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ON PAGE 11.)

THE GEM

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May 21st 1930

RUCTIONS AT ST. JIM'S, WITH GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY—

BRAINY GRUNDY!

By Martin Clifford.



CHAPTER 1.

Grundy Asks for It!

"SILENCE!"

There was hardly a sound in the Shell Form room at St. Jim's when Mr. Linton rapped out that word in tart tones.

The only sound that broke the silence, in fact, till Mr. Linton spoke, was the shuffling of Grundy's feet.

George Alfred Grundy never could keep his feet still.

Sometimes there was whispering in Form: sometimes even ink-balls or paper pellets would whizz at the back of the class. But never when Mr. Linton looked as he looked this morning.

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The master of the Shell was cross that morning. The moment he entered the Form-room the Shell knew that they had to be on their very best behaviour, lest trouble should accrue.

He looked rather like the Alpine climber in the poem; his brow was set, his eye beneath flashed like a falchion from its sheath.

So the Shell immediately sat up and took notice.

Tom Merry rather wished that he had given a little more attention to prep the previous evening, and a little less to a certain cricket list. Monty Lowther slipped back into his pocket his latest limerick, which he had intended to pass along the Form to relieve the tedium

**SCHOOLBOY PLOTS AGAINST
HIS FORM MASTER!**

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—AND TOM MERRY & CO. IN THE LIMELIGHT. A SCREAM!



of lessons. The Shell, who were not always as orderly as they ought to have been, became a model Form on the spot. Something had apparently happened to disturb the serenity of their Form master.

Generally Mr. Linton was calmness itself, though he erred, in the opinion of his pupils, on the side of severity. Now he was distinctly nervy. And nobody wanted to get the benefit of it.

Mr. Linton's eye roved over the Form. Anybody who did not know that Mr. Linton was an absolutely just master might have suspected that he was looking for a victim.

That would have been an unfounded suspicion. Mr. Linton would never have been unjust. But there was no doubt that he was in a mood to administer justice with awful strictness.

"Silence!" repeated Mr. Linton.

The Shell hardly breathed.

"Grundy!"

George Alfred Grundy started.

"Oh! Yes, sir?" he ejaculated.

"Be quiet!"

"I am quiet, sir!" answered Grundy.

"What?"

"I am quiet, sir," repeated Grundy. Linton might be in a wax that morning, but G. A. Grundy was not the fellow to be picked on for nothing—not if G. A. Grundy knew it.

Mr. Linton's eye looked more than ever like a falchion flashing from its sheath.

"You are impertinent, Grundy! Take fifty lines!"

Grundy coloured with indignation. He opened his mouth for a rejoinder, and Wilkins of the Shell pressed his arm in warning.

"Shut up, old man!" whispered Wilkins.

"Wilkins!" rapped out Mr. Linton.

"Oh dear! I—I mean, yes, sir!"

"Take fifty lines for talking in class."

"Yes, sir!" gasped Wilkins.

Grundy closed his mouth again without speaking. Grundy

was the fellow to look for trouble; but even Grundy realised on this occasion that silence was golden.

Mr. Linton's eye roved over the class again. There was dead silence; even Grundy's feet were still.

Lessons began in quite a tense atmosphere.

Talbot of the Shell was the first fellow called on to construe. That was rather fortunate, for Talbot's "con" was always good. Even in his present meticulous mood Mr. Linton had no fault to find with it.

Tom Merry came next, with worse luck. There was no doubt that Tom had given more attention to certain important cricket matters than to prep the previous evening. It would not have mattered had Linton been in his usual good humour. Now the captain of the Shell had the acid edge of Linton's tongue, and Linton's tongue could be very acid. Tom was almost perspiring when the Form master had done with him.

Then Grundy was called on.

A sense of duty made Mr. Linton give particular care to the most backward members of his Form. Grundy was the most backward of all. Grundy's powerful brain did not assimilate knowledge easily. Classical learning, in Grundy's opinion, was rot, and he found it hard to bring his lofty intellect down to such rot. Grundy would have got on better with a much less dutiful Form master. This morning Mr. Linton's sense of duty was unusually keen.

"You will go on, Grundy!" said Mr. Linton.

It was unfortunate that Grundy had found no time for prep the previous evening. While Wilkins and Gunn had been at prep Grundy had been telling them what an ass Tom Merry was to leave him out of the cricket. Wilkins and Gunn had found prep difficult in those circumstances. Grundy had hardly looked at it. Now he wished he had given it a glance or two.

"At pius Æneas, per noctem plurima volvens," stared Grundy in the face, and he wondered dismally what it might possibly mean.

"I am waiting, Grundy!" said Mr. Linton, in a deep voice.

There was no doubt that when Virgil wrote that when he had meant something, Grundy knew that. The question was, what had Virgil meant? On that point Grundy's mind was a beautiful blank.

Still, he had to make a shot at it. Unluckily, Grundy was no marksman in such matters.

"The pious Æneas, turning over in the night——" began Grundy.

The Shell gasped.

So did Mr. Linton.

"What?" ejaculated the Form master.

Grundy blinked at him.

If "per noctem volvens" did not mean that the good Æneas turned over in bed Grundy of the Shell did not profess to know what it did mean.

"Grundy!"

"I fancy that's right, sir!" said Grundy.

"You—you fancy that is right, Grundy?"

"I think so, sir! Æneas turned over in bed——"

The Shell did not dare to chuckle. The expression on Mr. Linton's face did not encourage chuckles.

Besides, it was not a laughing matter—for Grundy! All the Shell knew that Grundy was for it. In Mr. Linton's present frame of mind a "con" like that was simply asking for it. On another occasion it might have made him smile. Now he frowned portentously.

"Grundy! You are not only the most obtuse boy in the Form——"

"I, sir?" ejaculated Grundy. He very nearly told Mr. Linton to draw it mild Grundy was fully conscious of being the only really brainy man in the Shell at St. Jim's.

"But you are also the most careless and remiss——"

"Really, sir——"

"I came jolly near binging the inkpot at him," said Grundy darkly.

"Oh cwumbs!"

"But that would have meant a lot of trouble."

"It would—wathah!" grinned Arthur Augustus. "I am afraid it would mean a twighful lot of twouble, Gwunday.

Bettah gwain and leeah it!"

"Don't be a footling fathead!"

"Weally, Gwunday—"

"One thing's settled—I'm not standing it," said Grundy.

"All very well for fellows like Tom Merry, or Manners,

or Lowther, or Tal-

bot, or Kangaroo.

They're nobody in

particular. But

Linton can't treat

me like this! The

old fathead—"

"Bai Jove! Don't

say any more,

Gwunday!" said

Arthur Augustus

hastily.

The rather angu-

lar figure of Mr.

Linton came in

sight, walking

along the path

under the elms.

That path ran

behind the tree

against which

Grundy was lean-

ing; and Grundy

had a powerful

voice.

"Don't be a

dummy!" said

Grundy. "I was

saying that Linton

is an old fathead

and—

for—"

"Pway be quiet,

for—"

"A silly old fat-

head!" said

Grundy. "What

beats me is why

they let a man be a

Form master when

he hasn't the brains

of a bunny rabbit!

Has Linton the

brains of a bunny

rabbit? He has

not!"

"For goodness' sake,

Gwunday—" gasped

Arthur

Augustus, in horror,

as he saw Mr. Linton

pause, with a

convulsive start.

"Don't be an ass! A

Form master who can't

construe

Virgil—and picks on a

fellow simply because a

fellow

knows better than he

does— What are you

making faces

at me like that for,

you fathead?"

It was unnecessary

for D'Arcy to reply. A

voice, both

loud and deep, boomed

over Grundy's shoulder:

"Grundy!"

"Oh crickey!" gasped

Grundy.

He spun round.

Mr. Linton was within

a few paces of him,

and the

expression on Mr.

Linton's face was

positively blood-

curdling.

"Grundy!" gasped

the master of the

Shell.

"Oh! Yes, sir."

"So—so that is how

you speak of your

Form master!"

articulated Mr. Linton.

"I—I didn't know

you were listening

behind the tree,

sir!" gasped Grundy.

It was really putting

it rather unfortunately.

"What?" hooted Mr.

Linton.

"I—I—I mean—"

"Follow me, Grundy!

Follow me to my study!

Upon my word! I—I—I shall

chastise you most severely!

Follow me!"

Mr. Linton whisked

away towards the

House. Grundy

started after him in

blank dismay. Then

he glared at

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"You silly fathead—"

"Weally, Gwunday—"

"Why didn't you

tell me he was coming

up behind me?"

hooted Grundy.

"Bai Jove! I was twyin' to tell you—"

"You footling ass!"

"Weally, you know— Yawooooogh!" roared Arthur Augustus, as the enraged Grundy smote heavily, and his hat was flattened over his noble ears.

Grundy strode away after his Form master. He was "for it" again; there was no doubt about that. No Form master could possibly forgive a fellow for stating that he hadn't the brains of a bunny rabbit. These painful truths were much better left unuttered.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been feeling very sympa-



"Yawooooogh!" roared Arthur Augustus, as the enraged Grundy smote heavily, and Gussy's hat was flattened over his noble ears.

thetic towards the injured Grundy. He was not feeling sympathetic at all now, as he struggled to disengage his noble head from a squashed hat.

"Hallo! What's that game?" asked Blake of the Fourth, coming along with Herries and Digby. "Is that a concertina, Gussy?"

"Ow! That feahful beast Gwunday has cwushed my hat!" gasped Arthur Augustus. He got his head out of it at last, and held it up. "Look at it! Look!"

Blake & Co. looked. The sight seemed to affect their risible nerves.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! There is nothin' to cackle at!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I was sympathisin' with that feahful wuffian Gwunday, and this is the result!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This hat is simply wuined! Bai Jove! I am goin' to thwash Gwunday when Linton has done with him. I am goin' to give the uttah wottah a feahful thwashin'!"

And Arthur Augustus scudded away to the House. Blake & Co. followed him. If Gussy was going to thrash the hefty Shell fellow, it was likely that he would need his friends to carry away what was left of him when he had finished thrashing Grundy.

Grundy was already in Mr. Linton's study. At the corner of Masters' Studies the chums of the Fourth waited—Blake & Co. grinning, and Arthur Augustus breathing wrath and vengeance.

"Oh, my hat! Linton!" murmured Blake.

From Mr. Linton's study came a sound like unto that of beating carpet. It was accompanied by a succession of yells.

"Linton's going strong!" murmured Dig.

"That man Grundy's always asking for it," remarked Herries. "Queer that he should keep on begging for it when he gets it every time. Oh crumbs! Linton will make a pancake of him at this rate!"

"Serve him jolly well right!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Look at my hat! Ruined! And I was sympathising with the beast!"

"Here he comes!" murmured Blake.

The door of Mr. Linton's study opened. George Alfred Grundy emerged.

He looked quite a different Grundy. As a rule, Grundy of the Shell passed along, like the lords of humankind in the poem, "pride in his port, defiance in his eye." Now he seemed to be crawling. Obviously, Mr. Linton had not taken the risk of spoiling Grundy by sparing the rod. Grundy had had it rather severely in class that morning. But Grundy's last state was worse than his first.

The wrath faded out of Arthur Augustus' aristocratic countenance as he looked at Grundy. The hapless Grundy, apparently trying to fold himself up like a pocket-knife, crawled by. He glanced at the Fourth-Formers with a lack-lustre eye as he passed them. He did not speak. He was past speech.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wathah think Grundy had had enough, deah boys!"

"I'm sure Grundy thinks so!" agreed Blake.

And Grundy of the Shell never knew how narrowly he had escaped a "feahful thwashin'."

CHAPTER 3.

Lowther's Limerick!

TOM MERRY ran his fingers through his curly hair, a little trick he had when he was undecided. Manners, who was cutting films at the study table, in No. 10 in the Shell, glanced at him, grinned, and went on cutting films.

Monty Lowther, with a little paper in his hand, hesitated. On that little paper was written Monty's latest limerick. So far, nobody had heard that limerick; and Monty was rather anxious to get it off. It had been intended to cheer the fellows up in class that morning; but it had had to be suppressed then; there had been danger in the air. Monty Lowther had a keen sense of humour; and he was not the fellow to deprive his friends of the benefit of it. And in Manners and Tom Merry he possessed two faithful friends who were always, or nearly always, prepared to give him a hearing, and to laugh in the right place.

"After all, it's only a Form match!" said Tom.

"Evidently the captain of the Shell was thinking of cricket. Monty Lowther sighed, and the limerick remained suppressed.

"What about it?" asked Lowther.

"I was thinking of that ass Grundy—"

"Not thinking of Grundy in connection with cricket?" asked Manners, with a stare.

"Well, we ought to be able to beat the Fourth, even with a passenger on board—"

"Not a passenger like Grundy."

"Well, he's frightfully keen," said Tom apologetically. "If it were a School match, or a House match, of course it would be N. G. But a Form match—after all—"

He paused. "Poor old Grundy's been through it to-day. He's looking as glum as a gargoyle. Of course, he asked for it; but—"

"And you're going to comfort him by chucking away a cricket match?" asked Manners.

"Nunno. But, of course, he's a howling ass, and can't play cricket for toffee! But he's so jolly keen—and he's down on his luck to-day. And—and we could beat the Fourth, even with Grundy playing for us. I—I was just thinking—"

"You're an ass!" said Manners.

"Same to you, old chap, and many of them! Really, I'd like to give poor old Grundy a show, if it could be done. I know it's taking a risk; but after all, it's only a Form match. And he does really look frightfully gloomy."

Manners grinned.

"Linton was a bit rough on him this morning," said Monty Lowther. "But Grundy really does sit up and beg for it! He can't expect a Form master to be pleased when he makes jolly old Æneas turn over in his bed—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was corns with Linton," said Monty. "Speaking of Linton and his corns, I've written a little thing—"

Tom tugged at his hair again.

"Look here, I think we'll chance it," he said. "You've asked me to let you off if we can do without you, Manners. You want to take that blessed old camera of yours for a walk."

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"Well, look at the light!" said Manners. "There's a splendid light to-day for taking photographs. And there's that bit by the bridge at Rylcombe—I've never taken that yet—"

"Thank goodness it's a half-holiday to-day," said Monty Lowther. "I don't think I could stand Linton for a whole day in his present state. Funny thing, I'd just written some lines about—"

"Well, I'll speak to Grundy," said Tom. "I believe he's in his study now, sulking in his tent like jolly old Achilles. He will bag a duck, and get in the way of the field, but after all—"

"Don't let him bowl," said Manners. "You'll be responsible if he brains anybody."

Tom Merry laughed.

"No fear! Well, I think it's settled, and you can travel with that blessed camera, Manners."

"Right-ho!" said Manners cheerfully.

"Tom Merry moved to the door.

"I was going to say—" began Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry looked round.

"You don't want to cut the cricket too, do you, fathead?"

"Oh, no! But speaking about Linton—"

"We're done with Linton for the day," said Tom, "and thank goodness for that. Bless Linton!"

"It was rather a coincidence—"

"Eh, what was?"

"Why, Linton going on the war-path this morning with a pain in his favourite corn—"

"I don't see any coincidence."

"I mean, I'd just written a little thing—"

"Seen my camera?" asked Manners. "Has some silly ass showed my camera out of sight? Blessed if I know why you fellows can't leave a camera where a fellow puts a camera. Look here—"

"It's on the bookcase, fathead," said Lowther.

"Oh! So it is." Manners slung his celebrated camera over his shoulder. Well, I'll see you fellows later, and you can tell me how many runs—I mean how many innings—the Fourth beat you by."

And Manners marched off cheerily.

"I say, Tom—" exclaimed Lowther desperately.

"Yes, old chap."

"I was saying that it was rather a coincidence, you know, old Linton going off at the deep end this morning when I'd just written a little thing on that very subject—"

"So it was," agreed Tom. "Quite a coincidence, old chap. Well, I'll get along and speak to Grundy."

Monty Lowther was left alone in No. 10 Study with his little paper in his hand, and his limerick still unuttered. When Tom Merry was thinking of cricket, and Manners of photographs, their minds were fully occupied. Lowther grunted. Neither of his chums seemed to understand that there was a good thing going begging, as it were, and that they were missing it.

Monty wandered out of the study. He was not interested in photography, and still less in George Alfred Grundy. What he really wanted was an appreciative audience for that excruciatingly funny limerick. Monty had chuckled over it himself; but naturally he wanted to hear other fellows chuckle over it. Like every literary genius, he found it difficult to keep his good things to himself.

"Weady for a lickin' at cwicket, deah boy?" asked a cheerful voice as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dawned on him, a thing of beauty and a joy for ever in spotless flannels. "Splendid weather for the game, deah boy, isn't it?"

Lowther smiled genially.

"Oh, yes, rather," he answered. "I've got rather a funny limerick here, Gussy—like to hear it?"

"Yas, wathah, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus politely.

"There's a master whose name is—well, well—" began Lowther.

"Bai Jove!" interrupted Arthur Augustus. "Do you mean a mastah at this school, Lowthah?"

"Yes, ass."

"I have nevah heard of a mastah of that name," said D'Arcy, puzzled. "There is a mastah named Wells—the dwavin' mastah. Do you mean Wells?"

"No, I don't! Can't you listen?" demanded Lowther warmly.

"Certainly, deah boy; but I have certainly nevah heard of a mastah or anybody with such a remarkable name as Well-well!" said Arthur Augustus. "I hardly think it can really be a name. There is Lumley-Lumley in the Fourth—"

"Look here—"

"But Well-well is a vewy remarkable name—"

"That isn't the master's name, fathead."

"But you said it was, deah boy."

"If you'd listen, you ass—"

"You are not vewy polite, Lowthah; but I will listen with pleasuah. Pway continue!" said Arthur Augustus courteously.

Lowther continued, breathing a little hard.
 "There's a master whose name is—well, well, Perhaps I had better not tell!"
 "Ah, I see," interjected Arthur Augustus. "Well-well is not the nastah's name, but an interjection of your own. Is that it?"
 "That's it, fathead! Now—"

"I wathah dislike bein' called a fathead, Lowthah," said Arthur Augustus mildly. "Howevah, continue, now I have got it wight."

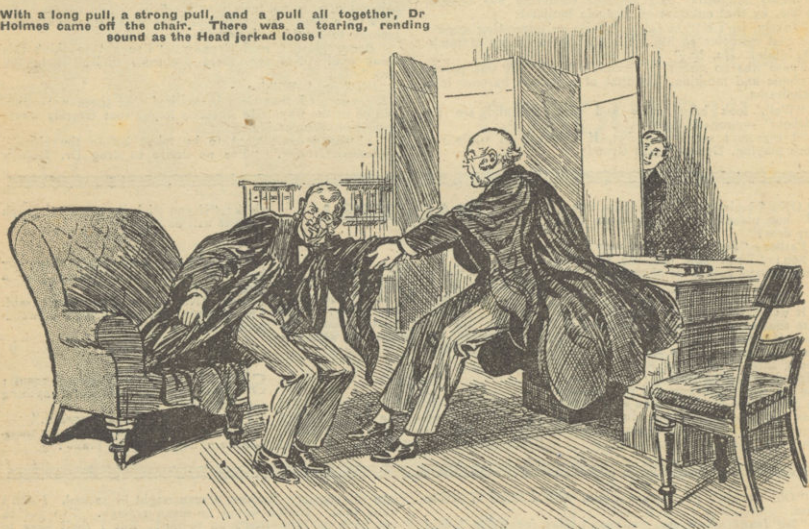
"There's a master whose name is—well, well, Perhaps I had better not tell."
 "You said that befoah, deah boy! Does that come ovah twice?"
 "No!" roared Lowther.

With a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together, Dr Holmes came off the chair. There was a tearing, rending sound as the Head jerked loose!

their effusions upon their suffering acquaintances. Monty gave a little cough and proceeded.

"There's a master whose name is—well, well, Perhaps I had better not tell."
 "When it comes on to rain, His corns give him pain, And he passes it on to the Shell."
 Having recited this execratic limerick, Monty waited for the burst of irresistible merriment to follow. But he waited in vain. It did not follow.

He stared at Blake & Co. They gazed at him with sad faces. Blake appeared to wipe away a tear.
 Monty Lowther breathed hard and deep.
 "What do you think of it?" he hissed.
 "Very nicely put," said Blake. "Very sad, and all that! But, of course, it's a serious subject."
 "Very nice and sympathetic," said Dig. "Quite elegant!"



"But you said it twice, deah boy."
 "I was beginning again, idiot!"
 "I strongly object to bein' called an idiot, Lowthah. If you are goin' to make offensive personal remarks, I think I had better wotire," said Arthur Augustus with dignity.

"You silly ass—"
 "Weally, Lowthah—"
 "You frumpious chump—"
 "I refuse to listen to your offensive remarks, Lowthah." And Arthur Augustus, with his noble nose high in the air, walked away.

Monty Lowther breathed hard and deep. He proceeded along the Fourth-Form passage and looked into Study No. 6. Blake, Herries and Digby were there; and Monty, banishing the frown from his brow, nodded to them and smiled. He had found an audience now.

"You fellows heard that our Beak was on the rampage this morning?" he remarked. "It was rather a coincidence, you know, because I'd just written something on that very subject. Funny, wasn't it?"

Blake & Co. exchanged a glance. They knew what was coming now.

"Like to hear it?" asked Monty Lowther, almost pleadingly.

"Go ahead, old bean," said Blake affably. "There're worse troubles than that in life."

This was not, perhaps, encouraging; but poets, as a rule, require very little in the way of encouragement to spring

"Quite!" said Herries heartily. "I didn't know you went in for serious verse, Lowther. You're generally supposed to be a rather funny merchant."

"That limerick's meant to be funny!" breathed Lowther. Blake gave a start.

"Funny?" he repeated.
 "Yes, you born idiot! Can't you see it's funny?"
 "Well, I didn't notice it," confessed Blake. "Did you fellows notice it?"

He appealed to Herries and Dig. They shook their heads.
 "Well, look here," said Blake, "read it out again! If it's funny, we don't want to miss the fun. Let's have it again."

Monty Lowther read it out again. Blake & Co. listened with careful attention. Then Blake burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Herries and Digby, like an echo. Monty Lowther's brow cleared.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake & Co. "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Strikes you as funny, what?" asked Lowther, greatly pleased by that exuberant demonstration of merriment.

"Well, no," said Blake, calming down. "I can't say exactly that. But you said it was funny, didn't you?"
 "Eh?"

"We're taking your word for it," explained Blake. "You ought to know whether it's funny or not, as you wrote it. We can take a fellow's word in this study."

Monty Lowther looked at them; and then he retired from the study, slamming the door after him with a terrific slam. And Blake & Co. roared again.

CHAPTER 4.

Achilles In His Tent!

"OLD chap!" murmured Wilkins.
 "Old fellow!" said Gunn.
 Grundy of the Shell made no reply.
 He seemed to disdain reply. The appealing words of George Wilkins and William Cuthbert Gunn passed him by, like the idle wind which he regarded not.

Grundy sat in his study—No. 3 in the Shell—with folded arms, frowning brow, and a general attitude of majesty. Wilkins and Gunn had been talking to him for some time. They had made no more impression on Grundy than water makes on a duck. Grundy was impervious to reason.

"Old bean!" said Wilkins. "Look here, come out this afternoon, and—and score for us! We're playing the Fourth, you know."
 Grundy laughed! His majestic solemnity was broken, at last, by that outburst of sardonic laughter.

"Likely, isn't it!" he said. "Quite an interesting scene—the best cricketer at St. Jim's scoring for a set of fumbling duds! Ha, ha!"

There was no mirth in Grundy's laugh. It was purely sardonic and mocking, like that of a wicked baronet in a melodrama.

"Well, look here, come and look on, and see the cricket!" suggested Gunn.

"I shouldn't see any cricket, if I looked on while you were playing, Gunny," said Grundy.

SON: "I always thought India was a hot place where they never need any fires!"

Father: "So it is, my son, very hot."
 Son: "Then how can the Calcutta Sweep make such a lot of money!"

It was the third time Sandy had been late that week, and his teacher had inquired the reason. "Weel, sir," said Sandy, "the road was so slippery that every time I took one step forward I slipped two steps back." "Well," said the teacher, "and how did you manage to reach here at all?" The wily Sandy was not at a loss, but immediately replied: "I pretended to go the other way, sir!"

"Oh, wouldn't you?" said Gunn, with a touch of irritation.

"No fear! You see, you can't play for toffee," said Grundy kindly. "You needn't mind my saying so, Gunny. Some fellows can play cricket—some can't. I happen to be one who can. You happen to be one who can't. That's all."

"That's why Tom Merry puts me in the team and leaves you out, I suppose?" said Gunn tartly, and with sarcasm.

"Exactly! It's what a fool like Merry would do." Wilkins and Gunn exchanged a glance. This was the old Grundy again! Grundy was getting back to normal.

"Well, look here," said Wilkins. "We ain't playing just yet—come out for a stroll, Grundy."

"I've got to think," said Grundy. "You fellows can cut—leave me to it. You can't help me there—thinking ain't in your line."

"Oh, my hat!" said Wilkins.
 "But look here," murmured Gunn, "you'll land yourself in trouble, old man! Linton's awfully sick with you, you know."

"I'll make him sicker!" said Grundy darkly.
 "You can't get back on a Beak, you know," urged Gunn. "You'll only get it hotter and hotter."

"Can't I?" jeered Grundy. "Well, I'm going to. I've been licked twice to-day. Think I'm standing it?"

"Well, you have to, you know."
 "Don't talk rot, Gunny! There's a limit to what I will stand from Linton; and Linton's passed the limit. Naturally, I'm going to get even."

"But a fellow can't," said Wilkins, almost tearfully.
 "Not an ordinary fellow, perhaps," assented Grundy.

"Oh, dear!" said Wilkins.
 Grundy apparently regarded himself as an extraordinary fellow! Perhaps he was right there, in some respects.

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CRACKERS!

"Seems a decent little house of yours," said a man to his friend the other day.

"But why call it the Cloisters?"

"Well," replied the other, "it's 'cloister' the sea, 'cloister' the shops, and 'cloister' the station. So what else would you call it?"

The haughty damsel had been handed back her telegram form with a stamp.

"Must I stick it on myself?" she asked.
 "Not necessarily," said the pert young

clerk; "if you stick it on the telegram form it will do!"

Father to his son: "Is it true, my boy, that your master called you a blockhead?"

Son: "No, father. He merely said, 'Keep your hat on, there's a woodpecker about!'"

SERGEANT (entering barrack-room): "Does any man here know anything about music?"

Private Smith: "Yes, sergeant."

Sergeant: "Then go over to the mess-room and help move the piano!"

into this matter. Besides, a man might be sacked. I don't want that. Linton would be mean enough. I've got to get back on him—that's up to me! But I shall have to use some strategy in the matter."

"Strategy!" murmured Wilkins.
 He wondered what sort of strategy would be evolved from an intellect like Grundy's.

"He's made me sit up!" said Grundy. "Well, I'm going to make him sit up! I'm going to make him properly sorry for himself. I'm going to make his life a burden. But don't you fellows think I'm going to do anything reckless and get the chopper. I'm not going to get sacked. I know this school can't spare a man like me, and I shall not forget that. In the circumstances, I shall act superstitiously."

"Superstitiously!" gasped Wilkins.

"Yes. The hidden hand, you know, and that sort of thing."

"Oh! You mean surreptitiously!" Grundy eyed him coldly.

"I mean what I say—superstitiously," he answered. "I don't want you to teach me English, Wilkins. I got enough cheek of that sort from Linton. I don't like being superstitious; but look at it—I'm driven to it. I believe I told you fellows that I had to leave Redcliffe, where I was before I came to St. Jim's."

"I—I believe so!" gurgled Wilkins.

Grundy had told him those chums about that; perhaps a thousand times, perhaps more.

"I had to leave for punching a prefect," said Grundy.

"He checked me, and I punched him. I had to go. Well, I don't want that to happen here. So I've got no choice about proceeding superstitiously."

He frowned, and shook his head.

"I don't like it; but it's the only way, as the Johnny fellows in the play. Linton's got to have it! That's settled.

I'm going to give up this afternoon to it, while you fellows are playing what you call cricket. You may as well cut."

"I—I wish you'd chuck it, old man," murmured Gunn. "Linton will be quite nice to-morrow—he always is after one of his tantrums."

"I'm going on the warpath," said Grundy calmly. "I'm going to make Linton squirm. I'm going to make him cringe. I haven't quite settled how yet; but I'm going to do it. Now, you fellows, get out, and leave me to think. I can't think while you're jawing."

"Or any other time," murmured Gunn. "Eh—what did you say, Gunn?"

"Nothing, old chap. I wish you'd come out—"

"Rats!"

"It's rather rotten to nurse a grudge, you know."

Grundy glared at him.

"Who's nursing a grudge?" he demanded.

"Well, ain't you?" asked Gunn, in surprise.

"Certainly not! I could forgive the fellow, so far as that goes. But something's due to one's own dignity. It isn't as if he'd licked you, or Wilkins, you know. That wouldn't matter. But he ought to know better than to treat me as he would treat you fellows. Well, he's going to learn better."

Grundy waved his hand towards the door.

"Leave me to it," he said.

And Wilkins and Gunn left him to it.

Outside in the Shell passage they ran into Tom Merry, who was coming to Study No. 3. Tom gave them a cheery nod.

"Grundy at home?" he asked.

"Oh, he's at home!" said Wilkins. "I say, I'm afraid Grundy's going to get into more trouble. He's got a weird idea in his poor old brain of getting back on Linton. Linton's too sick with him now to stand any more rot. Grundy's going to hunt for the sack."

"You talk to him, Merry," said Gunn. "See if you can get a little sense into his head. I know it isn't easy."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I'll try," he said.

"I—I suppose you couldn't stretch a point, and pit him in the cricket for once?" said Wilkins doubtfully. "I know he's no good, of course, but it might keep him out of mischief."

"Just what I'm going to do."

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Wilkins and Gunn together, in great relief.

And they went on their way considerably brightened. Tom Merry threw open the door of Study No. 3, and walked cheerily into the study where the gloomy and majestic Grundy was sulking like Achilles in his tent.

CHAPTER 5.

Grundy all Over!

"O W!" Grundy made that remark involuntarily as Tom Merry came in.

It was caused by a twinge.

Grundy was far from having recovered from his licking yet. Mr. Linton had displayed unsuspected muscular powers in administering the licking, and Grundy shifted uncomfortably in his chair.

"Still feeling it, old bean?" asked Tom.

"Oh, a little!" said Grundy carelessly. "Nothing to speak of. Wow!" he added, as he got another twinge.

Tom Merry smiled.

"We're playing the Fourth at cricket this afternoon, you know, Grundy," he remarked.

"I know you're playing the Fourth," answered Grundy, "and I suppose you'd call it cricket."

"Tom! Well, I've got room for you in the team, if you'd like to play for the Form this afternoon."

Tom had to make an effort to make the offer. But he had made up his mind to it. The words came out a little slowly; but they came out.

Grundy's lips curled.

It was characteristic of Grundy that he didn't understand. If ever there was a wrong conclusion at which George Alfred Grundy could jump, George Alfred was fated to jump at it with both feet.

"Oh!" he sneered.

Tom looked at him. He had expected, at least, that Grundy would be pleased. Grundy had claimed the right to play for the Form, the House, and the School, in season and out of season. He was sublimely ignorant of the fact that his Form was not good enough for a match with the Second. He was convinced that he was the best cricketer in the Lower School. And he doubted whether there was a man in the Upper School who could really

beat him. Even great men like Kildare of the Sixth, and Darrell, and Rushden, hadn't, Grundy considered, his style. In these circumstances Grundy might have been expected to jump at the chance that was now offered him. But with George Alfred Grundy you never could tell.

"Well?" said Tom, rather impatiently.

Grundy's snarl grew more pronounced.

"So you've found it out at last!" he asked.

"Eh—found out what?"

"That you can't do without me."

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom.

"Well, I refuse," said Grundy. "I'm a sportsman, I hope. I could put up with a lot for the sake of the game, but there's a limit. You keep me out of the cricket, just as you kept me out of the football, making out that I'm poor stuff. Now you get into a corner, and want a good man to save your bacon, and you come to me. Well, it's not good enough—see?"

"Oh crumbs!" said Tom.

"I'm not to be made use of like that," said Grundy contemptuously. "I should think you knew me better than to ask me. Give me my rights, as a regular member of the Junior House Eleven, and I'll consider it. But you can't expect to get away with this. I've offered my services, and been refused. Well, now you can go and bag the licking you've been asking for."

"You fabulous ass!" said Tom.

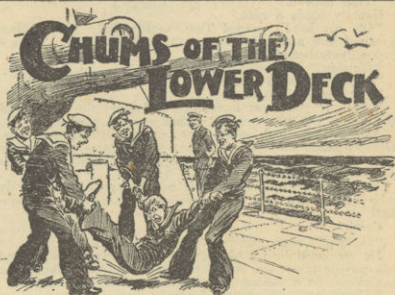
"That's enough! There's the door!"

"You unlimited idiot—"

"I don't want to have to chuck you out of this study, Tom Merry," said Grundy. "I say again, there's the door!"

"You silly chump!" roared Tom. "I'm offering you a place in the Form Eleven because—"

(Continued on next page.)



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"Because you've found out my value at last," sneered Grundy. "You want me to save your bacon to-day. Next time you'll drop me again. I know! Mean to say that you're meaning to play me in the next House match?"

"No jolly fear!"

"I know it! Not unless you have to, to save yourself from being walked over by the New House. Well, I'm not to be made use of like this. Go and eat coke!"

Tom Merry gazed at him.

"Listen to me, you frumptions chump—" he began. "Thanks! I've no time to listen to your silly jaw," answered Grundy. "I'm rather busy this afternoon. Shut the door after you."

The captain of the Shell breathed hard.

"You're not playing, then?" he demanded.

"No!"

"Please yourself, you silly fathead! If you want to know, you're pleasing me, too," snapped Tom. "I expect the fellows would have scalped me for putting you in. You're not wanted to save the match, you fathead! In playing you would be playing a man short, only worse. I was going to give you a chance—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Grundy contemptuously. "Your offer's simply insulting, in all the circumstances, and I've refused it. Don't try to make out now that you don't really want me. That's silly and mean."

"What did they send you to St. Jim's for?" gasped Tom. "There must have been a home for idiots available."

Grundy jumped up.

His temper was not good that day. It was never very reliable, as a matter of fact, and two lickings had not made it any more so.

"That's enough!" he roared. "Another word, you cheezy ass, and you go out of this study on your neck."

"You silly ass—"

"That does it!"

Grundy made a rush.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom, as the hefty Shell fellow grasped him and whirled him towards the door. "You— you silly fathead! Leggo!"

"Outside!" snapped Grundy.

"Leggo!" roared Tom.

"Out you go!"

"Well, if you must have it!" exclaimed the captain of the Shell, his own temper rather excited now.

And he returned grasp for grasp with great vim. Grundy made the discovery then that it was not an easy task to hurl the captain of the Shell bodily into the passage.

The hurling happened; but it was George Alfred Grundy who was hurled. He went across his study like a cannon-ball.

Crash!

"Ooooop!" roared Grundy.

He cannoned into a chair, and sent it flying; staggered against the table, and set it rocking; and then collapsed on the carpet, in a shower of books and papers, pens and ink.

"There, you silly chump!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Whooop!"

The captain of the Shell left the study, leaving Grundy to sort himself out. His visit to Study No. 3 could not be called a success.

Downstairs he came on Monty Lowther

"Manners gone out?" he asked

"Yes, rather," Lowther looked at him. "What's the row? You're looking ruffled."

"That idiot Grundy—" said Tom, rather breathlessly. "If that ass Manners hadn't gone out, I'd play him, after all; but if he's gone out, bless him, I'll have to look for another man—"

"But Grundy—"

"Blow Grundy!" said Tom crossly. "I'll ask a New House man. That howling ass Grundy would make a saint lose his temper! I was a fathead to think of him!"

"You always were a bit of a fathead, old chap! By the way, would you care to hear—"

"Time you changed, Monty. I'll cut across to the New House and get a man."

And Tom Merry walked out of the School House, Monty Lowther cast an expressive glance after his chum. It really seemed as if he never would get that limerick off.

CHAPTER 6.

Grundy's Campaign!

GRUNDY of the Shell strolled along by Masters' Studies with an air of casual carelessness.

His air was so extremely casual, and so exceedingly careless, that it certainly would have attracted a lot of attention had anyone been at hand to observe Grundy.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,162.

Fortunately, nobody was.

It was a half-holiday, and bright, sunny weather, and everybody seemed to be out of doors.

Mr. Linton was out of doors, as Grundy knew for a fact. Grundy had been keeping a surreptitious eye on Mr. Linton, or, as he would have described it himself, a superstitious eye.

Mr. Linton was walking in the quad, in company with Railton, the Housemaster, and Grundy had spotted him from a window. He had noted, too, that Linton still looked cross. Whether it was corns, or whether it was something more serious than corns, undoubtedly Mr. Linton was in a sharp and irritated state of mind that day. He was talking, and Railton was listening politely, and the topic, whatever it was, seemed to draw forth all the acid in Mr. Linton's nature. He could scarcely have been discussing corns; but it was evident that the topic was as disagreeable as corns.

Grundy did not care what it was. All he cared about was the fact that Linton, as he was chatting in the quad, was not in his study, or apparently likely to return there immediately.

Hence the casual, careless stroll of George Alfred along by Masters' Studies. George Alfred was on the war-path.

He reached Mr. Linton's door, and stopped there to give a cautious glance round. Had anyone been in sight, that cautious look round would have given the impression that Grundy was intending to set fire to the study, or to burgle it, at least. Nobody, however, was there to observe Grundy, and he opened Mr. Linton's door and went in.

He closed the door carefully behind him.

His eyes gleamed.

The anguish of that severe licking still lingered in Grundy's hefty person. Probably, when it had worn off, Grundy's keen desire for "getting back" at Linton might wear off also. Grundy was really not the fellow to bear malice for a long time. Just at present, Grundy was in a vengeful mood, and he was in his Form master's study for vengeance.

Rather—much rather—would Grundy have administered punishment to an erring Form master openly, in the sight of men and gods. It was not his way to be surreptitious.

But there was no help for it.

Linton, in licking Grundy, was, in Grundy's opinion, taking an unfair advantage of his position in the school. He could lick Grundy, and nobody said a word—the skies did not fall, as they ought to have done. The universe rolled on its accustomed way, just as if nothing cut of the common had happened. On the other hand, if Grundy licked Linton, the uproar would have been terrific. Grundy could have done it, if it came to that. But the thing was evidently out of the question, even to Grundy.

There were plenty of things that Grundy could not see, but he could see that. So he had to be surreptitious, or else suffer undeserved punishments and indignities in silence. That his punishment was deserved was a reflection that did not occur to Grundy's powerful brain. A fellow couldn't think of everything—at all events, Grundy couldn't.

Taking a large bottle of gum from his pocket, Grundy proceeded to distribute the contents over the seat of Mr. Linton's favourite armchair. He laid it on with a liberal hand.

On the dark leather surface the gum did not show, especially as the high back of the chair was towards the window. It was likely, however, to make its presence felt when anyone sat in that chair.

Grundy grinned as he performed that operation. This was the first step in his campaign, and Grundy considered it rather good.

He turned his attention next to Mr. Linton's desk.

In that desk was a large drawer, where Mr. Linton kept all sorts of business papers, and a cheque-book, and other articles that were often needed.

The drawer was locked; but Grundy did not want to open it. His object was to prevent Mr. Linton from opening it.

Grundy had gone prepared. He had a gimlet, a screw-driver, and a long, thin screw.

With the gimlet he proceeded to bore a hole in the dark oak. Having perforated a hole, he then drove in the screw, driving it well home with the screw-driver. The front of the drawer was now securely fastened to the wood below it. With a powerful twist of the screwdriver Grundy drove the head of the screw well under the surface of the oak.

In the dark wood it was scarcely noticeable, and when Mr. Linton came to open that drawer, it was certain that he would be very much perplexed, and exceedingly irritated.

(Continued on page 12.)

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24-5-30.

BRAINY GRUNDY!

(Continued from page 10.)

Grundy had not finished yet. That is, he had not carried out all his intentions. But he came to a sudden stop.

Footsteps came along to the door.

Grundy jumped.

They were not Linton's footsteps; but somebody was coming to the study. Linton was wagging his chin in the quad, and was safe to wag his chin till something happened to interrupt him. It was sheer ill-luck that somebody else should come along to Linton's study.

Grundy, in laying his surreptitious plans, had not allowed for accidents like that.

His heart beat fast.

By some beastly Beak found him in Linton's study—with the armchair gummed, and the desk-drawer screwed up—Grundy felt quite faint.

It would be a Head's flogging this time. There could be no doubt of that. Grundy did not want a Head's flogging! Very much indeed he did not want one.

He started wildly round the study in search of a hiding-place. Luckily, there was one at hand.

Tap! The tap came at the door just as Grundy whipped behind a screen that stood in a corner near the window.

It was not a very large screen, and Grundy had to crouch a little to keep his head below the level of the top. Grundy was not a small fellow; he was, in fact, an outsize in Shell fellows.

Tap! The tap was repeated, and the door opened.

"My dear Linton—"

Grundy shuddered.

What frightful ill-luck had brought the chief Beak himself to Linton's study?

He nourished a faint hope that the Head, finding the study empty, would merely glance round him, and depart.

Instead of which, Dr. Holmes came into the study, and crossed to the window, and stood looking out into the quad.

Grundy made himself smaller than ever, and scarcely breathed.

The Head, certainly, had no suspicion that anyone was in the study. Grundy, venturing to peer round a corner of the screen, saw Dr. Holmes make a gesture from the window to somebody in the quad. It was a genial gesture, and there was a benevolent smile on the old gentleman's face.

Grundy felt quite sick at the thought that he was gesturing to Mr. Linton. Of course, that was it! The Head had come there to see Linton, and spotting him in the quad, signed to him from the window. Instead of the Head going, Linton was coming!

"Oh crickey!" murmured Grundy inaudibly.

Dr. Holmes turned from the window. He sat down in the armchair to await Mr. Linton's coming. When Grundy heard him settle down comfortably in the armchair, he almost swooned.

The Head was sitting in the gum!

Grundy would have groaned aloud, only he dared not reveal his presence.

The Head was quite unaware of the gum. Probably it was soaking nicely into his scholastic gown.

Grundy wished that the floor would open and swallow him up. But that wish was not likely to be granted.

He could only wait in silent horror.

Footsteps in the passage again. Mr. Linton came into the study.

"My dear sir!" he exclaimed.

The Head did not rise, but he inclined his head graciously to the master of the Shell.

"You are not busy this afternoon, Mr. Linton?"

"Not at all, sir! Someone certainly is calling to see me shortly, but—"

"Well, well, perhaps I had better not take up your time!"

"My dear sir, my time is absolutely yours—this is an honour—a pleasure—"

"Having a few minutes to spare," said the Head benignantly, "I thought I would tell you, sir, of an idea that has occurred to me, concerning that obscure passage in Euripides that we were discussing yesterday."

"I shall be very happy to hear it!" said Mr. Linton heartily. This was a subject that could be relied upon to "buck" the master of the Shell. Every trace of irritation vanished from his countenance at the mention of Euripides.

He sat down in the chair at his desk.

"You do not feel a draught from the window, sir?" he asked solicitously.

"Not at all!"

"I will place the screen—" Mr. Linton half rose, and Grundy felt his heart: drop down somewhere in the region of his boots.

"No, no! Pray do not trouble."

Mr. Linton sat down again, and Grundy breathed.

The following quarter of an hour was extremely enjoyable to Mr. Linton and his chief. It was not enjoyable to Grundy.

Grundy took no interest whatever in Euripides. The thrashing out of an obscure passage in that ancient Grecian gentleman awoke no enthusiasm in his breast. He did not care in the least what Euripides had meant by that passage, if he had meant anything at all, which Grundy doubted.

But the two old gentlemen pursued the topic joyously. Together they thrashed it out: they evolved a meaning from verses which had baffled the most pertinacious and bald-headed commentators for generations; they tracked Euripides to his lair, as it were, and fairly pinned him down.

Minutes passed like seconds to the Head and Mr. Linton. They passed like centuries to the unhappy Grundy.

How long the two old donkeys—Grundy actually thought of his Form master and his headmaster as two old donkeys!—would have gone on, it is impossible to say; but there came an interruption.

Toby, the page, tapped at the door.

"Gentleman to see you, sir—Mr. Slooth, sir."

Mr. Linton started as from a happy dream.

"Oh! Kindly ask Mr. Slooth to wait a few moments, Toby."

"Yessir!"

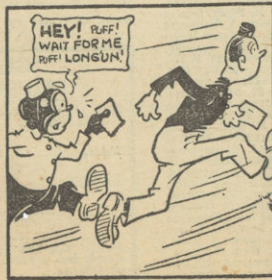
"Most annoying," said Mr. Linton, rising. "Very annoying indeed! In fact, extremely annoying."

"Not at all, sir," said the Head. "We will resume this very interesting discussion another time, my dear Linton."

And the Head rose.

That is he tried to rise

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To his amazement, he found himself adhering to Mr. Linton's armchair.

In his utter astonishment, the Head sank back again, with a gasp.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated.

"What—"

Mr. Linton blinked at him.

The Head made another effort. But he had been sitting in the gum too long; and it had stuck and hardened on his gown. The gown was a fixture. It jerked Dr. Holmes back as he strove to rise, and he fairly collapsed in the chair.

"My dear sir, what—what—" ejaculated the master of the Shell.

The Head gasped.

"I—I—I appear to be—to be adhering to—to the chair!" he said faintly. "This—is this is very extraordinary! I—I cannot rise from this chair, Mr. Linton!"

"Dr. Holmes!"

"There must be something—something of an adhesive nature in the chair. It is sticking to me!"

"Goodness gracious!"

Mr. Linton, horror-stricken, jumped to the assistance of his chief.

"This is most extraordinary!" he stammered.

"Most extraordinary!" snapped the Head. "Really, Mr. Linton, I am bound to say that it is excessively careless to spill gum, or glue, or whatever the substance may be, on the seat of a chair—"

"But—but I am sure that I have not done so!" exclaimed the master of the Shell, in bewilderment. "I cannot understand it—"

"Neither can I!" said the Head tartly. "But it is beyond doubt that I am adhering to this chair!"

"Goodness gracious me! I—"

"Pray give me your assistance!"

Mr. Linton gave the Head his assistance, and the Head made another effort. With a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together, Dr. Holmes came off the chair. There was a tearing, rending sound, and the Head jerked loose.

Dr. Holmes' face was almost crimson as he gazed at a remnant of his gown sticking to the seat of the chair.

"Really, Mr. Linton!" he said.

"I—I—I (ai) to understand! I—I—"

Mr. Linton seemed unable to do anything but babble.

The Head swept to the door.

"I—I assure you, sir—" gurgled Mr. Linton.

The Head departed.

Mr. Linton passed his hand across his brow. He was quite overcome. Such a dreadful happening, when the Head honoured him with a visit in his study, was enough to unnervise any Form master.

Dr. Holmes whisked away at an unaccustomed speed. With a tail-piece torn out of his gown, he was anxious to escape the public eye. Generally the Head of St. Jim's was calm, equable, good-tempered. But he was angry now—deeply angry and annoyed. Persons whom he passed on his way to his own study, could see that he was angry, and wondered at the speed he was putting on. And when they gazed after him in his flight, their gaze became fixed, as if mesmerised.

"Goodness gracious me!" said Mr. Linton faintly.

"What—who—how— Upon my word— What—what—"

Slowly understanding dawned upon him as he gazed at the

chair. "This is a trick! A practical joke! It was intended for me! And the Head— Good heavens!"

"Mr. Slooth, sir!" said Toby's voice.

"Oh! Ah, yes, Show Mr. Slooth in!" gasped Mr. Linton, remembering his unwelcome caller.

And Mr. Slooth was shown into the study—and Mr. Linton waved him to a chair—not the armchair.

CHAPTER 7.

Awful!

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY, wedged in the corner behind the screen, would have given all his great expectations from his Uncle Grundy for the floor to open and swallow him; or, alternatively, as the lawyers say, for the loan of a cloak of darkness in which to make his escape.

But there was no escape for Grundy.

The Head was gone, though Grundy had had a feeling that he would never go. Now Mr. Linton's caller was in the study; and Grundy was still a prisoner. Grundy had never dreamed of dreadful happenings like this when he had set out to "get back" on Linton.

How it was going to end, Grundy could not guess. But he had a feeling that he would scream soon.

Almost was he tempted to take the bull by the horns, as it were, and come recklessly out into the open and face the music. But after what had happened to the Head, that was impossible. Sticking Linton with gum would have been serious enough. But sticking the Head—Grundy's brain almost swam as he thought of it.

The voices of Mr. Linton and his caller came to Grundy.

"Pray be seated!" Mr. Linton was saying. "I am, of course, aware of the object of your call, sir!"

"Quite so!" said Mr. Slooth.

"I am bound to remark, sir, that I disapprove—disapprove very strongly—of these new methods, sir!" said Mr. Linton.

"My dear sir!" said Mr. Slooth deprecatingly.

"I do not blame you, sir—you are doubtless acting on instructions," said Mr. Linton. "I blame those who have issued such instructions."

"It is open to you, sir, of course, to forward your cheque at the proper date!" suggested Mr. Slooth.

"No doubt, sir!" said Mr. Linton tartly. "But it may not be convenient to do so. It is not always easy to raise a large sum of ready money—large, that is to say, for a man of my means."

"Quite so, sir!" said Mr. Slooth, in a soothing voice, speaking like a man accustomed to soothe. "Quite so! But as the time of grace has now expired, and proceedings are about to be taken—"

Grundy opened his eyes wide.

He guessed now why Mr. Linton had been so perturbed and cross that morning in class.

He had been expecting this caller; some fellow, apparently, who was sunning Linton for money!

It occurred to Grundy that this was a private matter—a very private matter—a matter to which no other ears should listen.

But Grundy could not help himself.

He had to stay where he was; or take the consequences for sticking his headmaster to the armchair.

(Continued on next page.)

A MESSAGE FOR THE "MARE"!



They're the world's prize mirth-makers—bar none!

That was not to be thought of. Grundy could only understudy Brer Rabbit—lie low and say nuffin'.

"Proceedings are about to be taken!" snapped Mr. Linton.

"In the usual course, sir! To-day is the very last date—hence my personal call."

"This amounts to persecution!" said Mr. Linton. "One might as well be living in Russia."

Mr. Slooth coughed. "I have heavy expenses to meet!" said Mr. Linton. "I have a nephew, sir—but that, of course, does not concern you. I mention it merely as the reason why I have not, as usual, forwarded my cheque on the due date."

Grundy's eyes opened wider. This sounded as if old Linton had been buying something on the hire-purchase system. If so, he seemed to be finding the system of "easy payments" far from easy!

"Until my next receipt of salary, sir, it is most inconvenient to draw this cheque!" grunted Mr. Linton.

"No doubt, sir!" Mr. Slooth's voice had the soothing tone again. Evidently he was accustomed to seeing people who found it inconvenient to draw cheques. "But I fear it is a matter of necessity, sir!"

"Necessity, sir!" repeated Mr. Linton, in a sardonic voice. "Oh, quite! I fully understand that! Whatever else may be unnecessary, we must agree in regarding the exactions of the Inland Revenue Department as necessary."

Grundy nearly jumped. He understood now! It was income-tax! He had heard his Uncle Grundy making remarks on that subject, so he knew the feelings of the victim. He had heard Uncle Grundy say almost blood-curdling things about income-tax, and the collectors thereof.

"Necessity knows no law!" pursued Mr. Linton, in the same sardonic vein. "I hear that the Prime Minister's salary is to be raised! Personally, I should be satisfied with an income of five thousand a year. Moreover, we must meddle in Asiatic countries, and meddling must be paid for. And we must build battleships. It is true that they are useless in war; but no doubt they are highly ornamental in peace-time. I do not dispute for one moment, sir, the necessity of these exactions."

Really, it was not quite cricket on Mr. Linton's part to take it out of the collector in this way.

The collector really had nothing to do with it, except to get in the supply of cash for unthinking politicians to waste.

But Mr. Slooth did not seem to mind. He was a polite gentleman, like all tax-collectors; and so far as patient politeness could do it, he was prepared to temper the wind to the shorn lamb.

So long as the cash was forthcoming, there was no objection to the victim blowing off a little steam along with it.

"But we are wasting time!" added Mr. Linton.

Mr. Slooth's expression seemed to hint that this reflection had already occurred to him.

"I will not keep you one moment, sir!" said Mr. Linton. "Fortunately, in spite of very heavy calls that have been made on me, I have succeeded in putting aside the necessary sum. I will draw the cheque immediately, sir!"

Mr. Linton put his hand to the drawer. He unlocked it, and pulled. It did not open.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mr. Linton, greatly irritated.

Mr. Linton had had much to try his temper that day. There had been a polite note from Mr. Slooth by the first post, intimating that he was calling that afternoon. Then there had been Grundy! Then there had been the sticking of the headmaster to the armchair. And now, for some weird and unaccountable reason, the desk drawer would not open; and in that drawer was Mr. Linton's cheque-book.

"Really," said Mr. Linton, "this is most—most annoying! What ever can be the matter with this drawer?"

He tugged.

But the drawer remained fast. There were few things that Grundy could do well; but when it came to driving home a screw, Grundy was all there. He could do that thoroughly, and he had done it.

"I—I cannot understand this!" gasped Mr. Linton. "This morning the drawer opened with perfect ease. My cheque-book is in this drawer! It is most annoying."

He rose from his chair, took hold of the handle of the drawer with both hands, and tugged.

An expression of incredulity was dawning upon the polite features of Mr. Slooth.

If this belated taxpayer, on the very last possible date of payment after the last period of grace was up, could not pay because he could not get at his cheque-book, it was very extraordinary—very extraordinary indeed.

It was, in fact, too extraordinary. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,162.

Mr. Slooth was accustomed to all sorts of wiles on the part of those who couldn't or wouldn't pay up. He could not help a slightly ironical expression creeping over his face, as Mr. Linton tugged in vain at the desk drawer.

"I cannot open it!" gasped Mr. Linton.

"Hem!" "It is very unfortunate—" "Very unfortunate indeed!" said Mr. Slooth, with accentuated dryness.

Mr. Linton flushed hotly.

Grasping the handle again with both hands, Mr. Linton put his beef into it. There was a good deal of sinewy strength in Mr. Linton, when he really exerted himself.

Mr. Linton reeled back and with a crash collapsed against the screen.



From the way he tugged this time, something was bound to go. The screwed drawer remained fast; it was the handle that went. It came off suddenly in Mr. Linton's grasp; so suddenly, that he was utterly unprepared for the surrender, and he shot over backwards with the handle in his hands.

"Ooooooh!" Back went Mr. Linton, reeling and staggering wildly, to collapse with a crash against the screen.

Crash! The screen spun over.

There was a howl of alarm. "Yaroooooh!"

Grundy had not known how this awful state of affairs would end. He had not been able to guess. Now he knew. It ended with the screen crashing over on him, and Mr. Linton crashing over on the screen!

Grundy was taken quite by surprise. The screen, smashing on his head, burst, and settled round his neck like a collar. Grundy's head came through it.

As his head emerged through the screen, Grundy blinked almost idiotically, in an utterly flabbergasted state.

"Woooooooooh!" he gasped. Mr. Linton scrambled up.

CHAPTER 8.

Poor Old Grundy!

He stared at Grundy.

Grundy stared back.

Mr. Linton tried to speak. Words would not come! Choking, he gazed at the head that stuck out of the screen as if out of a gigantic horse-collar.

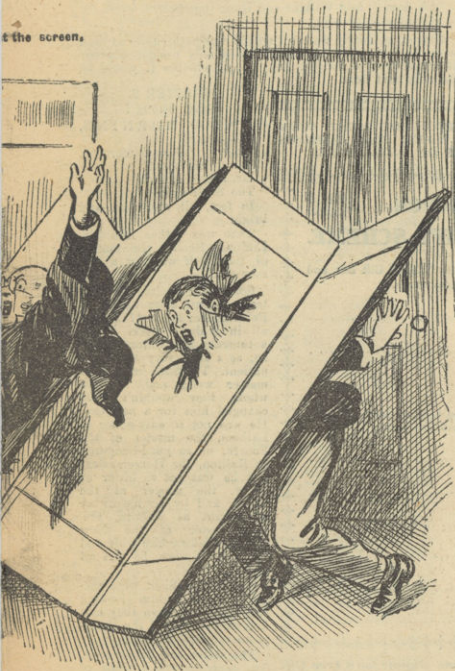
Mr. Slooth, on his feet now, gazed on in amazement.

Many strange experiences came Mr. Slooth's way in his career as a collector of taxes. But this was the strangest of all.

He fairly gaped.

Grundy was the first to recover. His powerful brain did not, as a rule, work quickly. But the gathering intensity

the screen,



of expression in Mr. Linton's speaking countenance was a warning to him. He scrambled up, his only thought being to flee for his life.

Mr. Linton found his voice.

"Grundy!"

He sprang to the study table. There was a cane there. It took Mr. Linton only a second to reach that cane and grasp it.

But a second was ample for Grundy.

Grundy made a wild leap for the door, the burst screen still hanging round his neck. Scarcely conscious of it in his wild haste, Grundy belted out the cry.

"Gr-r-r-rundy!" gasped Mr. Linton.

He sprang to the door, heedless and forgetful of Mr. Slooth, and of the whole Inland Revenue Department.

But Grundy was going strong.

Like the gentlemen in "Macheth," he stood not upon the order of his going, but went at once. He did the passage in record time. His feet seemed scarcely to touch the floor. At the corner, he shed the remains of the screen, then he vanished.

"Gr-r-r-rundy!"

Grundy was gone,

"Bai Jove! What's that?"

Arthur Augustus was quite startled.

Tom Merry & Co. were coming in to a rather late tea after the cricket. The Shell had won the Form match, doubtless because Grundy had not been there to help. But they had won it only by a narrow margin, and Arthur Augustus was explaining that that margin would have been narrowed to vanishing point, but for the extraordinary fluke by which Talbot of the Shell had taken his—Gussy's—wicket. Talbot had taken several other Fourth Form wickets by good bowling, such as Piggins' and Blake's and Fatty Wynne's. He had taken Gussy's by an extraordinary fluke, or Gussy was convinced that he had. Gussy was expatiating eloquently on that topic as the late adversaries came in to tea together—a feast being on in Study No. 10—when he was interrupted by a strange, ghastly, and dismal sound from Study No. 3 in the Shell, as the juniors were passing the door of that apartment.

Groan!

It was a deep, horrid, hair-raising groan. It told of somebody in deep anguish.

All the cricketers halted.

"Is that Grundy?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! It's Gwunday's studay! What the deuce—"

Groan!

"Sounds as if something's happened to Grundy!" remarked Lowther.

"Been reading him your limerick?" asked Blake.

"You silly ass—"

Groan!

Something evidently had happened to Grundy—something of a painful nature. Tom Merry opened the door of the study, and the juniors looked in.

Grundy was there. Wilkins and Gunn had not yet come in after the cricket, and the great George was alone.

He was standing up. His face was quite pale. Signs of suffering were imprinted all over that pale face.

He did not speak as the little crowd of juniors looked in. He gazed at them in anguished silence.

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah, doah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, deeply concerned.

Grundy wriggled and gave a deep and dismal groan. He was evidently unable to sit down, and he seemed unable to keep still. Like the young man of Hythe, who was shaved with a scythe, he did nothing but wriggle and writhe.

"Licked again!" asked Tom Merry.

Grundy nodded silently.

"Linton?"

"The Head!" said Grundy, in a hollow voice.

"Phew! A flogging?"

Groan!

"What have you been up to?" asked Blake.

Groan!

Words, apparently, could not express Grundy's feelings. He found relief in groans. Obviously, the flogging had been one of unusual severity. Grundy, it was clear, had not been enjoying his half-holiday.

"Sorry," said Tom. "But surely you haven't been checking the Head, Grundy! Even you—"

"How was I to know he'd come to Linton's study and sit in the chair?" asked Grundy, in the same hollow voice.

"Just after I'd fixed it up with gum for Linton—"

"Oh, my only Aunt Sempronia!"

"How was I to know that Linton would pull the handle of the drawer I'd screwed up?" moaned Grundy. "And even if he did, there was no reason why he should wallop on the screen where I was in cover, was there? Only an old idiot like Linton would have done it!"

"Bai Jove!"

"But for that I might have got clear, and they'd never have known who gummed the chair and screwed up the drawer," moaned Grundy. "I was doing my best to do the whole thing in a superstitious way—"

"Great pip!"

"I bolted!" said Grundy drearily. "I think Linton would have slain me on the spot if I hadn't bolted! But what was the use? Kidaro of the Sixth rounded me up and took me to the Head! Linton was there, looking like a tiger—a Royal Bengal! I never thought a Form master could look so ferocious! Ow, ow!"

"Well, of all the thumping fatheads—" said Blake.

"Of all the born idiots—" said Herries.

"Of all the fragious dummies—" said Dig.

Grundy nodded.

"He's all that, and more," he said, apparently taking these remarks as referring to Mr. Linton; "and a savage beast, too! Perfectly savage and as bitter as vinegar! I believe he wanted the Head to sack me instead of flogging!"

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me. "Ow!" Grundy groaned. "I shall have to be jolly careful next time, or it may be barking!"

"Next time!" exclaimed Tom Merry, agabst. "I should think this time was enough, Grundy. Cut out the next time!"

"Yeas, wathah!"

"Think I'm standing this!" said Grundy bitterly. "Why, I'm going to make him, cringe! I'm going to make him crawl! I'm going to turn his hair grey—what he's got left! I can tell you why he was so savage in Form this morning. They're dunning him for his income-tax, and he took it out of me!"

"But your con, old man?" hinted Tom.

"My con was all right, Ow!"

"Aneas didn't really turn over in bed that time, you know," grinned Monty Lowther.

"Virgil says he did. Ow! Taking it out of me because they're chasing him for his income-tax, and making out that my translation was wrong just as a miserable excuse! Ow! What do you think of that for a Form master?" asked Grundy, with deep bitterness. "I call it rotten."

"But—but you were wrong, old bean—"

"Don't be a fool, Merry!"

"Oh!"

"And you told him that you hadn't time for prep, you know," grinned Lowther.

"Well, I hadn't," said Grundy. "I suppose he didn't want me to tell him a lie, did he?"

Grundy, unthinkingly, dropped into a chair. The next moment he leaped to his feet, with a wild yell, as if the chair were red-hot.

"Wow!"

"Poor old Grundy!" said Arthur Augustus. "It's weally fwightfully hard on you, deah boy. In my opinion, Linton ought to take into consideration what an uttah ass you are—"

"What?"

"I mean, if a fellow with any bwains did as you did, he ought to be flogged, of course," said D'Arcy innocently. "But in your case, Linton should weally have remembered that you are practically an idiot—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys, it is not a laughin' mattah. I think it is vewy hard on Grundy to be treated like this when he is weally hardy responsible for his actions. I do not believe in twainin' a fool accordin' to his folly, you know. Some allowance should be made for a fellow when he's as fawed-up as Grundy— Yawwooh!" roared Arthur Augustus suddenly, as a cushion whizzed across the study and caught him under his noble chin.

Arthur Augustus sat down in the doorway.

"Oh cwumbis! Are you mad, Grundy?" he gasped. "What do you mean by hurtin' a cushion at me in that wuffianly mannah when I am sympathisin' with you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

Grundy gave the swell of St. Jim's a ferocious glare. He did not appear to have any use for Gussy's tactful sympathy.

"Bai Jove! I have a gweat mind to give you a feahful twishavin' you uttah wottah!" gasped Arthur Augustus, scrambling up in great wrath. "I wogad you as an ungratefual beast, Grundy!"

"I wogad you as an ungratefual beast, Grundy!"

"Come on, you fellows; I'm fed up with Grundy!"

And Arthur Augustus marched off in high dudgeon; and Tom Merry & Co., chucking, followed him.

Grundy was left to groan at his leisure.

He was still groaning when Wilkins and Gunn came in to tea. Wilkins and Gunn stared at him. Grundy told them what had happened while they were playing cricket—what they called cricket.

"Oh, my hat!" said Wilkins.

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"Oh, my word!" said Gunn.

"I say, you were lucky to get off with a flogging, old bean!" said Wilkins. "It might have been the push. I fancy the Beak must have made some allowance for you, because—" Wilkins paused in time. He had more tact than Gussy.

"You'll get over it, old chap," said Gunn comfortingly. "Anyhow, you know now that it's no good trying to get back on a Beak. You'll give Linton a miss in bank after this."

"Don't be a silly idiot, Gunn."

"But—but you ain't japing Linton any more after this, are you, Grundy?" ejaculated Wilkins.

"Don't be a babbling fawthead, Wilkins!"

"Oh dear!" said Wilkins and Gunn together.

And they gave it up.

Grundy evidently was still on the war-path—more so than ever, in fact. And his friends could only wonder whether it would lead to another flogging, or whether it would be the sack next time.

CHAPTER 9.

Going Strong!

"GOOD-MORNING, sir!"

"Good-morning, my boys!"

Mr. Linton smiled.

The Shell smiled.

In fact, all was calm and bright.

That was rather like Mr. Linton. Really, the master of the Shell was not a bad sort at all.

Sometimes he had his tantrums. But, after all, what Form master has not? It was all in a day's work. After a tantrum Mr. Linton would be, as a rule, very kind and patient. The Shell knew their master well; and, on the whole, they wouldn't have changed him for a new one. He was not so easy-going as Lathom, the master of the Fourth, or so good-tempered as Railton, the Housemaster; but he was not so bitter as Sully, the master of the Third, and by no means so unpleasant as Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House. Taking him wide and large, as it were, he was all right.

Few of the Shell were surprised to see him looking very pleasant when they met him at the door of the Form-room the next morning.

The storm had blown over.

The tantrum was a thing of the past. Besides, the fellows knew now that it wasn't corns, but a more serious matter than corns. Grundy had let out what it was. Allowances could be made for a gentleman who was tracked down by a ruthless tax-collector. The Shell, happily, were not old enough yet to have come under the eagle eyes of the Inland Revenue Department. But they could guess that it wasn't nice. So, with one exception, the Shell was prepared to overlook Mr. Linton's tantrums—especially as, according to custom, he followed it up by smiling good-humour.

The exception was Grundy.

George Alfred Grundy had suffered more than the rest of the Form. He was blissfully ignorant that it was his own fault. So he was still in the mood of the ancient prophet, and felt that he did well to be angry.

Grundy, no doubt, would have forgiven Mr. Linton had he succeeded in making that gentleman sit up, according to programme. But there had been a serious hitch in the programme. It had worked out in reverse order. It was Grundy who had been made to sit up—to such an extent that he had been unable to sit down!

Moreover, Grundy had vowed—and all the Shell knew that he had vowed—to make Linton cringe. Grundy was a fellow of his word.

Fact: in the Shell were quite cheery that morning—excepting Grundy's. Grundy's rugged countenance wore an expression of fixed gloom.

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Ask two chums, to whom you have shown your name in this list, to sign in the space provided below.

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Witnesses automatically become eligible for a Free Gift

Mr. Linton seemed to have forgotten Grundy's offences of the previous day. No doubt he regarded that matter as over and done with—being ignorant that it was Grundy's intention yet to make him eringe.

He called on Grundy to construe; and Grundy's con, as usual, was calculated to make a stone image smile.

But this time Mr. Linton was very patient. Gently he pointed out that Grundy's errors—without, however, convincing Grundy that they were errors.

Grundy had his own opinion about that. While Mr. Linton wondered how a fellow could be so obtuse as Grundy, Grundy wondered how a Form master could be so fatheaded as Mr. Linton.

Several times, in first and second lesson that morning, Grundy earned lines, if not the cane. But he did not get what he earned. Mr. Linton was patient and urbane.

Grundy was still unlined and uncaned, as it were, when the Shell went out in break.

And he was still implacable. "Linton's jolly good-tempered this morning!" Wilkins remarked as they went out into the quad.

"Sunshine after the shower, you know," said Gunn, with a grin. "He's not a bad old merchant, really."

Grunt—from Grundy. Monty Lowther joined the three Shell fellows. There was a smile on Monty's face, a sort of ingratiating smile. Any fellow who knew Lowther knew that smile and what it meant.

"I don't think you've heard my limerick," said Monty. "Oh, go and bury it!" said Wilkins. "It's rather funny," said Monty. "About jolly old Linton—"

"Oh, let's hear it, then!" said Grundy. "I dare say it's rot; but let's hear the thing if it's about Linton."

This was not the appreciation that Monty desired, but it was better than nothing. A humorist is always in the rather unfortunate position that he simply must get other fellows to listen to his humour. So the other fellows have the upper hand. They can do without the humorist, but the humorist cannot do without them.

Monty recited his limerick. Blessed with a keen sense of humour, Monty could see how funny that limerick was. But other fellows somehow did not seem to be frightfully tickled.

"But it wasn't corns, after all, yesterday," said Gunn, when he heard it. "It was income-tax."

"Yes; Grundy heard a man dunning him," said Wilkins, shaking his head. "You're off-side, Lowther."

"Poor stuff," said Grundy. "Very poor stuff."

Grundy & Co. walked on, leaving Monty Lowther with feelings too deep for words—at least, such words as a St. Jim's fellow was supposed to use.

But Grundy's brow was thoughtful. He did not speak for several minutes, and his chums looked at him, wondering what was the matter.

"That's an idea," said Grundy, at last. "That ass Lowther can't make up a limerick. I fancy I could. Something that would make Linton sit up and take notice. By Jove, I've got it!"

"Look here, you'd better let Linton alone," said Wilkins uneasily. "I've told you that I'm going to get back on Linton, Wilkins. It's up to me. Don't jaw."

"But look here—urged Gunn. "Don't jaw, either, Grundy. I'm thinking!" Grundy sorted out a pencil and an old envelope from his pocket, and sat on one of the benches under the elms. His rugged brow was deeply corrugated with thought. Apparently, having derived an idea from Monty Lowther, Grundy was in the throes of composition. Wilkins and Gunn exchanged a hopeless glance, and left him to it.

Grundy, apparently, was successful. When he had finished his composition, whatever it was, he grinned over it with great satisfaction. Shortly before break ended Grundy was seen walking briskly towards the House. He came on Monty Lowther any gave him a cheery grin. Lowther gave him a gloomy look in return.

"Listen to this," said Grundy. "'I's rather more to the point than your rather weak stuff, Lowther:—

"There's a merchant—I'm stating the facts— Who gets in a terrible wax, When a Johnny looks in, And says, with a grin,

"Will you kindly hand over your 'ax?'" "Ha, ha, ha!" wound up Grundy. "Ha, ha, ha! What do you think of that for a limerick. Lowther? Hardly in your line—what?"

Like many humorists, Lowther was not easily appreciable to the humour of others. He gazed sedately at Grundy. Not a ripple of merriment appeared on his face.

"I think that's pretty good!" chuckled Grundy. "You would!" agreed Lowther.

"Likely to make Linton sit up—what?"

"More likely to make him fall down," said Monty. "But suppose you're not going to show it to Linton. Do you want another lot on the same place?"

"I'm going to show it to him, but superstitiously," explained Grundy. "I'm going to chalk this on the blackboard in the Form-room. He won't know who did it—see?"

"Oh, my hat! You benighted ass—"

"Grundy did not heed. He went into the house, and made his way surreptitiously—or superstitiously, as he would have expressed it himself—to the Form-room. He came out again with a cheery grin on his face.

When the bell rang for third school, Grundy marched in with the Shell, still smiling. He felt that he was getting on at last in his campaign of "getting Lack" on Linton.

CHAPTER 10.

A Narrow Escape I

TOM MERRY & Co. stared. They came trooping into the Form-room, and found their Form master already there.

Mr. Linton was standing before the blackboard. He was gazing at it, with a strange fixedness. Naturally, the Shell fellows followed his gaze. And they stared blankly when they saw what was chalked on the board.

Grundy had carried out his fell intention. Some of the Shell were puzzled by what they saw. Mr. Linton seemed puzzled. Wilkins and Gunn exchanged a hopeless look. Monty Lowther shrugged his shoulders. Tom Merry looked quite aghast. Owing to Grundy's revelations most of the Shell knew all about Mr. Linton's adventures with the tax-collector. So most of them were able to grasp at once the true inwardness of that remarkable limerick chalked on the blackboard. Oddly enough, Mr. Linton did not seem to grasp it.

That, doubtless, was owing to the strange and original system of orthography favoured by George Alfred Grundy. Grundy prided himself upon the fact that he was not cast in a common mould. And Grundy's spelling, undoubtedly, was cast in a very uncommon mould.

Had Grundy recited that limerick, doubtless its meaning would have been perfectly clear. Orally, it could not have been missed. But when Grundy wrote it down, the matter was quite different. It ran:

"There's a merchant—I'm stating the facts— Who gets in a terrible wax, When a Johnny looks in, And says, with a grin,

'Will you kindly hand over your tacks?'"

Mr. Linton's expression was one of perplexity. He seemed to be trying to make head or tale of that limerick, and failing.

He turned to the class at last. The Shell almost held their breath.

Grundy winked at Wilkins. He had been careful, of course, to leave no clue to the perpetrator of that impertinent limerick. He had chalked it in capital letters. So far as Grundy could see, there was nothing to connect him with it. And Linton could hardly jump on a fellow on suspicion.

So it came rather as a surprise to Grundy when the master of the Shell called to him:

"Grundy!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped the surprised Grundy.

"You should not chalk on the blackboard in the Form-room, Grundy. You know that very well," said Mr. Linton. Grundy blinked at him.

"I don't see why I should be picked on, sir!" he said sulkily.

Grundy, of course, had done it. He would not have told an untruth about it. Still, it was rank injustice to pick on him like this, without the slightest evidence—that Grundy could see.

Mr. Linton smiled faintly. "I have no doubt that this is your work, Grundy."

"Indeed, sir!" grunted Grundy.

"You are the only boy in this Form who would spell in such a very extraordinary manner," explained Mr. Linton. "Spell!" repeated Grundy.

"Any boy in the Second Form, Grundy, could tell you that 'facts' is not spelt with a 'k,'" said Mr. Linton.

"Oh! Isn't it?" said Grundy, rather warmly.

"And 'grin' is spelt with an 'i,' not with a 'y,' Grundy."

"Oh!" said Grundy.

"For these reasons I have no doubt that you chalked this very peculiar verse on the blackboard, Grundy! No other boy in the Shell is so backward in the spelling of simple words!"

Grundy was silent. Apparently he had, after all, left a clue behind him!

But what puzzled Grundy was, why Linton was not looking waxy! Surely the gibe contained in that limerick would have made any master waxy! Now that Linton knew that it was Grundy who had done it, Grundy would have expected a thunderstorm. Instead of which, Mr. Linton seemed quite good-tempered.

"Composition, I think, Grundy, is not your forte," said the master of the Shell. "Nevertheless, I am glad to see you take some interest even in so trifling a thing as the composition of a limerick, as I believe this kind of effusion is termed. Any attempt at exercising your mental powers, such as they are, can only be for your good."

Grundy could only blink.

For some inexplicable reason—inexplicable to Grundy, at least—Linton was missing the point of that gibe. Now he knew it was Grundy, Grundy certainly was glad that he missed it; Grundy did not want another Head's flogging. Still, it was perplexing.

"But you should not use the blackboard for such things," said Mr. Linton. "That is not allowed, as you very well know. But I will pass it over on this occasion, but it must not occur again!"

"Oh!" gasped Grundy.

Mr. Linton picked up the duster.

"Since you appear to be taking an interest in composition, even of so simple a thing as er—limericks, Grundy," continued the master of the Shell, "I will point out, for your guidance, that the simplest composition should have a point of some sort. In this case, you appear to have composed certain lines with no point whatever."

"Oh!" gasped Grundy again.

It seemed to him that the "point" was staring Linton in the face. He did not realise how completely it was hidden by his remarkable spelling.

"In this verse," said Mr. Linton, while the Shell listened breathlessly, "you state that a merchant gets into a wax. I presume the word is meant for wax, and I presume that the word 'wax' implies anger—because a person calls and asks him for tacks. Now a merchant—presumably an ironmonger—who dealt in tacks would naturally be pleased by a customer coming in and asking him for tacks. It would be his business to supply them. There would be no occasion for anger."

"Oh!" gasped Grundy.

"Oh!" gasped the Shell.

"There is, therefore, no point at all in these verses," said Mr. Linton. "You see that now, Grundy?"

Grundy could only gasp.

"In any composition, even of the simplest kind," said Mr. Linton, "you should not be content with merely stringing rhyming lines together. You should have something to say, and you should say it. Do you follow me, Grundy?"

"Oh! Ah! Yes!" gurgled Grundy.

"As it is absurd to suppose that a merchant would be displeased by being asked to hand over goods that he would naturally be glad to supply, your lines totally lack point and meaning."

"Oh! Ah!"

"Bear that in mind, Grundy, and be more careful, even in such trifling matters as these," said Mr. Linton. "Then you will do better next time—but not," he added, with a smile, "on the blackboard."

And with that Mr. Linton wiped out Grundy's limerick. The Shell fellows looked at one another.

Grundy had had a narrow escape—a frightfully narrow escape. Had Mr. Linton penetrated the smoke-screen of Grundy's spelling, certainly he would have been intensely exasperated by that cheeky reference to his personal affairs. Fortunately he hadn't! Grundy's remarkable orthography had often caused him trouble. Now it had saved him. And Grundy realised that he had had a narrow escape, and was glad of it; but he was quite at a loss to know how and why.

Anyhow, the limerick had missed fire, that was certain. Third lesson went on in the Shell room, Mr. Linton quite undisturbed and genial.

Grundy was still in a state of great perplexity when the Shell came out after class.

"Is the man an absolute fool?" he asked the other fellows, in the quad. "He was sharp enough in guessing that I'd done it—and yet he couldn't see the point of the thing. It beats me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You benighted, burbling bandersnatch!" said Manners. "Did you mean the last word in that piddle for tax?"

"Of course."

"Well, fathead, tax is spelt with an 'x,' not with a 'k,' dummy!" Linton thought it was ironmonger's tacks, you meant."

"Don't be a silly ass, Manners! I suppose I know how to spell tax—t-a-x-e-k-s," said Grundy. "I meant income-tax—i-n-k-u-m t-a-c-k-s."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well," said Grundy, "as he knew it was me, it's lucky for me that Linton's such a bad speller, and made such a silly mistake. But fancy such ignorance in a Form master! What?"

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

"It's spelt 't-a-x-i'" shrieked Manners.

"Don't be a silly chump, Manners! Still, I suppose I can't blame you for not knowing how to spell when you've got a Form master who doesn't."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The man's ignorant," said Grundy. "As bad in English spelling as at Latin translation. And he finds fault with me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cackle if you like!" snorted Grundy, and he stalked away, leaving the Shell fellows cackling loud and long.

CHAPTER 11.

All Right at Last!

"IT'S raining," said Grundy of the Shell.

He spoke thoughtfully.

About a dozen fellows were standing at the window, looking into a weeping quadrangle.

It was Saturday afternoon; and the rain was coming down as if it knew that it was a half-holiday at St. Jim's and took a fenshish delight in pouring.

Tom Merry had remarked that there would be no cricket. Manners had given up the idea of a walk with his camera. Monty Lowther suggested the pictures, but nobody seemed to want a long walk in the rain. Fellows were saying all sorts of things about the weather, none of them complimentary. Then Grundy remarked that it was raining.

"Just noticed it!" asked Blake, with deep sarcasm.

"What a brain!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, equally sarcastic.

Grundy did not heed them. Grundy, evidently, was following some train of thought in his own powerful mind.

"Raining!" he said. "Raining hard! Linton always has a fire in his study in the evening on rainy days."

Some of the fellows looked at Grundy. Mr. Linton's manners and customs were quite well-known. Why Grundy was remarking on them was a mystery.

"Feeling like biking down to Wayland, you men?" asked Grundy, addressing his chums.

"No fear!" said Wilkins and Gunn simultaneously.

"Well, I'm going," said Grundy. "If you're afraid of getting wet, you can stay and frowst indoors!"

"It's raining jolly hard," said Wilkins.

"That's why I'm going, of course."

Monty Lowther tapped his forehead significantly.

"You—you're going to Wayland on your bike because it's raining?" ejaculated Wilkins.

"Yes, ass! Otherwise, what would be the good?"

And Grundy stalked away, deeply preoccupied. It was obvious that his great mind was working. The fellows stared after him.

"Is that chap pottay?" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Looks like it," said Tom Merry. "Well, you men, we shan't make the rain stop by staring at it. What about putting in some editorial work on the 'Weekly'?"

"Yaas, wathah."

Nobody but Grundy felt inclined to brave that down-pour of rain. But Grundy was seen from the window wheeling his bike out, enveloped in a poncho, and he disappeared in a mist of rain.

It was a couple of hours later that he returned.

He looked rather damp when he came into Study No. 3 in the Shell, where Wilkins and Gunn were playing chess; but he looked quite cheery. He slammed a parcel down on the study table; and there was a sudden move on the part of a number of the chess-men.

"Here, look out!" grunted Gunn.

"Never mind that rot!" said Grundy. "You can put that away. I shall want you."

"I've got Wilkins mate in three," said Gunn.

"That's rot!" said Wilkins. "I've got you mate in four, old chap."

Grundy grinned.

"I've jolly well got you both mate in one!" he remarked as he took hold of a corner of the chessboard and upended it. Pieces and pawns fell in a shower over the table.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grundy.

"You—you—" gasped Wilkins.

"You—you—you—" articulated Gunn.

"Mate in one!" chuckled Grundy. "Ha, ha, ha! Rather funny! What?"

His chums looked at him as if they could have eaten him. George Alfred Grundy had his own sense of humour. He had it all to himself.

"But never mind that," continued Grundy, dismissing the matter. "You fellows know where Linton is?"

"Blow Linton!" growled Wilkins. "I suppose he's at tea in Masters' Common-room now. You silly owl!"

"Well, look here, you cut down to his study, and see if he's there, and see whether his study fire's been lighted. He always goes to his study after tea; and on rainy days he puts a match to the fire—it's left laid ready. But I want to know for certain."

"What the thump—"

"For goodness' sake don't jaw, Wilkins! Just cut off!"

Wilkins eyed George Alfred. He was powerfully tempted to take George Alfred by the neck and bang his head against the study wall. But he refrained. George Alfred was too hefty to have his head banged with impunity; moreover, Wilkins concluded that the parcel Grundy had brought in contained tuck for tea. If that was the case, it was up to a pal to bear with Grundy as patiently as possible.

He left the study.

"Something good there, old bean?" asked Gunn, as Grundy began unfastening the string on the parcel.

"What-ho!" grinned Grundy.

"You could have got it at the school shop," said Gunn.

"No need to go over to Wayland in the rain for it."

"What rot!" said Grundy. "I couldn't get these things at the school shop. Mrs. Taggles doesn't sell fireworks."

"Fireworks!" ejaculated Gunn.

"Yes."

"Mean to say you've been over to Wayland to buy fireworks?" said Gunn, in blank amazement.

"Of course. Couldn't get them nearer."

"Lost your calendar?" asked Gunn, with sarcasm.

"Eh! No: why?"

"Oh, I thought you might be fancying it was November."

What the thump do you want fireworks at this time of the year for?"

"Because Linton lights the fire in his study on rainy evenings," answered Grundy. "That's why, fathead!"

Gunn only looked at him blankly. An ordinary mind could not follow the workings of an intellect like Grundy's, so William Cuthbert Gunn was hopelessly perplexed.

Grundy undid the parcel. Quite a large supply of various fireworks came to light: crackers, repeating-crackers, squibs, Catherine-wheels, Roman candles—all sorts of fireworks. Gunn gazed at them in perplexity while Grundy sorted them out with satisfaction.

Wilkins came back to the study.

"Linton's at tea with the other Beaks," he said, "and the fire in his study hasn't been lighted yet. And—my only hat!—what have you got that rubbish for?"

"You can't guess?" asked Grundy sarcastically.

"Blessed if I can," said Wilkins in wonder. "I thought you'd brought in something for tea."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Grundy. "I'm not thinking about tea. This is how I'm going to get back on Linton. It's the big noise at last!"

Wilkins and Gunn gave a simultaneous groan. They were utterly fed-up with Grundy's schemes for getting back on Linton. They were bored to the back teeth with Grundy and his schemes.

Grundy did not notice it. He would not have heeded had he noticed it. The thoughts and opinions of common mortals had never affected Grundy.

"You see the idea?" he asked.

"Nunno! You'll get into a row if the prefects see that stuff—they're not allowed in the House except on Bonfire Day."

"Don't be an ass! I'm going to take this little lot to Linton's study—superstitiously, of course—"

"What-a-at for?"

"To stack them under the coal in his fire-grate," said Grundy coolly. "He won't see them. When he goes to his study, after tea, he will put a match to the fire, like he always does on rainy evenings. What do you think will happen then?"

"Oh crikey! Something like an earthquake, I should think!" gasped Wilkins.

"That's what I want."

"You—you—you can't do it!" said Gunn, aghast. "You can't, Grundy! You'd get sacked—"

"I fancy I can do it," said Grundy coolly. "I've had some bad luck in getting back on Linton, so far. But I've got on to the right thing at last. This is going to make him cringe. I fancy his face when the things begin banging and fizzing right and left! Ha, ha, ha!" Grundy roared. "Isn't it the big idea? Isn't it the big noise? What? Ha, ha, ha!" Grundy roared again.

Wilkins and Gunn did not roar. They looked at one another in horror. No doubt Mr. Linton would be made to "sit up," if Grundy's latest stunt came off successfully.

But—

There were any number of "buts," Grundy however, was regardless of them. Grundy had no use for "buts."

"Rather a corker of a wheeze, what?" said Grundy complacently. "I fancy nobody else would have thought of it."

"Nobody outside Colney Hatch!" said Wilkins.

"Well, that's a dummy, Wilkins! If you fellows want to see some fun, just hang round by Masters' Studies when Linton puts that match to his fire."

Grundy began to pack the fireworks into his pockets. Even Grundy realised that he could not carry a parcel of fireworks openly into a master's study. He crammed crackers and squibs into bulging pockets.

"Grundy, old man," said Wilkins, almost tearfully, "don't do it! Don't! Be warned, old fellow!"

"Don't be a silly owl, Wilkins. This is going to be the big noise."

Wilkins horridly left the study. Grundy continued to stuff away fireworks, with a satisfied grin on his face. Grundy, at least, was convinced that it was all right at last; that this jape was really going to be the big noise!

CHAPTER 12.

The Big Noise I

TOM MERRY looked up and waved an impatient hand, with a pen in it, at Wilkins, as that worried youth looked into Study No. 10 in the Shell.

A numerous editorial staff were going strong in Study No. 10, and interruptions were not wanted.

"You mo—" gasped Wilkins.

"Hook it!" said Tom. "Busy!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "No admittance except on bizney, dear boy."

"For goodness' sake—" gasped Wilkins.

"What's the row?" asked Tom Merry resignedly.

"That ass Grundy—"

"Oh, bother Grundy!"

"That idiot Grundy—"

"Bless him! Look here, we're busy—"

"He's got to be stopped!" wailed Wilkins. "He's stacking his pockets full of fireworks, to take into Linton's study. He's going to stack them behind Linton's fire, to explode when he puts a match to it! He'll be sacked, if he isn't hanged for blowing Linton into small pieces! Oh dear! Somebody's got to hold him down!"

"The frightful clump!" said Tom Merry. He laid down the editorial pen and rose. "We'd better stop him! We'll jolly well tar him, too, while we're about it!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The editorial staff of "Tom Merry's Weekly" crowded out of Study No. 10. Obviously, Grundy of the Shell required to be dealt with with a firm hand before he got away with that big idea.

"Bai Jove! There he goes!" shouted Arthur Augustus excitedly.

The burly form of George Alfred Grundy was disappearing down the stairs.

"Grundy!" roared Tom Merry.

"Stop, you ass!"

"After him!"

The crowd of juniors leuded for the stairs. On the lower landing Grundy looked back.

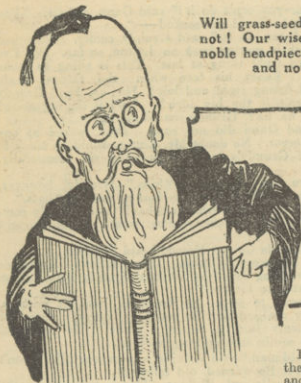
No doubt he realised what the pursuit meant, for he scudded down the lower stairs three at a time.

These cheeky rotters were going to stop him—him, George Alfred Grundy, when, after long mental effort, he had hit upon the big idea for getting back on Linton and making

that unfortunate Form master sit up! Grundy was not the fellow to brook such interference. Still, as even Grundy could not handle a dozen fellows at once, he did not stop to argue. He could argue afterwards—at once, he even Grundy out the big idea! Then he could explain to Tom Merry & Co. what fools they were. At the moment a strategic retreat was indicated. Grundy retreated strategically—as fast as his long legs could negotiate the stairs.

(Continued on page 28.)

Will grass-seed grow on wood? Decidedly not! Our wise old Oracle has tried it on his noble headpiece for the last ninety-nine years, and nothing's happened!—Ed.



HOW MANY BEANS MAKE FIVE?



I WENT out the other afternoon, chums, to have the solitary hair on my cranium washed and brushed up a bit, and when I came back I found a big change in the office, and a lot of small change in my pay-envelope. Yes, my lads, the worst had happened. The office-boy had awakened from his winter sleep, been through my waste-paper basket, and pinched a packet of "Gold Flake" and my job. I was called into the Editor's sanctum, and I was so excited that I tripped over my whiskers and sank on the sanctum carpet with a sickening thud. After the Editor had picked me up, he began to dress me down.

"You're too old," said the Editor, "and as we're spring-cleaning the office, we've decided to dump you with the rest of the rubbish, and give the office-boy a chance."

"Righto!" I said. "And would you mind, sir, giving me Chick Chance to read on the way home?"

"Here you are," he said, giving me a copy of the Gem, "that will be turpence, and just take your whiskers out of the inkpot. I've got a lot of queries here from readers. If you can answer them without asking the office-boy to help you, we'll let you stop on for a bit."

The Editor then turned to a great pile of letters on his desk.

"Here we are," he said. "A Bristol reader wants to know what a megatherium was like. Just tell me what you know about megatheriums."

"The megatherium," I said, taking a deep breath, "was an enormous mammal that existed during the pleistocene age; it had short hind legs, a heavy tail, loose-jointed, long fore-limbs, powerful claws, a long head, no front teeth—"

I had got as far as that when my own front teeth dropped out and fell on the carpet, whereupon the Editor roared with mirth.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he chortled, "I've often wondered what it is you remind me of, and now I know. It's time you were stuffed with sawdust and stuck in a glass case with a cloth over it!"

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I made no reply to this insult, and the Editor picked up another letter and said:

"How fast can an outboard motor-boat travel?"

"In the Albany—New York out-board marathon," I said, "early in 1929, the winner averaged a speed of 37 miles per hour."

"And can you tell 'Aero-bus,' of Southport, who it was that drove the first aeroplane?"

"Easy," I said. "The Wright Brothers were among the first to make flights, beginning in 1900 with gliders, and in 1903 they added a petrol motor, driving a screw. In 1905 they made forty-five flights, remaining in the air for half-an-hour, and travelling twenty-four and a half miles. Then there were Santos Dumont and Henry Farman—"

"That's quite enough," said the Editor, glaring

at me. "You needn't keep on all day, just because you've found something you know a bit about. Where can we grow tomatoes in the open?"

"The tomato is grown in the fields in Jersey, in the Channel Islands," I said.

"And what bird is it that has no wings?"

"The kiwi-kiwi, a native of New Zealand, also known as the apteryx, a word meaning wingless. The kiwi-kiwi cannot fly, but lives on worms, which it attracts to the surface of the earth by striking of its powerful feet."

"Dear me," said the Editor, "you mean to say that this bird knocks the little worm up and then knocks him back. Dear, dear!"

"Now let me ask you one," I said.

"What's whalebone made of?"

"Whalebone?"

"Why, whalebone."

"Wrong." I

gurgled. "There's

no whalebone in whalebone. It's

made from baleen,

an elastic substance

obtained from the

animal's mouth."

I waited for the

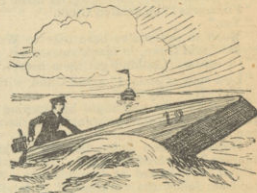
Editor to say that

the whale was a

fish, but he didn't.

"Can you tell F. Booker, of Sheffield," said the Editor, "when stage-coaches stopped running?"

"The railways abolished the stage-coach in the middle of the nineteenth century, but they were revived in 1866, and stage-coaches were running out of London until the beginning of the War. The motor-car and the tarring of the roads has made coach-driving unpopular nowadays."



Outboard racing's a fine sport, but a wet 'un, if you capsize!

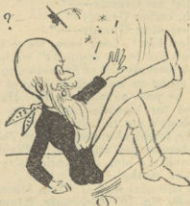
Just then, the office-boy himself popped in and asked me "How many feathers there were on a frushe's froat?"

I scratched my bald pate for a moment or two, while I thought out a suitable reply:

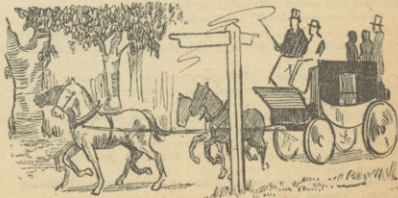
"Free fousand, free hundred and fifty-free," is the correct answer to that poser. The office-boy blushed and said no more.

"You'd better run away for a bit," said the Editor, "and I'll look out some harder ones."

So I settled down in the corner with my instalment of Chick Chance, and when I went to go home, I found the office-boy had tied my whiskers to the coal-stuttle. Never mind! Just wait!



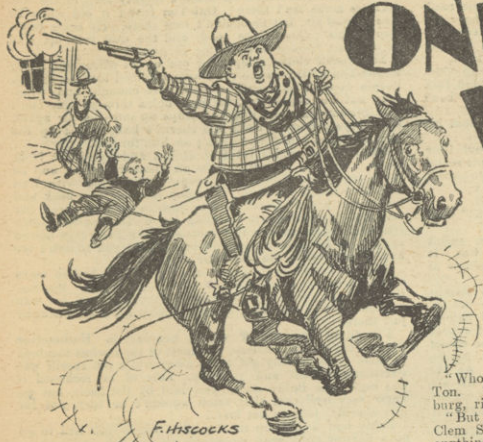
I tripped over my whiskers and fell with a sickening thud!



Travelling in a stage coach in ye olden days!

FIRST YARN STARTS THIS WEEK!

100% ALL LAUGHING COMEDY FEATURING—



ONE TON WILLY!

IN

“HE FALLS TO CONQUER!”

“Who’s tickling you to make you so funny?” sneers One-Ton. “Stand aside, mister. I want the sheriff of this burg, right now!”

“But he’ll put you in jug for cruelty to hosses,” says old Clem Smith. “A chap with your flesh oughtn’t to ride anything, barring a tortoise.”

“You mind your own business, and I’ll mind mine!” cries One-Ton angrily, because he’s touchy over his size. “If I’m built big can I help being fat?”

“Yes, you can,” says Clem. “If you gets off that hoss you’ll jest natcherally get your fat down, won’t you?”

We all laughs at that, though it don’t sound much to laugh at, not in old blood. But the man who couldn’t laugh when he saw One-Ton perched up on a spindle-legged pony like a bloated water-melon on matchsticks jest hadn’t a sense of humour at all.

One-Ton goes even redder in the face and looks like he’ll go pop, soon. Only he doesn’t.

“I haven’t got time to bandy words with you, Clem Smith!” he pipes in his shrill voice. “I got business with the sheriff of this burg. Here’s that dirty cattle rustler, Baldy Bates, rampaging in the foothills, a-stealing my daddy’s cows, and you husky hombres jest idling here doing nothing.”

“So Baldy’s at it again, is he?” says Jimmy Yates.

“Yes, he is,” says One-Ton.

“And he’s got to be stopped!”

“Oh, yeah!” agrees Jimmy.

“He’s got to be stopped, and maybe you’ll

stop him, you blown out

lizard! You’ll do what all

of us can’t do. You’ll corral

Baldy Bates, the quickest

man with a gun in all

Texas; the strongest and most

threw a leg over a hoss! The

hombre what has defied every sheriff’s posse for nigh on

ten year. You’ll catch him, won’t you, you streak of

fatty degeneration!”

One-Ton looks that mad he could ha’ put a bullet plumb

through Jimmy Yates, only he hadn’t the pluck. He glared

down at Jimmy, and his fat face was a dirty grey with

temper.

“Yes, I’ll catch Baldy Bates!” he snaps. “Something’s

got to be done when a dirty cattle rustler steals my daddy’s

cows. I’m going to the sheriff, I am, and I’ll tell him what

I thinks. And if he won’t get off his chair and take his

nasty smelly pipe out of his food trap I’ll go after Baldy

meself.”

“Haw, haw, haw!” we guffaws; and One-Ton gets madder

than ever.

“Out o’ my way!” he cries; and he digs his fat heels

into the ribs of his pony. The animal staggers some, then

lurches forward and scatters us. One-Ton rides straight up

to the sheriff’s shack and tumbles off his horse.

If anything, One-Ton on the ground was funnier than

One-Ton forking a pony. He’s so small and he’s so round

and heavy that his fat legs are as bandy as the front legs

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CHAPTER 1.

Wanted—Baldy Bates, Rustler!

ONE-TON WILLY WOOD came riding into Hammertoe Gulch—cloppety clop, cloppety clop! He looked mighty mad over something, too, but the look on his face was nothing to the look on the face of his knobby mustang, because One-Ton was a lot of meat to gallop over the mesa with.

Looked at, up and down, there wasn’t much of One-Ton. He only stood about five feet high, if that. But looked at broadly there was a whole heap of Willy. There wasn’t a barrel, nor yet a hoghead, in and around Hammertoe Gulch that Willy could have hidden behind without overlapping. He was just about square was Willy—five feet high and five feet thick.

And it’s no joke for a spindle-legged cow-pony to come cloppety clop, cloppety clop over the rusty mesa in the hottest part of the day, carrying One-Ton Willy at full lick from the Crooked Bar Ranch, which Willy’s pop ran in the foothills, across all the twenty odd miles of sand, scrub, and cactus thickets, into Hammertoe Gulch!

It wasn’t like One-Ton to do anything like work, and even if his daddy ran a ranch Willy never did much cow-punching, although he dressed like a cowpuncher. You see, the trouble was that every time Willy “forked” a cayuse the poor animal got curvature of the spine in half an hour. There was such a lot of Willy, and most of it, according to his daddy, was just waste material.

Anyway, when One-Ton comes riding into Hammertoe Gulch all the folks who hadn’t got a thing to do—which was nearly all the men of the town—came tumbling out of the saloon to find out where the earthquake was, but all they saw was a spindle-legged cow-pony, looking plumb disgusted, cloppety-cloppety on the dusty street, with One-Ton plopping up and down in the saddle, his fat face as red as the setting sun on a foggy night, his eyes bulging, and the perspiration running off him as if he was just stepping out of his monthly bath.

The men all wanted to take a look at One-Ton getting slim. It wasn’t the sort of thing you’d see every day of the week, and those grinning cowpunchers just stretched right across the street, and One-Ton had to rein in his pony.

“You’re in my way!” he cries out, panting hard enough to puff the roof off the saloon.

“But what’s the hurry, One-Ton!” asks old Jimmy Yates. “Is you ill-treating that ‘ere hoss, or is that ‘ere hoss ill-treating you?”

ONE-TON WILLY

“Drops” on a Bad Man, and
makes a Good Pancake of Him!

of a prize bulldog. But it is sure amazing how fast he can move when he's in the mind to move at all. And he waddled up the steps to the sheriff's veranda and straight into headquarters, leaving his horse standing in the road, right outside. Natchurally, we clusters round to hear the shindy, because the sheriff's temper is about as sweet as lemons pickled in vinegar, and Baldy has been his pet abomination ever since he wore a star on his dirty shirt.

"You kin take them feet off'n your desk!" cried One-Ton. "And you kin shy that pipe away, and you kin fork your cayuse and go out after Baldy Bates, what's been rustling my daddy's cows!"

"Oh, can I?" says the sheriff, without moving from his chair.

"Yes, you can!" snaps One-Ton. "It's sure about time you did something to protect the law-abiding citizens round these parts from scoundrels like Baldy Bates. If you ain't scared of him you'll go out and corral him."

"And s'posin' I says I won't go?" asks the sheriff.

"Then you don't stay Sheriff of Hammertoe Gulch!" One-Ton flashes back.

Now, the sheriff was plumb lazy, maybe, but he wasn't no coward, and he wasn't letting One-Ton say he was. It riled him, and he came out of his chair with a bellow of rage.

"You get out o' my office," he roars, "afore I stamps on you!"

One-Ton spins round quicker'n he'd ever moved before, and he just jumped out o' that shack. The sheriff's boot missed him by half an inch and no more. One-Ton comes thudding out across the veranda. He's big and fat, but he moved then slicker than a bullet out of a gun. At the edge of the veranda he took one mighty leap into the air and came down, plump in the saddle of his horse. That cayuse looked stunned almost, then started to stagger off with his load.

The sheriff stood in his doorway knocking out his pipe. "It's sure coming to something," he says, "when over-blown imitations o' cowpunchers can razzle me in me own office. You come back here, you animated balloon," he cries, "and you'll be a pricked bubble afore you knows what's happened."

The sheriff goes back inside, and we guffaws so loud you could ha' heard it right down to the border.

"Hold me, somebody!" splutters Clem Smith. "He's so full o' grit he'll catch Baldy Bates, but he's scared o' the sheriff!"

"Am I?" snarls One-Ton. "We'll argue about that, Clem Smith. You watch me!"

And he turned his horse, got off, and went back, leaving his pony outside, as before. Stomping across the veranda, he shoved the sheriff's door open with a bang.

"Now, look here!" he says. "Baldy Bates does rustle my daddy's cows, so what you going to do about it, eh? Air you sheriff o' this burg, or air you not? Because, if you air—"

"Get out!" bawls the sheriff, and jumps at him. His boot thudded on One-Ton's pants, and One-Ton lets rip a yell like a trodden-on cat, as he comes speeding out across the veranda. And he gives another mighty leap, as before, and flops in the saddle of his horse.

The sheriff glares at him, and at us, then goes inside again and slams the door, while we all stands there and laughs fit to split.

"Oh, look who's going to catch Baldy Bates!" chuckles Jimmy Yates.

"D'you think I can't?" biales One-Ton in a rage. "I guess I will corral the rogue, and, what's more, I'll think that sheriff's nose off'n his face, and stick it on the back of his head. You watch me this time, you pack o' hyenas!"

And he went back a third time, leaving his horse outside, Clem Smith excited a spot o' fun, and he takes a lump o' sugar from his pocket and lets One-Ton's cayuse get a sight of it. That pony comes for the sugar, and steps forward two or three paces; but One-Ton is too busy to notice. He stomps into the sheriff's office, and lets fir his piece of talk.

"Now, listen here, you boob!" he biales. "You may think you're the chicken's eyebrows round these parts, but let me tell you I reckon you're dumb. See? You're plumb scared o' Baldy Bates, so I'll go get him myself. See?"

"Go, and be dang'd to you!" snarls the sheriff. "When Baldy pumps lead into your fat carcass, it'll save your daddy a whole heap o' money feeding you, you oversized water on the brain!"

"Yes, and I'll go, and be dang'd to you!" One-Ton fires back. "But mark this, and note it down, you lazy critter. If I brings Baldy back, alive or dead, I takes that star of office off'n your shirt and I claps it on me own."

"What?" bawls the sheriff. "You sass me in me own office, you lump o' jelly! Gosh alive—"

And he goes for One-Ton, who don't stop to argue. No,

mr. One-Ton came out there faster than ever, thudding over the veranda without stopping to look where he's going. And for the third time he takes a mighty leap in the air. But his horse isn't there! One-Ton found it out when he was in mid-air, but he couldn't stop there. He came down flop on his pants in the road, and the dust flew up, like as it Dame Nature was leaping carpets.

The sheriff comes rampaging out of his office, and there is One-Ton sitting in the road with a pained look on his fat, purple face. The sheriff is mad, sure enough, and whipping out his six-shooter, he puts holes through One-Ton's best Stetson hat, and One-Ton leaps up into the air again, and keeps bouncing while the sheriff's bullets kick up the dust all round him till you can't see him and his grit.

One-Ton got on his fat feet at last and lights out from there. Yes, sir, he leaps in the air about four feet, and he starts running. The sheriff keeps him moving with lead whistling round his ears. He was just in time to grab her tail, and there they are speeding out o' Hammertoe Gulch like all the demons was after 'em, and One-Ton's legs moved so fast, as his horse towed him home, that you couldn't see any of him below the waist for dust.

And we laughs so loud and so long that we had to move off to the saloon to get the dust out of our throats. Besides, that sheriff was ready to show daylight through his own brother, he was that mad, and we reckoned it wasn't healthy just there.

I'll admit the sheriff wasn't popular in Hammertoe Gulch. He was plumb lazy, and most of the lawless hombres in them parts usually got clean away while the sheriff was stretching himself and yawning. Lots of us reckoned it was high time Baldy Bates was laid by the heels, but we knew very well that that same wouldn't be easy, not for fifty sheriffs, lazy or not lazy.

Baldy had a hide-up in the hills, where you had to go up a narrow path, with mountains on one side and a sheer drop on the other. You had to go up that steep path in single file, and Baldy had a place at the top where he could lie snug behind the boulders and calmly pick off the posses, one by one, with his saved-off shot-gun.

Natchurally, we all know it was high time something was done about Baldy, but none of us related the job of going up the path after him, and we didn't blame the sheriff for jibbing at the idea, either. And we didn't blame him for hearing at Two-Ton. It must ha' made him mad to be assed by a lump of fat meat like One-Ton, because Baldy Bates was still at large.

Well, we talked it over, and talked it over, and Clem Smith, he allows it is rather rough on One-Ton's daddy to lose his best cows and have nothing done about it, and Jimmy Yates ups and says why don't we go over to the Crooked Bar and take a look-see how the land lies. We all guesses that Baldy Bates wouldn't stay near when he'd just rustled prime steers, and that he'd be lying low up in the mountains. There'd be no danger to us, so we forked our penies, and rode out over the mesa towards the Crooked Bar Ranch.

CHAPTER 2. On the Trail.

WHAT we expected to see I don't rightly know, but what we did see when we got to the Crooked Bar wasn't anything like what we'd hoped for. Leastways, it wasn't so much what we saw as what we heard. We were riding up to the house when we sort of gathered that there sure was a row going on. We could hear One-Ton's daddy roaring and bellowing as if there was a steer a-sittin' on his belt and wouldn't budge.

As we forced our horses into a gallop and came to the corral, we guessed there wasn't no steer a-sitting on Daddy Wood's girth. He was a sight too active for that. He was ranting around, and letting fly with a six-shooter in each mitt. We dropped from our ponies and rushed up the steps to find out what all the sheenanigan was about, and we was in such a hurry about it that me and Clem Smith and Jimmy Yates got jammed in the doorway so's we couldn't move one way neether the other.

And, to make matters worse, we wasn't sure which way we really wanted to go for One-Ton's daddy was knocking sparks out of the atmosphere. Yes, sir, I'll say he was! He was an undersized, wizened, dried up, bald little coot of a man, and how he came to have a son like One-Ton was sure one o' them mysteries wrapped up in Nature. But if Daddy Wood wasn't so big as he might have been, and he sure had a voice that would deafen any bull, and his temper, when he got all hot up, wasn't the sort of thing you could monkey with, and there was no manner of doubt, just about then, that that something had upset the old chap cruel.

There was One-Ton over in the far corner of the room trying to hide behind a chair, and looking like a grizzly bear behind two straws and a matchstick, if you get me. And One-Ton's mammy was standing at the foot of the stairs, wringing her hands till I felt plumb sure the soap-suds was dropping from 'em, like she was at the washtub.

"Control yoreself, Hiram!" she cries, almost in tears. "You're losing your temper, dear!" "Dang me temper!" raves Hiram. "'Tain't me temper I done lost, but more steers! And I'll shoot up the hull continent of I can't get satisfaction no other way! I'll show 'em!"

And, bust me, if he didn't shoot six cups on the dresser to smithereens with six shots, so quick you couldn't ha' batted an eyelash atween 'em. And the bits of the last one

warrior because some of the slugs is sending up splinters from the floor-planks under his fat feet.

And in One-Ton's eyes is that bloodshot, scared look you see at times in the eye of a newly-branded heifer, and when his haddy happens to step aside he makes a bee-line for the door, which, most unfortunately, is more'n filled by me and Clem Smith and Jimmy Yates.

"It's easy to see there's going to be a first-class collision in that neighbourhood, but it ain't so easy to stop it happening. Because why? We'd sure plugged that doorway through trying to get through all together, and now we was all trying to get out of it together we stuck just as hard. And there were wriggling and wrenching, when One-Ton comes towards us like an elephant with a wasp sitting on his tail.



The Sheriff is mad, sure enough, and whipping out his six-shooter he puts holes through One-Ton's best Stetson hat.

fell all over One-Ton's head and he starts ya-hooing like mad.

"Leave off, pop!" he bellows. "You kill me, and I'll haunt you, I will!"

"Afore I've half done with you, you suetty pudden," blares Hiram, "there won't be enough left to make a ghost with!"

And—crack, bang!—he lets rip with his gun, and Mrs. Wood's best milk jug falls apart in a hundred thousand different places all at once.

"Ow, you're smashing up the home, Hiram!" she yelps. "I'll smash the United States of Ameriky!" Hiram tells her.

"I lose my best cows. I sends that lump o' potted chicken an' ham down to Hammertoe to fetch the sheriff and the boys to come over and get busy on Baldy Bates' trail, and all that happens is he has a row and ballyhoo with the hull township, and comes back single-handed and says he'll catch the man what's defied the hull county. And while he's away, Baldy Bates comes back and rustles a dozen of me best steers down by the water hole! Ain't I got a right to lose me temper if I wants to?" bawls Hiram. "Ain't I got a right to smash something? Wish it was his fat head I do! Bah!"

Crack! He lets fly with his six-shooter, and the bullet grazes One-Ton's scalp, parting his hair neater'n a barber could ha' done it, and goes plop into the wall behind him. And One-Ton looks all green and ghastly as he sinks down to the floor.

"I'll get Baldy!" he moans. "Gimme my dinner, then I go get him!"

"Dinner?" screams Hiram. "You don't get no grub stake in this shack! No, sir, not till you done coteched Baldy Bates! I'll teach you to sass folks, you barrel-belted lizard! You don't get so much as a hollow tooth full o' molasses till that dangred rustler is in the jug and put there by you! Get out o' my shack!"

"I want my dinner!" howls One-Ton, like a bereaved calf.

"Go cotch Baldy Bates and eat him!" blares Hiram, and having loaded both guns fills the air with lead, and crockery goes smash, clatter, crash, all over the show, and One-Ton is out of his corner and dancing like a Pirute

I shut my eyes, I did, and the crash came. I guess One-Ton must ha' lit us all at once. Anyway, he unstopped that doorway pronto. I'll say that much, though exactly what did happen I couldn't see. All I know was that One-Ton's check shirt hit me in the mouth, and I left there backwards. The hull world went over and over, then came up and hit me all down me spine, teetered over again till I was plumb dizzy, and the veranda step slapped me on the nose, and there I lay with me brain feeling like a lariat in mid-air and me eyes gushing out more water than ever fell over Niagara.

Immediately there's a mighty plopp, and I sit up to see One-Ton bouncing down the path on his back, but he gets up without stopping, and runs off towards the horse corral as though all the stick-up men in Chicago were on his heels. And then I discovers a boot on the step close beside me, and it's a boot that isn't familiar at first. In the boot was a foot, and atop of that was a leg, higher still was a body, and between that and a Stetson was the sheriff's ugly mug. Yes, sir, Two-Gun Turton, the doubtful Sheriff of Hammertoe Gulch, had come over for a look-see.

"What's all this ballyhoo?" he wants to know. And old Hiram comes out and tells him.

"And of you don't do something about Baldy Bates," he says, "you don't get my vote come next election."

"Talkin' is sure the easiest part of it," sneers the sheriff. "Many good men have died with lead in their vitals tryin' to corral Baldy Bates. An't I had his bullets in me? But, listen, you old fire-eater. I happens to know that Baldy Bates has just left these parts, or aims to do so. I've had information lodged at my office where his hide-out is, and I aim to go there with a posse and hopes to stop him hitting out for the frontier. Are you hombres ready?"

Natherally, we says we is, but we don't feel none too good about. Baldy Bates is a dead shot, and has no more compassion in him than a rattlesnake. Furthermore, we don't trust the sheriff a whole heap, but we goes with him, and he leads us to the foothills under the mountain. Hiram doesn't come with us, being getting on in years.

And we haven't gone a great way before the sheriff reins

in his horse and yanks out a gun because a head has popped up from behind a rock. As near as a toucher the sheriff make holes in that head, but the voice of One-Ton stopped him.

"Say gen's" pipes up One-Ton, "is my daddy with you?"

"No, he ain't!" snaps the sheriff.

"Ah, ah, you a goat' after Baldy Bates?"

"We air," says the sheriff.

"Then I'll come with you, gen's," said One-Ton meekly.

"Cause of I don't cotch Baldy Bates, I don't get no dinner."

"You!" sneers the sheriff. "You couldn't cotch dead flies!"

One-Ton comes out from behind the rock, leading his tired looking horse, and he's plumb wild and angry.

"I wouldn't want to cotch the dead flies, anyways," he says. "Bot I ain't none so sure as how you want to cotch Baldy Bates."

"Jumping rattlers!" raves the sheriff. "Ef you says I—"

"Cut out the fireworks!" snaps One-Ton. "Jest you show me where Baldy is, and watch me cotch him."

The sheriff looks at him like he was looking at an insect.

"I call your bluff, then," he says. "Come on!"

So One-Ton plants himself red in the face forking his pony, and he jots the posse. We canters along the trail till we come to a snug cave under a cliff, and the sheriff warns us to keep quiet, and he talks to One-Ton.

"Now's your chance, fleshy!" he says. "I wants to know whether Baldy Bates is in that cave."

Natchurally, One-Ton is feeling goosey, but he can't refuse. He rides his pony slap up to the mouth of that cave, then dismounts like a ton o' brick falling off a cart.

He yanks up his gun and walks to the cave-mouth on tiptoe. And it's funny to see him keeping to one side and looking sick round the girls in case he gets a bullet where his dinner wanted to be.

He cuddles the rock face of the cliff and sidles along. He

peeps in the cave and goes right in until he's swallowed up in the darkness. We sure has to admire his grit, but it's pretty plain that Baldy Bates isn't there, so we approaches without troubring to be too careful about it.

Then, just as we were all getting mighty near, from inside the cave comes a howl, and out comes One-Ton with one fat hand clapped to his nose, and something dark and small rushing after him, streaking along like a demon. He dashes up to his pony, jumps aboard, and we could almost hear the animal's spine crack. And away he gallops down the ravine; but the little dark critter that had chased him out of the cave dived off up amongst the rocks, and we all buried our noses in our neckerchiefs, because it was nothing more nor less than a polecat.

CHAPTER 3.

"A Man o' My Word!"

WHEN the aroma of that animal had faded out a bit we went into the cave, and there sure were signs that Baldy Bates had been there. We found old branding irons and ashes of his fires, though to me they looked about a month or two old. Sheriff allows, however, they're only a week old, and says he'll pump lead into the first hombre who argues about it. So we says nothing and rides back to the Crooked Bar, where Hiram wants to know what's what.

Hiram is mad, but he can't do a thing. The sheriff goes home; but some of us boys stay at the Crooked Bar for a bite of grub. Howsomever, when we do ride home we come on One-Ton by the side of the trail, and ask him if he'd like us to help him—funny like!

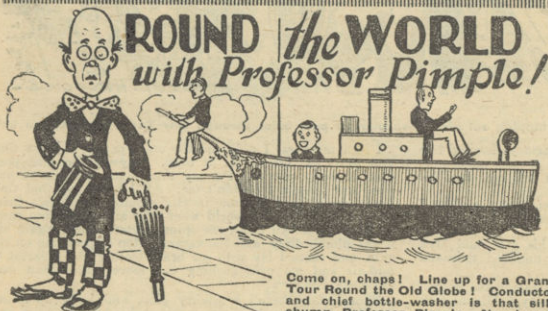
"I don't want no help," snaps One-Ton.

"Why don't you go home?" asks Clem.

"I dursn't do homo," he says, "till I done cotched Baldy Bates. Furthermore, I ain't going till I have."

"You never will," puts in Jimmy Yates. "For why? You don't know where Baldy is."

(Continued on next page.)



Come on, chaps! Line up for a Grand Tour Round the Old Globe! Conductor and chief bottle-washer is that silly chump, Professor Pimple. No charge, no fees, but plenty of fun and laughter.

FOR many years Professor Pimple has been running an academy for boys. The professor sometimes has to run after the academy because the boys decide to have a holiday. All of his scholars are promising pupils, and all their parents are promising to pay the fees.

This academy of Pimple's stands at the top of a hill near the gasworks at Canum Daley, a quiet little village with fifteen cinemas and an ice-rink.

Geography being the professor's favorite flower, he has decided to take his boys round the world, explaining things to them as they go along. The dear old buffer has fitted us up with a parcel of sandwiches and an orange each, and we started the trip on Monday at Wapping Stairs. I being senior prefect, he has asked me to keep the register, the detention-book, the diary, and the ginger-beer money.

PIMPLE'S a bit of an old windbag, and I expect some of the kids will try to cheat him and there'll be some inkpots flying about. I

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hope Sniffy gets it in the neck. Cheeky little beast, Sniffy is, and anything you tell him goes in one ear and out the other, there being nothing in between to stop it.

I'm telling you about Sniffy because I want you chaps to understand the job a fellow has keeping a diary, or anything else, with Sniffy about.

MONDAY.—Beginning the world tour. We got up early because, as the professor said, we had got a long way to go. We went on a bus to Billingsgate, near the river.

We then stood on Wapping Stairs—at least, all except Sniffy, who fell in, and Pimple said that was why they were called Wapping Stairs, 'cos if you stares about you fall wop in!

Having pulled Sniffy out we noted the objects of interest, one coal barge, and two bloaters asleep on the steps. Pimple thought we would take a boat and then changed his mind because someone was looking.

SNIFFY tried to put the bloaters in his pocket, but they kept slipping out again, and Pimple took the newspaper they were wrapped in 'cos there was a crossword in it he hadn't done. Sniffy was holding the bloaters bare when a man in a blue jersey, about ten feet tall, came down the steps and said if he didn't drop 'em quick there'd be a sickening splash, and Sniffy wouldn't hear it.

Sniffy dropped the bloaters and ran away, afraid of being thrown into the river. We had to run after him to see that he didn't get into further trouble, but we couldn't see Pimple anywhere.

Presently he came out of a door that had "Jug and Bottle" on it in big letters. Pimple said he had been trying to buy a few Jugs and things to take abroad, so that we could barter them for bread-fruit with the natives.

This made the kids wild with excitement, as if eating bread-fruit was something to swank about. Next we boarded a ship called the Crested Eagle and set sail for the East End. We sat round listening to Pimple, and I sat as far as I could from Sniffy because he was all wet, and smelt of fish.

Pimple pointed out the objects of interest along the river until a ginger-beer cork hit him in one eye, and after that he could only see one side, which saved us having to remember so much.

Presently the professor went downstairs into the cabin to bathe his eye, and we started to amuse ourselves by pretending to throw Sniffy overboard, which made him howl with fright.

When we had lost all our strength laughing we dropped him on the deck and threw orange-peel and corks at him. If the sailors fall over the peel and we get shipwrecked it'll be Sniffy's fault for coming with us.

(There's heaps more to tell you next week.)

"Yes, I do," says One-Ton. "When I left you idiots fooling round the polecat's front door I went up the stairs, and I done seen Baldy Bates going up to his hide in the mountain. And when I've thought of a way to fool him, I'm going after him."

"You fat boaster!" cries Jimmy Yates. "You durstn't do it!"

"Oh, durstn't I!" blares One-Ton. "Then watch me. I'm going up the mountain, right now, and you can follow me, if you ain't too scared."

After that he treats us as if we weren't on the earth at all. Puffing and panting, he climbs into the saddle, and sets out for the mountains. For a time we watch him go, too flabbergasted to do a thing or say a word. Then, without speaking, he all turn our ponies and follow him at a distance.

We saw him reach the mountains. He never once looked back. He went up that steep, narrow path; but he left his horse at the bottom and went up on foot, which wasn't a bad idea, when you come to think of it, because Baldy Bates wouldn't have such a big target to aim at.

We followed suit, leaving our horses tethered to some scrub, and up we went after One-Ton, at a distance, mind you, and feeling rather funny in the ribs, thinking of Baldy's bullets.

And then as we rounded a spur of the mountainside we saw Baldy Bates come striding down the path to meet One-Ton.

That was the moment, that was! One-Ton stood stock-still. I didn't like the idea of him getting killed, so I drops down on my hands and knees and crawls up to help One-Ton, and hoping that Baldy won't see me. I wanted to get very close so that when I did draw my gun on Baldy I'd have a dead shot at him.

Nearer and nearer I got. Baldy came down and met One-Ton glaring at him and fingering the butt of his six-shooter.

"What air you doing up here, fatness?" he asked.

One-Ton was shaking like a blanchmange.

"I done come up to catch you, Baldy Bates," he says. "You rustled my daddy's steers, and you got to pay for it," says he.

Baldy puts his head back and laughs till he can't see. One-Ton could have shot him there and then if he'd thought of it. Unfortunately I wasn't within range of the coyote or I'd have done it. That path wound about and twisted, so it wasn't easy to get a straight shot just there; but I goes on crawling forward, still feeling mighty uncomfortable about things because Baldy shoots straight.

"And you're going to catch me?" laughs Baldy. "You poor mutt, I'm going to let your fat out through umpteen bullet holes, and I'm going to roll you off this 'ere path," he says, "and leave you to lie in the rocks where the big cats can come and lick the juicy steaks off'n your bones."

"You durstn't do it in cold blood," says One-Ton, quivering all over.

"Oh, durstn't I?" cries Baldy. "We'll see." And he whips out his six-shooter.

But just then a cougar bellows out with a roar and leaps down from the rocks plumb into the middle of the path. One-Ton spins round so fast I couldn't see him move.

"One-help!" he cries. And round he comes again to run home as fast as his fat legs can twinkle. But he runs full tilt into Baldy Bates, who yelps, throws up his arms, staggers, and falls plumb off that path and rolls down the mountainside.

But it doesn't end there. That cougar was mad with hunger, and One-Ton would keep him and his family in meat for six months! He growled and he jumped. I let fly and put a bullet through the brute's brain, but One-Ton is that scared he just runs and doesn't look where he is going. I heard a scream and saw him run like mad slap off the path and go bounding down the mountainside.

My blood ran cold then. I went to the edge and peeped over, and I gasped. I saw One-Ton down below on a grassy slope. He was sitting up and feeling himself all over. He got to his feet and gazed about him, and, dang it, he had been sitting right on top of Baldy Bates who lay there, looking like he'd been run over with a traction engine.

At first, One-Ton gets scared and starts running away, then he stops and takes another look. He goes back to Baldy



Bates and tickles his nose, but Baldy is asleep and dreaming. He had broken One-Ton's fall, and he was plumb senseless.

So One-Ton takes his guns away, then ties his hands and feet with his own belt and scarf. While he's waiting for us to come up he searches the rustler and finds a letter on him from the sheriff himself.

"Dere Baldy," it runs. "Yore making this location too dang hot to hold you, and mebbe I won't be able to hold the boys back from corraling you. Better beat it for a time. Signed from Two-Gun Turton."

"Guess I'm clearing up these parts from snakes," says One-Ton. "I've got the drop on the sheriff, and here's the rustler. It was a most terrib' fight we had, but I done cotted him!"

"Oh, yeah!" I said. "You done dropped on him all right!"

"Take him to the jug," says One-Ton. Which we does, pronto. But when the sheriff saw the procession arriving he knows the game is up. One-Ton yanks out a gun, but Two-Gun Turton is quicker. As he leaps for his cayuse he lets fly with his six-shooter at One-Ton, only the fat waddy sure is lucky. The bullet hit the metal buckle of his belt, glanced off and smashed a window in Widow Magee's shack, and out she comes with her best frying-pan in her hand. Seeing One-Ton standing there with his gun, she crowns him with the frying-pan, and he sits down quicker'n he'd thought possible.

"Fat idjit!" she yells. "I'll teach you to scare the wits out o' a pore weak woman, I will."

And, of course, by that time Two-Gun Turton had got a good start, and he was busy making a smudge on the skyline. When the mists cleared from One-Ton's fat brain he gazed around and saw the sheriff's badge of office lying in the dust. He picks it up, and scrambling on to his feet he sticks it into his own shirt.

"I'm a man o' my word," he says, smacking his fat chest till it sounded like a war drum. "From now on I'm Sheriff o' Hammertoe Gulch. Anybody got any objections, we'll shoot it out now."

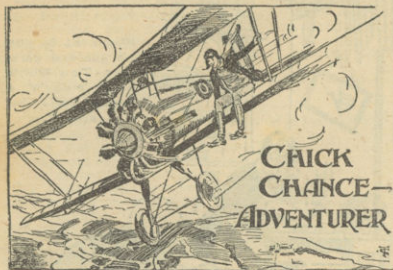
But none of us did object. For one thing we had no more bad men round there just then, and we reckoned there'd be fun for us in the future, which there was, as you shall hear another day.

And One-Ton parked his fat carcass in the sheriff's office from that very moment!

(You'll find another amusing yarn of One-Ton Willy here next week. Mind you read it!)

Hiram lets fly with his gun and parts One-Ton Willy's hair neater'n a barber could ha' done it.

OUR ALL-THRILLS YARN OF ADVENTURES IN CENTRAL AFRICA!



(Introduction on next page.)

The Mountain of the Lion!

BURK ROSCOE bared his teeth in a silent snarl. In a trice he had recovered his composure, and leaned back with a careless shrug of his shoulders.

"I bear you no malice, my friend," he said lightly. "I apologise if I seem to have cast any doubts upon your honesty of purpose."

"Like blazes you do," grunted Chick. "Well, we understand one another now, Roscoe. You've shown your hand, and you've felt mine."

"I have not shown all my hand," corrected Roscoe gently. "The game is never finished until the last card has been played."

Chick finished his scratch meal, lit his pipe, and returned to the cockpit to relieve Horace at the controls.

"Not so good," said the latter, unfolding his lanky figure from the none too roomy seat. "Lobula seems to have made a bit of a bloomer over them lakes we passed a while back, and now he don't quite know where we are. There should be a river somewhere about here, but I'm hanged if we can find it. It's certainly not marked on the map."

Lobula shook his head dejectedly. It was evident that for the time being he had completely lost his bearings. Chick climbed the plane to a height of ten thousand feet, but the heat haze that overhung the miles and miles of dense forest made it impossible to distinguish anything clearly from that altitude.

The map was now useless. They had gone far beyond the extreme point that Eustace Latimer had marked upon it. For over an hour Chick ranged backwards and forwards, sometimes swooping to within a few hundred feet of the tree-tops in the hopes that the native would pick up some familiar landmark.

Precious time was being wasted, and even more precious fuel. Chick had based all his hopes on locating the approximate whereabouts of the missing explorer during the first day, for it was essential that they should conserve sufficient petrol to enable them to make contact with nearest point where they could obtain fresh supplies.

Within a few hours the sun would set, and Chick knew that he would have to decide whether to remain aloft during the dark hours of the night, or find a safe landing-place and risk the unknown dangers that would attend such a procedure.

Another hour passed. Horace again took over the controls, while Chick rose to stretch his cramped limbs. The rim of the sun had dropped perilously near the horizon when Lobula suddenly flung his hands high in the air and uttered a shout of triumph.

"Look-look! The Mountain of the Lion!" he cried, in a great voice. "There we shall find the place of Roaring Waters, and in the valley beyond the Black City where the white man you seek was taken captive by the giant warriors of the Amazill!"

Chick's heart was pumping with excitement as he followed the direction of the native's pointing finger. Away to the north—perhaps fifty miles away—a towering range of moun-

tains loomed black against the crimson-shot sky. In the day-time they would scarcely have been visible at that distance, but now they were etched like ebony against the purple vault of infinity, and the contour of the highest peak of all was roughly that of a crouching lion, its great head turned watchfully towards the west!

"Lion! It looks more like a blessed French poodle!" exclaimed Herbert disrespectfully. "And what's the stretch of open ground over there, all covered with white stuff? Looks like snow from here!"

"It is bones that you see," declared Lobula solemnly—"the bones and the tusks of all the elephants that have died since the sun first shone in the sky! It is there that they go when they feel that their end is near; there that they sink down and die amid the bones of those that lived before them."

Chick knew that the native was not romancing. Many a time he had read of the hidden spot long sought by ivory traders, to which all elephants instinctively found their way when they knew that their term of life was nearly served.

The stretch of open ground covered an area of close on four square miles, and there was scarcely a portion of it that was not littered with sun-bleached bones and great tusks of ivory that were worth almost their weight in gold.

Here and there amid the gleaming remains they could see the grey shape of some monstrous denizen of the forest standing immovable as it waited patiently for its destined end to come.

There was something strangely impressive and pathetic about the spectacle, but the far-flung shadows of the dying day switched Chick's thoughts to more urgent matters. Night was falling with tropical swiftness. In less than half an hour it would be pitch dark. Already he had made up his mind to ground the plane, and his eyes were searching anxiously for a favourable landing-place.

It was Lobula who pointed out an open expanse of level ground that cut a broad swath through the forest, and seemed to stretch for mile after mile towards the distant Mountain of the Lion.

"You're right, old son—it's safer to land, and wiser to save all the juice we can," agreed Horace, as he pushed over the stick and put the plane into a long, smooth glide.

He made a perfect three-point landing, and scarcely had the machine rolled to a standstill when the sun slipped out of sight over the edge of the world, and the night swooped down as though a velvet shroud had been flung over the sky.

"We seem safe enough up here," observed Herbert, as he peered nervously over the edge of the lofty cockpit. "But I don't mind telling you that I should feel more at home if I could hear a few buses and trams knocking about, and know as there was a copper standing on the next corner."

"This is what I call nice and peaceful," declared Horace, with a scornful glance at his diminutive friend. "Not a sound to be heard except—"

—Suffering cats! Wot was that?"

"Him gorilla!" volunteered Lobula unemotionally, as a dull, booming roar came throbbing across the silence of the night. "And that was a lion. He sound pretty close. Listen, you hear his mate answer him all along at once!"

Horace turned pale and disappeared inside the steel body of the balloon.

"Touch of indigestion," he said gruffly. "Are you sure this is a safe place to park the old crate, Chick? Supposing a herd of elephants was to come ambling along here on the way to a funeral party?"

"Oh, they wouldn't interfere with us," said Chick casually. "Besides, Lobula's going to stand guard for the first couple of hours. After that the moon will be up, and it'll be as light as day."

Burk Roscoe was palpably nervous and ill at ease as he sat huddled at the far end of the plane. With the coming of night a hundred and one different weird noises seemed to have broken out in the heart of the great forest that stretched for mile after mile in all directions.

Huge cats of the jungle roared and coughed. Faint on the breeze came the squeal of an enraged elephant, and the vicious snorting and grunting of an old man rhinoceros. The buzz and hum of a million insects sounded like the deep note of a cathedral organ.

Boom! Boom! Boom! It was the hollow drumming of a gorilla, beating its hairy chest with its clenched fists.

—Lobula seemed perfectly unperturbed as he stood out-

FOUR MEN FRIGHTEN FORCE OF FIERCE NATIVES!

side in the cockpit, peering searchingly into the velvet darkness, his keen ears attuned to every separate sound. In one hand he gripped the automatic Chick had given him. He was not to know that it was unloaded.

Chick drew the steel shutters over the narrow windows in the fuselage of the plane, but it was impossible to shut out the weird and fearsome noises of the night, or to dispel the atmosphere of mystery and lurking danger that hung over the dark forest.

He tossed a spare blanket to Burk Roscoe, and sat down on the floor with his back propped against the cases of guns and ammunition which were stacked in the tail end of the plane. One hand was clamped tightly over the butt of his automatic pistol, and a flashlight lay within easy reach.

Chick awoke in pitch darkness. He knew that he had been jerked from his slumbers by some unusual sound or movement, but he could hear nothing more alarming than the noisy snoring of Horace and the steady breathing of Burk Roscoe.

Yet he sensed some other presence close at hand. His heart commenced to beat in heavy jolts, and his hand was sticky with perspiration as he fumbled for the button of the electric-torch.

"Lobula!"
The low whisper sounded like thunder in his ears, but there was no response from the direction of the open cockpit where the big native stood guard. The floor beneath him quivered as though the plane was swaying gently from side to side.

Chick pressed the button, and a beam of light stabbed through the darkness like a silver swordblade. He uttered a shout that was echoed by a rasping, nerve-racking screech that chilled the very blood in his veins.

The cockpit was filled with writhing, jostling figures, and a hideous, inhuman face, with flattened nose, rolling eyes, and leering jaws, was peering at him through the narrow doorway!

Where's Lobula?

FOR a fraction of a second and no longer, Chick Chance kept his thumb clamped on the button of the electric-torch. Yet in that short space of time the scene in the cockpit of the monoplane was registered on his mind with the clean-cut rapidity of a flashlight photograph.

He saw the writhing turmoil of stunted, black-skinned, half-naked savages that filled the narrow space just outside the door leading into the saloon of the machine. He saw the one hideous pigmy with distended nostrils, and dangling ear-lobes, who was peering through the aperture, straight into the blinding beam of light.

Spang! Chick's automatic barked stridently, awakening a thousand echoes in the confined space. It was sheer instinct that caused him to fling himself face-downwards to the floor. Something—a short-shafted throwing spear—was hurled venomously over his head and stuck quivering in one of the wooden cases of ammunition.

Then the light went out. Shrieks and yells rent the air, and the plane jolted and swayed as the terrified savages struggled and fought to escape from the glaring white eye of the torch, and the flame and lead-spitting gun that had already stretched one of their number dead beneath their trampling feet.

Chick shuddered with revulsion as he bent over the body. It was that of a pigmy, a foreign-looking, black-skinned native who was not much more than four feet in height. He wore a loin-cloth of twisted grass, and the carved bone of a pig was thrust through the cartilage of his flattened nose. The lobes of his ears were pierced, and distended with crude ornaments, while his frizzy, black hair was plastered with clay, and formed into three horns.

"My gosh, three's a nasty-looking bloke for you!" exclaimed Horace, in a scared voice. "Ain't much bigger than Herbert, and jest about as ugly. How the— Look out!"

It was another spear that came hissing from the outer darkness, and ripped through Horace's sleeve before it clanged against the steel wall of the saloon. This was the signal for a shower of missiles that thudded viciously

against the body of the plane, ripping through the fabric of the wings, and striking the wires with deep, twanging notes. "By heavens, where's Lobula? Why didn't he give the alarm?"

Reluctantly Chick grabbed hold of the limp, evil-smelling figure of the dead pigmy. Holding it as a shield in front of him he darted out into the cockpit, and dumped his load over the edge of the cowling.

Of Lobula there was no sign to be seen. His foot struck against something, and he stooped to find that it was the automatic he had given the faithful native. The darkness on all sides seemed to be alive with furtive, whispering figures.

Phut! A needle-pointed thorn, tufted like a dart, sang past Chick's ear and splintered harmlessly against the instrument board. With a gasp of horror the young airman seized the grips of the machine-gun and swung the weapon in a wide arc as he thumbed the triggers.

The blunt muzzle vomited a foot-long stream of orange-green flame as the drum spun and thundered, and a hail of bullets crashed into the surrounding forest.

Chick swung the gun from side to side, enraptured by the ominous disappearance of the native guide. Shrieks of pain and dire fear wailed through the darkness as the savages turned tail and fled.

"Lobula's gone! Those black brutes must have crept up and caught him napping!" There was a lump in Chick's throat as he jerked up the tail side-screens, and slid the movable roof of the cockpit into position. "Keep your heads down. They're armed with blowpipes and poisoned darts!"

Chick hit his lip as he dimmed the bulb of the electric-torch with his handkerchief, and placed it on the floor. Burk Roscoe's face was white and strained in the faint light.

"Look here, Chance, we're all in the same boat now," he said, uneasily. "If there's any danger I've got to share it, so you'd better let me have a gun. I'm not likely to use it for any other purpose save self-protection."

Chick hesitated for a moment, ere he handed the man a spare pistol, and a couple of clips of cartridges.

"I'm taking you at your word, Roscoe," he said meaningfully. "You'll hand back that gun when I ask you for it. You fellows had better open those windows a crack, and fire a couple of shots every few minutes."

Chick remained in the cockpit, where the side-screens now gave him protection from any stray poison darts. It was not likely they would penetrate the tough talc; but the heavy-bladed spears were a different matter.

His chief concern was the missing Lobula. The cunning pigmies must have crept upon him without a sound, and either speared him to death, or knocked him on the head, and carried him off a prisoner.

The uneasy silence, and the strain of waiting was beginning to play on Chick's nerves.

Jogged by a sudden flash of memory he opened the flap of the little cupboard that was let into one side of the cockpit. He was not mistaken. Clipped inside was a Verney-pistol, and a spare box of shells.

Whispering a warning of his intention to his companions, the young airman thrust the muzzle of the weapon through the ventilation slot in the roof of the cockpit, and pressed the trigger.

The shell burst a hundred feet in the air with an ear-splitting report, lighting the darkness with an unearthly vivid green glare, that hung motionless for several moments.

It must have scared ten years off the life of every savage in the vicinity. Chick caught a glimpse of hundreds of figures standing petrified in a complete circle within twenty yards of the big plane. Simultaneously Horace and Herbert and Burk Roscoe opened fire with their pistols from opposite sides of the saloon.

Screaming and howling in fear, the terror-stricken pigmies turned as one man, and fled precipitantly towards the forest, falling over one another in their frenzied haste.

"They're off!" shouted Herbert gleefully. "I'll take ten to one on the little fat bloke with the bald head!"

"This is only a sample of the perils Chick and his chums have to face. Look out then for more thrilling and exciting situations next week."

HOW THE STORY STARTED!

CHICK CHANCE, R.A.F., V.C., D.S.O., in company with his two chums, **Herbert and Horace,** late air-mechanic and pilot-sergeant of **Chick's old squadron,** agree to fly to **Central Africa to look for a Professor Lettiner,** who has come into a fortune of half a million pounds, but does not know it. If Lettiner is not found within three months the money is to go to **Burk Roscoe,** an earnest suitor. **Reaching Lakton** the three chums fall foul of **Roscoe,** who, assisted by a squad of native soldiers, tries to steal their plane and murder **Lobula,** a native guide who alone knows where Lettiner is. The three airmen manage to escape, however, only to discover **Roscoe** clinging to the undercarriage of the plane. In consequence of this, they are forced to descend, and narrowly miss being **hurled to their doom** over the forming lip of a vast cataract known as the Falls of Tombi. **Roscoe** offers **Chick** a substantial bribe to abandon the hunt and return to **Lobula.** Instead of accepting the proposition, however, the young airman deals **Roscoe** a stinging blow on the mouth.

"I'm going to find **Eustace Lettiner,**" he says "and you're coming with me!"

(Now read on.)

BRAINY GRUNDY!

(Continued from page 19.)

After him rushed the juniors, pell-mell.
 "Sleep him!"
 "Collar him!"
 Grundy scudded away for Masters' Studies. Into those sacred precincts pursuit could hardly follow.
 It was then that Mr. Railton happened.
 Mr. Railton smoked one cigarette a day after tea. Mr. Railton had just had his tea. It was not, therefore, remarkable that Mr. Railton, coming to his study after tea, stopped in the passage to light a cigarette.
 It was neither remarkable nor unusual. But it was very unfortunate—in the circumstances.
 Grundy came round the corner like a runaway bull.
 Crash!
 Bump!
 "Oh!"
 "Ow!"
 "Ow!"
 Mr. Railton sat down in the passage. His cigarette, yet unlighted, went one way. His lighted match went another. Grundy sprawled.
 Tom Merry & Co. came to a sudden halt at the corner, horrified.
 "And then—"
 "Bang!"
 Grundy's pockets were stuffed—over-stuffed—with fireworks—all sorts of fireworks. Fireworks of all descriptions exuded from Grundy as he sprawled. He shed fireworks on all sides; he fairly wallowed in a sea of fireworks.
 Fireworks and a lighted match cannot be brought into such a position without something happening. Something happened!
 It was a squib caught the light of the match. The squib shed sparks in a shower. The sparks did the rest.
 "Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!"
 "Oh!" gasped Mr. Railton. "Upon my word! What—what—what—
 "Whoopoo!" roared Grundy.
 "Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Fizzzzzzzz!"
 "Oh crumbs!" gasped Tom Merry.
 "Bai Jove!"
 "Phew!"
 Fizzzzzzzz! Squizzzzzz! Bang! Bang! Bang!
 Grundy leaped to his feet. Smoke and the smell of gun-powder cloaked him like a garment. He hardly knew what was happening. Sparks showered round him. Squibs and Roman candles were strong; crackers cracked and banged like musketry. In a halo of sparks, Grundy leaped

and yelled. There were fireworks under his feet, fireworks all round him, fireworks in his pockets, and they all seemed to be going off at once.
 "Bang! Bang! Fizzzzzzzz!"
 "Oh! Ow! Help! Fire! Yarooooooh!"
 "Oh ewiker!"
 "Yooop! Help! Yunnurrgh! Oh, my hat! Fire! Oh, Jerusalem!"
 "Bang! Bang! BANG!"
 The last cracker cracked; the last squib squibbed. Grundy staggered against the wall, hardly knowing whether he was dead or alive. Mr. Railton grasped him by the shoulder.
 "Grundy—"
 "Ow!"
 "You utterly stupid and reckless boy—"
 "Wow!"
 "How dare you carry fireworks in your pockets—"
 "Yow-ow!"
 "You are burned—scorched! You might have been seriously injured—"
 "Yow-ow-ow-ow!" moaned Grundy.
 His impression was that he was seriously injured, and that there was no might have been about it.
 "You—you—you—unspikably stupid boy!" gasped Mr. Railton. "You—you—you—you—"
 Words seemed to fail the Housemaster.
 Tom Merry & Co. faded away. They had been too late to stop Grundy. But it was evident that the big idea would never be carried out now.

Grundy was rather damaged. A fellow-could not be the centre of a conglomeration of explosions without getting damaged.
 Grundy had three days in Sunny, and medical attention. There was blessed quiet and peacefulness in the Shell passage during those three days.
 When Grundy reappeared in public he still showed signs of his wild adventures. There were all sorts of marks on Grundy, and he seemed rather short of eyebrows.
 But he was a more subdued Grundy. Perhaps he had been reflecting. That was unusual; but the circumstances were unusual. At all events, Grundy was no longer on the warpath. He was fed-up with the warpath, and nothing more was heard of Grundy getting back on Linton.

THE END.

(A ripping yarn this, eh? Next week's tale of Tom Merry & Co. is every bit as good, too! Note the title: "UNDER PETTICOAT RULE!" and see that you order your copy EARLY!)

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