

THE ONE-MAN REBELLION—SENSATION AT ST. JIM'S!

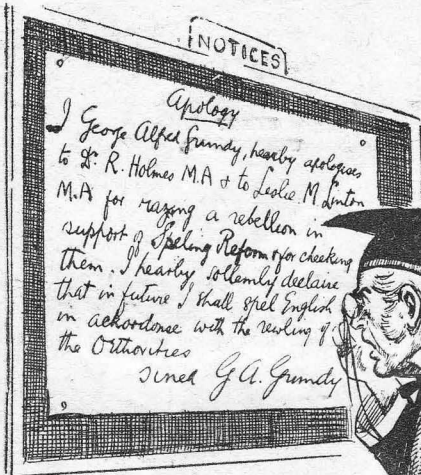
THE GEM

2¢

EVERY
WEDNESDAY.



"I WANT SIMPLIFIED SPELING! I AM PREPAIRED TO REBELL!"—



GRUNDY'S



CHAPTER 1.

An Unappreciated Reformer!

R IDICULOUS!"

Mr. Linton, Form master of the Shell at St. Jim's, fairly snorted out the word.

"But—" said George Alfred Grundy.

"Preposterous!" hooted Mr. Linton. "Your orthography, Grundy, is the worst I have ever encountered. Never in my experience as a schoolmaster have I seen such spelling! Utterly disgraceful!"

"Look here, sir—" protested Grundy, his ruddy face turning a shade ruddier.

"I refuse to listen to paltry excuses!" snorted Mr. Linton.

"The alleged essay on Roman History which you have had the audacity to submit to me as part of your prep would disgrace a Second Form boy. 'Legion,' for example, you spell 'l-e-e-j-u-n.'"

"Oh crikey!" exclaimed Monty Lowther involuntarily, while a chuckle went round the Form.

"Weapons," in your original spelling, is given as 'w-e-p-p-o-n-s.'"

"But—" said Grundy.

"Conquest," said Mr. Linton bitterly, "is spelt in two places 'k-o-n-k-w-e-s-t.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a roar from the Shell. Whether it was wise of them to regard the matter humorously while Mr. Linton was in his present acid mood was questionable. But they couldn't help it, anyway. George Alfred Grundy's weird and wonderful spelling was funny enough at any time. Emphasised by the outraged Form master, it sounded even funnier, and the Shell roared.

Grundy glared at his hilarious colleagues. The great THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,178.

"REBEL!" says, GRUNDY, the Fathead.

"NO!" REPLIES THE SCHOOL.

And that's how the trouble starts.

man of the Shell took himself rather seriously, and he had a rooted objection to being made a subject for mirth.

"Look here—" he said heatedly.

"Silence, Grundy!" roared Mr. Linton, rapping on a desk with his pointer. "And cease laughing, boys. The abysmal ignorance of this unfortunate lad—"

"Eh?" said George Alfred Grundy, an expression of incredulity coming into his rugged face.

"Is not a matter for laughter," said Mr. Linton. "Quite the reverse, in fact. Tears, not laughter, should more properly follow the display of ignorance—"

"Ignorance?" repeated Grundy blankly.

"And stupidity—"

"St-stupidity?"

"Which Grundy has given to-day," finished Mr. Linton. "I can see, Grundy, that I shall have to consult the Head as to what can be done with you. For the moment I am at a loss; you may sit down."

"Well, my hat!" said Grundy.

He didn't sit down. Instead, he continued to stand up at his desk, looking at his Form master almost dazedly.

"To resume the lesson—" said Mr. Linton.

"Half a minute!" broke in Grundy.

He had recovered sufficiently to speak. The humiliation to which he had been subjected to in the last two minutes was almost paralysing. But Grundy managed to recover just sufficient control of himself to use his vocal powers.

"You may sit down, Grundy!" said Mr. Linton.

"Quite, sir; but I don't want to sit down for a minute," said Grundy, in a deadly calm voice. "I don't want to be disrespectful—"

"Will you sit down, Grundy?" almost ground out Mr. Linton.

"But, whether it's disrespectful or not, I'm not going to be ticked off without defending myself!"

—GEORGE ALFRED IS FUNNIER THAN EVER IN THIS YARN!

Simplified SPELLING!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"What—what—"

"You see, sir," said Grundy steadily, "the fact of the matter is that, in spite of what you've said, your spelling may be all wrong, and mine may be all right, after all!"

"Oh!"

It was a gasp from the Shell. Mr. Linton jumped, as though electrified. If Grundy had dropped a bomb in the Form-room he could not have created a bigger sensation.

"Ideas about spelling are altering nowadays, sir," said Grundy, looking by no means displeased at the sensation he had caused. "People are getting to see how silly the present rules are!"

Another gasp from the Shell. Mr. Linton took a step forward.

"Grundy!"

"I've been mugging it up lately, sir," said Grundy unheeding. "Lots of clever people disagree with spelling as it stands to-day, and there are several societies formed to bring about spelling reform. I'm going to chance it and join one of 'em!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Linton.

Understanding came to him, and he looked a little relieved. What had seemed at first like pure "cheek" on Grundy's part was, apparently, not so bad after all.

Grundy grinned. He felt he had scored.

"Only yesterday, sir," he said cheerfully, "I was reading a pamphlet by a chap called Professor Knott-Wright condemning present-day spelling. Perhaps you've heard of him, sir?"

Mr. Linton smiled faintly.

"I have heard of the gentleman, Grundy. Professor Knott-Wright is a celebrated philologist whose eccentric behaviour in recent years has earned him a good deal of notoriety. I advise you not to place too much faith in him."

Grundy shook his head.

"I'm afraid I can't accept your advice, sir. Personally, I think the idea of simplified spelling is jolly sensible!"

"And, for my part, Grundy," retorted Mr. Linton, "I consider it in your best interests to learn to spell in the orthodox way before you attempt experiments in simplified spelling. Furthermore, I intend to see that you do so!"

Grundy's jaw set doggedly.

"And supposing I refuse?" he asked.

"What!"

"Because that's what I'm seriously thinking of doing," said Grundy. "What happens if I take my stand and refuse?"

Mr. Linton turned pink.

"Grundy! You reckless, insubordinate lad—"

"Why should I learn old-fashioned spelling when it will be out of date in a few years?" demanded Grundy. "Sheer waste of time, in my opinion!"

"Grundy!" hooted Mr. Linton.

"Professor Knott-Wright says that in a few years' time 'weapons' will be spelt as I've spelt it. Why shouldn't I start now? Why shouldn't we all start, if it comes to that?"

"Great pip!"

The Shell looked from Grundy to Mr. Linton breathlessly. The Shell Form master took another step forward, as if he felt sorely tempted to wade in and commit assault and battery on his argumentative pupil. But he overcame that temptation, and pointed to the front of the class instead.

"Grundy! Stand out!"

"What for, sir?" asked Grundy, looking quite surprised. Mr. Linton seemed to choke for a second.

"Because, Grundy, I am going to punish you for insolence and insubordination!" he managed to grind out at last. "Stand out!"

"But I haven't been insolent!" said Grundy indignantly. "I was only saying—"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Linton. And, without

wasting any more time, he rushed to Grundy's desk, grasped the argumentative spelling reformer by the scruff of the neck, and hauled him out before the class.

Grundy emitted a yelp.

"Ow! Look here, sir—"

"Bend over this desk!" hooted Mr. Linton.

"But— Yooooop! Yarooooooh!"

Grundy not bending over on his own accord, the master of the Shell himself had bent him over. The cane rose and fell, and a series of sharp thwacks, accompanied by a series of yells from Grundy, resounded through the Form-room.

"There!" gasped Mr. Linton, at last. "Perhaps, Grundy, you will now know better than to dispute with me on the subject of English spelling!"

"Ow!"

"For the remainder of the lesson, Grundy, you will stand at the blackboard writing the sentence, 'I must learn to spell.'"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Grundy.

"At once, sir!"

"But—"

Mr. Linton made another move towards the spelling reformer of the Shell, and Grundy fairly leaped to the blackboard. Grundy was not the kind of fellow to put up with humiliation without a struggle. But even the dreadful humiliation of having to stand out before the grinning class writing "I must learn to spell" over and over again was not dreadful enough for him to risk another dose of Mr. Linton's cane.

His rugged face a study in indignation, Grundy got busy with the chalk. His first effort, as the Shell rather anticipated, was a little off the rails; "learn" making its appearance as "lern," and "spell" as "spel." But Mr. Linton soon put him right over the minor inaccuracies, and after that Grundy managed to inscribe the sentence several dozen times, without blemish and without fault, before the bell announcing the end of the day's lessons came to end his ordeal.

CHAPTER 2.

Grundy Gets Busy!

"HERE he comes!"

"Good old Grundy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a yell as Grundy tramped up to the Shell passage. Mr. Linton had kept him behind for a few minutes after the class had been dismissed, for the purpose of administering a little pi-jaw. Judging by the expression on Grundy's face, Linton's pi-jaw had not succeeded in reducing Grundy to a state of sweet reasonableness. Grundy looked, in fact, rather like a lion, seeking what he might devour.

A grinning crowd surrounded the great man of the Shell.

"What did Linton say?"

"Was he on the warpath?"

"Manage to convert him to simplified spelling?" asked Monty Lowther, and there was another yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy glared.

"Cut out the cackling, for goodness' sake! Matter of fact, I didn't convert him."

"Go hon."

"I tried to, of course—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But Linton's a wooden-headed old ass. He simply wouldn't see it," said Grundy sorrowfully. "Same with all these schoolmasters, you know. They get buried in a school and lose touch with the world. Advanced ideas never reach them, and even if they do they're incapable of understanding them."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Linton's impossible; I can see that," said Grundy, with a shake of his head. "But Linton can't stop the tide of progress, and he's not jolly well going to stop me. I'm going ahead!"

"Great pip!"

"But—"

"My dear old bean—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can't!" said Tom Merry, with a laugh. "Whether there's anything in this idea of simplified spelling or not, I don't know. I should say myself that it's the idea of a crank—"

"Hear, hear!"

"But in any case, you can't dictate to your own Form master about spelling. It isn't done, you know, and if you try it on, you're simply asking for trouble in large doses!" Grundy snorted.

"Well, I'm going to ask for trouble, then! And simplified spelling isn't the idea of a crank, either. Suppose you'd never heard of Professor Knott-Wright before I mentioned him in the class this afternoon?"

"Fraid not, old chap! To my everlasting shame—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I didn't even suspect that he existed! What about him?"

"Well, he's not a crank, anyway!" snorted Grundy. "Professor Knott-Wright is the president of the Spelling Reform League, and his ideas are jolly sound. I've been reading a pamphlet of his I wrote for, called 'Spelling for Advanced Thinkers'—"

"But what's that to do with spelling for you?" asked Lowther innocently.

"You silly ass!" roared Grundy. "If I'm not an advanced thinker, what am I?"

"Give it up. What are you, anyway?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I ever met such a lot of grinning idiots!" growled Grundy. "Serve you right if I didn't tell you anything more about spelling reform. But I'm out to convert St. Jim's—"

"You are, are you?"

Grundy nodded.

"After what happened in the Form-room this afternoon, I shan't rest content until I've got simplified spelling recognised and established at St. Jim's. And you fellows will come into it, undeserving as you are. In fact, you'll be my first recruits!"

"Great pip!"

"After tea," said Grundy, "I shall hold my first propaganda meeting in the Common-room. All the Shell and the Fourth will be expected to roll up."

"We'll come!"

"Wouldn't miss it for worlds!" grinned Lowther.

"Good!" said Grundy unsuspectingly. "I'll leave it to you to tell all the Fourth chaps, then. Shan't have much time myself. I've got to prepare my speech and arrange details. Can I rely on your passing the word round?"

"We'll get you a full house; won't we, chaps?"

"Oh, rather!"

"Well, that's all right, then," said Grundy, much more graciously. "I'll buzz off, now. Come on, Wilky—and you, Gunn. I want you."

Wilkins and Gunn, Grundy's study-mates in No. 3, looking by no means enthusiastic, brought up in the rear of their leader and followed him into the study.

"Close the door," said Grundy. "I've got an idea."

"Oh!"

Wilkins and Gunn looked even less enthusiastic.

"I've been trying to think out a way of making my meeting amusing as well as instructive," said Grundy, sitting down in the armchair and resting his long legs on the table. "Most of the audience will be of the usual brainless type that needs entertaining as well as teaching."

"Hem!"

"Now, here's the wheeze!" grinned Grundy. "I've thought out a way of providing a sort of object-lesson and keeping them in fits of laughter at the same time."

"You mean you're going to speak to 'em seriously?" asked Gunn, with heavy sarcasm. "Good idea, old chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wilkins.

Grundy glared.

"Why, you silly ass—that meant to be funny? Because if it is—"

"Nunno! Go ahead, old man; what is this brilliant idea?" asked Gunn hastily.

Grundy smiled again.

"Brilliant" is the word for it, right enough! This is

the wheeze: For one of you chaps—you, Gunn, for preference—to dress up as a sort of comic Linton—"

"What!" yelled Gunn.

"And stand at the side of the platform, looking unintelligent, while I deal blow after blow at Linton's fatheaded ideas. It'll be quite easy. You'll just have to look natural—"

"Do you imagine I'm going to dress up as Linton for you?" hooted Gunn.

Grundy nodded calmly.

"Certainly. It's a wonderful wheeze. Dressed up as Linton, you'll stand for all that's old-fashioned and out of date in spelling, while I shall be the brainy, progressive chap who supports spelling reform. With the idea brought before them like that, the fellows will go wild for simplified spelling."

"Jolly good idea!" grinned Wilkins, probably influenced in that decision by the circumstance that he was apparently not required to do anything. "It ought to make a bit of a rag. Why don't you do it, Gunn?"

"Why, you crass ass—"

"He's going to," said Grundy confidently. "Not a very pleasant job, I know, disguising as a silly ass like Linton, but Gunn will do it for me, especially in view of my giving him that cricket bat I didn't take to."

Gunn's expression changed a little.

"Hem! Didn't know you'd actually decided to give it me, old chap. But if you have—"

"I have," said Grundy.

"Well, in the circs, I can't very well refuse, can I?" asked Gunn. "One good turn deserves another, and all that. Thanks for the bat, old man. And, of course, I'll back you up over this Linton bizney!"

"Just as well for you!" said Grundy, with a nod. "And now about this meeting of mine—"

"What about tea?" asked Wilkins, pointedly.

Grundy sniffed.

"Blow tea! All you chaps seem to think about is gorging. You two can have tea if you like, so long as you don't make too much noise. I'm going to prepare my speech!"

"Ha, ha!—I mean, quite so, old chap! Well, then, we'll have tea, eh, Gunn?"

"What-ho!" said Gunn emphatically.

"Don't be long, either," said Grundy. "I want my meeting to start not later than six, and you've got to go up to the box-room, where they keep the dramatic society's props, and rig up as old Linton before that, Gunn."

"Time for tea, anyway, old chap," said Gunn.

And in point of fact, both Wilkins and Gunn had made up their minds that even if Grundy's meeting had to be delayed, they would find time for the infinitely more important function of tea.

They piled into the good things which, by their leader's generosity, were stored in plenty in the cupboard. While they did so, Grundy, pencil in hand and a frown on his rugged face, piled into his speech.

In due course, all three finished. Then Grundy rose and transferred to his jacket pocket the scribbled notes which he had produced.

"Rather fancy I'm going to fetch 'em to-night, you men!" he remarked with a satisfied grin. "Ready, now, Gunn?"

"Ready, ay, ready!" answered Gunn, with a grimace.

"Well, you can do the disguising business on your own, I suppose? You've had a bit of experience in that line before, I believe, and I dare say you can rig yourself up to look like Linton."

"Pretty easy, I think," nodded Gunn. "Linton's rather a funny-looking beggar, with his bald head and little bits of side-whiskers. I imagine there's enough stuff in the dramatic society's props to do the thing quite well. Do my best, anyway."

"Good enough," said Grundy. "You'll come with me, Wilky. I want you to clear the Common-room while I rehearse my speech."

"Oh!" said Wilkins. Judging by his expression, Wilkins didn't exactly welcome the task. But he refrained from comment. Wilkins and Gunn, for several very good reasons, were in the habit of giving Grundy his head to a large extent.

Wilkins therefore followed his leader down to the Common-room while Gunn proceeded upstairs to the box-room where the dramatic society's props were stored.

Cuthbert Gunn was known to be rather a "dab" at the gentle art of make-up, and he certainly wrought a surprising transformation in himself during the half-hour that followed. His dark lounge suit was replaced by an old-fashioned suit of rusty black, his smart-looking shoes were changed for a dull-looking pair of boots several

sizes larger, and an academic gown was raked out of the depths of a property-basket and added, to alter his appearance still more.

Then Gunn got busy with grease-paint and crepe hair and a false, shiny forehead. Soon, something resembling Mr. Linton arose out of the cheery junior who had first come into the box-room.

Gunn was satisfied at last. A final glance in the hand-mirror which he found among the props, showed him that he had got as near to the original as he could hope to get.

Gunn grinned, then adopted the slight frown which was usually to be seen on Mr. Linton's face, and quitted the box-room.

Hurrying down the stairs he met several juniors who parted and made way for him most respectfully, evidently not dreaming that he was other than the master whom he was meant to be. Gunn felt quite elated. He turned the corner from the stairs into the passage that led to the Common-room quite eagerly, anxious now to get to Grundy's meeting.

Then his mood of elation departed from him at one fell swoop, so to speak.

For coming straight towards him was, of all people at St. Jim's, Mr. Linton himself.

Gunn turned again. But it was too late. Mr. Linton had already spotted him.

"Stop! I command you; stop!"

"Oh crikey!" murmured Gunn.

Mr. Linton grabbed him by the shoulder and swung him round. Then the master of the Shell gasped.

"Is it—can it be possible that you are masquerading as me?"

"Oh dear! Certainly not!" groaned Gunn. "The—the fact is, sir—"

"Who are you?" snapped Mr. Linton. Then, with the idea of answering the question for himself, the master of the Shell snatched off the impostor's mortar-board. With the mortar-board came the false forehead; and when that had gone, the culprit's identity was revealed immediately.

"Gunn!" hooted Mr. Linton. "You—you—how dare you, sir?"

"I—I—," stammered the wretched Gunn.

"You were making for the Common-room!" snorted Mr. Linton. "Evidently there is some kind of entertainment planned to take place there in which you were intended to represent me in a libellous fashion. How dare you, Gunn!"

"You see, sir—"

Mr. Linton pointed to the stairs.

"Go down to my study at once, Gunn, and await me there. I will inquire into the question of what is going on in the Common-room myself!"

"But—" groaned Gunn.

"Go!"

Gunn gave it up and went.

Mr. Linton, his brow thunderous, went back towards the Junior Common-room.

CHAPTER 3.

"A Horrible Example!"

"GENTLEMEN—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen, chaps and fellows—"

"On the bawl!"

"Go it, Grundy!"

George Alfred Grundy paused for a moment, to smile on his audience. This, he felt, was something like a meeting.

Certainly, the Shell and the Fourth had responded well.

Despite the fact that it was a fine evening and that the ground on Little Side was available for all who felt like footer practice, the Common-room was crowded. It was possible, of course, that some, if not most of the crowd, regarded Grundy's meeting as a lark and had turned up purely with the idea of turning it into a "rag." As that possibility did not occur to Grundy, however, there was nothing to mar his joy.

Grundy fairly beamed.

"Gentlemen—" he began again.

"Didn't you say that before?" asked Herries.

"Can't have too much of a good thing!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Perhaps Grundy's idea is to keep on yelling 'Gentlemen!' for the rest of the evening!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

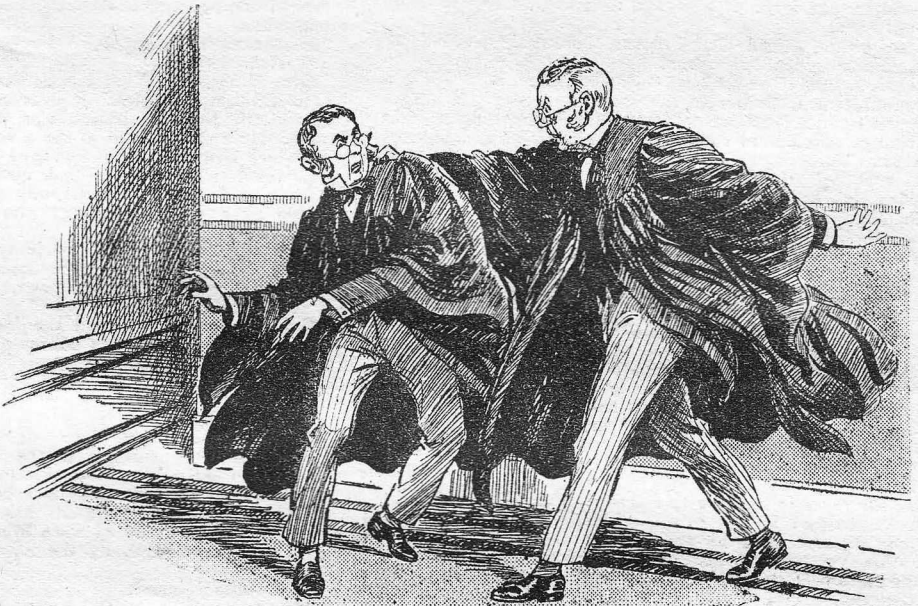
"Shut up, fathheads!" bawled Grundy, above the din. "Gentlemen! This meeting has been called to give you all a chance of hearing something about the great subject of spelling reform from the brainiest fellow in the Lower School. Need I say that I refer to myself?"

"No need whatever!" said Jack Blake. "We shouldn't believe you if you did say it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy reddened.

"No cheek, Blake! Any more of that and I'll get down



Mr. Linton gasped as he swung the disguised Gunn round by the shoulder.

and bash you! But to proceed: we are living, gentlemen, in revolutionary times. Old customs are dying every day—and a jolly good job they are! The dawn of a new age is upon us! And one of the signs of that dawn is the increasing interest that intellectual chaps like myself are taking in spelling reform!"

"Great pip!"

Grundy's audience looked almost stunned by that flow of eloquence—which was not surprising, considering that Grundy had spent the best part of tea-time composing the first part of his speech.

"For centuries, gentlemen," said Grundy, dramatically, "generations of schoolboys—and grown-ups, too!—have groaned under the tyranny of the most fatheaded spelling laws imaginable. Need I say that I refer to the spelling of the English language?"

"Can if you like, old bean!"

"Gentlemen!" went on the great man of the Shell, smiting the palm of his hand with his clenched fist. "All these rubbishy laws are going to be swept away—and jolly soon, too! The time is coming when English spelling will be run on lines so simple that even you chaps, dense as you are, will be able to spell with the greatest of ease!"

"Well, my hat!"

"Of all the cheeky asses—"

"This great reform, gentlemen," said Grundy, ignoring the protests of a section of the crowd, "cannot go through without opposition. That's only to be expected, of course.

Diehards are to be found everywhere; and so in the so-called master of the Shell, Leslie M. Linton, M.A., we've got as big a diehard as you'd find in any school!"

"Sh-sh!" came a warning hiss, as a familiar figure wearing cap and gown, appeared in the doorway of the Common-room.

Grundy looked round and started a little; the newcomer was more like Linton than he had anticipated he would be. Then he grinned.

"It's all right, you men; no need to be alarmed," he said reassuringly. "You think this is Linton, of course. But it's not. Matter of fact, it's Gunn, ain't it, Gunny? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crikey!"

"But——"

"But it's not Gunn, you howling idiot!" said Tom Merry, in a frantic stage whisper. "Bob down before you're spotted! It's Linton himself!"

Grundy wiped the tears of merriment from his eyes.

"Ha, ha, ha! All serene, Merry! I told Gunn to dress up as Linton. Done well, hasn't he? Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows! Cast your optics on the weird-looking freak that's just come in. One glance at him will tell you what a moss-bound moth-eaten old fossil Linton is!"

"Grundy——" entreated Tom Merry, in an agonised tone.

"Old chap——" murmured Wilkins, who, unlike his cheerful leader, could see at a glance that something had gone wrong.

But George Alfred Grundy was thoroughly worked up now. Nothing could stop him.

"Look at him!" he yelled. "Side whiskers, a face like a chimpanzee, and clothes in the fashion of fifty years ago. Can you wonder that we spelling reformers have got a fight in front of us when we're up against whiskery old dodderers like this?"

A sort of strangled gasp escaped the newcomer. Apparently he found difficulty in rendering himself articulate for the moment. While he struggled for words, Grundy, blissfully unaware that his brilliant plan had miscarried, rattled on cheerfully with his speech.

"There he stands, gentlemen, a living representative of the Dark Ages—a horrible example to those who hesitate to throw overboard the ideas of the past! This freak, gentlemen—this horrible example——"

"Grundy!" gasped Mr. Linton, articulate at last.

"Is the first barrier in our path of progress!" went on Grundy, not recognising Mr. Linton's voice in the heat of his enthusiasm. "He must be ruthlessly swept aside! Down with Linton, must be our watchword! Down with this footling old fogey!"

"Grundy!" shrieked Mr. Linton.

"Ow!"

Grundy came to earth with a bump. Carried away as he was, he couldn't fail to recognise Mr. Linton's last shout. Grundy looked hard at the half-paralysed Mr. Linton. Then his jaw dropped, his knees seemed to sag, and a gasp escaped him that was reminiscent of a punctured tyre.

"Grundy!" raved Mr. Linton. "Boy! Wretched youth! What are you saying?"

"Ow!"

"That's done it!" murmured Monty Lowther.

It certainly had! Mr. Linton, as a rule, was quite a mild-mannered gentleman. But the few home-truths concerning himself which he had just heard from Grundy had utterly destroyed anything about him that remotely resembled mildness. Mr. Linton glared at Grundy almost as though he could have eaten him.

"Get down from that chair, sir, at once! And come here!"

Leslie M. Linton, M.A., was almost dancing with rage.

"Oh dear!" moaned Grundy.

It took a lot to put Grundy off his stroke. But the overwhelming discovery that the person he had imagined to be Gunn was really Linton after all, fairly took the wind out of his sails. Grundy jumped down from the chair from which he had been delivering his speech, looking almost green.

"I—I—— You see, sir——" he moaned.

"You have an explanation of this heinous behaviour?" roared Mr. Linton.

"Ow! Nunno, sir!" gasped Grundy, feeling that explanations at that juncture would but add fuel to the flames.

"Very well, Grundy. Follow me. Your confederate Gunn is at present in my study. We will call for him and go straight to the headmaster. Come!"

"Oh crikey!"

Mr. Linton, with a wolfish look at Grundy's audience, swept out of the Common-room like a whirlwind. Grundy followed him.

Silence reigned in the Common-room after their exit—

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until sufficient time had elapsed for Mr. Linton to get out of earshot. After that, the silence ended abruptly and the juniors' feelings found expression in a howl.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 4.

Converting the Head!

"COME in!"

Dr. Holmes, the venerable headmaster of St. Jim's, called out the invitation as a tap came on the door of his study.

The door opened, to admit Mr. Linton, followed by two Shell juniors, in the shape of George Alfred Grundy and Cuthbert Gunn.

Dr. Holmes, with a sigh, put away the book which he had just started to read, and prepared for the trouble which experience had taught him to expect wherever Grundy was. He had been hoping for a quiet interval with Sophocles; but that interval apparently had to be devoted to Grundy instead, and the Head inwardly doubted, judging by the expression on Mr. Linton's face, whether it would be a very quiet interval, either.

Mr. Linton bowed to the Head.

"I am sorry to intrude, sir, but I am compelled to do so."

"What is the trouble, Mr. Linton?" asked the Head.

Mr. Linton pointed a forefinger that trembled in Grundy's direction.

"This intractable, impossible boy——"

The Head sighed.

"Grundy again? What has he been doing, Mr. Linton?"

Mr. Linton explained. It was a somewhat incoherent explanation, for Mr. Linton was in an incoherent mood. But Dr. Holmes managed to get a rough idea of the offence with which Grundy and his unhappy colleague were charged.

The revelation made him look quite shocked.

"Dear me! Then—then Grundy actually held you up to ridicule at a junior meeting?" he exclaimed, when Mr. Linton had finished.

"That is a mild way of describing it, sir. The boy used a number of extremely offensive appellations. He referred to me as a 'whiskery old dodderer,' and a freak. He cited me as a 'horrible example'——"

"Goodness gracious!" said the Head.

"His language, sir, was offensive and slanderous in the extreme!" said Mr. Linton angrily. "He had the impertinence to compare my face with that of a chimpanzee!"

The Head gasped.

"Extraordinary, my dear sir! And you say that Grundy's amazing conduct is the result of his disputing with you on the subject of English orthography?"

"Precisely, sir. This ridiculous boy, whose ignorance in spelling is beyond description, has chosen to ally himself with a misguided band of so-called spelling reformers who are led, I understand, by the notorious Professor Knott-Wright."

Dr. Holmes blinked.

"But—but, my dear sir, surely Grundy has nothing in common with this gentleman? Professor Knott-Wright, in spite of his eccentricities, is a philologist of repute——"

"Precisely, sir. The idea that Grundy can have anything in common with such a man is preposterous. The whole thing is a pretence——"

"It's not, sir!" broke in Grundy.

The great man of the Shell had slowly been regaining his customary sangfroid since his arrival in the Head's study. Grundy was not the sort of fellow to knuckle under for long, and although Mr. Linton's arrival in the Common-room had given him a shock, it had not altogether given him the knock-out. Mr. Linton's reference to spelling reform and the celebrated Professor Knott-Wright, had aroused Grundy's fighting instincts again, and Grundy had found himself turning things over in his mind. The position, he thought, might not be so bad after all. It was unfortunate, of course, that Mr. Linton had chipped in just when he had. But now that he had, and Grundy was on the carpet in the Head's study, might it not be for the best, after all? Certainly Grundy had a chance now, if he never had another, of converting Dr. Holmes himself to advanced ideas in the spelling of English.

Grundy faced the Head boldly. The Head eyed Grundy sternly.

"You again choose to dispute with your Form master, Grundy?" asked Dr. Holmes coldly.

"If he considers my spelling reform stunt's only a pretence, what else can I do?" demanded Grundy. "It's not, anyway. I believe in spelling reform. Why should 'conquest' be spelt 'k-o-n-q-u-e-s-t,' f'instance?"

"'Conquest,' my dear Grundy, is not spelt in that way, as it happens."

"There you are, then! That's an example of the

confusion we get from the old idea in spelling!" said Grundy triumphantly. "I stand by spelling reform, anyway. It's true I don't understand a lot about Professor Knott-Wright's arguments—"

"Dear me!" murmured the Head.

"But I expect they're mostly padding," said Grundy confidently. "You can look on me as a convinced spelling reformer, at any rate. And now, sir, what about you?"

"What!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes, with a start.

"Spelling reform is the most advanced idea of the day, sir," said Grundy gravely. "If you want to move with the times, it's up to you to think seriously about it."

"M-my dear Grundy—" stuttered the Head.

"Of course, sir, I know you're rather old-fashioned," rattled on Grundy, quite cheerful again now that he had got back to his pet subject. "Some people might even look on you as effete and out of date altogether. But I don't!"

"Matter of fact, they're jolly sensible ideas, sir, and I'm sure if you reflect—"

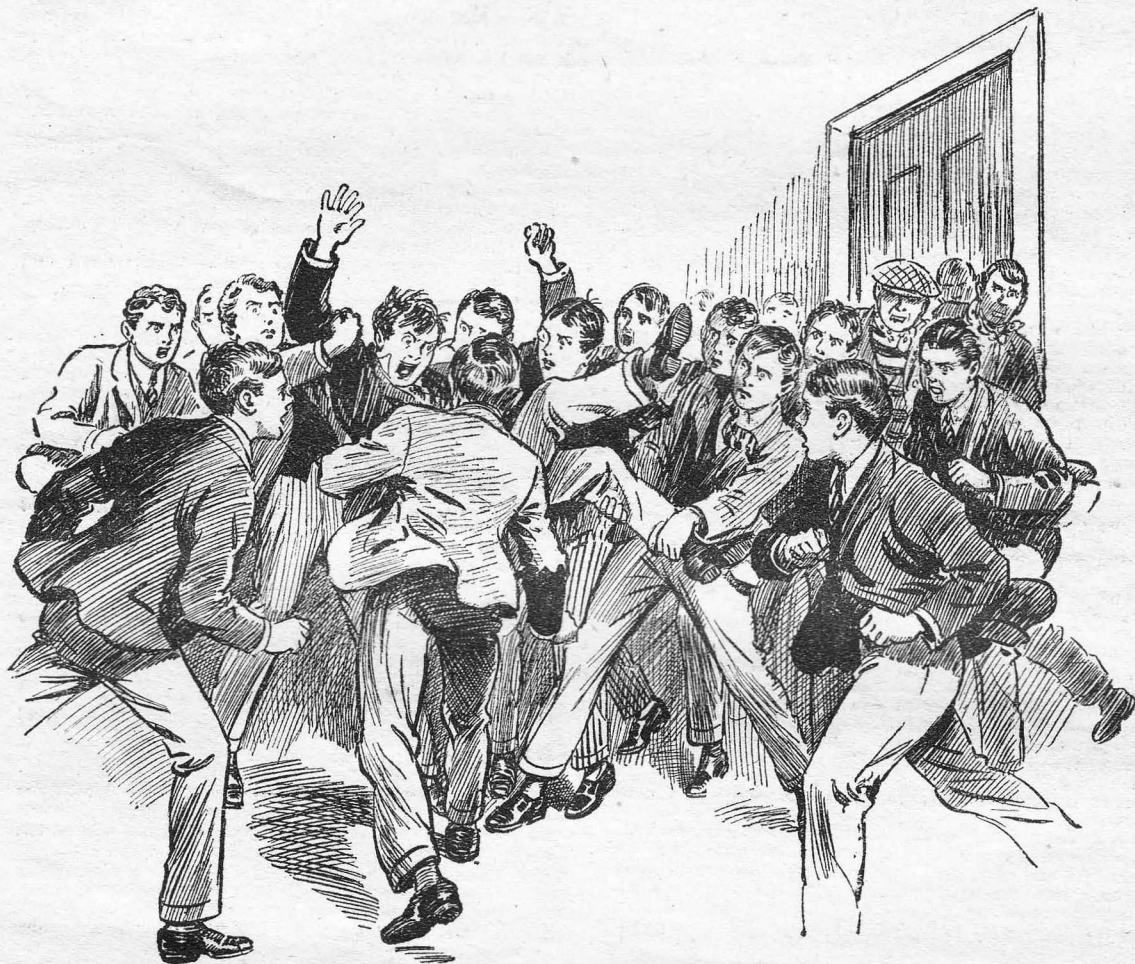
"If—if I reflect?" gasped the Head, quite faintly.

"Just so! If you reflect for a minute or two, sir, you'll soon come to the conclusion that—"

"Grundy! You utterly foolish and ridiculous boy!" gasped the Head, without waiting to hear what conclusion he would arrive at if he reflected. "Are you mad?"

"You see for yourself, sir," remarked Mr. Linton, "to what a degree of obtuseness Grundy's behaviour extends. He is impossible!"

"He is certainly phenomenally dense," said Dr. Holmes, staring at Grundy as though the great man of the Shell fascinated him. "Never before have I heard such arrant nonsense talked by a boy of his years. Is it not possible to bring you to realise, Grundy, how execrable your behaviour has been?"



In a moment the whole crowd closed in on Grundy, and he was swept off his feet!

"Grundy!" muttered the almost incredulous Head, while Mr. Linton and Gunn stared, open-mouthed.

"Anyway, even if you were awfully out of date it wouldn't be anything to wonder at in an old-fashioned show like this!" said Grundy. "Now, sir, about spelling reform—"

"Grundy!" hooted the Head. "How dare you!"

"What's wrong, sir? Dare what?" asked Grundy, in surprise.

"How dare you have the brazen effrontery to advocate absurd ideas on English orthography to your own headmaster?" roared the Head.

Grundy frowned.

"They're not absurd ideas, sir! Just what I was trying to explain to you. Professor Knott-Wright—"

"You may leave Professor Knott-Wright out of it, Grundy!"

"But he's the president of the Spelling Reform League, sir!" explained Grundy patiently. "In the pamphlet I sent for, Professor Knott-Wright says that anyone who calls his ideas absurd is an idiot!"

"What—what—"

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Grundy, genuinely surprised.

"You have flouted authority and defied your Form master, Grundy. You have gone even farther than that and spoken most disrespectfully to me."

"Disrespectfully?" echoed Grundy, in astonishment.

"But I was only—"

"Silence, sir! As to this extraordinary prank in which Gunn disguised himself as Mr. Linton so that you might hold Mr. Linton up to public ridicule, I can use no words strong enough to condemn it. Have you anything to say in defence of the part you played in it, Gunn?"

"Only that I'm sorry, sir," answered Gunn, who really did feel sorry now that he had been foolish enough to be lured into the affair. "I looked on it just as a lark— a joke, sir! I didn't mean to be disrespectful to Mr. Linton."

The Head nodded.

"That is the best you can say, in the circumstances, Gunn. I shall leave your punishment in Mr. Linton's hands. You may go."

"Oh! Thank you, sir!"

And Gunn went, feeling very thankful to have the chance

of getting away and changing into his own clothes again.

"And about me, sir?" asked Grundy, as the door closed behind his colleague.

"You, Grundy, I shall punish severely, myself. Words, apparently, you are incapable of understanding—"

"Eh?" gasped Grundy.

"So we will see if pain can teach you a lesson. Bend over!"

"But—"

Dr. Holmes looked very stern.

"Unless you obey me at once, Grundy, the consequences for you are likely to be very serious."

"Oh!" said Grundy. And after another moment's hesitation he bent over. Even Grundy had his limits.

For quite a considerable time after that the Head's study echoed to the steady sound of swishing.

Long before that steady sound had ceased, yells of anguish were proceeding from George Alfred Grundy. And the crowd of juniors who waited at the end of the passage for news rightly inferred that the great man of the Shell had not, in spite of his efforts, converted the Head to spelling reform.

CHAPTER 5.

Grundy in Revolt!

"HALLO, hallo! What the thump—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Do my old eyes deceive me or is somebody really converting the gym into a furniture depository?" asked Monty Lowther.

It was midday of the following day and the Terrible

Three of the Shell and Jack Blake & Co. of the Fourth were on their way from footer practice to the School House for dinner. Half-way across the quad, the unusual sight of a large pantechnicum driving through the gates had attracted their attention. Watching the great van's movements with some curiosity, they had seen it draw up outside the gymnasium.

When it halted outside that red-brick building and started disgorging scores of mattresses and blankets, Tom Merry and his chums fairly rubbed their eyes.

"What on earth's the idea?" asked Tom Merry wonderingly.

"Give it up. Seems to me nobody belonging to the school is in charge of the bizney, either."

"Unless it's Grundy," said Manners. "Grundy's there, with bells on, by the look of things."

"Bai Jove! Gwunday seems to be supewintendin' the job, in fact," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, regarding the scene through his celebrated monocle. "Let's c'ross ovah an' inquire what's the mewwy game!"

"Good egg!"

The chums retraced their footsteps and crossed over to the gymnasium.

Quite a busy scene confronted them on their arrival. Three men wearing green baize aprons were unloading the pantechnicum and carrying innumerable mattresses and piles of blankets into the gym. Grundy, meanwhile, stood by directing operations.

"Sharp's the word, you men!" he was saying, as the School House chums came up. "I want the whole lot packed away before the dinner-bell goes. No slacking!"

"What the merry dickens—" gasped Tom Merry.

Grundy looked round at the sound of Tom's voice and bestowed a careless nod on the new arrivals.

"Hallo, you men! Like to help?"

"Not keen, thanks all the same!" smiled Tom Merry. "But what's the big idea, anyway, Grundy? Whose is all this stuff?"

"What, the bedding?" asked Grundy carelessly. "Oh, that's mine!"

"Great pip!"

"I ordered it from the store at Wayland this morning," explained Grundy. "There's some more stuff coming up this afternoon. Grub, you know. Tons of it!"

"Eh?"

"Enough to last fifty men for a month," said Grundy calmly. "Of course, keep it dark, for the time being. The beaks mustn't hear a whisper about it till it comes off!"

"Till—till it comes off?" stuttered Tom Merry. "Till what comes off, anyway?"

"Why, my rebellion, of course!"

"Wha-a-at!"

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It was a yell from the seven School House juniors.

"Your—your rebellion?" stuttered Jack Blake.

Grundy nodded.

"Just that. I haven't said much about it yet, in case it got to the ears of the beaks before all my plans were ready. No harm in you fellows knowing, though—you're reliable."

"But—but—"

"Dashed if I understand what you're driving at," said Herries. "Mean to say you're going to rebel against something or other?"

"Against the antiquated spelling they use in this moth-eaten old place," nodded Grundy. "I explained my attitude at the meeting last night. Apparently the beaks are not in sympathy with it. So now I'm going to rebel."

"How are you going about it, then?" asked Tom Merry with interest.

Grundy snorted.

"You're very dense, Merry—I've often noticed that before. There's only one way of meeting the Head's challenge—that's by barring-out in the gym. And that's exactly what I'm going to do!"

"But why the blankets and things, deah boy?" inquired Arthur Augustus. "If you're pwoposin' to bah out on your own—"

"Don't be an idiot!" interrupted the spelling reformer of the Shell. "Think I'd bar out on my own? What good would that do?"

"None whatevah, deah boy! But if you're not goin' to bah-out on your own, who, might I ask, are you goin' to get to bah-out with you?"

"All of you," answered Grundy calmly—"you fellows, and the whole of the Shell, and the Fourth—New House as well, if they'll come in!"

The School House chums stared at Grundy for a moment. Then there was a yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, ye gods!"

"So that's it! So all these mattresses and things—"

"And the tons of grub—"

"Are for us to bar-out with!" roared Herries. "And this is the first we've heard of it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and his followers shrieked.

Grundy eyed them, with a darkening brow.

"Look here, you idiots—"

"Don't!" moaned Monty Lowther. "Any more funny stories like that, and I shall collapse!"

"Grundy's Barring-out, you know!" wept Jack Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy glared.

"Can it, you idiots, before I wade in and wallop you! I don't see anything to laugh at—"

"Lend him a mirror, somebody!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I must say I expected something of the kind from you!" said Grundy bitterly. "Jealousy, I expect. None of you fellows ever thought out the idea of barring-out for spelling reform!"

"Well, there's only one fellow at St. Jim's who's capable of an idea like that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's just it, anyway," said Grundy. "Nobody else thought of such a brilliant wheeze before; and you're all jealous because I thought of it first! All the same, I rather fancy you'll find yourselves backing me up before long."

"Better fancy again, old bean," grinned Manners. "I don't think I shall join in myself."

"Nor me!"

"Same here!"

"Watah not!" said Arthur Augustus emphatically. "I wegard the ideah as uttably widic, Gwunday, an' if you'll take my advice—"

"I shan't, anyway, so you needn't trouble to give it," grunted Grundy. "I'm going through with this rebellion, I can tell you. It's going to be the biggest barring-out ever. No surrender till simplified spelling is established at St. Jim's—that's going to be my watchword! You just see what happens!"

Tom Merry looked rather serious.

"Look here, Grundy, joking aside, you're not really thinking of going on with this nonsense?"

Grundy frowned.

"If you're going to call my barring-out nonsense, Tom Merry—"

"Well, I can't look on it as anything else but nonsense, anyway," said Tom. "If you're really going on with it,

Grundy, it looks to me as if you're in for a whole heap of trouble."

"I can stand that."

"Dare say you can, old bean. But there's no sense in asking for the sack, is there? And that's what this amounts to."

Grundy smiled.

"I shan't get the sack, Merry, never fear. The Head's a bit of a donkey, I know, but he's not donkey enough to expel one fellow who holds the Lower School together."

"My hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dashed if I know what you're all cackling at. It's a fact, anyway. Besides, when I've won my great victory I shall be in a position to dictate terms, so I shouldn't be sacked in any case."

"Great pip!"

"Well, they've finished unloading now, 'Scuse me while I pay 'em off!" said Grundy, as the three men in green baize aprons assembled near their van.

Tom Merry and his chums waited while Grundy paid off the men and inspected the piled-up bedding in the gym. Then they walked back with him to the School House, arguing, threatening, and pleading every step of the way. But it all fell on deaf ears. Grundy had made up his mind for a barring-out, and a barring-out he meant to have at any cost.

Dinner came with George Alfred as keen as ever.

After dinner he spent ten minutes or so going round the Shell and the Fourth asking for recruits.

But recruits seemed singularly backward in coming forward. Grundy found, to his disgust, that his proposed barring-out caused nothing but mirth in the Lower School.

It was disappointing. But the great man of the Shell had half-expected it. He had observed the same kind of peculiarity in their behaviour before, and this time he was already prepared for the emergency.

Just before afternoon lessons began Grundy paid a surreptitious visit to the Prefects' Room, and used the telephone to get through to a Wayland number.

"That the Wayland Boxing Hall?" he asked, when he had obtained his number.

A gruff voice at the other end of the wires answered in the affirmative, and Grundy gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"This is Grundy speaking—Grundy, of St. Jim's School. Think you can get together a dozen good fighting-men for a bit of rough work to-night?"

"Eh?"

"The pay will be good," said Grundy. "I'm flush, and money's no object. But they must be good scrappers. Think you can help me?"

"But wot's the game?" asked the gentleman at the Wayland Boxing Hall.

Grundy, in a subdued voice, explained what the "game" was.

Evidently his explanation had the desired effect, for when Grundy came out of the Prefects' Room again his face wore a grin that seemed to extend from ear to ear.

His reason for that mysterious call to the Wayland Boxing Hall, however, remained a secret, so far as St. Jim's was concerned. Grundy didn't breathe a syllable.

CHAPTER 6.

Willingly Recruits!

"TUPPENCE!" said Monty Lowther.

"Two penny stamps and a farthing!" remarked Tom Merry thoughtfully.

"And all I can find is a French franc and a threepenny-bit," said Manners lugubriously. "This, my sons, looks remarkably like tea in Hall!"

"Of course, if we pool my tuppence, and Manners' threepenny-bit and one of your stamps, Tommy, we get three buns at the tuckshop," said Lowther. "That'll help."

"Ass!"

"Might invite ourselves out to tea with Blake—Hallo, talk of angels! Here he is!" finished Manners, as the door opened to reveal the smiling face of Jack Blake of the Fourth.

"Brought the family with me. Mind if we all come in?" asked Blake, indicating D'Arcy and Herries and Digby, who were behind him.

"Welcome as the flowers in May!" smiled Tom Merry. "Matter of fact, we were just thinking of inviting ourselves out to tea with you."

Blake's grin vanished suddenly.

"My hat! Does that mean—"

"Means that famine stalks the land, old son! The cupboard's bare."

"Bat Jove!"

"That's the very reason we've turned up here!" said Blake. "We've all run short together, and knowing that this study is usually a land flowing with milk and honey—"

"Fraid it's all dried up now," said Tom ruefully. "Looks like tea in Hall for the lot of us. Trot in, fathead!"

The last in response to a peremptory rap on the door.

George Alfred Grundy came in, and the juniors, who had begun to look a little sorry for themselves, brightened up again. Grundy usually was adding to the gaiety of St. Jim's, and since he had embraced spelling reform he was fulfilling that function on a bigger scale than ever.

Grundy nodded as he entered.

"All here, then? Good! I want you chaps."

"Can't be did, old scout!" said Monty Lowther, with a shake of his head. "When I next feel like being a bold, bad rebel and dying at the jolly old barricades—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll drop you a postcard. Meanwhile, I'm a non-starter."

"Oh, rats!" said Grundy. "I didn't come to ask you to join in my barring-out. Catch me asking anyone twice! Besides, there are other ways of doing it."

"Like to hear what they are, old bean!"

"You may hear sooner than you expect," said Grundy mysteriously. "But I've no time to stand here jawing. I've come to ask you—"

"And I've told you it can't be did!"

Grundy snorted.

"I tell you I've come to ask you—"

"Nothing doing, old chap!"

"I've come to ask you all—"

"Shouldn't dream of it!"

"To tea!" hooted Grundy, finishing his sentence at last.

"I've come to ask you all to tea! Get that?"

"Oh!"

"Bat Jove!"

"Why didn't you say so at first?" asked Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy glared.

"Cackling idiots! Serve you all right if I cancelled the invitations now. Still, I want you to come, so I'll let them stand. Coming?"

"Coming? I should jolly well say so!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Be a bit of a crush in your study, won't it?" asked Manners.

Grundy shook his head.

"I'm not holding it in the study: it's to be in the gym. The idea is for you to have tea while I give a lecture on simplified spelling and explain the objects of my rebellion. Savvy?"

"Oh!"

"Knew there was a catch in it!" said Lowther. "Still, we'll put up with the lecture for the sake of the tea, eh, chaps?"

"What-ho!"

"Put up with anything," grinned Herries. "Anyone else going to be there, Grundy?"

"All the Shell and Fourth, I hope," answered the great man of the Shell. "Matter of fact, I'm trotting round issuing the invites now. Perhaps you chaps would like to help me?"

"Pleasure!"

"Pile in, then," said Grundy. "Tell 'em all to bring their own plates and things. I've got tons of grub, but no crocks. And be as quick as you can!"

"Rely on us!" grinned Lowther. "We'll bring all the school on those terms, if you like."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy quitted the study, and Tom Merry & Co. followed him out and started exploring the Shell studies in search of guests, while Jack Blake & Co. went along to the Fourth passage on the same mission.

Both parties very quickly obtained recruits in plenty. Tom Merry & Co. "bagged" Skimpole and Talbot from Study No. 9 immediately they explained matters. Gore, who was just entering as they strolled out of the study, joined in at once on hearing of Grundy's invitation.

Harry Noble, Clifton Dane, and Bernard Glyn rose at once from the frugal repast they had laid in Study No. 11 when they were approached. And by the time the swelling throng marched farther down the passage, quite a number of other juniors were turning out of their studies, the news having spread with surprising rapidity.

As it happened, both the Fourth and the Shell were experiencing lean times. Everybody seemed to be "on the rocks" at the same time. Coincidences like that had happened before and would doubtless happen again. This particular coincidence was rather fortunate for the success of Grundy's meeting. In the usual way, not many fellows would have troubled to go as far as the gym for a free feed.

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particularly as the feed involuntarily having to listen to Grundy. But this time they went with a great good will.

The two contingents met on the lower landing, and there was quite a cheer as Grundy came on the scene.

"Good old Grundy!"

"Lead on, Macduff!"

"Sure there's nothing to pay apart from listening to you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" said Grundy. "All ready now?"

"Ready, ay, ready!"

"Then follow me. And let's hurry; there's no time to waste!" said Grundy, consulting his watch.

The juniors didn't quite understand that cryptic reference to the time, but they were quite willing to hurry in the circumstances, and the entire crowd followed Grundy at great speed.

Grundy, being in a hurry, decided to slide down the banisters, which he did, with his hungry army at his heels. A wild rush through the corridor, then Grundy fairly greased down the last flight.

He took the last bend at colossal speed, reached the end and let go.

And then—

At precisely the wrong moment the door of the library opened and a figure in cap and gown emerged.

An instant later Grundy had collided with Dr. Holmes.

Bump!

CHAPTER 7.

Grundy Burns His Boats!

"**W**HOOOOP!"

Thus Dr. Holmes.

It was not a very dignified remark to proceed from the august lips of the Head of St. Jim's; but it seemed the most natural thing for him to say in the circumstances.

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Grundy, too, was roaring. His collision with the Head had been swift and sudden and decidedly painful. It was doubtful, however, whether he had experienced so much pain as the Head. But he made considerably more noise about it.

"Yaroooh! Ow-wow! Whoop!" roared Grundy.

"Oh crikey!"

Grundy's guests stared for a moment at their fallen headmaster in frozen horror.

Then, coming to the conclusion that this was a case where discretion ought to be the better part of valour, they turned tail and fled, most of them making straight out of the House towards the gym, while the bolder spirits, headed by Tom Merry, took up positions near the great door of the Hall—from which they could see without being seen themselves.

"Now for the fireworks!" murmured Monty Lowther.

And the fireworks soon came.

Dr. Holmes, not without difficulty, managed to get to his feet again. George Alfred Grundy scrambled to his feet soon after and regarded the Head quite dizzily.

"Oh!" gasped Dr. Holmes. "Grundy! You—you—"

"Ow! Sorry, sir!" said Grundy.

"Sorry?" gasped the Head, glaring at the great man of the Shell with a glare that should have shrivelled him up. "You have the temerity to knock me over, and you atone for it with a flippant 'Sorry!' What do you mean by it? Answer me, sir!"

"Ow! Wasn't my fault, sir!" groaned Grundy. "I'm as much hurt as you are, sir. You see, I was in a hurry—"

"And what right had you to hurry through the House to the peril of others?" demanded the Head sternly.

Grundy smiled a little. Now that he was recovering from the shock of the collision he felt pleased rather than otherwise that Dr. Holmes had seen him at the head of what he already regarded as his rebel army.

"These are my supporters," he explained, deviating a little from the strict truth.

"Your supporters, Grundy?"

"Exactly. These chaps," said Grundy, sweeping his arm out behind him to indicate the crowd which he evidently imagined to be still present, "are students of spelling reform—"

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"Bless my soul!"

"On the way to a lecture I'm giving. Under my able leadership, sir, they will all, in time, become enthusiastic spelling reformers!"

The Head gasped.

There was a gasp also from the concealed juniors.

"Well, of all the fatheads—" said Tom Merry, in a whisper.

"He—he thinks we're still there!" gasped Lowther.

"So he's going to impress the Head with the strength of his following, thinking we're still behind him!"

"Great pip!"

The juniors watched, almost choking with suppressed laughter.

The situation was certainly amusing. Grundy was quite under the impression that most of the Shell and the Fourth were still behind him, and this little delusion had resulted in his manner becoming exceedingly jaunty.

"Perhaps now, sir," he said, while the Head remained temporarily bereft of his powers of speech, "you will be prepared to reconsider the question of adopting the reformed spelling at St. Jim's. You treated me pretty shabbily yesterday—"

"What—what—" exclaimed the half-paralysed Dr. Holmes.

"But I realise that I was what you might call a voice in the wilderness then—alone and unsupported," said Grundy, fairly rolling the words on his tongue. "Now, sir, as you see for yourself, things are a little different!"

"Different? Different, you say, Grundy?"

"Altogether different, in fact," nodded Grundy. "Look at the crowd at the back of me! Every man-jack of 'em will shortly be all out for spelling reform!"

"But—" said the Head.

"You can afford to ignore my ideas when I stand alone, perhaps. But when I've got the whole of the Shell and the Fourth behind me, sir, you simply can't ignore 'em!"

"But—" said Dr. Holmes again.

"The Lower School is solid behind me," said Grundy,

with a sweeping gesture. "If you'll think for a moment, sir, you'll see that simplified spelling is bound to come. Why not adopt it to-day?"

"Grundy!" roared the Head.

"If you don't adopt it, sir, then I'm not going to be responsible for what happens. I and my followers—"

"Grundy!" shrieked the Head.

"Are prepared to go to any lengths—any lengths!" repeated Grundy emphatically. "Now that I've gone so far, sir, I might as well say that I'm fully prepared to lead a rebellion. And these fellows behind me—my faithful followers—are ready to join in it, too! See the determination in their faces! Look at 'em—Ow!"

Grundy's peroration came to a sudden end.

He had turned round with the idea of effecting a kind of introduction to his rebel army. As he did so he realised, to his surprise and dismay, that his rebel army had vanished!

"You—you utterly ridiculous boy!" hooted the Head.

"Ow!" Grundy fairly blinked at the deserted Hall.

"Where have the fatheads gone? I—I thought—"

"You thought that others were as foolish and misguided as yourself. Whereas, in point of fact, your Form-fellows are far too sensible to ally themselves with your preposterous schemes!" said the Head. "Perhaps, Grundy, the fact that they went so quickly will alter your opinion as to the amount of support your preposterous ideas are receiving."

Grundy frowned.

"They hadn't the courage of their convictions—that's all it amounts to, sir. But if they haven't, I have! And if you won't see reason over this spelling business, then I shall have to force your hand!"

"You insolent, ridiculous boy—" gasped the Head.

"You can take this as a declaration of war," said Grundy. "From now on I'm fighting for reformed spelling at St. Jim's. And the way I'm going to get it is by rebellion!"

"Utterly absurd!" hooted Dr. Holmes. "I forbid you to say another word, Grundy! Go to my study at once!"

"Likely, isn't it?" said Grundy sarcastically.

"What!"

"You don't seem to realise what I mean, sir. I'm in rebellion now!"

"You—you—"

"Until you alter your ideas about spelling I'm refusing to take any more orders from you!" said Grundy, fairly revelling now in his new sense of freedom. "Now I'm off to see where those fellows have got to!"

"Stop!" roared Dr. Holmes.

"Catch me!" sneered Grundy.

He turned to go out of the House.

Kildare and Rushden of the Sixth happened to appear in the doorway at that moment, however, and the Head called out to them:

"Kildare! Rushden! Hold that boy!"

The two prefects looked surprised, but made to obey the order.

"Half a mo, Grundy!" snapped Kildare.

Grundy eyed the two great men of the Sixth truculently for a moment as though he felt inclined to try to break through them. A moment's reflection evidently convinced him that that course was impracticable, for he swiftly turned round again and made a bolt for the stairs.

"Stop!" shouted the Head again. "Grundy, you utterly reckless boy——"

But Grundy, leaping up the stairs with giant strides, was already out of the range of the Head's voice.

"We'll soon get him back, sir," said Kildare. "Come on, Rushden!"

Rushden nodded, and the two prefects started off on Grundy's trail at express speed, confident that they would very quickly lay the fugitive by the heels.

As it happened, their confidence was misplaced. Grundy, realising that something desperate had to be done if he was to avoid capture, had doubled back to the front of the building on reaching the first floor, and, while Kildare and Rushden were racing up to the Shell quarters, was already climbing down the strong ivy that grew round the walls of the House into the quad.

The rebel of the Shell reached terra firma in safety, and marched off in the direction of the gym, grinning with the utmost cheerfulness.

Grundy derived amusement from the situation.

But in the opinion of Tom Merry & Co., who were at the same time tramping out of the House towards the same objective, Grundy's dispute with the Head was no longer a matter for laughter.

"Of all the champion asses——" said Monty Lowther.

"Of all the prize idiots——" said Herries.

"Of all the footling, fooling fatheads——" said Jack Blake.

"Grundy's the greatest!" finished Tom Merry. "And this time, my sons, it looks like the finish for G. A. G. Grundy has burned his boats now!"

And that seemed to put the matter in a nutshell.

CHAPTER 8.

Rebellion—Without the Option!

"HURRAH!"

"Three cheers for the rebel chief!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar from the crowd assembled in the gym as Grundy came in.

Grundy grinned.

"Made a start on the grub, you men? Good! Wade in, you know!"

"We will!"

"Pleasure, old bean!"

"Pass the potted meat, Monty!"

"Ginger-beer wanted here, Gus!"

"Hand over those biscuits, Trimble; and give someone else a chance with the pastries!"

"Oh, really, Noble——"

"Gentlemen! A toast to the founder of the feast!" grinned Clifton Dane. "Here's to Grundy! And if this is his idea of a rebellion, long may he continue to rebel!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Grundy!"

And the toast was drunk with acclamation in foaming ginger-beer and sparkling lemonade.

The gym presented a truly astonishing spectacle.

At least fifty juniors had turned up, and were standing, sitting, or reclining at improvised tables all over the gym, wading into Grundy's provender with great good will. Some had simply sat down on the floor; others, more fastidious, had dragged out some of the numerous mattresses which the furnishing people had brought for Grundy earlier in the day; while others yet sat astride vaulting-horses, or even on the parallel bars.

Tom Merry, his expression a little uneasy, tapped the cheerful host on the shoulder as Clifton Dane's toast was drunk.

"Look here, Grundy——" he began.

"Hallo, Merry! Sit down and wade in. I'm beginning my lecture on spelling reform in a minute!"

Tom uttered an impatient exclamation.

"Don't be such an ass, Grundy, for goodness' sake! Look here, some of us overheard your little interlude with the Head just now——"

"You did? Then why the thump didn't you stop and back me up?" asked Grundy, with a frown.

"Fathead! Try to see sense for a moment. You've insulted the Head——"

"I've told him one or two home-truths, if that's what you mean!" snorted Grundy. "What the old donkey was in need of, if you ask me!"

"I'm not asking you anything! I'm trying to tell you something. You've already done enough to get yourself the sack half a dozen times, Grundy. Now, if you're wise you'll stop playing the giddy ox and try to straighten things out while there's still a faint chance."

Grundy gave a yell.

"What, back out? After all the trouble I've been to——"

"Just that!" snapped Tom. "Back out and eat humble pie for all you're worth. That's the only way to save yourself from the long jump, and if you've got an ounce of common sense you'll do it!"

"Well, I'm not jolly well going to do it, anyway!" growled Grundy. "Catch me backing out when victory's in sight! Why, the Head's as good as beaten already. If only you fellows will follow my lead now——"

"But nobody dreams of following your lead, idiot!"

"That remains to be seen!" said Grundy, with dignity. "I'm going to give the whole crowd their chance in a minute. Stand aside, Merry, while I address my guests!"

"You utter ass——"

"Rats!" Grundy mounted a ginger-beer crate and held up his hand for silence. "Gentlemen! About spelling reform——"

"Blow spelling reform!"

"Join in the spread, Grundy! Much better than spelling reform!"

"Hear, hear!"

"About spelling reform——" said Grundy, for the second time.

"Can't you leave it over till another time?"

"No, I can't! Things are too jolly urgent for it to be postponed!" snorted the rebel of the Shell. "I've told the Head that the rebellion is as good as on——"

"Oh crikey!"

"And in the next few minutes it will have to start, or the Head will have the prefects here before we know where we are!"

"Great pip!"

"I've just got time to put a few of the salient features of spelling reform before you," said Grundy. "After that, I'm going to ask those who decide to support me to prepare for a barring-out against the Head here and now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you silly asses——" gasped Grundy, completely taken aback by that unexpected roar of laughter.

"Chuck it, Grundy!"

"Don't be an ass, old scout!"

"Silence!" hooted the rebel leader, recovering his composure again. "Now, gentlemen, turning to spelling reform——"

"Bother spelling reform!"

"I'll ask you for a few moments to consider the idiotic way we have of spelling most of the words in the English language——"

"Rats!"

"Take a word like 'knot,' for instance," said Grundy, unheeding. "When you write 'I tied a knot,' why shouldn't you spell it 'n-o-t'?"

"Well, why not?" asked Herries.

"In fact, why not 'not'?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy, who was a little slow on the uptake, smiled, apparently under the impression that he had scored a point.

"Gentlemen!" he cried. "It's ridiculous and senseless——"

"Hear, hear!" roared the crowd delightedly.

"It's all piffle and balderdash——"

"Bravo! Why don't you sit down, then?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen, it's——" said Grundy, when a sudden interruption came.

To the surprise of Grundy's guests, a dozen or so roughly attired men, headed by an enormous individual whose chief characteristics were a broken nose and cauliflower ears, marched in through the main door of the gym.

"Mister Grundy 'em?" asked this unprepossessing gentleman.

"My hat!"

"Who the thunder——"

"All serene, you fellows!" said Grundy. "I know who these chaps are. Let me have a word with 'em."

He stepped down from the ginger-beer crate and drew the man with the broken nose on one side.

For half a minute they were engaged in earnest conversation, while the juniors looked on in open-mouthed astonishment. What Grundy was doing on friendly terms with this ugly gang was for the moment a mystery.

The secret was soon out.

Grundy mounted the ginger-beer crate again, and the newcomers split up into two sections, one standing round the main entrance to the gym, and the other round the smaller entrance at the side.

The juniors watched them wonderingly; then all eyes were fixed on Grundy as he resumed his interrupted speech.

"Gentlemen," said Grundy, "unfortunately, I've no more time left in which to explain simplified spelling——"

"Oh, good!"

"Explain what these men are doing here, then, instead!" Grundy smiled.

"We'll see if that's necessary, first. Now, I want to get down to brass tacks. How many fellows here are willing to support me in my reformed spelling campaign by barring-out in the gym? Will those who want to do so kindly show their willingness by holding one hand up in the air?"

He waited expectantly.

With his usual optimism he confidently anticipated that every hand in the gym would straightway go up.

But he was doomed to disappointment. Not a single volunteer among the crowd so much as lifted a finger.

"Nothing doing, old bean!" said Tom Merry. "Now what about going to the Head——"

"Go to the Head, rats!" roared Grundy. "The Head will have to come to me before I'll go to the Head. Whether you like it or not, the rebellion's on!"

"But——"

"You howling ass——"

"How can you run a rebellion on your own?" demanded Manners.

Grundy laughed.

"I'm not going to try anything so silly."

"Then what the thump do you think you are going to do?"

"Get you chaps to come in with me!" was Grundy's surprising reply.

Fourth and Shell alike stared at Grundy, open-mouthed.

"You—you're going to get us——"

"But we've already declined!" hooted Herries. "Think you're going to compel us to join in your rotten barring-out, then?"

"Just that!" smiled Grundy.

"Wha-a-at!"

"I've given you the chance to come into this barring-out of your own free will. You've declined. Very well, then. Now I'm going to force you to come into it, whether you want to or not!"

"Mad!"

"Must be!" said Wildrake of the Fourth. "How do you think you're going to achieve this miracle, Grundy?"

For answer, Grundy pointed to the broken-nosed gentleman

and his followers, whose presence the juniors did not understand.

"That's how!" he said.

"Eh?"

"That's what these fellows are here for!" said Grundy.

"My friend over there is Young Alf, heavy-weight champion of Wayland——"

"Great pip!"

"And the rest are all prizefighters. I've brought them here for one purpose and for one purpose only—to keep you fellows in the gym for my barring-out! Now you've got it!"

Unbroken, stupefied silence followed Grundy's words.

CHAPTER 9.

Grundy's Barring-Out!

THE juniors stared at Grundy for almost a minute in utter amazement.

Then there was a roar.

"Why, you silly ass——"

"Think you can keep me here against my will?"

"Or me?"

"Or anyone else?" yelled Jack Blake. "Why, you're potty!"

"Mad as a hatter!" declared Tom Merry. "That is, if you really mean it! But you can't!"

"Can't I?" asked Grundy grimly. "Just try to get out of the building and see!"

"We jolly well will!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry and a crowd of indignant juniors made for the main door.

Grundy's eyes gleamed.

"Stop 'em, you men!" he snapped.

"Wotto!" came an answering shout from the bruisers on duty round the door.

They squared up and met the rush of Tom Merry and his followers, grinning. They anticipated no difficulty in keeping a crowd of schoolboys at bay.

The job involved a little more difficulty than they had foreseen. Tom Merry and Jack Blake, and one or two others among the attacking crowd were famous fighting men, and many of the rest were quite useful in a rough-and-tumble.

Greatly to the surprise of the hired prizefighters, they found themselves in the next few minutes collecting quite a number of painful mementoes in the shape of cut lips and injured noses.

But once they got over their initial surprise, Grundy's hirelings performed their appointed task without a great deal of difficulty.

They had a tremendous advantage in weight, height and reach over their youthful opponents, and standing, as they were, in a semi-circle round the door, they made it impossible for more than a small number of the juniors to attack them simultaneously.

Yells of pain and rage rang out in the gym as heavy fists collided violently with the attackers.

"Ow! Whooop!"

"Yaroooooop!"

"Oh, by dose!"

"Oh crikey! Like fighting a battery of heavy artillery!" gasped Jack Blake, as he went sprawling under the weight of a simple backhander from one of Grundy's bruisers.

"Bai Jove! The feahful wottahs are payin' no attention

Potts, the Office Boy.



He gets the order of the boot!

whatevah to the wules of faih boxin'!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, falling out for a moment to apply a silk handkerchief to the claret that was streaming from his nose. "Fight like anythin', deah boys! Wipe up the floor with them!"

"Easier said than done!" groaned Herries. "My eye! I can feel it turning blue already!"

Several others were undergoing the same experience. In fact, the casualties among the St. Jim's crowd were rather severe, and to all intents and purposes, the battle was already lost.

"Ease up, chaps!" called out Tom Merry, after the lapse of another minute. "No good piling up trouble like this. We'll find other means."

"You won't!" said Grundy. "Better make the best of it, Merry, and join in. Same with the rest of you!"

"Make the best of it, eh?" roared Herries excitedly. "Make the best of being hemmed in by a gang of bruisers you've engaged, eh?"

"Scrag him!"

"Squash him!"

Grundy snorted.

"It's all for your own good, if only you'd see it. Look at the benefit you'll all derive when we've got spelling reform—"

"Blow your rotten spelling reform!"

"And blow your silly rebellion!"

"And blow Grundy!" finished Lumley-Lumley. "I guess something in the way of a special ragging is called for!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Collar the rotter!"

A furious crowd made a threatening move in the direction of the self-appointed rebel chief, and Grundy backed away rather hastily.

"Mutiny, eh?" he said. "We'll soon see about that! Wilky and Gunn! Back up!"

"I'm backing up against you, if that's anything," said Wilkins. "What say you, Gunny?"

"What-ho!" said Gunn.

And Grundy's study-mates, as incensed as the rest, joined in the rush on the great man of the Shell. Grundy scarcely had time to hurl them a look of reproach before the whole crowd was upon him.

"Look here—" said Grundy.

"Down with him!"

"Mop up the floor with him!"

"Rescue!" roared Grundy. "This way, Alf!"

"Wotto!" said Young Alf from Wayland.

He and half a dozen of his followers rolled over from the door and pushed their way through to the centre of the room.

"Stand up to 'em!" yelled Jack Blake.

"Hit out at the wottahs—yoooooop!" finished up Arthur Augustus, as he felt himself seized by the scruff of the neck and swung round into the thick of the crowd.

"Yaroooooh!"

"You leave 'im alone, d'y'ear?" roared Young Alf unpleasantly, pushing and barging his way through the crowd seemingly oblivious to the blows that were rained on him from all sides. "Which we don't want to 'urt you, young gents, but if you go for Master Grundy, then we go for you. Junderstand?"

"Ow!"

"Groooooogh!"

The juniors began to understand all right. The unpleasant truth began to force itself on them that despite

their numbers, they were no match for this hardened gang of professional "pugs."

"All right; let 'em alone," said Grundy, as the juniors fell back from him. "I'll stand near the door now in case the silly asses feel like going for me again. Beats me why they should; some people don't know the meaning of gratitude."

"Wot's that?" asked Young Alf.

He was referring to a heavy banging on the main door which had just started.

Grundy smiled.

"The Head; ten to one it is. Keep the doors locked, Alf. I'll come over and do some talking."

George Alfred Grundy, his rugged face expressive of nothing but cheerfulness, tramped over to the door, and Grundy's prisoner-guests followed him and his unpleasant guards at a respectful distance.

A voice could now be heard above the banging on the outside of the door, and the juniors recognised it as Kildare's.

"Let me in! Do you hear me? Open this door!"

Grundy went up to the door and rapped back.

"Hallo! That you, Kildare?"

"Grundy! You young ass! Open this door at once!"

"Why should I?" asked Grundy calmly.

"Because I want to come in."

"All the more reason why I should keep it locked!"

There was an exclamation from the other side of the door, then the listeners heard another voice—this time the voice of Dr. Holmes.

"Grundy!"

"Hallo, sir!" responded Grundy cheerfully.

The juniors gasped.

"Hallo, sir!" was a new way of greeting the majestic and awe-inspiring headmaster of St. Jim's.

They could hear the Head gasp, too!

"Grundy! Are you aware that you are addressing your headmaster?"

"Yes, sir. And are you aware you are addressing the leader of this barring-out?" retorted Grundy.

There was a buzz from Grundy's prisoners.

"The footling ass!"

"This means the sack for a giddy cert!"

"Looks like the sack for the rest of us, too, if we don't make it clear that we're not in it!" remarked Gore.

"What about yelling for help?"

"Good egg!" said Trimble, between mouthfuls of cake, into which he was still piling with great relish. "Blessed if I want to stay here with a gang of toughs. If you'll wait a few minutes, Gore, till I've finished this cake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No hurry, anyway!" said Tom Merry. "Grundy's not a bad fellow at heart, for all his potty ways, and we don't want him to get expelled if we can help it. If we can help him at all by remaining mum—"

"But we can't possibly support this fatheaded spelling reform bizney!" objected Jack Blake.

"Perhaps not. If he insists on keeping that going, of course, we shall simply have to leave him to get out of it on his own in the end. But if, on the other hand, the insane fit passes, we may be able to save him from the worst if we stand by him!"

"Nice kind of idiot to stand by, too!" remarked Herries. "Just hark at him!"

Grundy was going strong.

(Continued on next page.)

Sold Again!



But he doesn't understand it!

"These are my terms, sir!" he was saying: "No surrender till you agree to establish simplified spelling at St. Jim's! We've nailed our flag to the mast and my followers and I are determined not to yield an inch!"

"Your followers?" cried the Head. "And pray who are your followers? How many misguided boys have you in there with you?"

"A little over fifty, I think, sir!"

There was an exclamation from the Head.

"Fifty? Nonsense! I refuse to believe that there are fifty boys so lacking in the elements of commonsense as to agree to join you in this ridiculous prank!"

"Wait till you come to call-over, then, and you'll find out exactly!" chuckled Grundy. "Now, sir, what about accepting our terms now? It'll save a lot of trouble!"

"How dare you!" roared the Head.

Then followed a buzz of conversation on the other side of the door. The listening juniors could distinguish the voices of Mr. Railton, Housemaster of the School House, and Mr. Linton, then those of Kildare and Rushden.

The powers that were evidently did not know quite what to do.

They could, of course, have attempted a forcible entry. But it was early yet to consider drastic measures like that.

Eventually the conversation ceased and the master and prefects dispersed.

"Personally I suggest we all turn up for call-over," remarked Jack Blake.

"Which is just what I, for one, intend to do," said Tom Merry. "Now, Grundy, how long's the farce going to last?"

Grundy frowned.

"Look here, Merry, if you're going to call this barring-out a farce—"

"Well, what else is it, you thumping idiot? Think we're going to hang on here for ever?"

"I think you're going to hang on here just as long as I want you to!" snorted Grundy. "You heard what I told the Head? That's exactly what I mean. There's going to be no surrender until spelling reform—"

There was an exasperated howl from the juniors.

"Blow spelling reform!"

"Chuck it, you loony!"

"Until spelling reform's firmly established at St. Jim's!" finished Grundy. "That's that. Now for business. We're living in a state of siege now, and you fellows have got to observe strict discipline. Of course, I'm dictator—"

"Oh!"

"You are, are you?"

Grundy nodded.

"I'm dictator, and what I say goes. If I give an order, it has to be obeyed immediately. Otherwise, somebody suffers. Alf!"

"Yes, sir!" said Young Alf from Wayland.

"If you'll look in that cupboard by the door, you'll find a supply of canes. Whenever I give an order for a fellow to be caned, you'll carry it out. Savvy?"

"Certainly, sir!" grinned Young Alf.

Fifty juniors stared at Grundy with startled eyes.

"You—you—"

"Mean to say you're thinking of bossing it over us with a cane, now?" asked Gore. "Because if you are—"

"I am!"

"Why, I'll slaughter you! I'll—I'll—"

"Alf! Give this mutinous fellow four with the cane for threatening me, will you?" said Grundy calmly.

Young Alf nodded and crossed over to the cupboard. There, sure enough, reposed about a dozen businesslike canes, one of which the Wayland "pug" selected.

"Now, young shaver!" said Alf returning. "Goin' to take it nice an' quiet-like?"

Gore let out a howl of rage.

"Keep your paws off me, you low rotter! If you try to touch me—yoooooop!"

Young Alf not only tried to touch Gore—he actually did it. Once, twice, thrice, and four times did the cane whistle through the air to alight on Gore's shoulders. Gore, yelling with rage and pain, made a wild rush at his aggressor, only to be contemptuously pushed aside.

"Anyone else while I'm on the job, sir?" asked Young Alf.

Grundy looked round the gym.

"Yes. Grab that fat toad, Trimble, over there. He hasn't stopped eating for the last half hour and he's got to be taught that food may run short before we've finished this barring-out. Give him six!"

"Whooooop!" roared Trimble, jumping hurriedly to his feet. "Look here, you rotter—"

"Come 'ere, you!" said Young Alf.

"Lemme alone! Keepimoff!" shrieked Trimble. "Back

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up, you fellows! Lay that rotter out—I'll hold your coats—yaroooop! Ow-wow!"

Trimble's pleas and protests ended up in a wild howl as he got the first instalment of his six.

Tom Merry gave a quick glance in the direction of the side door. He thought he saw a chance of escape while attention was on Trimble.

He nudged Blake and Lowther and one or two others to prepare them for action. Then, swinging round suddenly, he uttered a shout.

"The side-door, you men! Rush 'em!"

Instantly half a dozen juniors were racing across the gym to the side-door where one or two of Grundy's hired men were on duty. A score of others quickly followed them.

There was a yell from Grundy.

"Keep 'em back! Wade in, Alf!"

By that time Tom Merry and his followers had reached the door and were fighting desperately to get to the bolts.



With all the juniors streaming after him, Grundy ran straight into the arms of Kildare!

A wild and whirling struggle took place. The four burly ruffians who guarded the exit were almost swept off their feet by the first rush. But they quickly recovered and hit out furiously at their attackers.

"Down 'em!" roared Tom.

For a moment, it looked as if they would get through.

Then came Young Alf and Grundy and a couple of reserves from the main door and the tide turned. Fiercely as they "scrapped," the juniors were no match for Grundy's hardened toughs, and soon, reluctantly, they were forced to fall back.

"Rotten!" groaned Blake. "Chuck it, chaps! No good going on when we're licked!"

"Oh dear! Just wait, Grundy!" said Herries. "When we do get you on your own afterwards—"

Grundy glared.

"Threats again, by gum! Want a taste of that cane, Herries?"

"Ow! No! Oh crikey!"

"Better keep quiet, then!" said Grundy. "Get back to the middle of the room, all of you. Round 'em up, Alf!"

Young Alf, who seemed by his expression to be enjoying himself, shepherded the crowd back to the centre of the room. He accomplished that task without a great deal of

difficulty, for the juniors were beginning to feel a good deal of respect for his prowess with the cane.

"Good biz!" remarked Grundy, when he had finished. "Now, if any of you fellows would like to act sensibly and start giving me your real, genuine support—"

But before he could finish he was interrupted by an almost unanimous shout from the juniors:

"Rats!"

And Grundy gave it up.

CHAPTER 10.

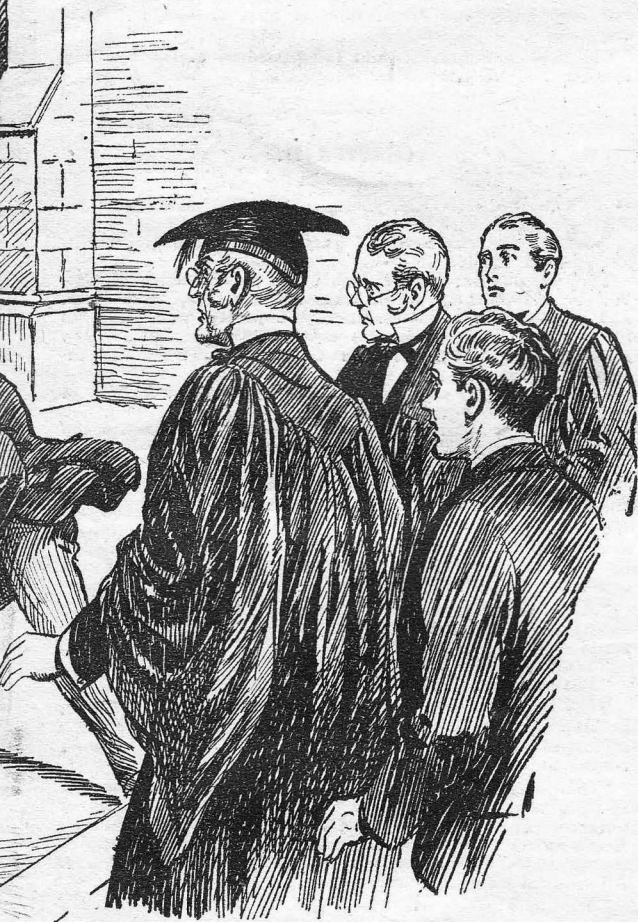
Enter the Professor!

"Of course, it can't go on!"

Tom Merry made that remark.

"Simply can't!" agreed Monty Lowther.

"Utahly imposs!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, polishing his monocle thoughtfully.



"Yet it has gone on so far," remarked Blake. "Grundy's kept it up through a whole night. No reason why he shouldn't keep it on through to-day, too."

The chums were discussing Grundy's amazing barring-out.

It was the morning after the great feed, which had terminated in Grundy's great rebellion.

The Shell and the Fourth were still prisoners in the gym. Or, as Grundy regarded it, the barring-out was still on!

Whichever way the matter was looked at, it amounted to the same thing. Twelve hired prize-fighters were still posted at the doors to prevent any possibility of the juniors escaping. They had remained at their posts all night, sleeping on mattresses, and taking it in turns to keep watch. Apparently they were prepared to remain on duty for ever.

Grundy, no doubt, was rewarding them handsomely. Being fortunately possessed of almost unlimited funds emanating from an affectionate uncle, Grundy was in a position to do so. There was no doubt whatever that Young Alf & Co. were being well remunerated for their services, and would be quite happy to remain in the gym for a week or more on the same terms.

Tom Merry chuckled as he saw Grundy stalking over to the door for a confab with his chief lieutenant.

"It's the weirdest and most wonderful stunt that was ever thought out; and, of course, it's jolly exasperating!" he remarked. "But it's funny!"

Jack Blake grinned.

"Well, give Grundy his due; I suppose it is," he acknowledged. "It won't be funny, of course, when the end does come—"

"Fraid not; Grundy's for it, right enough, this time!" "But I suppose this part of the bizney will be a bit of a scream to look back on afterwards. Hallo! Something moving now, by the sound of it!"

There was a general stir among the unwilling rebels of the gymnasium as footsteps were heard outside the building.

A sharp rap sounded on the main door, and Kildare's voice rang out:

"Hallo! You there, Grundy?"

"Bet your life!" answered Grundy cheerily. "Come to tell me the Head's given in?"

The listeners heard Kildare snort.

"Silly young ass! You'll pay dearly for this when we do get you! I've brought a message from the Head."

"Half a minute, then!"

Grundy got out a pair of steps from the cupboard beside the door, and stood them up alongside one of the high windows, then climbed up to the top and looked out.

Kildare was looking up, and he bestowed a deadly glare on the rebel leader.

"You unutterable young fathead!"

"You unutterable old fathead, if it comes to that!" grinned Grundy. "What's this message from the Head?"

"The Head demands that you and the rest of the young idiots who have ranged themselves with you report back to the School House at once. On that condition, and on that condition only, he'll consider the possibility of dealing leniently with you."

"Oh! That's it, is it?"

Kildare nodded.

"Mind you, he's making no promise. The probability is that you'll be flogged and expelled, in any case. But if you surrender at once it's just possible that you may get off a little more lightly. Savvy?"

Grundy smiled.

"I think I understand. Well, you can tell the Head, with my compliments, that I thank him for his offer—"

"Yes?" said Kildare.

"And, furthermore, that he can jolly well go and eat coke!"

There was a roar from within the gym.

"Grundy, you idiot—"

"Take the offer!"

"Jump at it, you howling ass!"

To which pieces of advice Grundy made answer with the ancient and classic monosyllable:

"Rats!"

Kildare ignored Grundy, and addressed himself to the unseen inmates of the gym.

"You there, you young asses? D'you hear me, Merry?"

"I'm here!" responded Tom Merry. "Anything wrong, Kildare?"

There was a chuckle from the juniors. Kildare uttered an exclamation of wrath.

"Anything wrong? I should jolly well think there is! What are you young idiots doing, backing up this lunatic?"

"Suppose we've all gone potty, too, Kildare! Can you think of any other solution?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble of the Fourth thought it high time he took a hand in the proceedings.

"Look here, Kildare, we're being forced to stay here!" he yelled. "I'll tell you the truth if these other idiots won't. The fact is— Whoooooop!"

Somebody had trodden on Trimble's foot—hard. And Trimble didn't get a chance to achieve the unusual distinction, for him, of speaking the truth, after all.

The listeners thought they heard Kildare grunt.

"Silly young asses! Think I can't tell there's something wrong somewhere? I know you chaps better than to think you'd follow this idiot Grundy in a wildcat scheme like this. Grundy!"

"Hallo!" answered Grundy coolly.

"I warn you that unless you throw in the sponge in the next few minutes I shall return with assistance, force open the door, and put an end to this freakish so-called rebellion myself. If I have to do that, all I can say is look out for yourself!"

"Thanks for the warning, Kildare; but I can look after myself all right. That all you've got to say?"

"That's all!" snapped Kildare.

The listeners heard him tramp away. Grundy remained at the top of the steps for a minute or so, looking across the quad.

"So much for Kildare!" he remarked, grinning down on the buzzing crowd beneath him. "I fancy we can hold the citadel against anybody they care to send along. Let 'em all come!"

"You—you loony!"

"And none of that talk, Herries, or you'll get six with the cane!"

"Come down here and I'll squash you, you maniac!" hooted Herries.

"I'll be down all right!" growled Grundy. "Call your own leader a maniac in a time of crisis like this! Half a mo'!"

He looked out of the window again, and the prisoners of the gym heard more footsteps approaching the building.

Then another voice—this time a strange one, which nobody recognised.

"Excuse me, young sir—"

Grundy, looking down from the window, saw a weird-looking figure approaching.

It was that of a middle-aged gentleman wearing a long, ill-fitting frock-coat, a tall hat of ancient design, and a short, bristly beard.

"You speaking to me?" asked Grundy.

"That, my dear young sir, describes what I was doing, precisely! Permit me to introduce myself. My name is Knott-Wright—Professor Knott-Wright."

Grundy jumped.

"What, the Professor Knott-Wright? Professor Knott-Wright, the President of the Spelling Reform League?"

"Precisely, my dear young sir—precisely! I have called in my official capacity as president, to interview a gentleman named Grundy—G. A. Grundy—"

"Why, that's me!" yelled Grundy excitedly and ungrammatically.

Professor Knott-Wright started a little.

"Dear me! I must say I anticipated a gentleman of more mature years. But life is full of surprises, is it not? Since you are Mr. Grundy, there is no reason why I should not enrol you in our great league here and now. That, I would mention, is the reason for my call."

Grundy chuckled.

"Well, this is a surprise, and no mistake! You couldn't have come at a better time. I've collected fifty-odd fellows here to make a stand in the cause of spelling reform—"

"Great work! Great work!" exclaimed the professor.

"And a few words from you ought to be enough to convert the lot of 'em!" said Grundy.

He turned round and looked down to the door.

"Anything you want, sir?" asked Young Alf respectfully.

"Yes. Open the door for Professor Knott-Wright, Alf, will you? Keep the fellows back."

"Easy!" chuckled Young Alf.

The Wayland champion unbolted the door, while his followers stood ready to stem the tide if the juniors chose to make a dash for freedom.

Tom Merry & Co. did not attempt a dash, however. Truth to tell, they were a little curious to meet the genius whose ideas had filled Grundy with such enthusiasm. In any case, hand-to-hand fighting with Young Alf & Co. had lost completely the fascination, if any, it had possessed originally.

The door swung back, and the president of the Spelling Reform League trotted in.

CHAPTER 11.

Disillusioned!

"GOOD-MORNING, young gentlemen!" said Professor Knott-Wright.

"Good-morning!" gasped the young gentlemen, in return.

They could hardly help gasping at Professor Knott-Wright. Gentlemen in old-fashioned top-hats, frock-coats, and aggressive beards were not seen in the gymnasium at St. Jim's every day in the week. The president of the Spelling Reform League, in fact, cut a decidedly incongruous figure.

Grundy jumped down from the steps and went up to welcome his honoured guest.

"How do you do, sir?" he said affably. "These are the fellows I mentioned. They're a lot of silly asses—"

"Dear me, Mr. Grundy!"

"And at present they won't accept spelling reform—simply won't have anything to do with it!"

"That, Mr. Grundy, is an extremely sad state of affairs," said the professor gravely. "If you think I can remedy it by explaining in simple terms the fundamentals of my system of simplified spelling—"

"Well, you can't do any harm, anyway," said Grundy cheerfully. "Doubt whether they've got the brains to understand—"

"Why, you silly ass—"

"But you can try, anyway. Go ahead!"

Thus enjoined, the professor took off his tall hat and, holding it in his hand while he spoke, began to explain the mysteries of that subject which had led to such amazing results at St. Jim's—spelling reform.

"Gentlemen," he said, "in the first place, all students of spelling reform should know that English is a mixture of tongues. The basis of modern English lies in Anglo-Saxon. Anglo-Saxon is an amalgamation of the several dialects of the invaders who drove out the Celts. So far, so good. All this, of course, is elementary."

"Well, my hat!" murmured Monty Lowther.

The juniors were all grinning. So far there seemed nothing to connect this learned gentleman's ideas with those of George Alfred Grundy of the Shell. Professor Knott-Wright, in fact, was talking very much in the strain of their own Form master, Mr. Linton.

They waited for the rest of his discourse with great interest.

Grundy waited with a frown on his rugged face. He had not known quite what to expect from the president of the Spelling Reform League. But he knew he had not expected this. This was too much like a Form-room lecture to suit Grundy—far too much like it.

"Following on the basic language," went on Professor Knott-Wright, "we find, in modern English, words of Latin origin, not to mention words of Greek, French, German, Scandinavian, Slavonic, Celtic, and other origins."

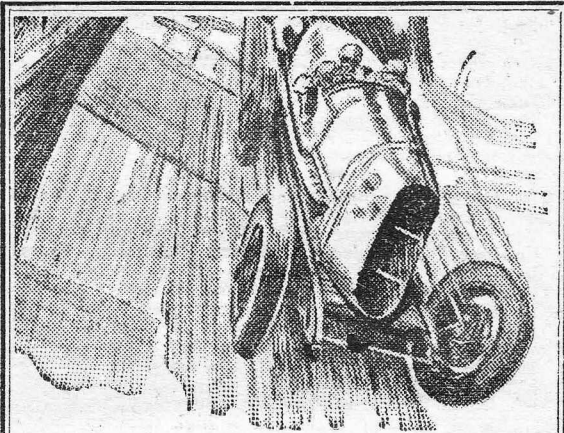
"Oh crikey!" said Grundy, looking a little dismayed.

"Look here, professor—"

"You desire to make an interpellation, Mr. Grundy?" asked Professor Knott-Wright.

"Not exactly," said Grundy, who, having no idea what that meant considered a slightly evasive answer judicious. "But can't you cut out all this business and get down to brass tacks?"

Professor Knott-Wright looked a little puzzled.



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"You are using colloquialisms which are somewhat unfamiliar to me, my dear young sir," he remarked. "I will, however, proceed to a simple explanation of my new method of spelling very shortly, if that is what you mean."

"My hat! How do you like it?" grinned Jack Blake, giving Grundy a dig in the ribs. "Sounds as if it might not be so simple after all!"

"Shut up and listen!" grunted Grundy.

Professor Knott-Wright resumed.

"Gentlemen! Consider now, for a moment, English orthography as it stands to-day. Nobody can gainsay that the spelling of the English language is at present in a condition which can only be described as chaotic. There is no system or design—no hard-and-fast rule. That, gentlemen, is what spelling reform sets out to correct."

"Ah!" said Grundy, more hopefully.

"Years of study and research have at last led me to the goal I set out to reach," continued the professor. "And now, gentlemen, we can at last say that a solution to the problem exists. I have devised a system—"

"Hear, hear!"—from Grundy.

"Whereby order and uniformity can be attained throughout the English language. That system, gentlemen, contains a number of simple rules—not very simple, perhaps, but rules that can be mastered after a few years of intensive study."

"Eh?" yelled Grundy, while a gasp went up from the rest.

"Rules are necessary, if order is to be attained, gentlemen. There are, as I say, rules to my system."

Grundy grabbed Professor Knott-Wright by the arm suddenly.

"How many rules are there in your system, then?" he asked.

The president of the Spelling Reform League pondered for a moment.

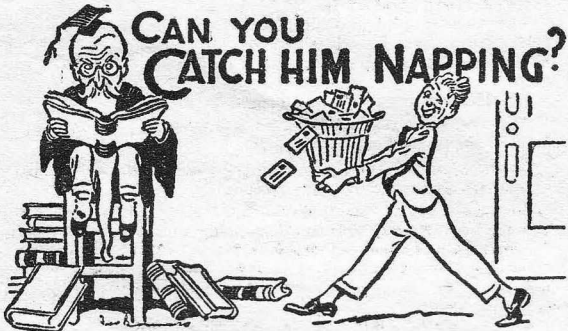
"Let me see. Can I remember? Yes, I can!"

"How many?" hooted Grundy.

Professor Knott-Wright smiled.

"Yes, I am positive I remember now. To my simple

(Continued on next page.)



Come along, chums, try your luck! Can't you hand the Oracle one he can't answer? Great skill deducts a shilling from the whiskey one's salary. Won't you help your Editor?

OUR office-boy, chums, has given up making darts out of the office nibs and notepaper. For the past week he has been crawling about over the sanctum carpet (while the old Ed. has been out having his lunch) with a magnifying-glass in one hand, and a copy of the "Nelson Lee Library" in the other. When I asked him what he thought he was up to—or, rather, down to—he said that he was training to become a detective. I told him he was defective already, and only needed to alter one letter.

Believe me, chums, he means to become what he describes as "a krime investigater," and the other morning he asked me to assist him in his studies. You see, his great trouble, chums, was that he hadn't got a corpse to practise on, and he asked me if I would lie on the carpet and be the corpse for a few minutes. Being of a kindly disposition I obliged him by doing so.

"Now, keep quite still, Whiskers," said he impertinently, "while I take the measurements and examine the body. Ha, ha!" he went on, assuming a dramatic tone, "the victim has been dead several hours. He should have been dead several years, but in spite of that, I will unravel the crime. The corpse is that of an old fossil, unless the whiskers are false." With that the young scamp gave my beard a terrific tug, which caused me to yell out. "Enough of that!" I said, giving him a hearty biff alongside his hat-rest.

The biff caused Adolphus to roll helplessly on the carpet, and at that moment the Editor returned. "Get up!" he roared. "You young scamp! What have you done to whiskers?" "He's a corpse," said Adolphus. "At this the old Ed. got thoroughly startled, and started tearing up the blotting-paper, and also tearing up and down the

"In the Western towns of America," I said, taking a deep breath, "the rodeo is an out-door exhibition of skill, usually held once a year, in which cowboys compete. The first properly organised contest of this kind was held in 1896, at Denver, in Colorado.

Some of the contests are very spectacular, and are rewarded with trophies and prizes of money. Sometimes a clever rider will be given work on the pictures. Since 1926 rodeos have been staged in New York under the title of "World Series Rodeo." The exhibition includes a contest in the riding of bucking-bronchos, a cowgirls' relay race, a wild cow milking competition, a two-steer bull-dogging contest, and a good deal of trick and fancy riding. The highest prize goes to the winner of the bucking-broncho contest, who gets \$2,100—over four hundred pounds. Another prize, called the Roosevelt trophy, valued at a thousand dollars, goes to the world's champion all-round cowboy. The—"

"Hadh't you better sit down?" said the Editor kindly. "This looks as if it might last a long time. What's the two-steer bull-dogging contest exactly?"

"I was coming to that, sir. It is really steer-wrestling. The cowboy jumps from his horse, which is called a hazer, and throws the steer. On one occasion, at Cheyenne, in 1904, a negro from Texas twisted a steer to the ground without using his hands. Some feat, believe me!"

"You mean," said the Editor, "he used his feet?"

"No, sir, he used his teeth. He buried them in the steer's upper lip."

"I should steer clear of that negro if I were in Texas!" said the Ed.

"Now Pat Murphy, of Belfast, wants to know if boxers wear moustaches?"

"Of course, sir, no boxer would shave off his moustache in case he gave himself an upper-cut."

sanctum. "Get out!" he bellowed at the trembling Adolphus. "I am refined! I cannot answer the readers' queries without the help of my whiskey friend!"

I was so upset that I got up and assured him that I was still able to perform my duties.

"Good!" said the Editor. "You can start performing right away. Herbert Briggs, of Worthing, wishes us to tell him what a rodeo is!"

"Fred Luxton, a Leeds reader, has come across the word coyote in a prairie yarn, and he wants us to tell him what a coyote is?"

"Easy enough, sir. The coyote is a North American member of the dog family, and is sometimes called the prairie-wolf. It is smaller than a wolf, with shorter legs and a richer coat. It's usually of a tawny colour, mixed with black and white on the upper part. Coyotes hunt in packs at night on the open plains each side of the Rockies. They live on mice, hares, young deer, game-birds, and wild fruits. They are very stealthy in their ways, and when galloping along, they make yapping cries."

"What is lanolin?"

"A mixture of wool-fat and water. It has the useful quality of quickly penetrating the skin, besides being antiseptic, and however long it's kept, it doesn't turn rancid. It is, therefore, a valuable ingredient in various kinds of ointments."

"What is a journal-box?"

"That, sir, is another name for the axle-box on a wheel."

"Here's a teaser," said the Editor, grasping a letter gleefully. "Willie Knight, who lives at Harwich, says: 'My name is Knight, and your Oracle seems a nut, so perhaps he can tell me what a knot is?'"

"I don't call that a teaser," said I. "A knot is the thing that joins two pieces of string together."

"Oh, no, my lad, not according to Knight."

"Then it's the measurement of a ship's distance."

"That's not the knot Knight's worrying his nut about. Listen, he says: 'My uncle went out yesterday and shot a knot. What's a knot?' Do you know, or not? Now, then, Knight's uncle shot a knot, not a ship's knot, or a knot, but a knot."

"Well, why not?" said I, thoroughly bewildered, believe me.

"What sort of a knot was it he shot?"

"You think you've caught me, but you haven't!" I said, remembering all at once. "The knot his uncle shot is a bird that is frequently found on the coasts of Britain. It's a little larger than a snipe, but has a shorter bill and shorter legs. In winter the plumage is grey above and white beneath; in summer its back is black mixed with white and red. In the old days the knot was netted in England, and fattened for eating."

"The knot is not eaten now?"

"No, sir, it's not. Have you any more knotty ones? You've not? Very good, sir, good-not—I mean, good-afternoon!"

GRUNDY'S SIMPLIFIED SPELLING!

(Continued from previous page.)

system of spelling reform, Mr. Grundy, there are but nine thousand eight hundred and sixty-seven rules."

Dead silence for a moment. Then—

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A roar went up from Grundy's "rebels"—a roar of uncontrolled laughter that seemed as if it would never stop.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, ye gods! Nearly ten thousand rules!"

"And poor old Grundy—ha, ha, ha!"

"Thought there were no rules at all! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fifty-odd juniors shrieked.

George Alfred Grundy stood rooted to the floor, his face a study.

"Look here—" he muttered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What about simplified spelling now? Don't you think it's easier to spell the usual way?" hooted Herries.

"Well, my hat!" said Grundy. Then he turned round on the professor in whom he had placed all his hopes, and fixed a ferocious glare on him. "You silly ass!"

"What—what—" said the surprised professor.

"Call that simplified spelling?" roared Grundy. "Mean to say you've misled me—"

"My dear Mr. Grundy—"

"Into believing spelling reform meant something easy, when it's a dashed sight harder than the other kind?" howled Grundy furiously. "You silly ass!"

"But—"

"Don't say any more!" groaned Grundy. "I'm through with you. Spelling reform, eh? And I've gone to the trouble of getting up a rebellion—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"For a system with ten thousand rules in it. Oh dear!"

Professor Knott-Wright frowned.

"Does this mean, my dear young sir, that you are no longer desirous of enrolling as a member of the Spelling Reform League?"

"Blow the rotten Spelling Reform League! I wouldn't join it now—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you paid me to join it!" hooted Grundy. "Blow it! And blow you, too! Buzz off!"

"My dear young gentleman—"

"Buzz off!" shrieked Grundy.

Professor Knott-Wright gasped, then hurriedly retreated. Something in Grundy's eyes told him that further delay at St. Jim's might result in personal discomfort for him.

He slipped past Young Alf and through the half-open door like a startled rabbit. A yell of laughter followed him.

"That's that!" remarked Grundy. "Of all the silly old freaks—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wish I'd never heard of him! Anyway, the barring-out's off now—"

"Hurrah!"

"And I wash out everything I ever said about spelling reform," said Grundy. "You can buzz off, too, now, Alf, and all your pals. Here's another five to split up between you."

"Thank you sir. Good luck!" grinned Young Alf. "Call us in again any time you're needin' 'elp!"

The Wayland champion and his followers streamed out of the gym doubtless with the intention of making for the nearest hostelry where they could celebrate their remunerative sojourn at St. Jim's.

Immediately they had departed there was a yell from the released prisoners of the gym.

"Now for it! Collar Grundy!"

"Slaughter the silly cuckoo!"

"Look here—" said Grundy.

"Down with him!"

Grundy fled. It was an unusual line for the great man of the Shell to take, but Grundy didn't like the menacing looks on the faces of his "rebels." He ran for it.

With a crowd of whooping juniors hot on his heels, the disillusioned spelling reformer streaked across the quad.

At the same time Dr. Holmes, Mr. Railton, Mr. Linton, Kildare, and a crowd of prefects came out of the School House and looked towards the gym.

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CHAPTER 12.

Grundy Makes Amends!

"BLESS my soul!" said Dr. Holmes.

"Looks as if it's all over!" remarked Kildare, with a smile, as George Alfred Grundy sprinted madly towards the House with a yelling crowd behind him.

"That is obvious, Kildare. But for what reason are the boys giving chase to the one who has presumably been their leader?"

"I fancy we shall soon find out, sir!"

Grundy arrived at the foot of the steps just then, and Kildare ran down to stop his wild career.

"Hold on, young 'un!" he said, grasping the great man of the Shell by the scruff of the neck and yanking him almost off his feet.

"Ow! Oh dear!"

"Stop!" called out the Head, as a crowd of juniors swarmed upon the scene. "Silence, everybody!"

"Oh crikey!"

"The Head!"

The tumult and the shouting died. In their excitement the juniors had failed to notice Dr. Holmes at first. But at the sound of his voice their activities came to a dead stop.

Dr. Holmes regarded the crowd grimly.

"So you have decided to abandon this preposterous prank, boys?" he remarked.

Grundy, in Kildare's firm grasp, mopped his perspiring brow and answered for the rest.

"It's all right, sir," he said. "Everything's off, now. We no longer want reformed spelling at St. Jim's. In fact, these fellows never did want it."

"Indeed!" said Dr. Holmes icily. "In that case, Grundy, what made them follow your lead in this so-called rebellion?"

"They didn't. The—the fact is, sir—"

"Well, Grundy?"

"I forced them to come into the barring-out," said Grundy. "I hired a gang of professional fighters from Wayland—"

"Goodness gracious!"

"Especially to stand by the doors and prevent the chaps getting out. I wanted to get spelling reform adopted at St. Jim's, and I thought a barring-out the best way of getting it. So, as they wouldn't support me, that was how I managed it, you see, sir!"

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Holmes, quite faintly.

"They've gone now—the fighting-men, I mean. And, furthermore, I've decided to chuck the idea of simplified spelling."

"Oh, you have made that decision, then, Grundy?"

Grundy nodded.

"I'm afraid I've been rather silly, sir," he confessed, surprisingly enough for Grundy. "I thought simplified spelling really meant what it said. But Professor Knott-Wright turned up this morning—"

"Dear me!"

"And explained it a bit. And I found out that reformed spelling is a jolly sight more difficult than ordinary spelling. So, for the future, I'm sticking to the orthodox way of spelling words. And I'm sorry I ever thought of doing it any other way."

Tom Merry thought he saw Mr. Railton hide a smile. But the Head did not smile. His face was sterner than ever when he spoke again.

"So you see, Grundy, you have created all this trouble and annoyance, and been insolent and disrespectful to your masters and prefects, for the sake of something which you now see to be impracticable and absurd!"

"That's so, sir," admitted Grundy. "But, anyway, I can see it now, and I'm prepared to take my gruel. I hope you're not thinking of punishing anyone else but me. Nobody else but me was responsible, sir. The rest were helpless, of course, when it came to dealing with a chap like me."

"Bless my soul!"

"It was my work from beginning to end, in fact, sir," said Grundy. "So if you are considering punishing the rest, I want to take it for 'em, whatever it is. Then again—"

"That is enough, Grundy," said the Head.

"Yes, but I was just going to say—"

"You will kindly say nothing more, Grundy. You appear to say a great deal more than is necessary. Possibly if you spoke less and thought more we should get on without so much friction."

Grundy opened his mouth to speak, but decided to close it again.

The Head turned to the crowd.

"Boys, I had thought, surprising though it was, that you had allied yourselves with Grundy in his ridiculous attempt at revolt. It now appears that I was mistaken; you were merely victims of an absurd plot on Grundy's part. In the circumstances, of course, I shall not punish you."

"Thank you, sir!" chorused the juniors.

"As for you, Grundy, you are impossible. I had fully made up my mind this morning that nothing short of a public flogging and expulsion would meet the case, with you—"

"Oh, sir!"

"But this frank acknowledgment that you were alone responsible, and your admission that you now realise your foolishness, does, to some extent, mitigate the offence. I shall, therefore, give you another chance; I shall not expel you."

"Thank you, sir," said Grundy, whose disillusionment on

Then a chuckle. Then a laugh. Then a howl of laughter as the crowd reached the end of it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cave!" said somebody, as two gowned figures appeared round the corner together.

The laughter died away. Dr. Holmes and Mr. Linton approached the board together, and the crowd parted for them.

"It is already here, sir," said Mr. Linton, pointing to a somewhat grimy and badly ink-stained sheet of foolscap.

"Excellent!" remarked the Head, with an approving nod.

Headmaster and Form master read the contents of the sheet. As they did so they gasped.

This was the apology which Grundy had penned:

"APOLLOGY.

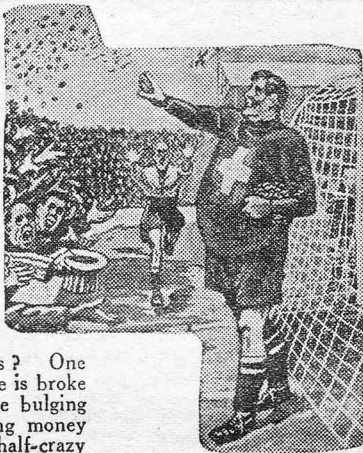
I, GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY, HEARBY APOLLO-GISE TO DR. R. HOLMES, M.A., AND TO LESLIE M.



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the subject of spelling reform had reduced him to a most unusual state of humility.

"I shall, however, flog you most severely after prayers to-morrow morning. And you may consider yourself detained within gates for a fortnight."

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"Finally, Grundy, since you have treated both Mr. Linton and myself with unexampled disrespect, I shall require you to post up on the notice-board, in your own handwriting, a full and complete apology. You will see to this?"

Grundy nodded.

"I'll do it, sir. I'm awfully sorry, of course, now. In any case, I didn't really intend to be disrespectful. I was only making a stand for what I thought was the right thing—"

"That will do, I think, Grundy," said the Head hastily. "And now, boys, you will all report to your respective Form-rooms."

And after their night out in the gym the juniors felt quite happy to do so.

Grundy's apology went up on the notice-board at midday. There was a rush to read it.

LINTON, M.A., FOR RAZING A REBELLION IN SUPPORT OF SPELING REFORM, AND FOR CHEEKING THEM. I HEARBY SOLLEMPLY DECLAIRE THAT IN FUTURE I SHALL SPEL ENGLISH IN ACKORDONSE WITH THE REWLING OF THE ORTHORITIES

(Sined). G. A. Grundy."

"D-d-dear me!" stammered the Head.

"B-b-bless my soul!" stuttered Mr. Linton.

They looked from the notice-board to each other, then back to the notice-board again.

Then they beat a hurried retreat.

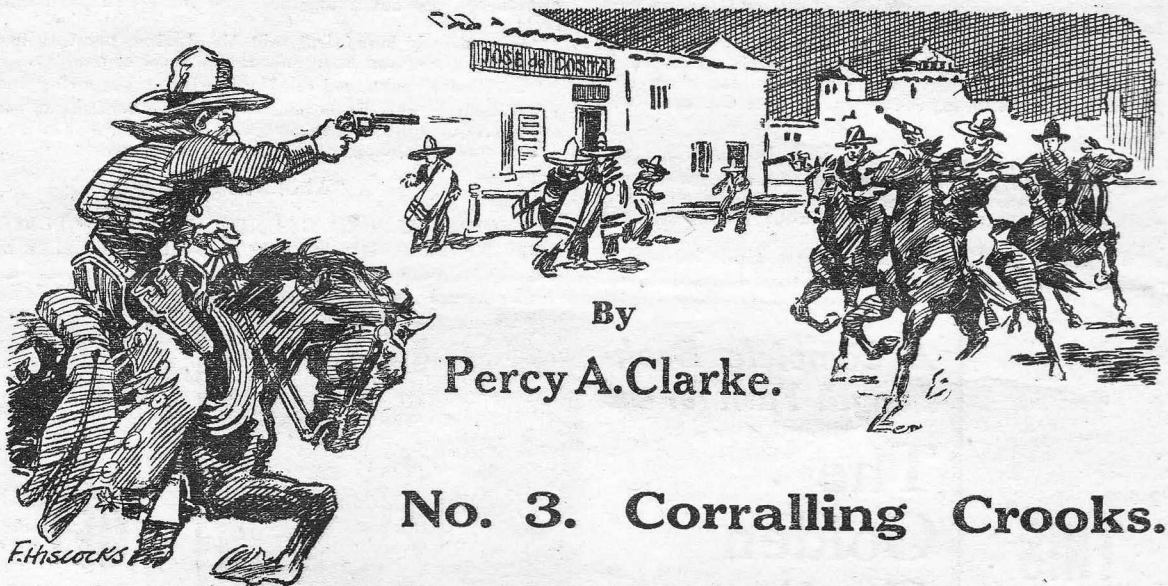
Grundy had rendered them incapable of doing anything else!

THE END.

(Chums, don't miss next week's great yarn of St. Jim's whatever you do! It's packed with thrills from start to finish! Remember the title: "The Mystery Makers!")

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,178.

Buck of the Broken K!



By
Percy A. Clarke.

No. 3. Corraling Crooks.

CHAPTER 1. Dirty Work!

BUCK MORAN sat on his favourite perch, the top rail of the horse corral. It was evening, and he had finished work. He was in the best of health, and there was no reason on earth why he should be miserable, so he opened his mouth and sang.

"Wi' me foot in the stirrup, and me hand on the horn, I'm the best durned cowboy as ever was born!"

Colonel John Worth, the owner of the Broken K outfit, came out of his bungalow and gazed around, a stern frown on his face. He saw Buck—and heard him, too—and came striding over to the corral.

"Hey, Buck!" he cried. "Quit that bellowin' and come and look at this."

"Don't you like my singing, boss?" asked Buck.

"Oh, yeah, it's fine!" retorted the colonel. "But I sure hate that row you was kicking up just then. But I haven't come out here to pass compliments. Guess there's a man's work ahead of us."

"Trouble, boss?" asked Buck, dropping down from the rail.

"In the corrals," said the colonel. "What d'you know about that?"

He handed Buck a letter to read, and Buck frowned even darker than the colonel as he read it.

"Boss," he said, "I'll swear in any court o' law when them horses left here there wasn't a spot or blemish in the whole herd."

"That's as maybe," said the colonel. "I believe you, Buck. But the major at the Army Remount Camp says a quarter of 'em had sore ears. I don't like it. Nothing like this has ever happened to me before. When I've delivered the goods they've been plumb up to contract. I suspect dirty work, Buck."

"But how, boss?" asked Buck. "Them horses took the journey easy. Even then it was only three days' slow ride to the camp, and no horse could get sore ears in three days without us knowing something about it. Boss, I examined every animal in that herd meself, and they was the finest horses I ever did see."

"Yeah," drawled the colonel. "Sounds like dirty work to me—and horse-thieves have plenty of tricks. Anyway, Buck, I'm going over to the remount camp right away to take a look-see at things there. You stop along here and watch for anything you can find. Get me?"

"I sure do, boss," said Buck. "But you'd better not go

alone. If there is dirty work, better take a man with you to be on the safe side."

"I will," agreed the colonel. "Tell Hank Johnson to be ready to hit the trail with me in half an hour."

Buck wasn't singing any more. His lips were set in a straight line and his eyes glinted. He couldn't understand how horses that he had passed as fit had developed sore ears in the space of three days. Like the colonel, he suspected dirty work. Yet who could have done it? The colonel had no enemies that he knew of anywhere near those parts.

As soon as Hank Johnson was ready he and the colonel set out for the remount camp, while Buck lolled about the ranch looking for trouble and hoping to find it.

The Broken K outfit owned a wonderful herd of cattle, but Colonel Worth had other interests in life besides cattle. He was renowned throughout Texas as a horse-breeder, and at least once a year he sold a herd of thoroughbred horses to the Army.

Never before had a consignment of horses from the Broken K been found faulty.

The colonel and the ranch had a reputation for honesty in that respect, and this news hurt them. Another consignment was due to go out the next day, and Buck meant to keep his eyes skinned. Owing to the pressure of work they had taken on many new hands lately, so that he couldn't be sure of every man on the ranch.

He went to the horse corral to take a look-see at the animals. Adjoining was the breaking-in corral, and men were busy there with the more stubborn horses. Buck took no notice of them apparently; he was in the thick of the herd in the corral, where there were so many horses that it was easy enough for him to keep out of sight of the men in the breaking-in pen.

He saw one of the new hands astride a big black mare that did its best to throw him off. Buck remained in the midst of the corralled herd and watched. There were three men in the breaking-in pen—men of whom he couldn't be sure. There was Jim Brewer, riding the mare, and standing by were Jed Hunter and Caleb Carn.

The mare tried every trick it knew short of exploding. It bucked and jumped; it put its head between its forelegs, and up went its hind legs in the air; then down they came, and the animal leapt in the air clean off the ground, coming down with a bump, all four feet together; its back seemed to break in two, then up it came like the hump of a camel as it bucked again; it cavorted and went round and round in rings till it made itself dizzy.

But Jim Brewer stayed in the saddle and broke her spirit,

**SMOKE SAVES BUCK'S
LIFE!**

And Buck Saves the Colonel's!

There was no doubt about Jim's ability to ride the horse. When it was quiet he slipped to the ground and grinned at his mates.

"How's that?" he asked. "As fine a bit o' horseflesh as ever I hope to fork!"

"Yeah, you've said it," agreed Caleb Carn. "Worth something to Laredo, I guess."

Laredo! Buck's blood ran cold with rage. Laredo, the Mexican bandit! Buck had been the chief instrument in getting Laredo and his robber gang out of that part of the country some time ago. Apparently Laredo had come back, or else he was just over the frontier with his paid crooks doing his dirty work for him. Even then Buck couldn't understand what he hoped to gain by doctoring Colonel Worth's horses, unless it was simply a matter of revenge.

But Buck watched the three men in the breaking-in pen, and he was careful to remain unseen by the crooks. He saw Jim Brewer glance around, then cautiously stoop; he scooped up a handful of sand from the ground, and with a quick movement thrust it into one of the horse's ears.

He had to be quick. No sooner did that tormenting sand fall in the animal's ear than the mare kicked, lashed with her hoofs, careering about the pen madly. The three men promptly climbed the rails and let her have her own way for a time.

But Buck had seen enough. He remembered now having heard of this trick before. The sand would cause sores and abscesses in the animal's ear very quickly. Whether there was some dirty scheme behind it all, or whether it was just revenge, hardly mattered then. If it was nothing else, it was cruelty to the horse, and Buck hated that worse than murder.

He came from the corral and ran to the breaking-in pen. The men were outside it, and turned as he rushed up to them.

"That black mare is obstreperous, Buck," said Jim Brewer. "We're letting her tire herself out, and—"

"Tire herself out—nothing!" snarled Buck, whipping out his shooting-iron. "Make a false move, you three, and I'll drill you so full of holes you'll never drink water again without spilling it! Shy your guns away! One at a time, now!"

"What's the idea?" snarled Brewer.

"Nix on talk! You, Carn, take your guns— No; unbuckle your belt and shy the lot, guns and all, behind you! So! Now it's your turn, Hunter! That's right! Brewer, shy them shooters behind you—and make it snappy! That's the way!"

"But, look here," snapped Brewer, "is this a joke—"

"Joke—nothing!" roared Buck. "You low-down horse-doctor! I saw you put the sand in that mare's ear!"

"Gee!" gasped Hunter. "That's started something!"

"You've said it!" hissed Buck. "If I tell the boys they'll string you up to a telegraph-post. But I aims to thrash this skunk till he can't stand! I'm fair itching to slam him plenty! I'm shying my guns away—like that! Now, Brewer, put your dukes up! I'm coming!"

Brewer backed away.

"Listen, Buck! I'll—"

"Too late!" roared Buck. "I'm coming! Put 'em up. Brewer, you worm, if you've got any sand left over! I'm—"

He hurled himself at the rogue, and his bare fists came a-swinging. His right stung Brewer on the nose and shot him backwards. Buck was after him and steadied him with a slashing left to the ear.

After that Brewer had to fight. He was bigger than Buck, and had the advantage in reach, but that never saved him. Buck was raging mad at the thought of what Brewer had done to that horse, and he meant to cut his man to ribbons. He slammed in sledgehammer blows at the rogue's ugly face, then changed his tactics and drove in hard pile-drivers to the body.

Not that he had it all his own way. Brewer fought savagely, and several times Buck gasped as his blows struck home. Both men were battered and bleeding, but Buck had the better physique. The strain was telling on Brewer, who never had lived the same sort of healthy life that Buck always had. The end was coming. Brewer was panting and badly damaged. He had both eyes puffy and discoloured; his lips were cut and swollen.

Carn and Hunter knew it was the end for Brewer, and they began to sidle back towards their guns. Buck was too busy to notice them. Then one of the cowpunchers, coming from the bunkhouse, saw the fight going on—saw something else, too, for he yelled at the top of his voice.

"Look out, Buck! Behind you!"

Carn cursed, and Buck let himself drop in a crumpled heap. Behind him roared Carn's gun, and the bullet whistled over his head. Enraged at the treacherous trick, Buck came to his feet again, spinning round. Brewer saw his chance. He leapt forward, and his fist crashed home on Buck's temple, dropping the Broken K foreman in a heap.

Other waddies were coming running, and the three rogues were panicky.

"Better clear out!" panted Brewer. "Come on!"

Their horses were saddled and tethered to the rail of the breaking-in pen. They cut the tethers as they leapt to the saddles; and by the time the red mist had cleared from Buck's eyes they were galloping away over the mesa towards the south and the frontier.

CHAPTER 2.

One Man's Job.

"WHAT happened, Buck?" asked the waddies, helping Buck to his feet.

"Plenty!" gasped Buck, fighting hard to control his reeling senses. "The boss heard from the remount people to say how a lot of horses in the last consignment had sore ears. The colonel's gone over to the camp about it. I gets looking round, and I catches them snakes doctoring the black mare's ears with sand."

"Shucks!" snarled Pete Dawson, whipping out his gun. "Who's behind this, Buck?"

"Laredo. I heard them rats talking in there!"

"Laredo? Has he started in the horse business? But what's he get out of it? Or is it getting his own back?"

"Search me!" said Buck, pulling himself together. "Jest hand me my guns, and I'll saddle Smoke and ride out to talk to Laredo with bullets!"

"You can't go alone!" protested Pete Dawson.

"Waal," drawled Buck, "I don't know. If I— But, look, boys! Who's that on the trail?"

"It's Hank Johnson!" snapped Buck. "Something's wrong with the colonel."

The men clustered forward as Hank rode in. He was dusty, perspiring, and wounded. There was a neat hole in the shoulder of his shirt, and blood flowed down one arm.

"Spill it, pronto!" snapped Buck. "Where's the colonel?"

Hank slid from his horse and leant against the animal weakly as he explained.

"Buck," he said, "you done got to get busy, and I can't help none along of me being pretty nigh all in and tuckered up. It was this way, Buck. We looked over them hosses at the remount depot, and a quarter of 'em had ear troubles. Seems it cuts us this a-way. The remount people, if so many hosses is unfit, cuts our price and sells the unfit hosses over the frontier to some Mexican outfit."

"Mex outfit, says you?" snarled Buck. "Gimme the name o' that joint! Did you hear it?"

"I sure did," said Hank. "The name was Laredo. Does it mean anything to you?"

"It means all the world and then some!" retorted Buck. "I'm seeing daylight. Laredo's rats doctor the hosses here; the remount fellows throw 'em out as unfits, and sells 'em cheap to Laredo, who cures the ear trouble, and gets thoroughbreds for the price of sheep. Shucks, fellers, us have got to look into this! But the colonel—"

"I'm coming to that," said Hank feebly. "We aimed to ride home quickly and get things going. See? But we was held up by greasers. The colonel lost his hoss. I stopped a pill that knocked me silly. We did some gun-shooting and we bumped off half a dozen greasers; and then, having lost me some blood, I jest fainted clear off. When I came round the colonel is gone. I finds me hoss in a thicket, so I rides on here. And—that's all."

"And a-plenty!" snarled Pete Dawson. "There's going to be trouble a-popping along the border as soon as I gets to me hoss. Come on, boys! We'll ride and rescue the colonel!"

"Yeah, Pete, let's go!" yelled the punchers.

But Buck shouted at them.

"Come down off o' that steer!" he yelled. "You boys may have sand, but you ain't got no more brains between your ears than a burro. This rescue job belongs to me!"

"Alone?" queried Pete.

"Alone!" snapped Buck.

"But—"

"Have you gone plumb loco, cowboy?" asked Buck. "Listen! Laredo knows perfectly well how you chaps 'ud feel about the colonel being kidnapped. Don't you think he'd expect the hull gang of you to raid his show across the frontier?"

"Yeah. But who's worryin'?"

"I am," retorted Buck. "Because while the hull gang of you is away, what will Laredo be doing? Boys, I'll tell you. He'll slip up this a-way and clean out the Broken K. This kidnapping stunt is a frame-up jest to get you where you can't interfere; and by the time you get back here there won't be a hoss nor a steer left in Snake Springs totting the Broken K brand. Laredo'll rustle the lot."

"No, boys; you're a fine crush, and I don't ax for no better partners when it comes to a show down. But this

rescue business stays right with me. I'll ride over and talk to Laredo. If I'm away more'n three days, then send half a dozen boys on me trail; but never leave the ranch without a guard at the corrals. Promise me that! From now on you can expect Laredo and his greasers any old time, and you've got to be ready to give them skunks a warm welcome. Now, one o' you lazy hulks get me my horse while I wash off the stains o' battle. And you, Pete, see to Hank's wounds. Guess I'd better travel right now."

"Yeah, you're right—as always, Buck," said Pete. "You can call it done."

And in less than half an hour Buck Moran rode out of the Broken K Ranch and headed north. The Mexican frontier was to the south, but Buck knew what he was doing. He rode across the mesa until he reached the distant foothills. Anyone watching him would have come to the conclusion that he was on his way to Pecos City to lodge a formal complaint with the sheriff.

But in the foothills, with plenty of cover, Buck changed his course, made a wide detour, and headed for the Mexican frontier. He travelled fast, yet not too fast for his wiry mustang. He had a long way to go, and to arrive at his destination worn out and fatigued, and with his horse barely able to stand, wouldn't be of any use to Colonel Worth.

Buck had tremendous faith in his horse, even if it wasn't much to look at. Smoke, his mustang, was a queer-looking animal, and some folk laughed outright at the first sight of it; but from experience Buck Moran knew that Smoke had speed and endurance, and, above all, intelligence that had often got his master out of tight corners. Buck wouldn't have sold his leggy mustang for a fortune.

Even then it was difficult to see how Buck could rescue the colonel from the hands of Laredo's gang of bandits single-handed. Smoke might be a fine horse, and intelligent, but he had his limits. No doubt Buck was more

than a match for half a dozen greaser robbers, but if there were two or three dozen the outlook wasn't too cheerful.

On the other hand, Buck reckoned that Laredo had his spies out in the hills waiting for the time when the Broken K cow waddies should ride south on the rescue trail, leaving the ranch practically unprotected, when the Mexicans would come down on the place and drive off every steer and horse they could find. In that case a solitary rider had a better chance of carrying on undiscovered than twenty rip-roaring, quick-shooting cow-punchers.

"Brains is what is wanted when dealing with a skunk like Laredo," said Buck, scratching Smoke's head between his ears. "But ef I knew jest how to use them brains in this yere matter I'd be feeling a sight happier. Howsomever, you long-legged critter, keep moving, and something is liable to happen almost anywhen."

CHAPTER 3.

The Showdown!

BUCK struck the main trail that led over the border and followed it for some time. But when he came within twenty miles of the border he left it and struck across country. On the trail he was likely to meet States officials on one side of the line and Mexican soldiers on the other side who would ask him awkward questions.

He came to the river that formed the boundary between the two countries, and, although recent rains had swollen the swift-running stream, he put his horse at it, and Smoke swam across safely, clambering out on the shingly shore of the Mexican side.

Then Buck looked to his guns and loosened them in their holsters, because things can happen in Mexico and no questions asked, either before or afterwards. He knew roughly where to head for, because Laredo was well known to have friends amongst the Mexican officials in that province. All that Buck had to do was to reach the nearest Mexican village, enter the cantina, and kick up a row, and he'd be sure to spot some of Laredo's men in the resulting shoot-up.

But all these plans came to naught just when Buck began. He rode into the village, rather strangely named, of Puerto Bambino, and suddenly became aware that three cowpunchers were riding up the street before him very leisurely. They looked familiar to Buck. Then the biggest of the three turned at the sound of horse's hoofs behind him. It was Jim Brewer!

Buck's hand dropped to his gun—and he wasn't a second too soon about it, for the three treacherous renegades from the Broken K wheeled their horses and whipped out their guns. Bullets shrieked past Buck, and he was blazing back at the skunks, a gun in each fist, eyes glinting.

Caleb Carn dropped from his horse. Jim Brewer joined him on the ground, clutching at his shoulder. Jed Hunter dug his spurs into his horse's flanks and rode from there up the street as hard as he could go. Buck went after him, and Smoke's long legs kicked up the Mexican dust to some purpose. Jed pulled up outside the cantina, and even as he shot across the plank sidewalk in one bound Buck's gun barked and the bullet got Jed in the gun-hand.

But it wasn't enough to stop him. He disappeared into the cantina. Buck ought to have been warned by the way Jed dived in there; on the other hand, it might have been merely a case of taking cover. In any case, that was how Buck regarded it. He rode on furiously, and as Smoke was pulled to a standstill by the hitching rail of the cantina Buck came out of the saddle as light as a feather, but with rage seething in his heart.

He crouched opposite the door, alert for more treachery. It came—but it came from the other side of the road. A shutter of a window was slammed open and a gun roared. Buck half-turned, and that movement saved his life. The bullet creased the side of his head. It felt like a blow with a pickaxe, and Buck just doubled up in a heap, senseless.

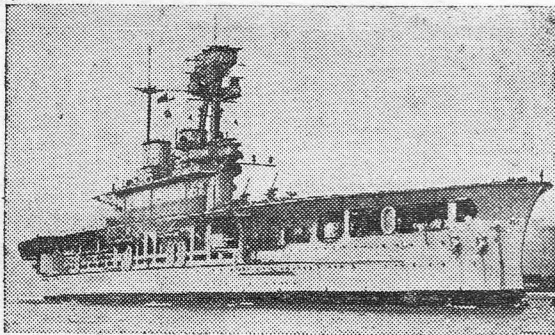
Men came running both from the cantina and the adobe house across the way. Smoke reared up, snorting defiance, lashed out with his hoofs, then galloped a little way up the street. But no one worried about the horse. It wasn't much to look at—hardly worth stealing, so the greasers thought. Besides, there were other things to be attended to.

Buck came round, dreaming about swimming a river. That wasn't very amazing, because a Mexican was throwing water over his head. He sat up and stared about him. He was in the cantina, and Laredo lounged against the bar grinning at him.

"Buenos noches, Senor Moran," he said. "They tell me you come to Puerto Bambino, so I ride this way to welcome you to my country—is it not?"

Buck glanced at the window, and sure enough the sun

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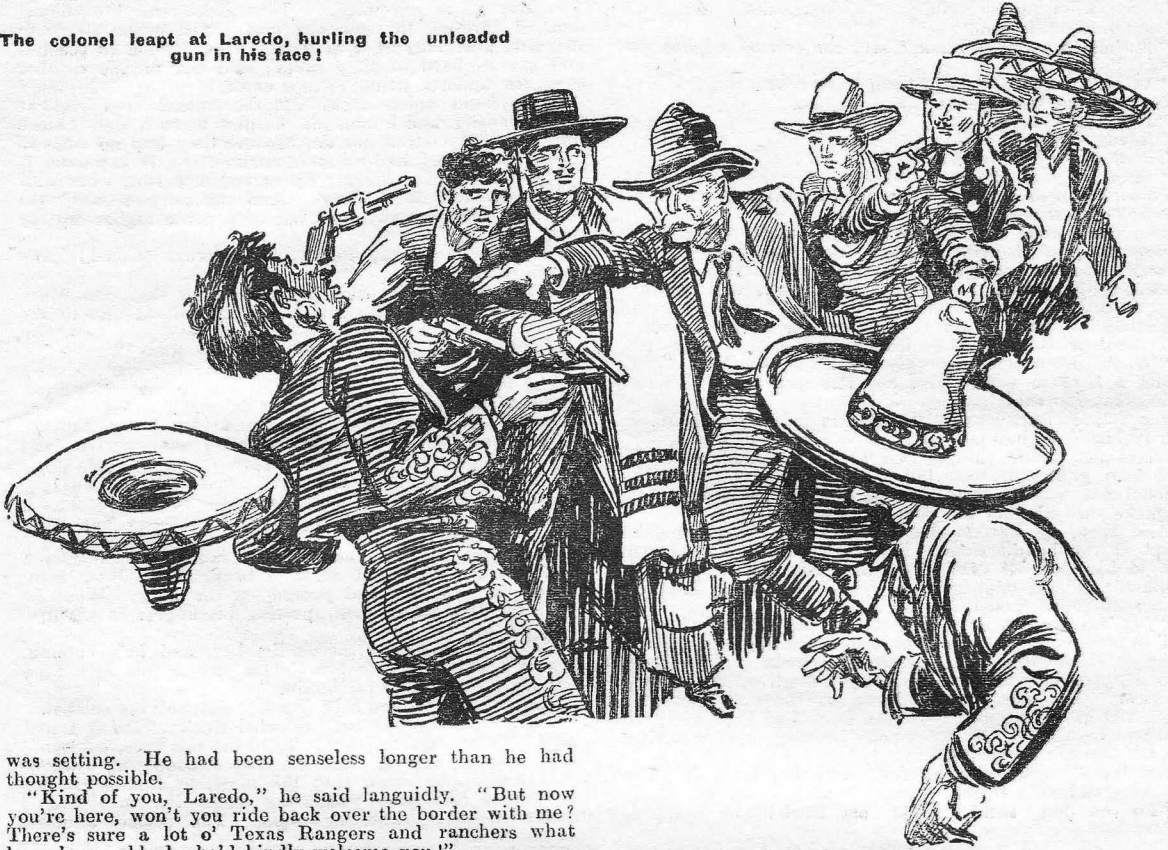
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The colonel leapt at Laredo, hurling the unloaded gun in his face!



was setting. He had been senseless longer than he had thought possible.

"Kind of you, Laredo," he said languidly. "But now you're here, won't you ride back over the border with me? There's sure a lot o' Texas Rangers and ranchers what have been robbed who'd kindly welcome you!"

"You are pleased to joke, senor!" laughed Laredo. "It matters not. I was expecting you—"

"Not alone," put in Buck.

An ugly look came to Laredo's eyes.

"You interrupt me, senor!" he snapped.

"I know what I'm talking about," said Buck. "You expected me down here with a hull pack o' Broken K waddies. Then you'd ha' slipped past 'em in the hills with your gang o' murderers and rustled every hoof o' cattle and horses on the old range. But I sorter guessed what you had in mind, so I came alone, you old rat!"

Laredo was snarling with baffled rage.

"It is the bluff!" he snapped. "You have men in the hills."

"Nary a one, worse luck!" said Buck. "Ef I had, wouldn't they ha' come down after hearing all thet shooting? No; I'm alone."

"And what good has it done you?" sneered Laredo. "You are in my power now. And I owe you something. You recall that time I plan with Senor Rawlins to get away with the Broken K pay-roll? You fool me that a-time, gringo. I never forget things like that. No, Laredo never forget—and Laredo pays his debts."

"You've had time to bump me off," said Buck. "What are you waiting for—huh?"

A queer grin came to Laredo's face.

"Ah, senor, it is not good for a Mexican to kill a gringo yellow dog!"

"Since when have I been yellow?" snarled Buck. He felt instinctively for his guns; but, of course, they had been taken from him.

Laredo ignored the question.

"But suppose one gringo kill another, eh?" he said.

And then, for the first time, Buck became aware that Colonel Worth stood between two armed Mexicans.

"Hey, boss!" cried Buck. "How's this for our Waterloo, or somethin'—huh?"

"Waal," drawled the colonel, "it sure is no end of a jam, Buck. How come?"

"I do the talking," put in Laredo. "Listen! Senor Moran—so brave he is—come to rescue the colonel. Is it not? Well, I let the colonel go free on one condition."

"Name it!" snapped the colonel.

"You shoot Senor Moran."

"Durn yore greasy hide!" roared the colonel. "I'll do no such thing!"

"Then I shoot you!" snapped Laredo.

Buck was white beneath his tan; but he showed no fear, because he knew no fear. At the same time he didn't like the prospect of being shot down by the very man he had come to rescue.

"Say, that's rayther warm, Laredo!" he protested. "Ef you're that anxious I should die, then do the work yoreself, ef you've got that much sand—which I doubt!"

Laredo's face was twisted in a sneer of mingled contempt and rage. He moved from the counter and lurched forward unsteadily. He was drunk, for one thing; but obviously his real motive was to torture Buck with this idea of being shot down by his best friend.

"The colonel shoot you, he go free!" he snarled.

Then the colonel stepped forward, stretching out his hand.

"That's okay with me, Laredo!" he said. "Give me a gun and let's get it over."

Buck gasped at the very idea.

"Say, colonel," he began, "you wouldn't shoot me down after all I done for you?"

"It's either you or me, Buck," said the colonel tartly. "And I'm plumb anxious to go on living."

"But, colonel, you ain't telling me you believe Laredo will let you go free?"

Colonel Worth ignored that, facing Laredo.

"Give me a gun and let's get it over," he said.

Buck stared at the scene, amazed. He took good stock of that cantina. He got to his feet, and a couple of Mexicans thrust him against the wall between the door and the window. Colonel Worth was over by the bar, facing Laredo, who studied him closely. But the bandit leader was too drunk to do too much studying apparently.

"Give me a gun!" said the colonel again.

Laredo seemed taken aback at the ready way in which the colonel had consented to shoot his own foreman, but he turned to one of his gang for a gun. His back was turned to the colonel as he accepted the six-shooter. He bent over it for a second before he spun round, staggered slightly, then offered the gun, butt first.

"But no funny tricks, mind!" he said.

"But you cain't do it, colonel!" moaned Buck, as if he

had the wind up frightfully. "Colonel, don't say you'll shoot yore best friend!"

"I aims to go free, Buck," said the colonel. "Are you ready?"

"Waal," drawled Buck, "have it yore own way, colonel. Remember me to the boys."

"I will, Buck. Ready?"

"Ready, colonel."

There was a leering grin on Laredo's face.

"What a joke to run along the border!" he sneered. "Colonel Worth saves his life by shooting Senor Buck Moran! What a—"

But Buck stood as firm as a rock while the colonel raised the gun. A grim silence fell on the room. Colonel Worth suddenly brought the revolver up until it pointed at the ceiling; then he pulled the trigger, and all that happened were two faint clicks!

Laredo burst out laughing, cackling like a hen.

The colonel spun round on him.

"What sort o' trick is this, suh?" he snarled. "You made a bargain with me, suh. The gun is not loaded! You hear, you rat?"

But Laredo leant against the counter helpless with mirth. He reckoned he had caused Buck terrible agony of mind; he reckoned many things, and he was tickled to death. His men guffawed, too; but that was just what the colonel was waiting for. He had fired at the ceiling first to make sure whether the gun had been loaded.

And then, as Laredo doubled up with merriment, he leapt at the bandit chief. He hurled the unloaded gun full in his face. It crashed on his nose, and he recoiled. Then the colonel snatched the loaded guns from Laredo's belt, spun round, and faced the audience.

"Put 'em up, you durned greasers!" he yelled.

Two men went for their guns, and twice the colonel fired, winging them both. And before the smoke cleared Buck had whipped into action. He flung himself at the nearest Mexican. His fists plugged home on the man's swarthy face, and as he dropped senseless Buck had both his guns and was backing to the door, body heaving, eyes watching for the first hostile movement.

But the Mexicans were covered, and they knew it. The colonel was beside Buck.

"To the left and straight on, Buck!" he snapped. "Beat it!"

They both fired over the heads of Laredo's gang, and

they ducked as one man. Then Buck and the colonel crashed through the doorway and out into the street in the dim, uncertain light of dusk. They turned to the left and ran as hard as they could; and out of the cantina came the bandits, firing as they came.

Three times apiece Buck and the colonel fired back at their pursuers, and a man bit the dust at each shot. More than that they dared not do, because they had no time to reload; and Buck had no more ammunition, in any case.

The bandits were kicking up no end of a row, what with their yells and their shouts. And the purpose was soon revealed; for men streamed out of a house higher up the road, barring the way.

"Jammed!" snarled Buck. "This way, colonel! Any port in a storm!"

He turned and dived in at a doorway that was open. Inside sat a portly Mexican, but Buck jabbed him in the fat ribs with his gun.

"Outside! Quick march, muy pronto, senor!"

The Mexican turned a ghastly green; but obeyed, protesting volubly; and as soon as he was in the street Buck slammed the door on him, locked it, and put the bar up. Then he rushed to the window and closed the shutters. He was only just in time, for Laredo's gang arrived and sent a fusillade of shots at the house.

"Got any more shells, colonel?" asked Buck.

"Only what are in my guns," said the colonel.

"In which case," observed Buck, "we can't stay here. Let's try the back."

They went upstairs, and on the landing there was a window that looked out on to a back alley. Buck leant out of that window and peered up the alley. What he saw made him grin; then, putting his fingers to his lips, he whistled.

"Colonel," he said, "there's Smoke; and he's coming, because I done sent for him! Out you go and fork him, and ride like mad for the border."

"I'm not leaving you here, Buck!" snapped the colonel.

"No one's axing you to!" retorted Buck. "Do as I say, and I'll foller. Quick—now! Trust me this once, colonel!"

The colonel agreed. He clambered over the window-sill and dropped down into the alley, as Smoke—Buck's horse, that had been wandering about Puerto Bambino unattended—came cantering along. The colonel climbed into the saddle.

"Hit her up, you ole critter!" yelled Buck.

Smoke jumped immediately into a gallop, while Buck stood upright on the window-sill. A man on horseback came round the corner of the alley, and, seeing the colonel speeding away, fired his guns as a warning, yelled madly, and clapped spurs to his horse.

"Gee, whiskers!" exclaimed Buck. "I was sure born lucky!"

He crouched on the window-sill, and as the horseman passed beneath him he leapt. He judged it accurately. He came down on the flanks of the horse behind the rider and hung on. Then he swung his fist, striking with all his might. The blow cannoned on the man's head and he was knocked clean out of the saddle.

Buck wriggled himself into the empty saddle, gripped the bridle, and controlled the horse, galloping furiously after the colonel along the alley and out into the main road. The bandits saw them and rushed for their horses, firing their guns at random.

But when they did get their horses the fugitives had a long lead and kept it, heading for the border. When they had a chance they left the trail and headed for the hills, where Buck found a cosy canyon in which they hid.

"To tell the truth, colonel," he said, "I don't aim to go home yet awhile. To-day is the third day since I left the Broken K, and the boys'll be looking for me. Maybe they'll meet Laredo and there'll be some argument—leastways, I'm hoping so. Guess we'll stay here and rest the hosses, seeing Laredo can't find us."

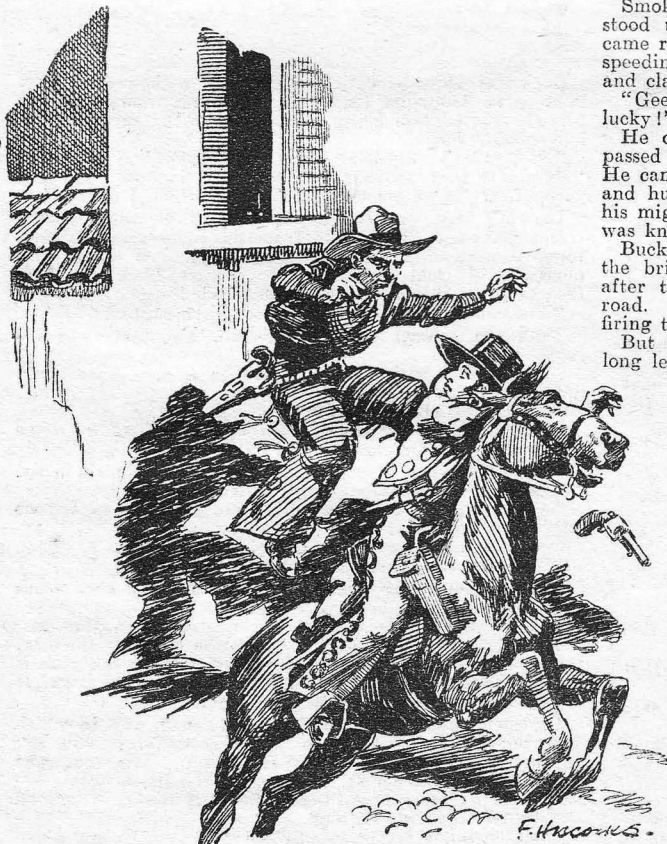
"I leave it to you, Buck," said the colonel. "But, tell me, did you really think I was going to shoot you?"

"Jumping rattlers, colonel!" cried Buck. "Do I dook like a dumb-bell? I knew you'd never do it. But I did hope you'd grab the chance of saving time for the breakaway. I guessed Laredo never meant to give you a loaded gun. Gee, but it's dark! I vote one sleeps and the other watches!"

"Okay!" said the colonel. "I take first watch."

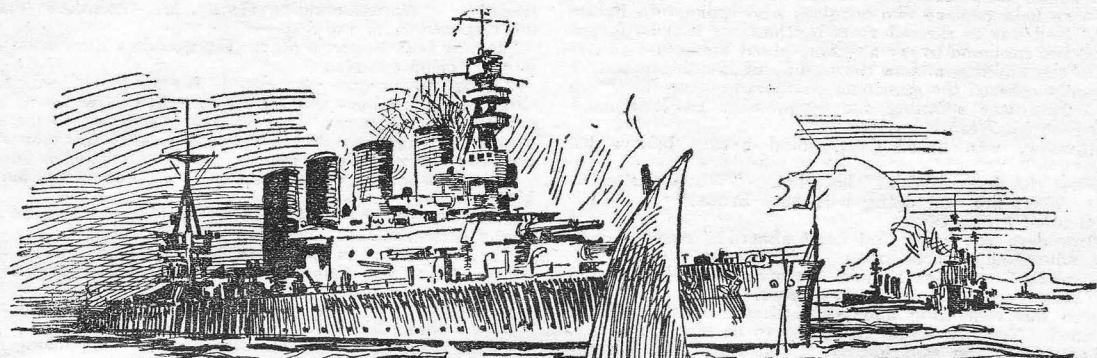
Nothing happened that night; but in the morning, when the sun rose over the hills, they saw Laredo and his bandits hunting for them in the valleys. Buck studied the skyline

(Continued on page 28.)



Buck leapt on top of the horseman as he rode beneath!
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A RED-HOT ADVENTURE YARN OF THE ROYAL NAVY!



The Fighting Middy!

BY
DAVID GOODWIN

(For Opening Chapters, See Page 26.)

Mr. Smiler, A.B.

ONE glance had been enough for Ned to recognise the man. It was the red-bearded tough who, with a companion, had drugged and tried to rob him in the railway carriage coming down to Portsmouth.

"By gosh!" exclaimed Ned, starting up. "I know that bird! The chap with the ginger beard!"

He darted across the restaurant, making for the door; but two guests got in his way—in a very pigheaded manner, Ned thought—and, though he did not lose more than a few seconds, when he reached the street there was not a sign of the man.

Ned looked up and down the road rapidly, and then bolted for the nearest turning, a hundred yards farther on. To his amazement, there was no sign of the man there either. It did not seem possible he could have got out of sight so quickly, yet he was gone, without a doubt—had vanished so swiftly that he evidently knew he had been recognised.

Ned stamped with anger as he realised that he had let the fellow get away with it.

His first impulse was to call up the police. But he checked himself. Mytton had warned him that it was no job for the police, and had bidden him keep it to himself. Fuming inwardly, Ned returned to the restaurant, where Smiler had missed him and was hunting for him frantically.

"What on earth stung you?" said Jinks. "Who were you after?"

"A fellow I know; but he's gone," returned Ned.

He wished he could have told Jinks about it; but decided not to. Neither would it do to be late in returning, of all things. There was no chance of communicating with Mr. Mytton.

"We'd better get the tripehound aboard," said Jinks. "He'll have a cold reception if he's late."

"I hope he won't give too warm a one to anybody on the ship," said Ned, rather doubtfully.

"Why, he looks as amiable as an old sheep!"

"Yes; as long as he doesn't get his rag out. When he does that, things begin to hum. You never know how he'll take a stranger."

"By the seat of the breeches, I should think. Wonder how he'll like Grimshaw?"

"He won't see much of Grimshaw if I can help it," said Ned.

Ten minutes later Ned was in the stern of the *Victorious*' picket-boat, with Smiler sitting up beside him on the cushions. In this wise the middies returned aboard, much to the wonder of the corporal of the gangway.

"Hallo!" said the first-lieutenant, as Smiler came scrambling up the steps. "Whose dog is that?"

"For Mr. Hart, sir," said Ned, saluting.

"Mr. Hart! I didn't know he had a dog."

Number One looked rather suspicious at Ned, who hurried below with his charge as quickly as he could.

In the alleyway leading to the gun-room he ran into the third sub-lieutenant.

"Here's your dog, sir," said Ned.

"My what! Good heavens!" exclaimed Hart, who had forgotten his rash promise. "Let's look at it!"

He stood stock-still, however, somewhat hesitatingly, as Smiler silently and grimly approached him. Ned was on

pins and needles. Would the bulldog take to his supposed new master or not? It was an anxious moment.

Smiler sniffed loudly and cautiously at the sub-lieutenant's trousers, walking round him, and looking like a dumb demon. Then his tail slowly began to wag, and he sniffed again. His head opened in a smile like that of

a coal-scuttle. It was all right. He approved of Mr. Hart. "He's a ripping fine beast!" said Mr. Hart, patting him, his heart quite won by the way the dog had taken to him. "Bring him into the gun-room!"

They found five of the sub-lieutenants and several midshipmen within, and Hart presented his new charge with a flourish.

"Gentlemen, let me introduce the latest member of the gun-room mess! Mr. Smiler is henceforward one of us. Warranted to eat a snottie at a single meal, if required!"

The members of the mess crowded round, and there was a general chorus of admiration for Smiler, who received it with one of his best grins; and Ned was so pleased at his pet's triumphal entry that he shared in it.

"Rather! Quiet as a cab horse!" he said, in answer to several questions. "Thoroughbred from the old strain. Pluck? I should say so!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,178.

Bulldog Joins the Navy!

He began enthusiastically to tell a tale of how Smiler had once held captive two burglars who broke into Briars Hall. Ned was so carried away by the story that he forgot he was not supposed to say anything about the actual ownership of the bulldog, and in the middle of it Sub-Lieutenant Grimshaw entered the gun-room, and strode up to the group where Ned was spinning the yarn, with Smiler's head resting on his knee.

Grimshaw, who hated dogs, could hardly believe his eyes.

"What the deuce is this?" he cried. "Who's chattering here? What are you doing with that brute?"

Ned stood up hastily.

"How dare you bring that beast aboard?" rasped Grimshaw, advancing towards him.

"Gur-r-r-r!" growled Smiler, his eyes suddenly growing red. He turned to the noisy newcomer.

There was something about Mr. Grimshaw that stirred his blood. Ned saw there was going to be trouble.

"Lie down!" he said hastily. "I'm sorry, sir, but the dog belongs to the mess—"

"Take the brute out, and let him be put ashore or overboard!" said Grimshaw hotly. "As for you, Hardy—"

"Gurr-r-rrr! Wow!" said Smiler, with a lunge forward, his fangs showing like the teeth of a rake.

Mr. Grimshaw started back violently, as if to bolt for it. It was enough for Smiler.

"Call him off!" shrieked Grimshaw, turning to fly for his life.

Smiler hurled himself in pursuit, and Grimshaw fled across the gun-room, right into the arms of the marine steward, who was coming in with a tray of glasses. There was a howl and a crash as the two collided amid a shower of tumblers and soda-water.

Even Smiler was bewildered for the moment. Amid the ringing of the broken glass and the gasping yell of the steward, the bulldog was not quite sure which was his man—they were all so mixed up together.

The whole gun-room roared with laughter. Mr. Grimshaw, detaching himself from the melee, fled like an excited cat down the alleyway, with Smiler, a good second, behind him.

Not a moment too soon the senior sub-lieutenant swung himself into the steward's pantry and slammed the door in Smiler's face.

The middies sank down on the benches, weeping with laughter, while Smiler made fearful noises and scratched frantically at the pantry door with his paws, as if he meant to dig Mr. Grimshaw out.

"That's torn it!" gasped Ned.

He dashed after the bulldog in the vain hope of securing him, but tripped on the steward's tray and fell sprawling.

"Take the brute away!" boomed Mr. Grimshaw's voice inside the pantry. "Call the sentry!"

Ned had cut himself on the broken glass, and things looked very serious for him besides; none the less, he was struggling with agonies of laughter as he picked himself up and hitched a leather lead on to Smiler's collar. He led the dog back into the gun-room, where everybody was still laughing, and tied Smiler securely to the leg of the table, which was bolted to the floor with brass clamps.

"Make him well fast, youngster!" said Hart, under his breath. "There'll be trouble over this, but I'll see you through."

"Is that infernal dog gone?" shouted Grimshaw.

"It's all right; you can come out now," said Sub-Lieutenant Vaughan soothingly. "They've chained up the man-eater!"

Grimshaw opened the pantry door cautiously, and not till he had assured himself that there was nothing to fear from Smiler did he venture out. Then he strode into the gun-room, with a brow as black as thunder.

Smiler stared up and growled, but Ned spoke to him sharply, and made him lie down.

"You young fiend!" panted Grimshaw, beside himself with passion. "You dare to bring that brute here! I'll deal with you! Pass the word to the sentry there, one of you. and I'll have the beast shot!"

"Shot!" exclaimed Ned, the blood leaping to his cheeks at the mere notion. "Do you mean to—"

"Silence!" roared Grimshaw. "Another word, and I'll have you put under close arrest!"

"Hold on!" said Sub-Lieutenant Hart, stepping forward quickly. "No use blaming Hardy, Mr. Grimshaw. He's not responsible for the dog—"

"It was only Smiler's play. He wouldn't have done any harm!" cried out Ned.

"Hold your tongue, youngster! It's my show!" said Hart sharply. "You have nothing to do with this matter!" He turned to Grimshaw. "The bulldog is common to the gun-room mess, and he's under my charge. I'm sorry he went for you; but it was only in play, and he shan't do it again." Grimshaw glared at the speaker as if he could not believe his ears.

"Are you going to tell me the dog doesn't belong to that young demon there?" he cried. "I say he does!"

"I beg to inform you that you're wrong!" said Hart stiffly. "You will take my word for it. He belongs to the gun-room mess of this ship."

"Quite right!" said three or four of the other subs. "We've signed him on!"

"Bosh!" cried Grimshaw vigorously. "He belonged to that scoundrel of a—"

"I don't want to repeat to you what I said before!" broke in Hart angrily. "Nor to have my statements questioned!"

"I say the beast shall not remain on the ship!" exclaimed Grimshaw.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Grimshaw," said Hart, more coolly; "but I intend to look after this dog and he will remain. You can consider me fully responsible for him, and regard me as his owner, if that is more convenient."

"Do you know what my position is on this ship, and what yours is?" said Grimshaw hotly.

"Certainly; you are senior to me, and the ruler of the mess. You've never found me lacking in any matter of discipline or duty, Mr. Grimshaw; but you have no authority to tell me whether I shall keep a dog or not. The commander alone, or the captain, can do that!"

Grimshaw knew well enough that it was true. He bit his lip savagely as he saw that his evil temper had led him into a trap.

"You say you mean to keep this dog that Hardy brought aboard?" he blustered.

"Exactly!" said Hart courteously.

A dangerous look grew in Grimshaw's eyes as he leaned forward.

"You seem determined to come across my hawser, Mr. Hart, in spite of being warned!" he said in a low voice.

Hart looked him in the eyes.

"I need no warnings!" he said. "I am within my rights, and I have apologised for the dog's attack on you. I don't think there was anything in it; but I'll apologise again if you like."

Grimshaw made no reply, but glanced sideways at Ned, who had kept silent throughout.

"I take all blame, if there is any," said Hart. "I told Hardy to bring me the dog, and instructed him and Jinks to go ashore and fetch him."

Grimshaw felt himself beaten. Two-thirds of the seniors were against him in the matter, and backed up Hart's declaration that the dog belonged to the mess. Mr. Grimshaw was not strong enough to stand out against the whole mess, and he knew when to give in.

"If you choose to keep a mongrel on board you are at liberty to do it," he said, with a wicked glance at Hardy; "but you will keep him out of this gun-room. Do you hear?"

"Certainly!" said Hart civilly. "Mr. Jinks!"

"Sir?"

"Take this dog out into the flat and make him fast in his quarters!"

Jinks obeyed at once, and Smiler went off. Lieutenant Hart gave him the order purposely, instead of to Ned, which was a piece of diplomacy. Grimshaw turned on his heel and strode out of the gun-room.

"Put the broken glasses to my account, steward," said Hart, as he departed also, before the discussion in the gun-room could break out.

Ned overtook him in the alleyway.

"It was awfully decent of you, sir!" exclaimed Ned. "I was afraid it was all up with Smiler—and me, too—"

"Eh? What the dickens have you got to do with it?" said Hart, so sharply that Ned was taken aback. "You don't suppose I did it for you, do you?"

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

MIDSHIPMAN NED HARDY, son of a line of sea captains, is appointed to the Victorious, the same ship from which his brother Ralph has been cashiered in connection with a robbery. Before very long Ned is put in charge of the third cutter and succeeds in winning his footing among the middies by saving a bluejacket's life. Later, Ned receives a letter from Ralph asking him to take charge of Smiler, his bulldog. The junior snottie gets the necessary permission, and in company with his pal Jinks collects Smiler at Southsea. Ned is feeding his four-footed friend in a near-by restaurant, when a man whom he recognises hurries past, casting a quick, flashing glance at the two boys as he does so.

(Now read on.)

"No, sir. We—I thought—"
 "Don't think! And don't you get above yourself, Mr. Hardy. You understand me? What have my pets to do with you?"

Ned was silent.
 "Oh, look here," said Hart, coming back again, "I think it would be as well if you gave Mr. Smiler his meals, you know!"

"Yes, sir!" said Ned, grinning.
 "Don't grin like that! It's nothing to laugh at!"
 "No, sir."

Hart went on his way, and Ned scuttled back to the after flat, where Jinks was waiting for him.

"By Jove! He's one of the show," said Ned. "He nearly jumped down my throat when I spoke to him, but he pulled Smiler and me through, all the same! And he did it smartly, too!"

"He made that swab Grimshaw curl up," said Jinks, "although Grimshaw's boss of the show. But that's the difference between a gentleman and a bounder. Grimshaw gave himself away and got pipped." He patted Smiler, who beamed on him angelically. "You can thank the cheerful

"Perhaps you'd better not let that out to the chaps."

"Of course I shan't!"

The second dog-watch was half over as the boys reached the upper deck, and a message was received from the admiral. The news travelled swiftly through the ship.

"Signal from the flagship; the squadron goes to sea at eight bells," said Jinks.

"Good egg!" said Ned. "That's something like! Isn't it rather quick notice?"

"That's old Tinpot's way." In this disrespectful manner did Jinks refer to his admiral. "He makes things hum, believe me. We've had steam up half the day, you know, and they've been standing by. Nobody expected to go, for all that, or we shouldn't have got shore leave. I say, it's blowing pretty stiff outside! You'll get your—"

"Clear decks there!" ordered the first lieutenant. "Pipe down, quartermaster! All midshipmen on duty, get to your stations!"

The two middies dashed off as the silver whistles trilled and piped, and soon the swift, orderly bustle of getting the huge battle cruiser under way was in full swing.

Captain Raglan appeared on the upper bridge, all boats



Grimshaw fled like an excited cat down the alleyway, with Smiler hard on his heels!

Hart, Smiler, my son, that your bright young existence isn't cut short."

"He said he'd have him shot!" exclaimed Ned. "Great guns! He couldn't do that!"

"I don't know. When Grimshaw gets his rag out there's no saying what he'll do."

"I'd have felt like shooting him if he tried it."

"Then you'd have swung at the yard-arm, my bonnie boy, and the Navy'd be shut of another nuisance. Don't get under the collar. This pup's one of the ship's company, now properly signed on and sworn—'Henry Smiler, O.S.'"

"O.S.! Not he. He's A.B.. First-rating able seaman! The way he sailed in after the Grimshaw bird was able enough—eh, what?"

Jinks doubled up in helpless laughter at the recollection.

"It squares up for Grimshaw walloping you with the dirk-seaboard. The dog would never have looked at him if he hadn't belted like that. Grimshaw began it, too. I wondered what he was in such a rage about at first."

"Smiler was my brother Ralph's dog," said Ned. "That's why."

Jinks whistled on hearing this.

were swung in, and in due course the mighty anchors came clanking up to the catheads, and the ship thrilled gently to the first revolutions of her turbine engines.

Then, as the two midshipmen came on watch and took their stations, the squadron steamed out of the Solent in line ahead, and met the blue waters of the open Channel, the flagship leading, with the Victorious following majestically in her wake.

The Fleet At Sea!

NED felt rather like Nelson as he stood his first watch at sea on the most famous battleship afloat. He had nothing to do but attend to a windsail that gave a draught of air down to a room below decks, but he felt as if he owned the entire line of floating steel fortresses as they swept out across the waters.

"This is great!" he said to himself. "Who wouldn't sell a farm and go to sea?"

Admiral Sir Francis Frobisher, known—but only in whispers as "Tinpot," was just the man to take his division to sea so late in the day, and set it to practising steam evolutions and tactics among the Channel traffic in a way

that would have made some admirals' hair stand on end. It was agreed on all hands that he would be a man to fight under when it came to war.

A sea was running now that made even the Victorious roll a good deal, but Ned did not worry as he turned in that night.

In fact, he slept all the sounder for the seas and the gale outside, though his hammock swung and swayed heavily at times. Being one of the junior midshipmen, Ned had no night watch to keep at present. He turned out in the morning, tubbed, breakfasted briefly, and went on deck for the forenoon watch from eight to midday.

The gale had eased, but a big sea was still running, and the great battleship was wet and glistening from end to end with brine. She took little or no solid water aboard, but as she shouldered through the Channel chops the spray smoked over her in clouds. The watch on deck were all in oilskins. Even Captain Raglan, on the upper bridge, was red-eyed from the stinging lash of the spindrift and rain.

"Ripping day!" said Ned to his chum as they hurried to their posts. "Looks jolly wild, doesn't it?"

The rain had cleared off, but the sky was still grey with ragged, racing clouds, and the seagulls had been blown inland.

Ned had a wet and windy four hours of it on the upper deck, and went down to lunch in the gun-room as fresh as paint, and with the hunger that only the high seas can give. Afterwards came instruction in the school-room, which was much less to Ned's liking; but he knew that no midshipman has the least chance of promotion, or even of remaining in the Service, unless he does about as much bookwork as three schoolboys every day, in addition to his other duties. So he slogged away hard at the work, and had the luck to satisfy the instructor. The afternoon was well advanced when he took his watch on deck again.

Ned was surprised to see the North Goodwin Lightship away on the port beam, and the Foreland beyond. He had had no idea the ship was leaving the Channel for the North Sea. The gale had dropped to a light breeze, and far less sea was running in the Straits. By the time they were in the desolate region beyond the Kentish Knock, thirty miles out of sight of land north from Margate—there was no more than a slight swell running. Captain Raglan's orders were given, and the ship was cleared for target practice.

"Now you'll see some sport," said Jinks to Ned.

(Ned really seems to be enjoying life now and he has a good pal in Jinks. But there is a startling and dramatic turn in next week's great instalment. Don't miss it, chums.)

BUCK OF THE BROKEN K.

(Continued from page 24.)

to the north and saw horsemen coming from the frontier, and he knew they were not Mexicans.

"Colonel," he said, "me and Pete Dawson have served in the Army, and we know signals. Got such a thing as a looking-glass?"

"A little pocket-mirror," said the colonel. "Any use?"

"It'll have to be."

Buck used the mirror as a heliograph and signalled to the oncoming riders.

"Now we dash for it, colonel, and you'll follow me."

Buck mounted Smoke this time, and the colonel had the Mexican horse. Frantically they rode through the canyon and along the pass to the border. The bandits saw them, and, yelling defiance, pursued them hotly. Buck deliberately pulled in his horse and allowed the Mexicans to gain on him slightly. He knew the country, and he had his plans. He plunged into a ravine, the colonel beside him, and the Mexicans behind. The echoes rang with the thunder of hoofs, the hoarse shouts, and the cracking revolvers.

Buck and the colonel galloped out of the ravine, and then the Broken K cow waddies appeared, barring the way for the Mexicans. It was the neatest ambush that ever had been staged on the border, and when the first fusillade of shots had died away Laredo and his men didn't stay to fight it out; they turned their horses and fled while they had the chance, leaving half their number behind in the ravine.

"And I reckon it'll be a long time before Laredo tries any more funny stuff with the Broken K outfit," said Buck, "seeing that his gang is only half as numerous as it was."

"But how did you guess he kidnapped me to fetch all the boys to the rescue, and thus leave the ranch unprotected?" asked the colonel.

"Sure, boss," said Buck, "I know these yere Mexicans like I know the palm of me hand! Ef Laredo wanted to kill you he'd have left ye dead, wouldn't he? And ef you can tell me any other reason for kidnapping you than that one I'd like to hear it. But don't thank me all the time, boss. Ef Smoke hadn't learnt the lesson of never going far from where he loses me we wouldn't be here now."

"But Laredo will try to get even," said Pete Dawson.

"I'll try not to worry," grinned Buck, as they crossed the border.

THE END.

(It seems that Buck and Smoke get into a tighter corner each week! Don't miss next week's adventure it's better than ever!)

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