



By
Martin Clifford

THE FIRST CHAPTER

A SLIGHT MISUNDERSTANDING

"Twot in, deah boys."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy spoke with even more than his accustomed affability.

The swell of St. Jim's was, in fact, beaming.

If he had been a parliamentary candidate, bent upon pulling the legs of his worthy electors, he could not have beamed upon them with more cheery and affable politeness.

He stood in the doorway of Study No. 6, with his celebrated eyeglass gleaming in his eye, welcoming his visitors.

Outside in the quadrangle, a dim November mist hung low and grey, the old elms looking like spectres through it. But inside Study No. 6 all was merry and bright. There was

a cheery fire, and the light was on, and the study looked really very inviting.

Blake and Herries and Digby were seated round the table, at work. They were painting cardboard masks, apparently in readiness for the celebrations of the Fifth, and they did not seem to have any time to waste on the visitors.

It fell to Arthur Augustus to do the honours of the study. But that was just in Gussy's line.

"Twot in, Julian! Twot in, Kewwuish, old top. Pway come in, Hammond! Weilly, old man, heah's a chair! Vewy glad to see you, Duwance. Is that you, Levison, and Clive, and Cardew? Woll in!"

The Fourth-Formers crowded in.

Some of them glanced round the study rather inquiringly, as if in expectation of seeing something that

George Alfred Grundy has good cause to remember the Fifth of November—thanks to his plot to "blow up" the St. Jim's Parliament!

was not visible. Arthur Augustus did not notice it. His attention was taken up by a fresh lot of visitors in the passage.

"That you, Gwunday?"

Grundy of the Shell stepped in.

"Here I am," he said. "Here's Wilkins and Gunn——"

"Twot in, deah boys."

The Shell fellows came in.

"Any more coming?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What's the game?" asked Jack Blake. "You fellows are welcome, of course; but I'm blessed if I know what's on. Is Gussy going to give a lecture on Relativity?"

"I thought it was a feed," said Levison.

"So did I," said Clive. "Isn't it?"

"Isn't it a feed, bedad?" demanded Reilly. "Sure, Gussy asked us to come, and tould us not to be later than five——"

"And we're here," said Grundy. "I don't often feed with Fourth Form chaps. But I've come."

"Twot in, Skimpole," said Arthur Augustus, as a lean face adorned by a pair of big spectacles blinked in. "Plenty of room for you, old fellow. Come along, Tompkins. Twot in."

"Standing room only," remarked Blake. "Perhaps some of you can sit on the mantelpiece."

"Weally, Blake——"

Three cheery faces looked in on the crowded study. They belonged to Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther.

"Room for three little ones?" inquired Tom Merry.

"Sowwy, deah boy——"

"Not turning down your old pals, Gussy, when there's a feed on, are you?" asked Monty Lowther, in a tone like that of the ghost in Hamlet—more of sorrow than of anger.

"It is not a feed, Lowthah."

"Not!" ejaculated Manners.

"Nothin' of the sort, deah boy! It is a fah more important mattah than a feed."

"My hat!"

"I'm sowwy I cannot ask you fellows——"

"My dear chap," said Tom Merry kindly, "there's no occasion for sorrow. If it's not a feed, we've got an important engagement at this very moment. Good-bye!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy closed the door of the study—with some difficulty, as there were many in the way. However, he closed it, and then turned and beamed upon the assembly.

"My deah chaps——" he began.

"Hold on!" interrupted Levison of the Fourth. "Did I hear you mention that it wasn't a feed?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then what the thump are we here for?"

"Weally, Levison——"

"There seems to be a misunderstanding," remarked Ralph Reckness Cardew. "We thought we were coming here to tea; and Gussy thought we were coming here to see him wag his chin. A mistake on both sides."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Cardew——"

"Good-bye, dear man!" said Cardew, and he opened the door and lounged out of the study.

"Pway don't wun away, Cardew. Where are you goin', Clive? I have somethin' vewy important to say——"

But Sidney Clive was gone.

"Levison——"

"We haven't had tea yet, old top," said Levison, laughing. "Sorry there was a misunderstanding. But I want my tea."

And Levison departed.

Several other fellows seemed inclined to follow his example; but Arthur

Augustus D'Arcy jerked the door shut. "Pway listen to me, deah boys!" he exclaimed. "I asked you all to get heah by five o'clock—for a meetin'—"

"Not a feed?" grunted Reilly.

"Oh, no! I am sowwy there was a mistake! But the meetin' is a vewy important one. I have to address a few words to you on a subject of burnin' importance."

"Cut it short!" said Grundy.

"Weally, Gwunday—"

"Well, what's the throuble, anyway?" asked Reilly. "We'll give you a minute and a half!"

"Two minutes!" said Julian generously. "There you are, Gussy."

"Bai Jove! I am afwaid I could not deal with the mattah in two minutes, Julian! I shall not take up more than an hour of your time—"

"You can bet on that!" said Reilly. "You won't take up two minutes of mine."

"Weally, Weilly—"

"Cut the cackl'e and come to the hosses!" grunted George Alfred Grundy.

"I am comin' to the point at once, Gwunday. The mattah wefers to the new elections for the St. Jim's Parliament," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy impressively.

"Any refreshments to follow?" asked Gunn.

"Oh, no!"

"Then I'm off!"

"Weally, Gunn—"

William Gunn opened the door and departed. Before Gussy could close it again, two or three more fellows slipped out.

The St. Jim's Parliament was a very important thing. The impending



Arthur Augustus welcomed the visitors to Study No. 6. "Twot in, Julian! Twot in, Kewwush, old top! Is that you, Levysen, Clive and Cardew? Well in!" The Fourth Formers crowded in.

elections were very important. But there was a general failure to realise the importance of Arthur Augustus' remarks on the subject.

"Pway hold on, you chaps!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus anxiously. "Pway lend me your yahs, as the chap wemarks in the play. Mattahs in the St. Jim's Parliament are vewy fah fwom satisfactowy—"

"Hear, hear!" from Grundy.

"In the new session, to commence on November the Fifth, in Peppah's Barn, I considah that there ought to be a change—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I am not satisfied with Tom Mewwy's pwoceedings as Pwime Ministah of St. Jim's——"

"Hear, hear!"

"I have called this meetin', to wequest you fellows to wally wound," said Arthur Augustus impressively. "There is goin' to be a change. Things are goin' to be wun on bettah lines. What is wanted is a leadah."

"Good!" said Grundy.

"At a cwis is like the pwesent a man is wequiahed," said Arthur Augustus, much encouraged by Grundy's agreement—Grundy generally not being in agreement with anybody but George Alfred Grundy of the Shell. "The hour and the man, you know! What we wequiah as a leadah is a stwong, silent chawactah——"

"Just it!" said Grundy.

"Tom Mewwy is all vewy well in his way——"

"In his way!" snorted Grundy.

"Yaas, exactly. But a new leadah is wequiahed—a weal leadah. I beg to offah myself——"

"What——"

"And I wequest you all to wally wound, and secure me an ovah-whelmin' majowity in the elections——"

"You silly ass!" roared Grundy.

"Bai Jove!"

"You've got us here, supposing it was a feed, to hear you talk utter rot, have you?" exclaimed Grundy indignantly. "We jolly well want a change in the St. Jim's Parliament—but the leader we want isn't a silly owl in the Fourth Form! It's a man that's wanted, and I'm the man!"

"Weally, Gwunday——"

"I'm going in strong for the job at this election," said Grundy. "You can vote for me if you like——"

"I wegard the suggestion as widicu-

lous, Gwunday. A leadah in politics wequiahls bwains——"

"You cheeky ass!" continued Grundy. "It was a bit beneath my dignity to come to a spread in the Fourth; and now I find there's no spread, only chin-wag! As for voting for you, I'd rather vote for the House-dame's tomcat! We've been taken in, you fellows! Bump him!"

"Bai Jove!"

Grundy led the way, and the meeting seemed to agree with Grundy. They had come in expectation of a feed, and they were disappointed. Gussy's parliamentary eloquence did not seem so satisfying, somehow, as a study spread. Three or four pairs of hands collared the eloquent candidate, and Arthur Augustus found himself sitting on the study carpet. He sat there with rather a heavy concussion.

Grundy and the rest marched out of the study, leaving the swell of St. Jim's gasping for breath. The door closed with a bang.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Blake chuckled.

"You asked for it, old top!" he remarked.

"Begged for it," said Herries. "Now you've got it, I hope you like it!"

"Weally, Hewwies——"

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet, and dusted down his elegant "bags," which had suffered from contact with the carpet. He turned his eyeglass upon the three juniors at the table. They were grinning.

"There is nothin' whatevah to gwin at, you fellows!" said Arthur Augustus. "I have been tweeked with gwoss diswespsect."

"Go hon!" murmured Blake.

"I wegard Gwunday as a wuffian. It was not my fault if the fellows

expected to find a spweed heah. I nevah said it was a spweed. I wegard them all as wottahs. I suppose you thwee fellows are goin' to vote for me at the election?"

"I'm a candidate!" grinned Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"And I'm another!" chuckled Digby.

"Weally, Dig——"

"Same here!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"But I'll tell you what," said Blake. "You shall withdraw your candidature and vote for me. How does that strike you?"

To which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy replied laconically and disdainfully:

"Wats!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER

NO COALITION!

THE Prime Minister's brow was wrinkled deeply in thought.

Two members of the Cabinet were looking very serious.

The Prime Minister referred to was Tom Merry, and the two members of the Cabinet were Manners and Lowther of the St. Jim's Shell.

Matters were not really going well with the St. Jim's Parliament.

The Terrible Three realised that fact.

Meeting of Parliament in Pepper's Barn had, of late, lacked the gravity that should have characterised parliamentary assemblies. Indeed, Monty Lowther averred that, of late, the St. Jim's Parliament had been almost as rowdy as the other assembly at Westminster.

As Tom Merry was Premier, he could not help feeling that any change was likely to be for the worse. Real Premiers feel like that, though they are very frequently mistaken.

While other fellows who were

ambitious enough to have an eye on the premiership, felt that any change was likely to be for the better.

Undoubtedly there was trouble. And the St. Jim's Premier, taking the high hand, had announced his intention of "going to the country," and the St. Jim's Parliament had been dissolved.

New elections impended, and excitement ran rather high. Every fellow in both Houses at St. Jim's had a vote in the elections—there was universal suffrage. But vaunting ambition was rife on every side, and it looked at present as if there would be more candidates than electors.

The Prime Minister's idea had been to get a fresh Parliament, and get returned to it with a bumping majority. This would clear the air, and silence the malcontents.

But it began to look as if that bumping majority was a very doubtful quantity. Study No. 6, it seemed, looked forward to getting the leadership into the hands of the Fourth; which all the Shell agreed was utter rot.

The Shell had agreed upon that; but they agreed upon little else. Grundy of the Shell was "up against" Tom Merry—in fact, he was up against everything generally. Grundy was trying to form a party of his own. At present his party consisted of two—Wilkins and Gunn. They were in Grundy's study, and they supported Grundy for the sake of a quiet life. Trimble of the Fourth was a possible recruit to Grundy's party—it depended on the number of jam-tarts that Grundy was prepared to stand Trimble.

A house divided against itself cannot stand, as was said of old. With Study No. 6 going one way, and Grundy & Co. going another, Tom

Merry's party lost a good deal of support. In the School House, probably, Tom still commanded a majority. But there was the New House to be reckoned with.

Figgins & Co. of the New House were ambitious, too. Figgy looked forward to getting things into New House hands, and it was known that Figgy was going in very hard for electioneering. It was only too likely that while three School House parties were contending for the prize, the New House would carry it off.

Hence the wrinkle in the brow of the boyish St. Jim's Premier, Manners was thinking deeply, too; and even Monty Lowther was serious for once. All three of them felt that things were coming to a crisis. For if the Government fell into the hands of the New House, the St. Jim's Parliament was certain to go to the dogs. According to Figgins, it had gone to the dogs already. But that was only New House swank.

"I think I've got it, you fellows," said Tom Merry at last.

Manners looked up from a list he was making on a sheet of impot paper.

"We shall carry the School House all right," he said. "But——"

"The New House sticks together," said Lowther. "Redfern and his pals are backing up Figgins & Co. They'll beat any single party in this House, I think."

"That's what I've been thinking out," said Tom, "and I've got an idea. What about a coalition?"

"A which?"

"Coalition!" said Tom. "You know what that means—two parties in politics coalesce, and back each other up——"

"But Blake & Co. won't back us up," said Lowther, "and, of course,

we can't back up cheeky Fourth-Formers."

"Grundy wouldn't coalesce," said Manners.

"I'm not thinking of Grundy, or Study No. 6. A coalition with the New House," said Tom.

"Phew!"

"We coalesce with Figgins & Co.," said the captain of the Shell. "We agree to let them in for a share of the seats in the St. Jim's Cabinet. That's how it's done in real politics."

Monty Lowther looked doubtful.

"St. Jim's politics are a bit different," he remarked. "There's no salary attached to the offices in the St. Jim's Government."

"What difference does that make?"

"Lots! Two parties, in real politics, get up a coalition to divide the plunder. But here there isn't any plunder."

Tom Merry looked thoughtful.

"You see, in a real Government they invent jobs for chaps, their friends and relations. The Opposition tries to show them up to the public, for the sake of getting them out of office, so they can get in instead, and invent jobs for their own friends and relations," said Lowther, with a wisdom beyond his years. "Then sometimes it becomes convenient to have a coalition of both parties, and they agree to whack out the jobs and salaries; and, without an Opposition to cause trouble, they can invent any number of jobs. And this goes on until there's a crowd of new men come along, hungry for salaries, and they form a new Opposition."

"But there ain't any salaries in our Cabinet," said Manners. "No inducement to an Opposition to coalesce."

"Ye-e-es," said Tom Merry. "I suppose that's so in real politics. But, dash it all, St. Jim's politics are a



Three or four pairs of hands grasped the eloquent candidate, and Arthur Augustus found himself sitting on the study carpet. Grundy and the rest marched out of the study, leaving the swell of St. Jim's gasping for breath.

cut above the real thing, I hope! The St. Jim's House of Commons hasn't quite come down to the level of the other one. I'm going to appeal to Figgins' patriotism. That wouldn't be much good at Westminster, but it ought to work here."

"Won't do any harm, if it doesn't do any good," assented Manners. "Figgins may realise, when it's pointed out to him, that the leadership must remain in the hands of this study. After all, he's not an utter ass."

"Let's go and see him, then," said Tom. "Strike the iron while it's hot. The elections take place to-morrow."

"Right-ho!"

The Terrible Three left their study and went towards the staircase. George Alfred Grundy looked out of Study No. 3 as they passed, and

called out to the captain of the Shell. "Tom Merry! Step in here a minute——"

"Busy, old top!" answered Tom, without stopping.

"Look here——" roared Grundy. "Rats!"

And the Terrible Three went downstairs without heeding the great George Alfred.

They crossed the quadrangle through the dim November mist, and entered the New House.

Tom Merry tapped at the door of George Figgins' study.

"Come in!" sang out Figgins.

The Shell fellows entered. Figgins and Kerr and Wynn were just finishing tea. They smiled genially at the School House juniors. Their looks showed that they were anticipating great things at the general election.

"Trot in!" said Figgins. "Take

a seat—if you can find one. Come to tea? There's one sardine left——"

"Thanks; we won't worry your sardine," said Tom. "We've walked over to talk politics."

Figgins chuckled.

"Feeling the draught?" he asked.

"I rather fancy we're going to give you the kybosh this time, Tommy."

"I fancy we're going to be the Cabinet next session," said Kerr. "You fellows needn't mind. We shall run the thing better."

"Much better," said Fatty Wynn. "As soon as I'm in the Cabinet I'm going to propose a new law. There will be an assessment on all members of the St. Jim's Parliament, excepting members of the Cabinet. The money will be used to provide refreshments. What do you think of that idea?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to cackle at. I think it's a jolly good idea," said Fatty Wynn warmly.

"You would!" agreed Tom Merry. "Now, Figgy, come to business. I understand that all the New House fellows are backing up your party."

"They are!" assented Figgins complacently.

"You think you'll get a majority?"

"Sure of it, unless the School House all vote together. And they won't."

"Don't be too jolly sure of that," said Tom. "There's a certain amount of discontent in our House, I admit. The Fourth Form kids are cheeky, and Grundy is an obstinate ass! But if I can pull them all together, we shall knock out the New House. However, that isn't what I came over to say. We're willing to give you New House fellows a show on certain conditions."

"Give 'em a name," said Figgins tolerantly.

"What about a coalition?"

"Oh!"

"You back us up, and we back you up," said Tom.

"That's not a bad idea," said Figgins, after a glance at Kerr and Wynn. "We work together, and divide the seats in the Cabinet?"

"Exactly."

"With a New House Premier?"

"A School House Premier," corrected Tom Merry gently.

"Don't be an ass, old chap——"

"Well, don't you be a cheeky goat!"

"Look here——"

"Look here——"

"We didn't come over here to listen to New House swank!" exclaimed Monty Lowther warmly. "Have a little sense, Figgins. There's seven seats in the St. Jim's Cabinet. We'll let you have two."

"That's fair!" said Manners.

Figgins laughed derisively.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," he replied. "We're prepared to take you into our party; and we'll let you have one seat in the Cabinet—as a reward."

"What?"

"On condition that you toe the line and do as you're told, of course," said Figgins.

"You silly ass!" roared Manners.

"If you're going to be a cheeky chump, Figgins, there's nothing more to be said!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I've a jolly good mind to punch your silly nose. That's what you really want!"

"I want all the punches any School House duffer can give me!" retorted Figgins disdainfully.

"I'll jolly well——"

"Rats!"

That was too much for the St. Jim's Prime Minister. He was not a master

of political strategy, like some Prime Ministers ; but he was quite good at punching noses, as he proceeded to show. There was a roar from George Figgins as Tom Merry's knuckles came in contact with his nose.

"Yoop ! Why, you cheeky rotter !"

Figgins was on his feet in a second, and Tom Merry in less than another second.

"Now, you School House rotter

—"

"Now, you New House chump—"

"Kick 'em out !" roared Fatty Wynn.

"Try it on !" snorted Lowther.

Fatty Wynn tried it on at once, with a rush at Lowther. They closed and struggled, and in a moment more Kerr was hotly engaged with Manners.

The political discussion had degenerated into a free fight.

The study table went flying in one direction, the chairs in another. There was a crash of the teapot on the floor.

In the midst of the wreck, six ambitious politicians struggled and shouted and punched.

The door was flung open, and Redfern and Owen looked in.

"What the thump—" began Reddy.

He did not finish. There was no need to ask questions. He shouted along the passage :

"School House rotters ! Line up !"

Then he rushed into the fray, followed by Owen. There were foot-steps in the passage, and five or six more New House juniors crowded in.

After that the Terrible Three felt as if they were in the grip of a nightmare.

They woke up, as it were, at the bottom of the stairs, whither they had been rolled.

"Oh ! Ah ! Ow, ow !"

"Come up and have some more !" roared Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha !"

"Oh, dear ! Ow !"

The Terrible Three scrambled up, gasping for breath. There were a dozen New House juniors crowded on the steps above, but the Shell fellows were wrathful, and they were about to charge recklessly up the stairs, when Monteith of the Sixth came along, ashplant in hand.

"What's this thumping row ?" demanded the prefect. And without waiting for an answer he started in with the ashplant.

The Terrible Three retired rather hurriedly from the scene.

They were breathless and rather untidy when they limped back into the School House. And it was quite clear that there was going to be no coalition !

THE THIRD CHAPTER

GRUNDY'S WAY !

GRUNDY of the Shell was in Study No. 10 when the Terrible Three arrived there. Grundy was sitting on the table, swinging his long legs and looking impatient. He grinned as the dusty and dishevelled trio came in.

"Hallo ! Been in the wars ?" he asked.

"Oh, go and eat coke !" said Manners crossly.

"I called to you in the passage, Tom Merry—"

"Rats !"

"Do you call that civil ?" roared Grundy.

"Run away and play !" said Monty Lowther, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief. "You're a bore, Grundy !"

"The elections come off to-morrow—"

"Bother the elections—"

"I'm standing as a candidate——"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"It looks to me," continued Grundy, unheeding, "as if the New House will pull it off if we don't stand together. I'm proposing that we sink our own differences, and all back up together against the New House."

"Oh!" said Tom Merry.

The Terrible Three looked a little more amicable. This was unusually reasonable on the part of the hot-headed and obstinate George Alfred.

"That's a good idea!" said Manners. "Rather a pity you didn't think of it before. But better late than never."

"Well, I've thought of it now," said Grundy. "Are you fellows agreeable?"

"Certainly!"

"Shoulder to shoulder against the enemy?" asked Grundy.

"Right!"

"Good! I'm jolly glad you can see reason," said Grundy, with much satisfaction. "You see, Merry, you made rather a failure of it as Prime Minister, and you can realise that a new man is wanted. If you three fellows back me up, lots of the others will follow your example, and I don't see why I shouldn't carry the election."

"What?"

"You'll vote for me——"

"Vote for you?" repeated Tom Merry blankly. "Are you off your silly rocker, Grundy?"

"Why, you've just agreed to sink our differences and stand together against the New House!" exclaimed Grundy. "That means that you will vote for me, doesn't it?"

"No, you ass; it means that you will vote for me!"

"Don't be an idiot, Merry——"

"Oh, ring off, Grundy!" exclaimed Lowther. "I thought it was too

good to be true when you started talking sense!"

"Look here, Lowther——"

"Ass! Fathead! Chuck it!"

"Roll him out!" exclaimed Manners impatiently. "I'm fed up with Grundy!"

"Yes, rather!"

The Terrible Three were not in the best of tempers after their exciting experiences in the New House. They were in no mood to stand Grundy.

They collared the burly Shell fellow and whipped him off the table. George Alfred resisted furiously as he was swung to the door.

"Take him home!" said Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With arms and legs wildly flying in the air, George Alfred Grundy was rushed along the passage to Study No. 3. Lowther kicked open the door, and Grundy was rushed in.

Wilkins and Gunn jumped up in amazement at that sudden and startling invasion.

"What the thump——" ejaculated Wilkins.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Gunn.

Bump!

Grundy was landed on the study table with a loud concussion.

"There's your prize lunatic!" gasped Tom Merry. "I advise you to keep him on a chain! He will get hurt if he wanders up the passage again!"

And the Terrible Three retired, feeling a little solaced. Grundy had received what was due to Figgins & Co.

Wilkins and Gunn grinned as Grundy sat up on the table, looking rather dazed. Grundy's faithful followers were loyal to their great chief, but they seemed to see something comic in their leader's aspect at that moment.

Grundy glared at them.

"You silly owls, what are you grinning at?" he gasped. "Ow! Oh! I'll jolly well scalp those rotters! Oh dear!"

Grundy rolled off the table.

"Come on!" he shouted.

"Eh—where?"

"We're going to mop up Study No. 10! Follow me!"

Grundy rushed out into the passage. Apparently he was under the impression that his loyal henchmen were following close at his heels, eager to avenge the wrongs and injuries of their great leader. But if Grundy was under that impression, he was making one of his many mistakes.

Wilkins and Gunn followed him as far as the passage.

There, while Grundy rushed to the left, Wilkins and Gunn turned to the right; and by the time Grundy reached Tom Merry's study, Wilkins and Gunn were half-way downstairs.

Grundy was far too enraged and excited to think of looking round to ascertain whether his comrades were at his heels. He hurled open Tom Merry's door and rushed in.

"Back up!" he roared.



In the hands of the New House Juniors the Terrible Three felt as if they were in the grip of a nightmare. They woke up, as it were, at the bottom of the stairs, whither they had been rolled. "Come up and have some more!" roared Figgins.

And he rushed right at the Terrible Three.

"Hallo! Do you want some more?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Three pairs of hands grasped George Alfred Grundy and swept him off his feet. Bump!

"Back up, Gunny! Go it, Wilkins!" yelled Grundy.

But the voice of George Alfred was wasted on the desert air. Wilkins and Gunn were out of hearing by that time—not that they would have

heeded if they had heard. Wilkins and Gunn were not looking for trouble with Study No. 10. George Alfred Grundy feared no foe; but Wilkins and Gunn were wiser in their generation.

To his surprise and wrath Grundy discovered that he was single-handed in the fray; and the fray went very much against George Alfred.

He was whipped out of the study, bumped in the passage, and rushed back to his own quarters.

There he was bumped thrice on his own hearthrug; and his voice rang along the Shell passage in tones that might have been envied by the celebrated Stentor himself.

"If you want some more, come back and ask for it!" gasped Tom Merry.

And Grundy was left on his hearthrug, gasping for breath. He sat up spluttering.

"Oh, dear! Where are those rotters? Leaving a chap in the lurch! Oh, my eye! Oh, my nose! Oh, crumbs!"

Grundy scrambled up at last. His inclination was strong to invade Study No. 10 again. But even Grundy realised that he had had enough, and he sat down in the armchair instead.

When Wilkins and Gunn came in, they found George Alfred rubbing a variety of bruises, and he gave them a scornful glare.

"You didn't back me up!" he snorted.

"D-d-d-d-didn't we?" murmured Wilkins.

"You left me in the lurch——"

"You——you see——"

"I see a pair of blessed funks!" said Grundy scornfully. "I'm not having funks in my study! Get out!"

"Wha-a-at?"

Grundy picked up a fives bat.

"I give you one second!" he said grimly.

Wilkins and Gunn exchanged a glance, and backed out of the study. They did their prep. that evening in Kangaroo's room. In No. 3, George Alfred Grundy was alone in his glory, with no companion save his own lofty dignity. He was still ambitious of a triumph in the St. Jim's elections. But, from the point of view of a disinterested observer, it would seem highly improbable that Grundy's methods would carry him through successfully.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

THE MEETING THAT DIDN'T COME
OFF

"WHAT silly ass——"

"Gwunday, of course——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A crowd of juniors had gathered round the notice-board, on the following day. A new paper was pinned on the board, and that new election manifesto attracted a considerable amount of attention. It ran:

"NOTIS!"

TO THE ELECKTORS OF
ST. JIM'S!

GRANDMEATING OF ELECKTORS
WILL BE HELD IN PEPPER'S
BARN AFTER MORNING LESSON
TO-DAY.

COME AND HEER THE REFFORM
CANDYDATE!

(Sined) G. A. GRUNDY."

"Like his blessed cheek!" said Jack Blake indignantly. "Meetings ain't allowed to be held in the barn, excepting when Parliament is in session."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, let him rip!" remarked Cardew. "Nobody will go!"

"Wilkins and Gunn will have to go, or Grundy will punch their heads in the study!" grinned Levison.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here he comes," murmured Clive.

Grundy of the Shell came striding down the passage. He paused, and looked on with approval as he saw the attention his notice was attracting.

"You fellows reading that notice—what?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah, old top!"

"All are welcome, and the meeting begins in ten minutes," said Grundy. "I'm going along now. I expect to see all you fellows there!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I shall address the meeting. Interruptions will not be allowed, and there will be no questions, and no argument," said Grundy. "I'm going to explain the situation, and appeal to your patriotism to vote for the right candidate, and save the St. Jim's Parliament from going to pot. That's how it stands. Roll up!"

And Grundy walked on. In the corridor he rounded up Wilkins and Gunn, who really seemed to display some inclination to avoid him. But Grundy did not even notice it.

"Come on, you chaps!" he said.

"Where?" asked Wilkins feebly. If it was another attack on Study No. 10, Wilkins

did not intend to "come on" by any means.

"Pepper's Barn, to get ready for the meeting!"

"Oh, all right!" said Wilkins, relieved.

"Is there going to be a meeting, though?" asked Gunn, as Grundy led the way to the gates.

"I've called one!" answered Grundy stiffly.

"But if they don't come——"

"The fellows are hardly likely to ignore my notice, I suppose?"

"They might——"

"Don't talk rot, Gunny!"

"Look here, Grundy——"

"My dear chap," said Grundy kindly, "I know you mean well, and you can't help being an ass. You can't help being one any more than I can help being a fellow of unusual intellect. It's just how we happened to be born. But facts are facts, so the less you air your opinions the better!"



Grundy was landed on the table with a loud concussion. "There's your prize lunatic!" gasped Tom Merry. "I advise you to keep him on a chain!"

Gunn followed his great chief in silence after that. But both he and Wilkins were looking restive by the time they reached Pepper's Barn.

Grundy threw the door wide open and strode in. The rather large apartment was vacant. Grundy sniffed as he walked in.

"Somebody's been smoking here," he said.

"Racke or Crooke, perhaps," said Wilkins. "They're always sneaking off to smoke somewhere, the dinky asses!"

"Let me catch 'em smoking in our House of Commons!" said Grundy hotly. "I'll jolly well make an example of 'em anyway!"

"Is that your way of catching votes, Grundy?" inquired Wilkins. "Do you think chaps will vote for you if you punch their heads?"

Grundy snorted.

"I haven't asked for your advice, George Wilkins. I'm not a fellow that needs advice. All you fellows have to do is to back me up and hold your tongues. I've told you that before."

"Look here——"

"Don't interrupt! Now, I've got my speech here," said Grundy, taking a sheet of impot paper from his pocket, and glancing over it. "I think it's a pretty telling one. I've practically no doubt that it will carry the meeting, and give me a solid majority in the School House, at least. You fellows will stand by me and support me during the meeting. When I give you a sign, you shout 'Hear, hear!' same as they do in the House of Commons."

"Oh, all right!" yawned Wilkins.

"Don't yawn at a fellow, Wilkins. If you're not enthusiastic, you ought to be, and if you want a thick ear——"

"How long will the speech last, Grundy?"

"About half an hour!" Grundy sniffed again. "There's smoking going on here. I can't make a speech in an atmosphere like a tap-room. There's some of those smoky rotters in the cellar, I believe. I'll look!"

Grundy strode out of the barn, and round the building to the back, where the door to the cellar was situated. Wilkins and Gunn looked at one another.

"Do you think the fellows will come here to listen to Grundy spouting, Wilkins?" asked Gunn.

"I don't think!" grinned Wilkins.

"Do you want to hear him spout?"

"No jolly fear!"

"Shall we cut?"

"Let's!" said Wilkins.

And while Grundy was pursuing his investigations at the back of the barn, Wilkins and Gunn scuttled away in the direction of St. Jim's.

Blissfully ignorant of that defection on the part of his supporters, George Alfred Grundy jerked open the cellar door at the back of the barn. The ground sloped away under the barn, the floor of which was level, so that the cellar had a good depth at the back. It was, in fact, quite a roomy place. As Grundy threw open the door, he made the discovery—which he suspected already—that the cellar was not untenanted. Racke and Crooke of the Shell, and Chowle and Mellish of the Fourth, were there, smoking cigarettes—perhaps as an appetiser for their dinner.

They started up and stared at Grundy.

"Caught you, have I?" said George Alfred grimly.

Aubrey Racke gave him a scowl.

"Well, now you've caught us, you can clear!" he snapped. "Don't butt in where you're not wanted, Grundy."

"You're smoking!"

"Any bizney of yours?" sneered Crooke.

"Lots!" answered Grundy. "You're not allowed to sneak under the St. Jim's House of Commons like a gang of Guy Fawkes' conspirators, and smoke filthy cigarettes, and poison the atmosphere through the cracks in the floor. Get out!"

"Mind your own business!" roared Chowle.

"This is my business," said Grundy.

"I don't allow this sort of thing."

"Have they made you a prefect by any chance?" sneered Racke.

"Outside!"

"Rats!"

"I'll jolly soon show you!" said Grundy.

He strode into the cellar.

"Hold on, Grundy!" said Crooke uneasily. "The fact is, old fellow, we're going to vote for you, and—and we came here to talk it over, over a smoke——"

Short from Grundy.

"I don't want a dingy gang of smoky blighters to vote for me," he answered. "Now then, out you go!"

And Grundy, who never stood on ceremony with friend or foe, collared Crooke, and pitched him headlong out of the cellar. Crooke sprawled on the ground outside and roared.

"Collar the fool!" shouted Racke.

He gripped Grundy, and they



As Grundy threw open the cellar door he made the discovery that Racke and Crooke of the Shell, and Chowle and Mellish of the Fourth were there, smoking cigarettes. "Caught you, have I?" said George Alfred grimly.

struggled. Mellish and Chowle came on, half-heartedly. As the merry smokers were four to one, they ought to have been able to handle Grundy easily enough, burly as he was. But Grundy had no end of pluck; and that was a quality in which Racke & Co. were rather deficient.

Grundy freed one hand, and gave it to Mellish, clenched. Mellish caught it with his nose, and howled, and scudded out of the cellar. Chowle followed him without waiting for the same hint.

Racke was fighting savagely; but Grundy handled him easily enough. Aubrey Racke came flying out of the cellar in less than a minute, and he landed beside Crooke, spluttering.

The victorious Grundy followed them out.

"Now, then!" he commanded. "Clear!"

"Ow! Wow! Yow!"

"If I begin on you with my boots——"

Mellish and Chowle departed without waiting for Grundy's boots. Crooke received one kick, and fled. Racke received two or three before he scudded away after his comrades. The great Grundy was left victorious on the field of battle.

He grinned and closed the cellar door, and returned to the barn. There he looked round, rather puzzled, for Wilkins and Gunn.

"Wilkins!" he roared. "Gunny!"

Echo answered "Gunny!" But there was no other answer. Grundy's henchmen were far away by that time.

"Cheeky rotters!" muttered Grundy. "They've cleared while I was dealing with those smoky cads! I'm too kind to 'em—that's what it is—too gentle and soft in my ways, because they're my pals. I shall jolly well take a high hand with 'em after this. Can't have this sort of cheek!"

Unsupported by Wilkins and Gunn, Grundy unrolled his speech, and glanced over it. He nodded with approval as he read, quite pleased by his own eloquence. He had little doubt that that speech, delivered in his own splendid oratorical way to a numerous audience, would swing round public opinion at St. Jim's into his favour.

But where was the numerous audience?

Grundy was puzzled.

The notice on the board in the School House was plain enough for anybody to read, and he had told the fellows himself that the meeting began in ten minutes. Yet no one had arrived.

It was very peculiar.

Grundy stepped out of the barn at last, and looked across the misty field. There was no St. Jim's fellow in sight. A weary ploughman was plodding his way homeward, and that was all.

"Why the thump don't they come?" muttered Grundy, in perplexity. "Even those silly owls can't have made a mistake about the time of the meeting. It's jolly odd!"

Odd or not, the meeting did not arrive. Grundy paced to and fro in the barn, memorising the specially eloquent passages in his great speech, ready for the impressive delivery. But there was no sound of footsteps; not a single St. Jim's cap appeared in the doorway. And Grundy's watch told him at last that it was dinner-time. He took another look across the field and frowned. Still there was no one in sight.

Grundy breathed hard. Evidently, if he was going to deliver his speech at all, he would have to deliver it with only himself as audience. That was no use to Grundy; he did not, himself, need convincing that he was the right candidate for parliamentary honours.

He shoved the speech into his pocket and started for St. Jim's. He arrived late for dinner, and Mr. Linton gave him fifty lines; and there was a general smile round the Shell table, to which Grundy replied with a heavy frown. When dinner was over, he looked for Wilkins and Gunn, but those two youths were too wise to let Grundy find them. He did not see them again till they met in the Form-room for afternoon lessons, and, in the presence of Mr. Linton, Grundy could not tell them what he thought of them.

Grundy was in a pessimistic mood that afternoon. He could not help

feeling that St. Jim's was unworthy of him, that in his efforts to improve matters he was casting pearls before those who did not understand the value thereof. On his own account, Grundy felt inclined to throw up the whole affair and let the St. Jim's Parliament go to the dogs in its own way. But, for the sake of the school, Grundy nobly determined to keep on. He felt that, after all, it was up to him, and in that noble resolution George Alfred Grundy did not waver.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

THE ELECTION

ELECTION night at St. Jim's was full of excitement. Prep that evening was woefully neglected by the most industrious juniors. Much more important matters than prep were on the carpet. The Form-masters probably would not have taken that view, but Form-masters were dismissed from consideration at this crisis.

Electioneering was going strong right up to the election. There were meetings and whisperings and confabulations, arrangements and re-arrangings of groups; and, in fact, all the busy buzz of real electioneering, full of sound and fury and signifying nothing.

Grundy was indefatigable. He counted on Wilkins and Gunn, but he found that he could count on simply nobody else. Trimble and other fellows like Trimble were prepared to vote for any fellow who made it worth their while, but Grundy scorned bribery and corruption. Certainly he would not have had much of a look-in in real politics.

In St. Jim's politics he seemed to have no look-in at all. It was in

vain that he pointed out to fellows that he, George Alfred Grundy, was evidently the right man to vote for, and appealed to their common sense in proof of his statement. Either they hadn't any common sense or there was something wrong with Grundy's own belief. At all events, not a single elector undertook to see Grundy through, excepting Wilkins and Gunn, and they really had no choice in the matter. Life in Grundy's study would have been intolerable afterwards if they had voted against the great George Alfred. So they meant to vote for him, comforted by the knowledge that he wouldn't get any other votes anyhow and was sure of an imposing minority.

The Terrible Three were busy, with more success. So were Study No. 6. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, like Grundy, felt that there ought to be a change, and that he was the man to buck up things if the other fellows could only see it. For some reason, mysterious to Gussy, the other fellows didn't see it.

Blake and Herries and Digby found themselves in the same boat, as it were. Study No. 6, with four candidates for the Premiership in the St. Jim's Parliament, was too divided against itself to stand, and was pretty certain to fall altogether.

So, after much argument in that celebrated study, Blake & Co. paid a visit to Study No. 10 in the Shell, and there was an amicable discussion.

Tom Merry's scheme of a coalition was discussed and adopted.

But instead of a coalition between the Terrible Three and the New House, the two parties in the School House coalesced.

Honours were to be divided—three seats in the Cabinet to Study No. 6 and three to Study No. 10, with Tom

Merry as Prime Minister in the event of a successful election.

The agreement was arrived at only an hour before the election, under the stress of circumstances. For it was evident that without an agreement in the School House the New House would carry the day. And Studies No. 6 and No. 10 agreed that that would be utterly disastrous, and must be avoided at all costs.

So the list of candidates was redrawn amicably by the two studies sitting in committee, and the School House was once more united, the only disagreeable member being George Alfred Grundy.

Grundy had pasted a large poster on his study door announcing himself as the Independent Candidate. But that candidate was likely to preserve his independence only too well. In spite of his noble resolution to keep on and do his best for St. Jim's, Grundy could not help realising that his was a voice crying alone in the wilderness, as it were. And when the numerous candidates and electors met in the Hobby Club-room for the poll to take place, George Alfred Grundy strode in, with something very emphatic to say. The room was crowded, and there was a buzz of voices when George Alfred mounted on a chair to address the assembly.

"Gentlemen!" he shouted.

Tom Merry looked round.

"Shut up, Grundy!" he called out. "This isn't a political meeting. We're here for the poll."

Grundy did not heed.

"Gentlemen, I have a few words to say——"

"Dry up!"

"Chuck it, Grundy!"

"Only a few words," pursued Grundy. "I don't recognise this election."

"What?"

"Cheek!"

"Weally, Gwunday——"

"I mean it," persisted Grundy.

"I regard this election as null and void, and of no account. I decline to recognise the St. Jim's Parliament if elected as at present arranged——"

"Shut up, Grundy!"

"Go home!"

"And I shall make it my business to put a stop to the proceedings," pursued Grundy, undaunted. "My idea is that there are too many electors. Universal suffrage is rot. Votes for fools and donkeys is all piffle. You ain't fit to vote——"

"My hat!"

"You haven't sense enough to rally round the right candidate. My idea would be to disfranchise the New House, and the Fourth Form, and the fags. Only the Shell ought to vote, and only some of the Shell. In fact, if I had my way, I'd cut down the electorate to two—Wilkins and Gunn, the only two sensible fellows in the House."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I make a public protest against these proceedings," went on Grundy, "and I rise to move that the election be postponed till this day week, in order that I may have a chance of making the fellows understand that they're playing the goat in voting for this measly crowd of silly chumps. And otherwise, I shall not allow the St. Jim's Parliament to meet——"

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"I shall come down heavy——"

At this point Figgins of the Fourth hooked away Grundy's chair with his foot, and there was a sudden collapse of the excited orator.

Bump!

Grundy had said that he would

come down heavy, and undoubtedly he did come down very heavy indeed. He gave a fiendish yell as he came down.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What rotter hooked my chair away?" yelled Grundy. "I'll spifficate him! I'll pulverise him! I'll—"

"Order!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ordah, Gwunday!"

"Turn him out!"

"I'd like to see anybody turn me out!" roared Grundy.

Probably Grundy was not serious in that statement, and did not intend it to be taken literally. But if he liked to see it, certainly he had his wish, for he saw it immediately. He was collared on all sides, and jerked to the door, and turned into the passage.

Grundy limped away to his study in a state of simmering indignation. Wilkins and Gunn joined him there a little later. Grundy gave them a glare of inquiry.

"Result announced?" he sneered. Wilkins nodded.

"Tom Merry's crowd are in, I suppose?"

"Most of 'em," agreed Wilkins, "and Study No. 6 are all elected. Figgins & Co. are in, and Redfern. They're going to be the Opposition."

"School House majority, anyhow," said Gunn. "That's so much to the good, Grundy."

Grundy snorted.

"I decline to recognise the proceedings at all," he answered.

Wilkins winked at Gunn.

"I dare say they'll pull through somehow without your recognition, old top," said Wilkins. "Now, what about supper?"



"I shall not allow the St. Jim's Parliament to meet," said Grundy. "I shall come down heavy——" At this point Figgins hooked away Grundy's chair, and the excited orator suddenly collapsed.

"I've been thinking it out," said Grundy.

"About supper?"

"About the election!" roared Grundy. "I understand that the new session is to open on the Fifth of November?"

"That's it. Opening of Parliament in Pepper's Barn, to be followed by the bonfire celebrations," said Wilkins, with a nod.

"I shall be there!" said Grundy, darkly and mysteriously.

"Eh? You're not a member."

"You fellows will be there with me."

"But——" began Gunn.

"Ever heard of a man named Guy Fawkes?"

"Eh? Yes, rather! The Johnny who tried to blow up the House of Commons, and stop their chin-wag, in the reign of James the First," said Gunn.

"That's my idea," said Grundy.

"Eh? What is?" asked Wilkins, mystified.

"You wait a bit," said Grundy, still more mysteriously. "I shall want you fellows to help, and I'll explain when the time comes. You wait—and let them wait—let 'em all wait! I haven't done with them yet."

Which was exceedingly dark and mysterious, and would probably have puzzled Wilkins and Gunn very much had they not been thinking seriously about supper. But they were, and so Grundy's dark hints passed almost unregarded.

Meanwhile, great celebrations were going on in both the School House and the New House. Figgins & Co. had failed to secure the hoped-for majority, owing to the unexpected coalition in the rival House, but they had bagged a number of seats, and were going to be well represented at the opening of Parliament. Which was so much to the good, and caused satisfaction. And the School House coalition had secured a "working majority," and had the Government in their hands, so they were still more satisfied. And neither party, certainly, gave a single thought to George Alfred Grundy, or to the lofty wrath with which he regarded the

whole affair. And nobody—not even Wilkins and Gunn, so far—suspected the startling surprise that Grundy was elaborating in his mighty brain, to take place when the St. Jim's Parliament opened on November the Fifth.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

GRUNDY'S GUNPOWDER PLOT I

TOM MERRY & Co.—still utterly regardless of the great Grundy—were busy with preparations for the opening of the St. Jim's Parliament. It was going to be rather a great occasion. There would be a full muster of members in Pepper's Barn, and the leading members of the Government and the Opposition were preparing splendid speeches, to which the House was to listen with more or less attention—probably rather less than more. And while the schoolboy politicians were thus engaged, dark and darker thoughts chased one another through Grundy's powerful brain. During these days his proceedings, too, were dark and mysterious. Wilkins said that, judging by Grundy's looks, he seemed to fancy himself a genuine Guy Fawkes' conspirator. Perhaps he did.

Certainly, he made several excursions on his bike, without being accompanied by his chums, or explaining to them the why or the wherefore. On one of these occasions Wilkins sighted him in the lane, returning from Wayland with a big bundle strapped on his handlebars. But when he came in Grundy made no reference to the bundle or to what it contained.

A still more important circumstance struck Wilkins and Gunn. Tuck ran rather short in the study.

As a rule, Grundy's study was a land flowing with milk and honey.

George Alfred was an open-handed fellow, and he had a large allowance from his affectionate Uncle Grundy. He spent his money in princely fashion, and his study-mates were generally in clover. But, for some reason unknown, the study table was now much more sparingly provided than of old. Yet Grundy was not short of money; his chums knew that his usual allowance had come, as well as an extra tip from Uncle Grundy. They compared notes on the subject, and wondered what it meant.

"It's jolly odd!" Wilkins said to Gunn. "Old Grundy can't be growing mean. 'Tain't like him. He's a silly owl, and a fatheaded chump, and he can't play cricket or footer, or talk sense, and he has the manners of a bear and the intelligence of a bunny rabbit; but, otherwise, he isn't such a bad chap. He's never been mean. But twice lately we've had nothing but a few measly sardines for tea."

"If Grundy is going to be mean," said Gunn, with decision, "Grundy will have to learn to behave himself."

"Yes, rather!"

It was possible that the plenty generally reigning in Grundy's study had something to do with Wilkins' and Gunn's faithful friendship. Certainly they showed strong signs of restiveness when the fat years were followed by the lean years, so to speak.

And still George Alfred gave no sign, but went darkly on his mysterious way.

It was not till the evening of November Fourth—the eve of bonfire day—that Grundy enlightened his puzzled and wondering study-mates. It was then that Wilkins and Gunn found themselves elevated from mere study-mates to the rank of fellow-conspirators.

After prep that evening—during which Grundy had been very thoughtful—he unbosomed himself to his chums.

"You fellows ready?" he asked.

"Certainly," said Wilkins, thinking—or, at least, hoping—that this meant a supper in the study on the old scale.

"Anything you like, old chap!"

"Come on, then!" said Grundy. "Better put on your coats. It's a bit cold."

"Eh? Are we going out?"

"Yes."

"But it's after lock-up."

"I'll bunk you over the wall."

"Oh dear!" said Wilkins.

"No good yapping like that," said Grundy. "We've got to see that all's ready for to-morrow. There's a lot to do."

"Ready for what?"

"That's what I'm going to tell you. Come on!"

Wilkins and Gunn exchanged a hopeless look, and followed Grundy. They contrived to bag their coats and caps and escape into the quadrangle unnoticed, and they climbed over the school wall and dropped into the road—two of them, at least, in a very uneasy and apprehensive frame of mind.

"Where are we going?" asked Gunn, rather rebelliously.

"Pepper's Barn."

"What on earth for?"

"You'll see."

It was useless to question Grundy. Evidently he intended to explain in his own way, and at his own time. His chums followed him dispiritedly across the field to Pepper's Barn.

Grundy approached the rear of the building, where the door gave on the cellar below the St. Jim's House of Commons.

"Going in there?" asked Gunn.

"That's it!"

"It's padlocked."

"I've got the key to the padlock. I had it made."

"The dickens you did!" exclaimed Wilkins, in astonishment.

Grundy unlocked the door, and opened it. He produced a bike-lamp from under his coat, lighted it, and flashed the light round the cellar. It looked very gloomy and eerie in the glimmer of the lamp.

Wilkins and Gunn shivered. The November night was cold, and a chilly mist was creeping over the field, and wisps of it followed them into the cellar under the barn.

From a dark recess of the cellar Grundy rolled out several bundles into view. His chums looked at them.

"Tuck?" asked Gunn, brightening a little. Certainly it was a queer time and place to choose for a spread; but, if it was a spread, Grundy's chums were prepared to play up.

Grundy snorted contemptuously.

"Nothing of the sort, you ass! Tuck, indeed! I suppose you know what the date is to-morrow?"

"The Fifth!" yawned Wilkins.

"Exactly. On November the Fifth, once upon a time, Guy Fawkes undermined the House of Commons with gunpowder, and jolly nearly succeeded in blowing the whole crowd of chin-waggers sky-high," said Grundy. "That's our game."

Wilkins jumped.

"You're going to blow up the St. Jim's House of Commons?" he stammered.

"Well, not exactly blow it up," said Grundy. "That would be too drastic!"

"It would—a little!" murmured Gunn.

"I think Guy Fawkes was a bit of

a brute," said Grundy. "Blowing up the House of Commons was too thick. Of course, a fellow can understand how he felt about it—a lot of chin-wagging blighters, spoofing the public and browsing on the public funds, and all that. Still, blowing them sky-high was rather brutal. I wouldn't have done it myself. And, of course, I couldn't think of anything of that kind here. I'm not going to blow up Pepper's Barn, or even set it on fire——"

"Nunno!" gasped Wilkins.

"This lot isn't gunpowder," said Grundy. "It's fireworks—some of them jolly powerful ones!"

"That's what you've been spending your money on!" exclaimed Gunn.

"That's it! There's going to be a Guy Fawkes' celebration that they little dream of," said Grundy impressively. "To-morrow, when the St. Jim's House of Commons opens, we lock ourselves in the cellar, where they can't get at us——"

"D-d-d-do we?"

"We do. And then we start. We can't blow the silly asses up. But we can bombard them with crackers and squibs and things!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And there won't be much of a grand opening of Parliament, with the fireworks going off among them," grinned Grundy—"what?"

Wilkins and Gunn understood now. They were astonished; though by this time they really ought to have ceased being astonished at anything George Alfred Grundy thought fit to do.

"But—I say——" babbled Gunn.

"You needn't say anything. Just listen!"

"But—how are you going to get at them with the fireworks?" asked Wilkins. "You can't chuck a



"Bal Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus as he jerked off the canvas sheet. The guy was revealed, adorned with a silk hat and an eyeglass, and there was a general chuckle. "I wegard this as uttah cheek!" said D'Arcy indignantly.

cracker through a solid floor, can you?"

"That's an idiotic question, Wilkins! Of course I can't! I've been at work on the floor already, cutting through the boards——"

"Phew!"

"That's what we're going to finish to-night," said Grundy. "There isn't much time to be lost, so pile in, and don't jaw."

"But—but, you know——"

"I've said there's no time to be lost, Wilkins. If you want to jaw, you can jaw afterwards. Blessed if I ever saw such a fellow for jawing. You ought to be in the House of Commons yourself!" said Grundy witheringly.

"They'll skin us afterwards!" howled Gunn.

"Let 'em!"

"But I don't want to be skinned!" protested Gunn.

"For goodness' sake do shut up, Gunn. You're as bad as Wilkins; like a sheep's head, all jaw, you know. Now pile in, and do exactly as I tell you."

Never had Wilkins and Gunn been so near to rebellion. But the masterful George Alfred had his way. He generally did. His helpless chums submitted to their fate, and proceeded to carry out Grundy's instructions.

The conspirators set to work.

Grundy had shown unusual sagacity in his preparations. He had drilled one of the floor-boards from below in several places, so that little more work was required to knock out a section of the board.

The opening thus made would give ample room for the conspirator's bombardment from below; while it was too small for the members of Parliament above to get through and deal with the conspirators.

The section was marked out in chalk, and on the chalk line there were already a large number of drill-holes. Grundy & Co. now took turns with the brace-and-bit, drilling more holes round the chalked section.

As for the damage he was doing to somebody else's property, that did not worry Grundy at all. His lofty mind passed over such trifling considerations. He was very keen on his Fifth of November plot, which he felt was fully justified by the fact that he was left out of the St. Jim's Parliament. If the St. Jim's fellows chose to leave out the only man who could have run things in a creditable and satisfactory manner, they could take the consequences. That was how Grundy looked at it.

"I say, it's nearly time for dorm!" Wilkins gasped, at last.

"Can't be late for dorm!" urged Gunn.

Grundy surveyed the work done.

"All serene," he said. "That section will knock out quite easily when the time comes. Just a rap from a hammer. All serene."

"You—you really mean——"

"I generally mean what I say, Wilkins."

"They'll simply lynch us if we muck up the opening of Parliament."

Grundy smiled superior.

"We shall be masked," he said.

"Masked?"

"Yes, black masks, of course. If they see us they won't know us."

"They'll jolly well guess——"

"You argue too much, Wilkins. Let's cut."

Wilkins and Gunn were glad enough to cut and gladder still to find themselves safe back within the walls of St. Jim's.

That night Grundy slept the sleep

of the just: but there were two unhappy conspirators who found it less easy to sleep.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER.

"WOTTEN weathah!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Please to remember the Fifth of November," replied Jack Blake. "You don't expect it to be like the fifth of June, I suppose?"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Real November weather," said Tom Merry cheerily, as he blinked into the mist in the quadrangle. "Lucky there's no rain, anyhow. The bonfire will go off all right."

"Yaas, wathah!"

It was the Fifth, and lessons for the day were over. All thoughts were turned upon two subjects—the opening of the St. Jim's Parliament in Pepper's Barn, and the bonfire celebrations that were to follow.

The "guy" which was to be burned on the bonfire, and to which Monty Lowther had given artistic touches, was made of canvas and straw, clad in tattered garments which had been purchased at a very cheap rate. It reposed at present in a corner of Pepper's Barn. Monty Lowther had surreptitiously added an old silk hat and an eyeglass, to give the effigy a playful resemblance to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Some of the juniors had already gone along to begin piling up the fuel for the bonfire, which was to be burned in the field adjoining the barn. But Tom Merry & Co. were thinking more about the opening session of Parliament than about the Guy Fawkes celebrations, at present.

After tea, Grundy came out of the School House with Wilkins and Gunn. Grundy's rugged face wore an expression of grim determination; while

Wilkins and Gunn looked like fellows who had resigned themselves to an unhappy fate.

Grundy gave Tom Merry a lofty look as he passed him in the quad.

"Parliament opening soon?" he asked sarcastically.

"Six sharp," said Tom.

"All going well—what?"

"Quite," said Tom.

"Ha, ha!"

With that ominous and mysterious cackinnation, George Alfred Grundy walked on. Tom Merry glanced after him. But he had little time or attention to waste on Grundy.

"Come on, Tommy!" called out Monty Lowther.

"Buck up, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You have got to open the pwoceedin's with a speech fwom the thwone, you know. If you don't mind my suggestin' it, Tom Mewwy, you might cut it wathah short. It would not be fair to bore the fellows, would it?"

"Fathead!" answered Tom.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Gussy wants to do all the boring," remarked Herries. "He's written out a speech filling eleven sheets of impot paper."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I twust that I shall be given time to delivah my speech," said Arthur Augustus warmly. "I have to touch upon a gweat many important subjects. For that weason, Tom Mewwy, I suggest your openin' Parliament with a few words, and not spweadin' yourself——"

"Bow-wow."

"Undah the cires, you know——"

"Rats! Come on, you fellows."

Tom Merry & Co. started for the barn, joining quite a procession of members of Parliament who were bound in that direction.

Pepper's Barn looked unusually bright and festive when the members entered it to take their seats.

A dozen bike-lamps were fixed round the walls to illuminate the House of Commons, and the whole place was newly swept and garnished.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon a still form that lay in a corner, covered by a sheet of canvas, while the members were taking their places, with much buzzing of voices and shuffling of feet.

"Bai Jove! Is that the guy?" ejaculated Gussy.

"That's it!" said Lowther.

"It is wathah infwa dig to have such a widiculous object pwesent at the openin' of Parliament!" said Arthur Augustus severely.

"My dear chap," said Figgins, "that's not the only ridiculous object present."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That is quite twue, Figgins, but as you are a membah, you must be allowed to wemain——"

"Why, you silly ass——"

"But that sillay guy ought to be wemoved befoah the pwoceedin's pwoceed," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I will take it away."

Arthur Augustus approached the corner where the guy reposed and jerked off the canvas sheet.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated.

The guy was revealed, adorned with a silk hat and an eyeglass. There was a general chuckle in the House of Commons.

"I wegard this as uttah cheek!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Lowthah, I pwesume that you have done this——"

"Guilty, my lord!"

"Tom Mewwy, I wequest you to delay the pwoceedin's while I give Lowthah a feahful thwashin'——"

"Order!"

"Call him to order, Mr. Speaker."

Talbot of the Shell was Speaker. He signed to Arthur Augustus.

"If the honourable member does not cease to interrupt the proceedings with personal remarks concerning another honourable member, the honourable member will be requested to withdraw," said Talbot.

"Bai Jove! I should uttahn we-fuse to withdwaw."

"Order!"

"Shut up!"

"Wats!"

With that unparliamentary retort, Arthur Augustus stooped to knock the silk hat off the guy. The next moment he gave a yell. Quite to his surprise, the floor gave way under his foot, with a loud crack.

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus jumped quite clear of the floor in his astonishment.

"What on earth——" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! The floor's givin'——"

"Look out!"

"My hat!"

Arthur Augustus had jumped just in time, as a section of the floorboard, about a foot long, gave under his weight. The section of board dropped through, and there was a sudden, fiendish yell from below. Apparently it had dropped on the head of someone in the cellar underneath.

Tom Merry rushed across to the spot.

"Look out, deah boy, it's givin'——"

"The floor's all right!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Somebody's cut through that board——"

"Bai Jove!"

"There's somebody in the cellar!" roared Blake.

"It's a jape——"

"Grundy!" exclaimed Monty Low-

ther. "I thought that howling ass was up to something!"

There was a confused buzz of voices below. A glimmer of light came up from the cellar.

"Come on, you fellows!" shouted Tom Merry. "They're up to something! Let's have 'em out!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The sitting of Parliament was interrupted before it had fairly commenced. Every member rushed out of the barn after Tom Merry, and they dashed round in an excited crowd to the cellar door at the back.

Tom Merry dragged at the door.

He dragged it open, and the mob of excited juniors rushed in. A startling scene met their gaze.

A single bike lamp burned in the cellar. In the dim light three masked figures were seen—the gunpowder conspirators, caught in the very act!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

GLORY FOR GRUNDY!

"COLLAR them!"

"Bai Jove, it's a wegulah conspiwacy——"

"Scrag them!"

Tom Merry & Co. crowded into the cellar.

The three masked conspirators backed away, their eyes blinking with apprehension through the eyeholes of their masks.

The plot was clear enough to the eyes of the members of the St. Jim's Parliament. The hole in the floor told its own tale; and there were stacks of fireworks, all ready for their deadly work. But for the accidental discovery made by Arthur Augustus in stepping on the drilled board, Grundy's gunpowder plot would undoubtedly have been a success. In ten minutes the St. Jim's Parliament would have been in the full tide of parliamentary

eloquence, and Grundy would have been ready to chip in.

But the discovery had come too soon. Grundy had intended to screw the cellar door inside, to render his fortress impregnable during the bombardment. Afterwards he intended to escape during the confusion and excitement. But Grundy's plans had not had time to ripen. He had not started the screwing yet—indeed, he was busily engaged in rubbing his damaged head, where the section of board had fallen. And so the indignant members of Parliament found nothing to stop them when they arrived on the scene, and the gunpowder plotters were fairly caught.

"Who are they?" exclaimed Blake.

"St. Jim's chaps, of course——"

"Unsuccessful candidates!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Grundy, you bet!" said Fig-gins.

"Yaas, wath-ah!"

"Collar them!"

"Hands off!" roared the well-known voice of Grundy, as the members of Parliament rushed on the conspirators.

The next moment George Alfred Grundy was struggling in half a dozen pairs of hands.

The masks were jerked off the conspirators, and the faces of Grundy, Wilkins and Gunn exposed to view.

Wilkins and

Gunn did not resist. They knew it was useless. But George Alfred Grundy put up a terrific fight.

But the juniors simply swarmed over Grundy, and he went down on the cellar floor, and Fatty Wynn sat on his chest and pinned him there. With Fatty Wynn's weight on his chest even Grundy had to give in. There was no arguing with Fatty's *avoiidupois*.

"Gwunday!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "It's weally Gwunday! The feahful wottah——"

"A giddy gunpowder plot!" chuckled Jack Blake. "Grundy's got Guy Fawkes on the brain—if he has any brain——"

"Lemme up!" roared Grundy. "I'll lick the lot of you! Lemme get up!"

"Yank him up!" said Tom Merry.



Tom Merry dragged open the door and the excited mob of juniors rushed in. A single lamp burned in the cellar, and in the dim light three masked figures were seen—the gunpowder conspirators, caught in the very act!

Grundy was jerked to his feet. He stood helpless in the grasp of many hands, gasping and glaring defiance.

"I say, you chaps!" stuttered Wilkins. "Go easy, you know! You—you see——"

"You see——" stammered Gunn.

"Kick those two duffers out!" said Tom Merry. "It's Grundy that we've got to deal with!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Wilkins and Gunn were escorted to the door, and about a dozen boots helped them to depart. They yelled as they went, but they were glad to go. Never in all the history of gunpowder plotting had two wretched conspirators been so relieved to have done with a conspiracy.

They picked themselves up and fled, but George Alfred Grundy was not to escape so cheaply.

"The cheeky duffah was actually goin' to chuck up fireworks into the House of Commons, you know!" said Arthur Augustus, with breathless indignation. "Actually conspiwin' to muck up the openin' of Parliament, you know!"

"Scrag him!"

"Lynch him!"

"Have you got anything to say for yourself, Grundy?" demanded Tom Merry sternly.

Grundy snorted defiantly.

"Lots!" he answered. "I don't recognise this Parliament at all! I was jolly well going to muck up the whole show! And I'll do it somehow yet! Go and eat coke!"

"Bump him!" roared Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Look here! We're going to make an example of him!" exclaimed Manners.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Exactly! Grundy has chosen to butt into the proceedings, and now he is going to take a leading part. Bring him into the barn."

"Oh, all right!"

With six or seven hands grasping him, the truculent George Alfred was marched out of the cellar and round to the barn. At a word from Tom Merry, the fireworks were gathered up by a crowd of the juniors.

In the barn, Grundy stood in the midst of a wrathful crowd, still defiant. The House of Commons waited, however, for the Prime Minister to pronounce sentence upon him.

"Gentlemen!" said Tom Merry. "There has been a gunpowder plot, on the lines of the celebrated Guy Fawkes, and the chief conspirator is now in our hands. His punishment must be exemplary."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yah!" from Grundy.

"Grundy thinks that he ought to take a leading part. Well, he's going to. I beg to move that the opening of the St. Jim's Parliament be postponed till after the bonfire celebration. And in that celebration Grundy will be given a leading part—that of the guy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Wippin', deah boy!"

"Carried unanimously!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

There was a roar from Grundy.

"You cheeky rotter! If you dare I'll lick you! I'll—I'll—I'll——"

Grundy almost foamed.

It was true that he had aspired to leadership; that he yearned to play a principal part. But it was not the part of a guy in a Fifth of November procession that he yearned for. But that was what Fate allotted to Grundy.



There was a blare of tin whistles and mouth-organs as the procession, bearing Grundy tied to the hurdle, marched round the quad. Grundy's wild yells were drowned in the roars of laughter and cheering.

Monty Lowther stripped the tattered garments from the guy, and Grundy was quickly adorned with them.

A few touches of red ink on his face added to the effect, together with the ancient silk hat jammed down on his head.

Then he was mounted upon the hurdle which had been provided to carry the guy to the place of execution.

Grundy resisted desperately all the time, but his resistance was quite useless. His hands and feet were tied to the hurdle, and he simply had to sit where he was placed.

Then the hurdle was raised on the shoulders of a number of fellows, and Grundy was borne out of the barn.

"Into the quad first!" said Tom.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The procession started. There was a blare of tin whistles and mouth-organs and the bray of a concertina.

The procession marched in at the school gates, amid shouts of laughter, and marched round the quadrangle.

Dr. Holmes glanced from his study window and smiled. That procession round the quad was always allowed on the Fifth of November; but the good old Head, as he glanced out at it, little dreamed that the effigy borne aloft was a Shell fellow of St. Jim's. Grundy's wild yells were drowned in the roars of laughter and cheering.

"Boys will be boys!" the Head remarked to Mr. Railton, with an indulgent smile. "But, bless my soul, what a very ridiculous-looking effigy they have contrived for this occasion."

The ridiculous effigy was yelling at the top of its voice; but, fortunately, the Head could not distinguish its words amid the general din.

But all the fellows in the quadrangle knew the identity of the effigy, and they howled with laughter.

Right round the quadrangle went Grundy of the Shell, in stately procession, amid shrieks of merriment.

Then he was borne out at the gates again, and away to the stacked-up bonfire, all ready to be lighted, in the field.

The procession halted at the bonfire.

"Shove him on!" roared Blake. "I've got the matches ready! Good-bye, Grundy!"

"You silly owls!" howled Grundy in great alarm. "Keep me away from that bonfire, you chumps——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good-bye, Gwunday! I twust you will not suffah much!"

"You silly idiots!"

Grundy was really alarmed for the moment. But the hurdle was set down in the grass, and the "other guy," as Lowther put it, was fetched from the barn for execution.

Grundy had the pleasure of watching the scene, still tied to the hurdle, and the further pleasure of seeing his expensive collection of fireworks used up to the last cracker. It was quite a glorious celebration, and everybody enjoyed it—excepting Grundy. Judging from the expression on Grundy's face, he did not share the general joy. But in such circumstances it was impossible to please everybody.

After the bonfire had burned out the members of the St. Jim's Parliament adjourned to Pepper's Barn, where Parliament was opened in state—without any further intervention from George Alfred Grundy. Even Grundy had had enough. And there was no doubt that for a long time afterwards Grundy of the Shell would remember the Fifth of November!



TOWSER

By Arthur Digby

WE have a little bulldog
That goes in and out with us,
And though he is a cruel dog
We must never make a fuss,
For Herries thinks a deal of him,
The dog is his delight;
But we don't like the feel of him
When Towser starts to bite!

Poor Gussy says that, "Towsah's
Quite a savage bwute to cwoos!
He'll bite a fellah's twousahs,
Which is uttably imposs!
And Hewwies likes to set him on
To bite my bags, the bwute!
Next time, deah boys, I'll get him on
The boko with a boot!"

When Herries says he's bringing
"Poor old Towsey!" to the den,
You'll see Gustavus springing
Round the study like a hen!
"Yawwooh! Help! Pushimout, deah boys!"
He yells, and tears his hair.
"Pway kick him on the snout, deah boys,
Or bwain him with a chair!"

Then like an angry feline
Enters Towser on his chain,
And promptly makes a bee-line
For poor Gussy once again!
He soon shows his intention in
A snatch at Gussy's limbs—
Yes, the brute deserves high mention in
The Horrors of St. Jim's!