly should not allow—"

"I'll have them, though!" yelled Wootton major. And he rushed at Arthur Augustus.

But Binks rushed at him, and Wootton sat down again in a hurry—which Lowther, with tears streaming down his face, said was like locking the stable-door after the bird had flown. It was a trifle mixed; but that was no time for being cool and calm.

"The white flag!" shouted Blake.

"Where? Wootton ain't showing it. He's taking no end of care not to," replied Gordon Gay.

"Oh, cheese it, Gordon! I say, go and fetch me a pair of bags!"

The order was addressed to Wootton minor, whom his bereaved brother had seized by the leg.

"No fear! Don't you think I know a joke when I see it?" retorted Wootton minor.

"Find the grass coolin', Wootton?" inquired Cardew blandly.

"He'll get rheumatism," chuckled Levison.

Wootton major gave a sudden deft jerk, and capized his brother across his legs.

"Come on, dog! Have some more!" he shouted. "This chap thinks it's no end of a joke. Come and be funny with him!"

But Binks had no further use for samples of trousering, and he ignored the invitation.

"We'd better call it a draw, Gay, I think," said Tom. "All things considered, it can't be said that the white flag was really hoisted on your side, can it? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come along, Wootton. We'll protect you from rude eyes on the way back," said Frank Monk.

"I want a pair of bags! I don't want any of your rotten protection!" howled Wootton major.

But he had to be satisfied with that. The Grammarians marched off in a compact body—of which the victim of Binks' devotion formed the centre.

Grundy turned to Tom Merry.

"Now we'll settle our affair, Merry," he said loftily.

Tom looked at his watch.

"Not before dinner, old chap," he said cheerily. "We shall have to scoot unless we're to be late."

And it was not settled that day, and the terms of settlement cannot be told here. More was to come of the double dealing of Mr. Erasmus Zachariah Pepper, as will be related in due course.

And more—much more—was to come of the St. Jim's Parliament, in spite of all the difficulties that beset it at the outset, as will also be recounted.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"GRUNDY THE PATRIOT!" by Martin Clifford.)

## The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"GRUNDY THE PATRIOT!"

By Martin Clifford.

There is more about the projected St. Jim's Parliament in this story, and although the schemes for it do not get very much further, other things happen in connection with the hero which George Alfred Grundy and Tom Merry have both hired from Mr. Erasmus Zachariah Pepper, whom Rylcombe calls a miser. Grundy discovers that the village yarn is true. How he discovers it you will read next week, as also of the patriotic determination to which he came in consequence. You will also read how Grundy, Gunn, and Willing were all sent to sunny and charming Marle Rivers, of whom some of you complain you don't hear enough, fits across the scene, and the great Grundy actually condescends to ask for advice, which he does not do after it is given. But does Grundy ever take advice?

### OUR CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

This will be dated November 17th, so we are not so very far from it now. It will be the usual extra-length ripping story, of course; that goes almost without saying. And there will be a good, long instalment of "The Wins from Warrania," which has fair to rival in popularity any serial we have ever published. But it is of something else I want to tell you now.

Many will remember, and nearly all will have heard of the supplement which was given with the Christmas Number of 1915. It gave a lot of information relative to St. Jim's, including a list of all the fellows who are all prominent in the stories. The number containing it has long since been out of print, but there is no week when we do not receive requests for a copy of it.

With a supplement of that kind brought up to date, will be a feature of the Christmas Number this year. Those of you who have cherished the earlier supplement need not fancy that the space given to it will be wasted as far as you are concerned. This will not be a reprint of the former budget of information, but a new one on slightly different lines. You will all be glad to learn sure, so don't forget that you had better order the issue containing it—both for November 17th—in advance!

### NOTICES.

#### Back Numbers, etc., Wanted.

By T. Donovan, 27, Bute Street, Liverpool.  
—"Boys' Friend" 3d. Library, Numbers 301, 302, 313, 320, 327, 370, 375, and 380.

By J. Gregory, 119, Deon Street, Ardwick, Manchester.—"Boys' Friend" 3d. Library. Back numbers. State price.

By Jas. Green, 50, Devonshire Road, Prince's Park, Liverpool.—GEM and "Magnet," Christmas Numbers, 1914 and earlier.

By Reggie Booth, Swinton House, Swinton, Manchester.—"Britain Invaded," "Britain at Bay," and "Britain's Revenge," in "Boys' Friend" 3d. Library. Full price offered.

By Hugh M. Lawson, 22, Scotland Street, Edinburgh.—GEM and "Magnet," numbers 1-200.

By A. E. Hamblin, 4, Prospect Road, Hungeford.—Christmas Number "Magnet," 1910, "The Yankee Schoolboy," and Christmas Number GEM, 1915, "Talbot's Christmas." 6d. each offered.

By Tom Dignam, 61, King's Road, St. Albans.—"Merry Minor," "The Fellow Who Won," "Sportsmen All," and "Skimpole the Sportsman."

By E. Addison, 20, Norwood Avenue, Heaton, Newcastle-on-Tyne.—GEM and "Magnet," numbers 1-400.

By Norman Paton, 69, Perth Road, Dundee. GEM numbers 263, 265, 309, 371, 372, 380, 221, 284, 285, 287, 290, 293, 298, 299, 300, "Magnet," numbers 250, 257, 259, 260.

By George Fletcher, 14, Meadow Street, Butts, Coventry.—GEM and "Magnet," numbers 1-300.

By W. Fawcett, jun., Willow Pond Hotel,

Millfield, Sunderland.—Earliest issues of the GEM and "Magnet."

By D. Rowlands, 41, James Street, Maerdy, Glam.—"After Lights Out" and "Boys' Friend" number containing "Put to the Test."

By E. Turnbull, 9, Chestnut Road, Plumstead, S.E.—GEM, numbers 23-39; "Magnet," numbers 32-64.

By Jas. McCernick, 24, Nile Street, off York Street, Belfast.—GEM and "Magnet," numbers 32, 90, 107, 170, 182, 221, 250, 326.

By R. P. Hirst, 9, Victoria Terrace, Dudley.—Nos. 1 and 2 of "Magnet"; 18, each offered. "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out"; 6d. offered.

By Alfred Gordon, 28, Tennyson Terrace, Crook, Co. Durham.—Back numbers of GEM, "Magnet," "Penny Popular," "Boys' Friend," "Dreadnought."

By R. A. Hezigi, 9, Ferntower Road, Canonbury, N.—First five numbers of "Magnet," also "Bob Cherry's Barring-Out" and "The Boy Without a Name."

#### Football—Leagues, etc.

Ernest T. Acott, 57, White Lion Street, Angel, Islington, N.1, wants members for GEM and "Magnet" Club North London readers especially. Stamped and addressed envelope, please.

T. Waters, 19, Sheepcote Lane, Battersea, S.W.11, would like to hear from readers in any part of the world who want to join a GEM and "Magnet" League.

W. E. Last, 105, Alan Road, Ipswich, would like to join a GEM and "Magnet" League somewhere in the world.

Readers and contributors wanted for an amateur magazine. Please send stamped and addressed envelope for particulars to Wm. M. Nally, Glenview, Kenilworth, Wigtonshire.

E. Gumbrell, 95, High Road, South Tottenham, N.15, would be glad to hear from readers who want to join a GEM and "Magnet" Club.

### TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT.

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Your Editor



Caterpillar, ignoring Hazel entirely. "Doosid, pleased to see you, Field, as long as you haven't come along to invite me to do anything strenuous, by gad! Franky, here, keeps me up to the mark, 'know; but I rather bar any more. I chased the boundin' hell for a solid hour this mornin', an' I really haven't got over it yet."

"I wish your talkin' apparatus too hard, Caterpillar—that's what tires you out," said Squiff. "But I haven't time to see you chaps at all, as a matter of fact. It's Pon I'm after."

"Pon's popularity increases by leaps an' bounds, Franky," remarked the Caterpillar. "Hazel had wheeled his machine in past them, an' had now met Gadsby and Vavasour."

"Is it right about this fight business, Field?" asked Frank Courtenay.

"Yes; that's what I've come about."

"I don't see for the pleasure of seein' the dear Pon?"

"I'd see Pon hang'd first, Caterpillar! He's a blessed sight too tricky for my liking."

"Nothing to be afraid of, Franky, your eyes skinned, dear boy! Pon won't take you in at all do for you quite as easily as he might some of your fellows, I fancy, by gad!"

"That made a mighty agree to this foolery," Frank Courtenay inquired.

"You don't like it, then, Courtenay? Well, if it's any comfort to you to know it, Wharton don't like it much, either."

"Pity he should ever have agreed to it, then. It only means more bad blood between the schools, and, goodness knows, there's been enough of that."

"I'd like to see a much choice. And it isn't going to cause any ill-feeling between us and you fellows, anyway."

"I hope not. Well, pon in and have some tea with us before you get back, old chap. I think you prefer to take tea with Pousoboy, of course."

"Your fellow herald, Field," said De Courtenay lazily. "Has grown impatient. He has been taken to the neck by Gaddy at the amiable Vavasour to the august presence of Pon."

"Hazel's got nothing to do with this bizney, he's come over on his own," said Squiff. "I'll trot along, see you too later."

Gadsby, Vavasour, and Hazeldene stood together in the passage when Squiff came up to see Pousoboy.

"You'll find all the giddy warriors in there," said Gadsby, indicating Pon's study, with a leer that made Squiff long to kick him.

"Oh! Aren't you one of the chosen champions?" asked Squiff.

"No, I'm not."

"Beastly disappointing for you, I should say. I do hope you won't let account of the little affair with Derwent? You carry some of his marks still, I see."

"Sneerin', swainkin' cad!" snarled Gadsby, as he passed into Pousoboy's study.

"Oh, I don't know. There are worse chaps than Squiff," Hazel replied.

"He's another of these Colonial rotters! I hate them—don't you say?"

"Absolutely," said the dandy of the Fourth.

"I suppose it's no good thinking of seeing Pon till he's got through with Squiff?" said Hazel.

"Not a scrap. Got any tin on you?"

Hazel flushed. Gadsby's meaning was brutally plain. He wanted a game, but not on terms of O.T.

"Oh, yes," answered the Greyfriars junior, weak as ever in the face of temptation. "But where shall we go? You chaps seem to be turned out of your quarters."

"Come along to No. 6," said Gadsby. "Nobody there—only that dashed bird of Derwent's. An' those three will be ratty if we make the place full of 'em. Merton's always been a bit chucked it since Derwent came along. He'll make old Pon pi before he's finished, shouldn't wonder?"

"So the three made for No. 6," said Hazel, with Flip Derwent shared with Merton and Tunstall.

"Nice boys—oh, nice boys!" chuckled Cocky, as they entered.

"I'll take care, of I'll bring your dashed neck," said Gadsby viciously.

#### Fixing It Up.

"HOW de do, Field?" said Pon-onyon, in his lordliest manner. "Pleased to see you."

"Thanks," replied Squiff dryly. "He knew how much Pon's affability was worth. But he shook hands."

"I saw you at the gates, an' Monson

fetched these other fellows along," Pon continued. "We are the five, you know; an' I suppose you may as well fix up things with us now, to use bringin' anyone else into it, by gad."

Merton and Tunstall and Monson shook hands, about it. They were all well, and re-spectful, and bring one of the five champions. It seemed to him a little too much in the line of being one of the five victims, for the nuts never had been up to the Remove fighting level, and he had no great faith in the new fellow's ability to tip down the scale on their side.

"You know Derwent, I think?" said Pousoboy.

"Well, we've met—and exchanged compliments," said Squiff. "I can't say we have been properly introduced."

"I wasn't over and above civil," admitted the Flip, grinning. "But I don't think you'll get that against me, Field."

"Oh, not likely," Squiff said. "And they gripped hands. There was nothing of the nut-flabbin' about Derwent's grip, Squiff noticed."

"You chaps come from threeabouts the same place—Timbuctoo, Mandalay, or wherever you're from, by gad," drawled Pon.

"We come from places hundreds of miles apart; but we're both Australians, and I'd recommend you to study geography a little, please, before you say that."

"You don't mean that neither Timbuctoo nor Mandalay is in Australia."

"My dear man, I ain't interested in geography," said Hazel. "I call it hot."

"You yawning. As for studyin'—what do you think we keep a tame Mobby for? He knows his place too dashed well to think of explainin' it to study."

"I don't know, but I'm pleased to see you, though I shouldn't care for it myself, by gad!"

"His tone was almost susceptible. If the card had been the usual nutty one, Squiff would have felt inclined to chuck his mission then and there. But Gadsby and Vavasour were absentees, and no Greyfriars fellow would have dared to touch him."

"Moreover, the frank, healthy face of Flip Derwent made Sampson Quincy Illy Field feel more at home."

"I don't know, with the washing," he said, and he sat down.

"I take it you have authority from Wharton to settle things?" said Pon.

"You may certainly take it that way. That's what I've come here for," replied Squiff.

"Do you make any proposals as to time, place, an' so on?"

"I'll leave that to the rest say that, on the whole, they'd as soon leave that to you."

"Doosid kind of them! Gloves, I take it?"

"Yes, I should say that it was far better for the Highlife champions that gloves should be used. But he thought it."

"Let's see—your five are Wharton, Cherry, Naxent, Ball, and that nigger chap."

"And Harree Janset Kam Singh, who is no more a nigger than you are," said Squiff corrected him.

"Oh, don't set on your ears! I'm not good at pedigrées, by gad, outside racein'. Well, here are our five. Now we don't see pairin' off."

"You don't see what?" asked Squiff.

"We'd prefer to fight five against five—not in pairs."

"Oh!"

"So one at Greyfriars had thought of that, and at a moment the ambassador felt doubtful."

"But it was only for a moment. For quite certainly no one at Greyfriars had any doubt of the ability of the five Puritans to lick the best five of the nuts, with gloves or without, in pairs or in general combat."

"You don't agree—what?"

"Oh, yes, I agree! My chaps won't mind. There must be some understanding as to what makes a finish, though. Suppose four of one side are down and out, and only one of the other, are the blessed nuts to hang away at the one till he sings out that he's had enough?"

"Oh, yes, by gad! It's all very well to say down an' out, because the Puritan has to get to prove that there's no more fight left in him. He may scramble up again."

"But you'll admit you're licked—I mean, either side must own up to being licked if all five are down, Pousoboy."

"Certainly, as long as there's more than one of the other lot on his dashed feet an' ready to go on."

"But why more than one? Ain't one good

enough? Though I must say I don't think the fight ought to come to anything so jolly thick that eight or nine fellows out of ten are laid out."

Squiff could not quite see what the leader of the nuts was driving at, and he felt a bit suspicious. But Pon had no very definite end in view; he was only making the terms as favourable to his own side as he could manage in the uncertainty of what might happen in the fray.

"Five down one side, only three on the other—a win. Five down on one, an' four on the other—two minutes by the watch to give one or more of the five a chance to stagger up again, that is, if five are down."

"I think that will do," Squiff said bravely. "The terms sounded as if the nuts were going into this affair in the most determined do-or-die spirit. But that was not like the nuts, and there was excuse for Squiff's puzzlement."

"As for the venue, don't you think the sands, down beyond Peag, would be a dashed good place?" inquired Pon.

"That will do—as long as it's far enough beyond," the Greyfriars junior answered. "We don't want a crowd of outsiders gaping at the show."

"Time to-morrow afternoon, shall we say?"

"I say, though, Pon, that isn't the best time for me." Flip put in. "Courtenay asked me to play for the Form Eleven to-morrow."

"You didn't promise him, did you?" snapped Pon.

"I didn't, as it happened—because of this. I wasn't to, when you'd all fix it for. But he knows that there's no first team game, of course; and there was a kind of understanding that I'd turn out for the Form when you were all in."

"You didn't promise him, did you?" snapped Pon.

"I didn't, as it happened—because of this. I wasn't to, when you'd all fix it for. But he knows that there's no first team game, of course; and there was a kind of understanding that I'd turn out for the Form when you were all in."

"You didn't promise him, did you?" snapped Pon.

"I didn't, as it happened—because of this. I wasn't to, when you'd all fix it for. But he knows that there's no first team game, of course; and there was a kind of understanding that I'd turn out for the Form when you were all in."

"You didn't promise Courtenay. I don't see that there's anythin' in it," Cecil Pousoboy said. "Haug Courtenay, anyway! An' his sourr' looks as if he'd be glad to see myself what you want to lother about a piffin' Form game for. You can't throw us over for Courtenay, you know, my dear man."

"I don't want to," answered Flip, flushing. "I'll say no more, except that I don't quite see why playing for the school team need hinder my turning out for the Form when they're all in."

"Pon had won his point, and was wise enough to let it go at that. But Squiff could guess that there were wheels within wheels here. It was not a usual thing—even at school's a school as Highlife—for a new fellow in the Fourth to walk at once into the School Eleven. Derwent must be nailing good at the game, and he was a good deal better than something more than that behind it."

"There was little more to arrange. A referee would be needed, and it was Flip who suggested Squiff himself for that post of honour and responsibility. To the Greyfriars fellow's surprise, Pon made no objection. He said he would much rather have Squiff than some Highlife chaps he knew, anyway."

"So the five Puritans of the sneer, which was levelled at Courtenay and De Courcy, as everyone knew."

Pon wanted Gadsby as timekeeper; but they countermanded Deury to do it.

"Stay an' take a hand at nap, Field?" asked Pon.

"No, thanks. Dead out of my line."

"Oh, I forgot. You one of the Puritans, by gad! Well, stay an' have some tea. That ain't out of your line, I suppose, an' we'll undertake not to poison you."

"I've agreed to look in and have tea with Wharton and De Courcy," said Squiff. "Thanks for the noble undertaking, all the same. By the way, Hazeldene rode over with me. He wants to see you, before he goes to Alva, to discuss to see the festive Hazard, by gad." Pon replied. "He's not quite such a doosid Puritan as some of you. Ta-ta, Field!"

#### Hazel in the Toils!

HAZEL DENE was certainly not playing off. He was just the Puritan. The Banker is not a game on the Puritan list.

He ought not to have played at all, and he knew it. He had only a few shillings to lose, but he was to see to it that he was not to be taken in by Pon's notice; and he needed what he had for other purposes. But Hazel was one of those whose only way of resisting temptation is to keep a devil's advocate at it. When it came close he was sure to fall.

Cocky was in one of his most conversational moods. He did not talk to these three as he did to Flip, or to Merton and Tunstall, as he had become his very good friends. His remarks were rather a sarcastic kind, quite as though he perceived the folly of what they were at.

"Nice boys? Oh, very nice boys—I don't think," he said, and then he gave a shrill, prolonged whistle.

"That's a knowing old bird," said Hazel, grinning as he swept up his winnings on the first hand.

"That's the brute!" said Gadsby savagely. "One of these days I shall do for him!"

"Well, don't ask me to help you, you know," answered Hazel lightly. "I've nothing against him—except the chap he belongs to."

"Tricky—oh, devilish tricky!" said Cocky. "Shut up!" roared Gadsby.

"Not if I'm jolly well—know it—by—Jupiters!" said the crosst-bird slowly, with a pause after each word.

"Hanged if I ever saw another like him!" remarked Hazel. "He talks straight back."

"That's the other," Gadsby said. "It's just one of the things Derwent's fond of saying, just in that way, too. An 'by Jupiter' he picked up from that silly ass Merton."

"Gladly's all right—all right-o!" put in Cocky.

"I shouldn't care to talk secrets before him," said Hazel.

"I should trouble you for five bob, old sport," Vavasour said.

"Why didn't the dashed girl twin take him by gad?" growled Gadsby, who was losing and did not like it.

"She wanted to, didn't she?" asked Hazel. "I heard something about it. They're both no end fond of old-top-keep here. She might have kept him—except the horse, too. They'd bar a dog there; but old maids like parrots and all that sort of thing."

"Why shouldn't she have him?" inquired Vavasour, grinning.

"What do you mean, ass?"

"Oh, by gad, I'm not such an ass. Gaddy! It wouldn't be half a bad move to let the giddy little creature in over the garden wall at Cliff House, would it?"

Cocky began to sing "Over the Garden Wall." Cocky's singing voice was not as fatuous as it might be supposed. Hazel's temper grew rapidly worse as he continued to lose.

"Con-found the rotten bird!" he snarled. "What good would that do, Vav anyhow?"

"I don't know, no one could blame us much. We heard that Miss Derwent was plain for the creature, y'know, an' we were too cantant to let her pine any longer. So we took him along with us, widgez-vo!"

"And if by accident the catch of the cage came open as we were lovin' it, an' Cocky flew away, an' the cruel crook an' magpies an' things pecked him to death, y'know—well, that wouldn't be our affair, would it?"

"My hat! You must have been daft" some thakin', Vav!" gasped Gadsby.

It was rather surprising to find Vavasour, the emptiest-headed of all the nuts, coming out with a scheme all on his own, though the scheme itself seemed to Hazel rather a ridiculous one.

"That's two did, how much the bird from his far-away home counted for with Flip Derwent. If Cocky were missing nothing but physical strength and plenty of that, he would be worth from going in search of him. Class-o, or call-over, footer or even a fight, it would be all one. Each or any of them used to make me wait till Cocky had been found."

"I should think Vav had better drop using his brains if he can't use them to any better purpose than that," said Hazeldene.

"Leave the cockatoo alone, and let's get on with the game."

Hazel was winning thus far. He had a ten-shilling note and quite a little pile of silver before him. He had put down his cigarette, the burning end of which was making a hole in the tablecloth. His hands were shaking with excitement, and his eyes gleamed.

"He was not built for gambling. He could not keep cool."

Gadsby tapped Vavasour's shins under the table. The scheme Vavasour had outlined appealed to Gadsby. But he had no wish to go to the thing himself, he would much rather be quite a good notion if Peter Hazeldene could be got to take the risk.

"Vavasour's brains were not likely to run to the same as keep as this. But Gadsby was crafty enough."

Across the table the dandy winked at his pal. He saw that Gadsby was meditating a move.

He had a look at the next round, but was a

winner again on that which followed. He was feverishly excited now. If only he could keep on for half an hour or so in this vein he could face Pon without a tremor—pay the debt again—of course never get into his debt again—till next time!

"You're in luck to-day, old sport, by gad," said Gadsby cheerily.

"That should have been enough to make Hazel suspicious, for Gadsby was known to be a bad loser."

But it had not that effect. The Greyfriars junior was too full of pleasure at his own success to wonder why Gadsby should be so unusually affable.

Had he but known it, there was no present reason for his favouring Pon. That magnificent youth had not summoned him to High-cliffe to dine him, but only to be kind—to refrain in the most marked manner from playing the heresi-captor. It was all part of Pon's plan to establish friendly relations with Cliff House; but even if Hazel had suspected that, it is doubtful whether he would have worried about it.

But Pon was at the back of Hazel's mind all the time. Hazel had the weak, foolish idea that gambling debts are in a very special way debts of honour. All debts are more or less—gambling ones rather less than most, perhaps. Hazel, who would have borrowed from anyone who would have lent to pay Pon, would not have worried a tenth part as much about repaying the loan.

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FRIEND"?

Now he thought he saw a chance to pay Pon without borrowing from anyone.

For a time he went on winning. Then the tide turned, and he saw his winnings slipping away from him.

He would have stopped; but the fascination of the game was strong upon him, and moreover, he knew that Gadsby and Vavasour would resent his proposing a stoppage.

So he went on, growing more morose with every loss, as he got up, and as feverishly excited as ever.

And now he began to feel something for Gadsby's virulent hatred towards Cocky.

"Why don't you stretch the bird dry up?" he snapped, as he passed more money across the table.

"Clink him out of the window!" said Gadsby, with an evil grin.

"Mind whose toes you tread on!" chuckled Cocky.

"He means Derwent will attend to you if you meddle with him, by gad!" said Vavasour.

It would have needed a pretty strong inducement to get Vavasour to meddle with Cocky. He had hoped at first that Gadsby would carry out the proposed scheme. Now he was hoping that Hazeldene would. That would suit him just as well. Derwent would suffer, and he could not be brought to book.

"I'm not afraid of Derwent!" snarled Hazel.

"Big talk! Big talk!" remarked Cocky. "Oh, ain't he got a lovely, lovely face."

As he got up and approached the bird, was far from lovely. The drawn,

wan look of the luckless gambler was upon it, and an angry gust of passion disfigured it further as he arose from his seat, seized the cage, and shook it violently.

"Oh, stop that, you cross idiot! You'll have Derwent here!" protested Vavasour, shaking in his elegant shoes.

"He's afraid of Derwent, by gad!" said Gadsby. "Hazel can lick him all serene."

"Hats! I'm not going to fight the fellow!" said Hazel. "But that beastly bird does get on a chap's nerves."

He sat down again.

"Oh, my hat!" he said. "Look at this dashed tablecloth! One of your beastly cigarettes has burnt a hole right through it."

"Yours—not ours," said Gadsby pointedly.

"We've been smokin' ours. But it's no odds. The dashed tablecloth isn't 'Derwent's, it belongs to Tunstall, or you ain't afraid of Tunstall, for all he's developed into a fightin' man nowadays."

"If we pull it over a lap this way it won't be nearly so smart I've gone," replied Hazel. "Those chaps won't be best pleased about us smokin' in here, I guess, as you say Merton and Tunstall have chuckled it."

He pushed the tablecloth farther over the edge on his side, and Gadsby and Vavasour exchanged winks.

"That cleans me out!" said the Greyfriars junior in a moment.

"Oh, well, take your paper, y'know!" said Gadsby, to Vavasour's surprise.

Pon might have taken Hazel's I O U's, for Pon knew that the old sport would follow would pay up. But Gadsby, himself a roguish, had less faith in human nature than Pon, because he had less knowledge of it.

"I don't know," said Hazel doubtfully.

"I don't think I will thank you, Gaddy. I'm up to my giddy ears in debt now, you know."

"Pon's one of your creditors—what?" said Gadsby.

"Yes—the biggest one. And I guess he expects me to shell out something on account to-day. But I can't! I haven't anything but a copper or two left."

Gadsby winked. He offered which caused Vavasour to open his eyes very widely.

"Look here, old sport, we're pals, you know. Shall I lend you a couple of quid or so to sweeten Pon—eh? You don't want Pon kickin' up a shime because you can't pay, what?"

Gadsby offering to lend money—and to an outsider!

For the nuts looked upon Hazel as an outsider. They were ready enough to gamble with him; but there was no friendship in that.

For a moment Vavasour utterly failed to comprehend it.

He knew that Gadsby was aware that Pon did not expect anything on account from Hazel, and only wanted to hold the deal over the Greyfriars junior's head in order to further his own schemes.

Then Vavasour's eyes fell upon Cocky, and he understood.

It was double-dealing on Gadsby's part. He would be working against Pon's plans if Hazel accepted.

But Vavasour had no objection to treachery, excepting against Pon, for whom his feelings were as friendly as to anyone to whom he looked up as a leader. And Vavasour was a good deal in love with his own plan to annoy Flip Derwent, for a time, what Gadsby was plotting for, he felt sure.

He waited anxiously for Hazel's answer.

It was not as ready as might have been expected.

At heart Hazel neither liked nor trusted these two. And Hazel was suspicious. It was not for nothing that Gadsby wanted to become his creditor, he felt sure.

But here his fatal weakness came.

With a couple of pounds he could face Pon light-heartedly. As it was, he dreaded the interview.

"It's jolly good of you, Gaddy!" he said slowly. "I suppose I might as well owe it to you as to Pon."

"Better, my boy—better!" replied Gadsby. "I shan't be so rough on you if you're a bit behind me as I shan't be on a trades who trades himself on his Norman blood an' all that, there's a trifle too much of the Isabelle about 'em—Pon, by gad!"

"Am I not?" said Vavasour. He felt a little bit nervous in talking treason thus. But he wanted to back up Gadsby.

The two pound-notes had just changed hands when the study's rightful occupant came in.

(To be continued next week.)