

READ "GRUNDY'S BARRING-OUT!"

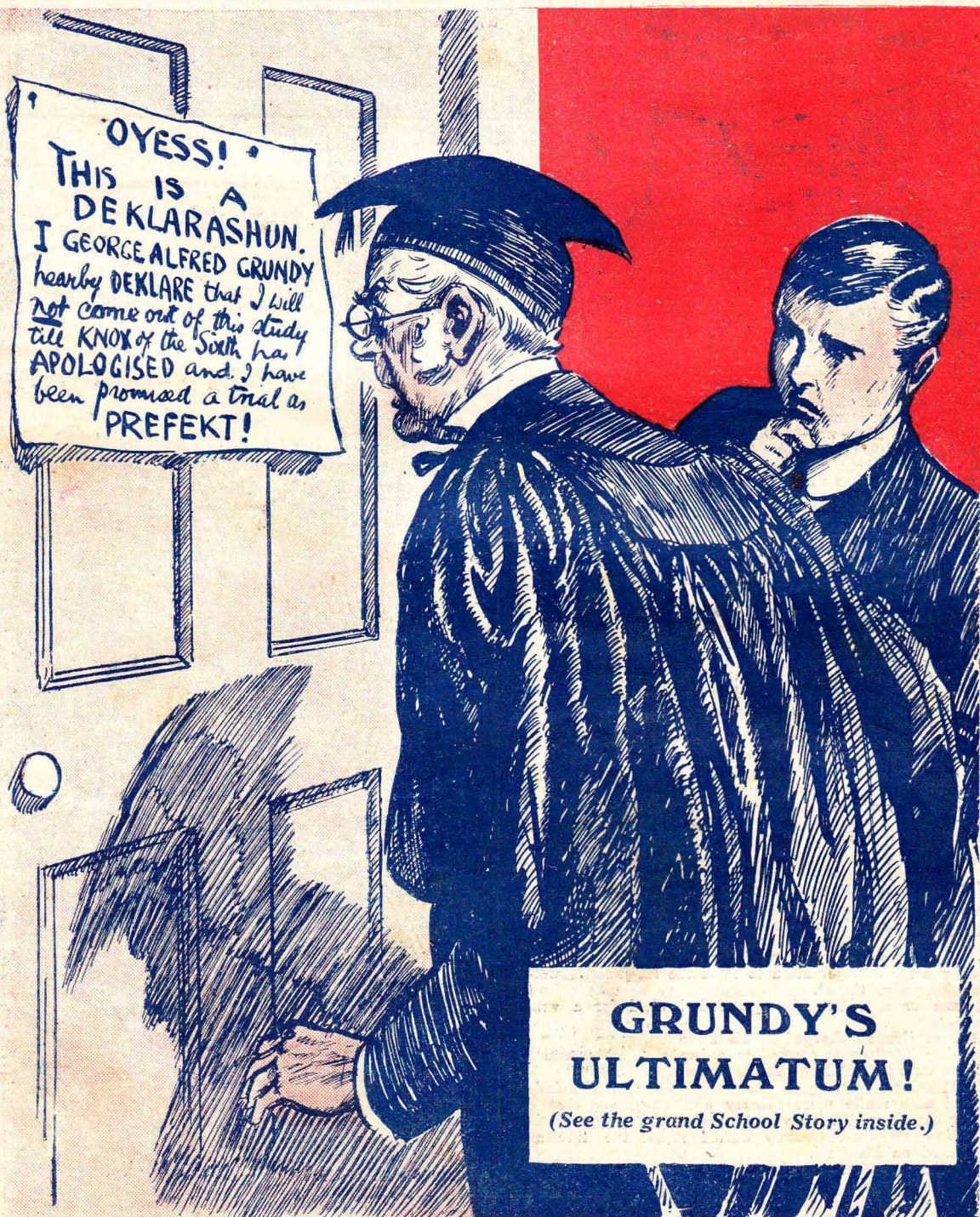
This week's ripping
long complete school
story.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2^D

LIBRARY

No. 1,009.
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OYESS!
THIS IS A
DEKLARASHUN.
I GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY
hearby DEKLARE that I will
not come out of this study
till KNOX of the Sixth has
APOLOGISED and I have
been promised a trial as
PREFEKT!

**GRUNDY'S
ULTIMATUM!**
(See the grand School Story inside.)

A GRAND NEW LONG COMPLETE STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO. AT ST. JIM'S!

GRUNDY'S BARRING-OUT!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



CHAPTER 1. The Cunning of Trimble!

YAH! You rotter!" George Alfred Grundy, of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, strolling under the old elms with his chums, Wilkins and Gunn, stared.

It was not so much the nature of the epithet, but the fact that it proceeded from Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth, that made Grundy stare.

Important personage that he felt himself to be, Grundy had become used, in the course of life in the St. Jim's Shell, to disparaging remarks from fellows of inferior mental and physical ability.

In his more tolerant moods, Grundy was used to smiling and allowing these petty jealousies to roll off him like the proverbial water off the duck's back; at other times, he was wont to run amok with his fists, without stopping to count odds—a little way of Grundy's that brought him more kicks than ha'pence.

But, though there were many juniors at St. Jim's whom Grundy regarded as "cheeky," the fat and fatuous Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth, had never hitherto ranked among them. Trimble had no reputation for deeds of daring—and undoubtedly it required a certain amount of "nerve" to cheek Grundy to his face in open quad.

And that was what Trimble was doing.

"Yah, beast! Rotten bully, Grundy! Come here, and I'll lick you!"

Grundy's stare increased, and his mouth opened.

"Wha-a-at? You heard that, you fellows?"

"Is it really Trimble?" ejaculated Gunn, in tones of amazement.

"The fat chump must have gone off his rocker!" remarked Wilkins. "Grundy has kicked him once to-day, already!"

"And I'll jolly well kick him again!" gasped Grundy, clenching his fists.

"He's insane!" said Gunn. "Be careful, Grundy, old man! You might do the kid some fearful injury!"

"Feeling funky, Grundy, you cad? Come here and take a licking!" jeered Trimble, peering from the vantage of a tree trunk some yards distant.

"My only hat!" roared Grundy, his face crimsoning ferociously. "I'll dribble the fat cad round the quad for that! Come on!"

"Hold on, old man—" began Wilkins.

"If he's dotty—" commenced Gunn anxiously.

But it was useless to try and restrain Grundy. The advice of Wilkins and Gunn was as the idle wind, which he regarded not. Before the excited gaze of George Alfred, loomed the sneering features of Baggy Trimble, and in his mind was the determination to force the fat junior's words down his podgy throat.

Insane or not, Trimble appeared booked for a warm time.

But, as Grundy charged in his direction, some gleam of returning intelligence seemed to animate Trimble, and he did not wait till the Shell fellow came up with him.

As Grundy made a grab round the tree trunk, Trimble dodged with really extraordinary nimbleness and shot off among the elms. With a whoop as of a Red Indian chasing a fleeing Paleface, Grundy darted round the tree and thundered on his trail.

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For sheer obstinacy and "fatheadedness" George Alfred Grundy, of the Shell at St. Jim's, has no equal. But an "obstinate fathead" can be likeable enough, as this topping school story shows.

Wilkins and Gunn, anxious to be in at the death, so to speak, and to learn the cause of Trimble's mysterious access of courage, broke into a trot behind them.

In a foot-race, Baggy Trimble was not likely to last long. Even if his "wind" held out, he had too much weight to make anything like rapid progress. His only hope was to reach studies or box-rooms until such a time as George Alfred had had time to cool down. And as Wilkins and Gunn broke from cover of the elms into the quad, the chances of pursuer and pursued appeared about equal.

There was a group of fellows standing at the foot of the School House steps, and Grundy gave a roar as he spotted them.

"Hi! You chaps—stop that fat rotter!"

"Eh? What? Oh, Trimble!"

"Head him off!"



"What do you want him for, Grundy?"

"Stop him!" howled Grundy.

Whether the juniors would have obeyed Grundy's exhortation was never decided. Trimble, hearing the shouts, swerved to one side and attempted to double on his tracks. He had little enough chance, and, by accident or design, his flying footsteps led him beneath the windows of the Sixth Form studies.

Grundy gave a whoop, and closed in on his victim.

Trimble emitted a wild howl, and stumbled. He rolled in the grass and sat up, gasping with apprehension, just beneath one of the Sixth Form windows.

"Ow! Keep off, Grundy! What have I done, you rotter?" roared Trimble.

"Got you!" grinned Grundy triumphantly.

"Yow-wow-wow! Lemme go, you rotten bully!" howled Trimble, in dire alarm.

"Get up! I can't lick you down there!" ordered Grundy peremptorily. "Sharp's the word, you fat worm!"

There was a rush of footsteps as Wilkins and Gunn came up with their leader, and attempted to drag him back. Trimble, apparently not attracted by Grundy's magnificent offer, remained on the ground and roared.

Perhaps he had an object in roaring. Wilkins, at any rate, left Grundy a moment to kick Trimble—whereat there was a fresh roar from the Fourth-Former.

"Shut up, you rotter!" hissed Wilkins,

"Come on, Grundy!" urged Gunn, dragging in vain at his chum's shoulder. "Can't you see we're right beneath Knox's window?"

"Blow Knox!" observed Grundy coolly. "That fat cad isn't going to call me names—me, you know—just as if I were a fellow of no importance—like you, Cuthbert Gunn. I've kicked him once to-day, for scoffing our grub, and this time he's going to feel it!"

"He's not worth the trouble—" began Wilkins.

But there was an interruption.

Trimble's yells might well have been heard in the village, had anyone been listening keenly. There was no doubt at all that they had penetrated into the study outside which Trimble had stumbled.

The window was thrown up, and a red and wrathful face appeared. Knox, of the Sixth, looking in a far from pleasant temper, gazed down on the little group of juniors below his sill.

"Help! Save me, somebody! He's bullying me, the rotter!"

That yell from Trimble, voiced in a really pathetic manner, smote Knox's ears as he leaned out of the window.

The prefect glanced from Grundy to Trimble, and back again; and his glance was grim. It was really only to be expected, if a fellow pursued his quarry right under a prefect's window, that the prefect would take the part of the oppressed in no uncertain manner. Indeed, any fellow but Grundy would have thought of that. It had occurred to Wilkins and Gunn, and they had done their best. But it was too late now. Grundy, as usual, had put his foot in it.

"You see, Knox—" Gunn broke off as the prefect glanced at him.

"Wilkins and Gunn can clear!" said Knox grimly.

"They weren't in it, of course!" agreed Grundy. "Cut off, you chaps! But you see, Knox—"

"I saw what happened from the window!" observed Knox coolly. "You were pursuing Trimble across the quad; bullying, as usual!"

Grundy coloured, and his eyes gleamed.

If there was one thing that Grundy prided himself on, it was that he was not a bully. A little heavy-handed correction he regarded in a totally different light. It was not surprising, however, that to Knox the matter was clear—Grundy had been bullying.

"You can go, Trimble!" said Knox. "Grundy, you will come to my study at once, and I will try to impress on you that you must keep your hooligan instincts in hand in the future. Get a move on."

"Me? Bullying? Why—"

Grundy paused. Knox had slammed his window, apparently not desirous of continuing the argument in full view of the juniors in the quad.

"Hard luck, old chap!" murmured Wilkins, putting a sympathetic hand on Grundy's shoulder. "That fat cad Trimble purposely led you under Knox's window, of course!"

"In revenge for the kicking you gave him this morning!" explained Gunn.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Grundy indignantly. "I've had my leg pulled—me, of all people! And now Knox believes I was bullying Trimble. If he thinks I'm going to take a licking, he's made the mistake of his life! I tell you—"

"Buck up and get it over, old man!" advised Wilkins. "Knox won't improve with keeping, you know."

Grundy, still rather dazed with the turn of events, suffered himself to be led into the House, and wended his way towards the study occupied by Knox of the Sixth.

He found Knox swishing an ashplant meditatively through the air.

"Here I am, then, Knox!" observed Grundy, closing the door. "I may as well tell you—"

"Shut up!" commanded Knox, gripping the ashplant. "I'm not in the mood to listen to your excuses. I've had my eye on you for some time now, Grundy, and this bullying has got to stop! Bend over!"

Grundy gasped. This was insult added to injury.

"D-did you say bend over?" he ejaculated faintly.

"Sharp!" rapped Knox. "Unless you want a double dose!"

"But—"

"Sharp!" roared Knox.

Grundy set his jaw, and for a moment appeared likely to refuse. But open defiance of a prefect's command would have painful consequences; and even Grundy had sense enough to know when he was cornered.

Without another word he bent over, while Knox laid on the ashplant.

Swish, swish, swish, swish, swish!

The strokes had all the strength of Knox's arm behind them, and Grundy was a little white as he stood up after that infliction.

Knox grinned at the pallor of the Shell junior's face.

"Satisfied?" he asked. "You can have another dose whenever you like, you know. If you like to complain to Mr. Railton, I shall report that I have had occasion to reprimand you several times lately for the same offence, and I thought it was time you had a lesson that you would remember."

Grundy's eyes burned.

"Report, and be blown, then! It was Trimble's fault—"

"You will do me, in addition, two hundred lines!" said Knox calmly. "Have you anything else to say?"

Grundy drew a deep breath, but he did not speak again.

"Cut!" said Knox briefly.

Grundy opened his mouth, but thought better of it.

He closed the door after him, and walked towards the stairs, sparring fiercely with an imaginary opponent in the air. It afforded Grundy some relief to imagine that it was Knox's features which his fists were hitting.

A prefect ascended the stairs and stared at the sight of Grundy.

"Hallo! What's the name of that game, Grundy?" inquired Darrell, in surprise. He knew that Grundy was several sorts of an ass, but this particular form of lunacy was new.

"Eh? Oh, my hat! Nothing at all!" gasped Grundy, dropping his hands suddenly.

"You'd better see the matron, kid!" said Darrell, looking after him.

Grundy, with a slightly heightened colour, headed for the Shell passage. His spirit, far from being subdued by the castigation he had received from Knox, flamed at the thought of his humiliation. He was only thankful that the rest of the school would not know that he had had to "bend over."

Certainly, in administering so severe a punishment, Knox had been "going it" a little steeply, but it was in his power to make it very unpleasant for Grundy with his Housemaster if he liked, and Grundy had wisely chosen the lesser evil.

It was true that of late Knox had several times punished him for cuffing juniors, and that fags with a grudge against Grundy had sometimes gone out of their way to secure a cuff from Grundy, always with Knox somewhere in the offing.

Grundy was getting fed-up with it, but it was beyond him to avoid a trap of that sort.

He kicked open the door of Study No. 3, and grunted as he saw that Wilkins and Gunn were preparing tea. It was perhaps thoughtful of them to have a spread in readiness to cheer their leader; but, at the moment, far greater matters were occupying Grundy's mind.

Gunn placed a cushion on the study armchair for Grundy. He stared as George Alfred waved it aside and propped himself up on the mantelpiece.

"Had it bad, old man?" asked Wilkins.

"Not—" gasped Gunn, suddenly realising why his chum did not want a chair.

Grundy nodded, much as Napoleon might have nodded after the Battle of Waterloo.

"I had to bend over!" he remarked coolly.

"Tea, old chap?" said Wilkins soothingly. "You'll feel better after a feed. Try these chocolate meringues!"

"I'm not standing it!" said Grundy firmly.

"What about these cream horns?" asked Gunn solicitously.

"I'm not standing it!" repeated Grundy.

"A custard tart, old man?" said Wilkins persuasively.

"I tell you I'm not standing it!" roared Grundy. There was a silence in the study.

CHAPTER 2.

Grundy Demands His Rights!

"IT'S rot!" Wilkins coughed, and Gunn shuffled his feet. There was no doubt that Grundy had "got it bag." His chums were now receiving the after effects.

Grundy's dignity—always his first consideration—had been outraged. It was really time for the skies to fall, though there seemed little likelihood of that phenomenon occurring.

Great thoughts were stirring in Grundy's brain. Knox's "five" had had a stimulating effect on that organ, and perhaps Knox would have been surprised had he known quite how that severe licking had affected the Shell fellow.

Grundy was hurt, and he was excited. It was plain that he was not in the mood for sympathy and tea, whereat Wilkins and Gunn groaned inwardly.

"I've been caned!" observed Grundy, in the tone of one who is almost unable to credit his senses. "By Knox. Me—the fellow whom all the Lower School looks to as an example—caned by that smoky, bounds-breaking cad Knox! It's rot! And I tell you flat I'm not standing it!"

"Better not let him hear that," grinned Gunn, "or you'll be up before the Head, you ass!"

"Sit down like a sensible chap and have some tea!" suggested Wilkins pacifically. "Or stand up, if you like. We'll hand the grub to you!"

"Grub!" ejaculated Grundy, with withering scorn. "That's all you fellows can think about—stuffing yourselves full of cakes and tarts, while a tyrant like Knox goes unpunished!"

"Dear man," said Gunn patiently, "we all know Knox is a rotter, but he's a prefect, and we can't help it. There's nothing to do but grin and bear it, old man. The pain will wear off, you know!"

"Do you think I care about the pain, you idiot?" roared Grundy. "It's an insult to the dignity of the Shell! Who's Knox, anyway, I'd like to know?"

"Knox is a prefect!" said Wilkins tartly. "You can't buck against him. If you weren't such a blithering fathead you'd know you can't!"

Grundy's faithful chums were getting a little fed-up with their leader, and their faces showed it. They were prepared to hand out sympathy in large chunks until the pain had subsided; but Grundy evidently was not amenable to sympathy.

His manner suggested that, had Knox appeared at that moment, he would have hit out straight from the shoulder, prefect or no prefect. He began to wonder how he had even submitted in the first place.

"Look here, you chaps," said Grundy, in a calmer voice, "Knox caned me for bullying—you know he's been down on me a lot of times lately—and threatened to report me to Railton if I didn't take it lying down. I can see now that Trimble pulled my leg—"

"Oh! You can see that?" inquired Wilkins, in surprise. "We could have told you in the first place, if you'd listened!" observed Gunn.

Grundy breathed hard and deep.

If ever a fellow exercised self-control, Grundy exercised it then.

"I've had my leg pulled!" he repeated. "It doesn't happen once in a thousand years—you fellows know that!"

"Do we?" murmured Gunn.

"But it has happened!" continued Grundy. "Remarkable as it is, that fat slug Trimble managed to pull my leg and get me into another row with Knox. I've been licked, and I've got lines to do into the bargain!"

"Phew! Knox went it pretty hot, didn't he?" ejaculated Wilkins.

"He's been worried over the gee-gees a bit, I know!" said Gunn. "He must have taken it out of Grundy!"

Wilkins forbore to chuckle, and Grundy fixed his chums with a grim glance.

"I've got lines to do, but I'm not doing them!" he observed coolly. "When I said I wasn't standing it, I meant every word. Who's Knox? I've often said to you fellows that I'm far better fitted to be a prefect than Knox, haven't I?"

"You often talk out of the back of your neck, old chap!" assented Wilkins, and Gunn grinned.

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"This is how the matter lies," said Grundy, apparently having thought the whole thing out. "I've had it in my mind a long time—"

"Then it's not a complete vacuum?" inquired Wilkins. "Sorry. My mistake!"

Grundy glared.

"Look here, George Wilkins! When you've done your funny turn, I'll go on—"

"You're the only funny man here!" grinned Gunn. "Get on and get it over, there's a good chap! I'm more interested in tea!"

"You would be!" said Grundy bitingly. "Chuck gorging and lend me your ears for a minute or two. What do you think of me as a prefect?"

"I'll tell you when I've seen it!" said Wilkins, his mouth full of cream bun. "I should say it would be the joke of the term!"

"You'll laugh on the other side of your face when you do see it!" said Grundy grimly. "I shan't stand any rot I warn you—pals or not!"

"Did Knox raise you to his own exalted state after the flogging?" asked Gunn innocently. "Or are you just blithering as usual?"

Grundy glared, and then he sneered.

"I suppose you think that's funny?" he asked sarcastically. "Let me tell you that before you're many hours older you'll see me invested with full powers of prefectship. So you can put that in your pipes and smoke it!"

"Dotty!" said Gunn.

"Explain yourself, ass!" said Wilkins. "What do you mean—if you really mean anything at all?"

"I'm going to the Head!" announced Grundy coolly.

"I'm going to put it to him as man to man that I'm a sterling fellow with brains enough for the whole of the lower school, wasted in my present environment. I shall—"

"Environment!" repeated Gunn. "Good word, that, Grundy! The Head will think you've been swotting!"

"Old Grundy's getting educated!" chuckled Wilkins.

"I shall point out," continued Grundy, regardless of the interruptions, "that I'm just as much fitted to be a prefect as Knox or Sefton or Baker—more, in fact, owing to my exceptional mentality. I fancy I could handle a prefect's job with my eyes closed. Once I can make the Head see it—"

"He'll be an old man before he sees that, Grundy!" chuckled Wilkins. "And so will you!"

"Once I can make him see it," went on Grundy determinedly, "I shall be on equal terms with Knox and his crowd, and then you'll see some fireworks! I happen to know that Knox breaks bounds after lights out—"

"Go hon!" murmured Gunn. "Is there a fellow in the lower school who doesn't know that?"

"He goes to the Green Man and gambles with rotten bookmakers," said Grundy sternly. "He bets on horses, and I've got it from his fag that he takes a whisky now and then—"

"Phew! What a gay dog!" grinned Wilkins.

"That kind of thing will be put down with a firm hand when I'm a prefect!" said Grundy grimly. "Kildare will have to look out for his job, I can tell you! From being a prefect, it's only a short step to captain of the school—"

"Captain Grundy!" sobbed Wilkins. "Don't, Grundy, old man; my feeble constitution won't stand it! And are you just going to tell Kildare to clear out? I imagine he might put up a scrap!"

"Kildare will keep!" said Grundy decisively. "At present I'm a junior suffering from injustice. That's going to be remedied at once. I'm going to the Head to put it to him plain!"

"You're not going now, you awful idiot?" roared Wilkins, as Grundy turned to the door.

"Why not?"

"Haven't you had enough for one day, you fathead? Dr. Holmes will probably give you another five!"

"Rot! He will fall in with my suggestion like a shot!" said Grundy confidently. "You fellows wait here and see. When I come back I shall be a full-blown prefect!"

Grundy swung open the study door, and stepped into the passage. Not satisfied with enough, he was determined on asking for some more.

There was a gasp in the study as he left it. Wilkins and Gunn were utterly dismayed. They had flattered themselves that they knew most of Grundy's little ways, and they made it a point never to be surprised at any particular form his lunacy might take. But even Grundy might have been expected to have been satisfied, and at least left his interview with the Head till the morrow.

But Grundy had taken his decision, and he was going straight ahead, regardless of the consequences. It was high time for his chums to act, if they were to save him from a further licking.

"Bring him back!" gasped Wilkins, leaping to the door.



Gunn had bitten his tongue. Grundy did not stay to survey the damage he had done. With an angry snort, he strode away towards the Head's study, leaving Wilkins and Gunn to their own devices.

A peremptory knock on his door was Dr. Holmes' first warning that Grundy wished to see him.

The kindly old Head raised his glance to Grundy, and smiled. He seemed to be in an amiable mood, which was all the more fortunate, felt Grundy, considering the delicate nature of his visit.

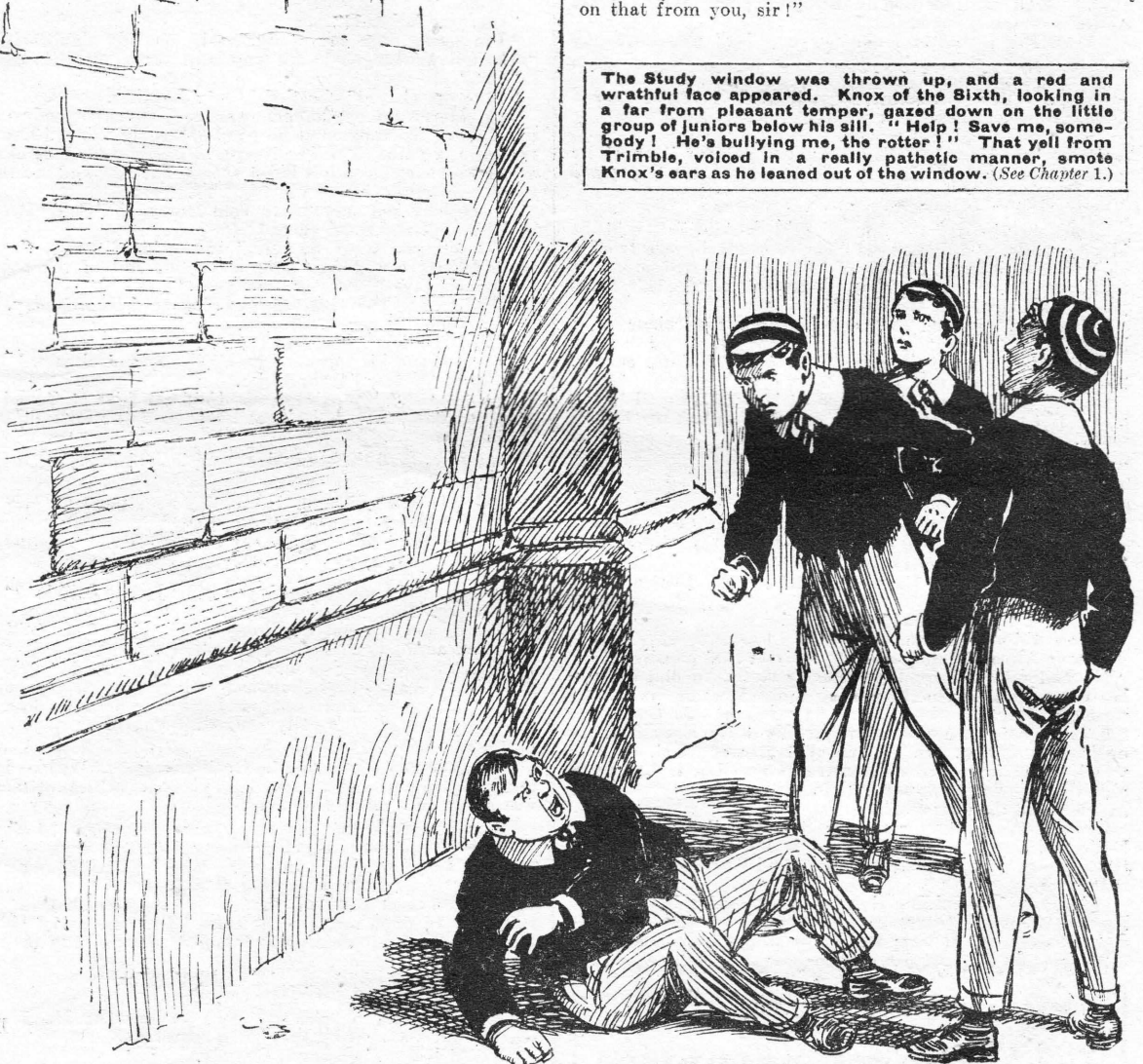
Grundy coughed and cleared his throat. He was going to put it plain—though, of course, with respect. But plain, nevertheless. Firm but respectful; that was to be Grundy's maxim.

He coughed again.

"Well, my boy?" asked Dr. Holmes. "What is it?"

"It's an injustice, sir!" began Grundy boldly. "I've come to you for redress under affliction. I felt I could rely on that from you, sir!"

The Study window was thrown up, and a red and wrathful face appeared. Knox of the Sixth, looking in a far from pleasant temper, gazed down on the little group of juniors below his sill. "Help! Save me, somebody! He's bullying me, the rotter!" That yell from Trimble, voiced in a really pathetic manner, smote Knox's ears as he leaned out of the window. (See Chapter 1.)



"By the scruff of his neck, if need be!" added Gunn.

Grundy was stalking in his usual important manner towards the head of the stairs, but he spun round as his chums dashed on him from behind.

"Why—what—"

"Come quietly, old man!" grinned Wilkins, taking one arm in an affectionate grasp.

"Leave the Head till to-morrow!" advised Gunn, taking the other arm.

Grundy drew a long breath, and then he acted. His chums were not prepared for it, and he took them completely off their guard.

His left took Wilkins neatly on the chin, and Wilkins, with a wild howl, rolled in the corridor. Gunn opened his mouth and shut it again abruptly as Grundy's right knocked him against the wall, where he ejaculated:

"Mmmmmmmmm!"

"Doubtless, Grundy!" agreed the Head, with a peculiar glance at the Shell fellow.

"I want to put a case, sir!" said Grundy, feeling that he could not be too cautious. He wanted to gain the Head's sympathy before revealing that the figure in the "case" was himself. Grundy had learned from bitter experience that people had a prejudice against him personally which was difficult to remove.

"It's the case of a fellow," he went on, "who is really the most important fellow—the best athlete, and the finest scholar—in the junior school. This chap—I'll give you his name in a minute, sir—is kept down by petty jealousy, and persecuted by fellows in authority over him. Just before tea, Knox had the nerve—I mean, the fellow was flogged, sir, for something he hadn't done—but I'm not grumbling about that. What I want to make clear to you,

sir, is that this fellow would have a decent sphere for his talents if he were made a prefect—he would be able to assert his superiority, and set a shining example to the juniors, sir—in short, I strongly urge you to consider this fellow's case, Dr. Holmes!"

The Head removed and polished his glasses.

"If all that you say is correct, Grundy, this boy is deserving of recognition!" he remarked. "I should like to learn his name—though I do not think he will merit appointment as a prefect! Who is he, Grundy?"

Grundy puffed out his chest, and fixed what was intended to be a compelling glance on the Head's face.

"Me, sir!" he responded ungrammatically. "I'm the fellow!"

The Head stared for a moment, and the corners of his mouth twitched. But when he spoke his voice was calm and grave.

"You have an excellent opinion of yourself, Grundy!" he said. "And your method of bringing your claims to my notice is certainly ingenious."

"Then I'm a prefect from now on, sir?" asked Grundy eagerly.

"You are nothing of the kind!" retorted Dr. Holmes, with asperity. "You will return to your study and write me a hundred lines. Have you a notebook?"

"But—but—yes, sir!" gasped Grundy.

"Pray take down this line, and let me see it carefully written one hundred times!" said Dr. Holmes. "I am a conceited boy—"

"Wha-a-at?" gasped Grundy.

"I am sorry to make the punishment so childish!" said the Head calmly. "But you will derive great benefit from a close consideration of this line. 'I am a conceited boy, with little respect for my superiors. I must remedy this.' Have you taken that down, Grundy?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Grundy, his face the colour of a beetroot.

"Then you may go, my boy!" said Dr. Holmes calmly. "Bear what I have said in mind!"

Grundy gulped, and for a moment he was tempted to say a lot. But prudence supervened, and Grundy left the Head's study. He walked to his study with a fixed expression on his face.

CHAPTER 3.

* Getting Even With Knox!

"HALLO! Here comes the prefect!"

"Prefect Grundy! Make way, you common mortals!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How did you get on, Grundy?"

George Alfred Grundy did not reply to that question.

He had returned from the Head's study, to find quite a little crowd of the Shell awaiting him. Most of the fellows were grinning; it was evident that Wilkins and Gunn had not kept their own counsel regarding their chum's extraordinary ambition. In his present frame of mind, Grundy was inclined to regard that as traitorous; but it was probable that his recent abrupt parting from Wilkins and Gunn had affected their tempers.

Grundy was a difficult enough fellow to live with at the best of times; and even Wilkins and Gunn, faithful pals though they were, had their limit. And Grundy had passed that limit.

Grundy had no inkling that he had passed a limit at all. He had intended to return to the Shell passage with his claims recognised at last; though on what grounds he based

that extraordinary expectation was not clear. But his claims had not been recognised, and Grundy felt that the grinning crowd of juniors was, to say the least, superfluous.

He frowned heavily at the storm of questions.

Although not a prefect, Grundy felt a quite perfectly desire to dispel the crowd with a glare and a hundred lines apiece; which summary method of dealing with them was not, unfortunately, practicable.

"Wilkins!"

George Wilkins looked rather apprehensively at his chief. "I suppose you and Gunn have been letting your chins wag about me, what?"

"Well, you are an awful ass, you know!" said Gunn defensively.

Grundy, surprisingly enough, contented himself with a nod.

"All right. But you needn't speak to me again, that's all!"

"What?"

"Oh, you fathead!"

"I'm going into my study," said Grundy deliberately. "Any fellow who gets in the way is liable to get hurt!"

"Oh!"

"Line up, chaps!" chortled Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry, among others, was in between Grundy and the door of his study, but he good-naturedly stepped out of the latter's path. The Shell captain had chuckled as much as the rest over Grundy's latest spasm, but he could see that the great George Alfred was hard hit.

"Hard luck, old man!" said Tom Merry, as Grundy strode by. "Didn't the Head agree?"

"I'd tell you what he said," responded Grundy, "only these fellows would roar over it for the rest of the term! He was cheeky—absolutely cheeky—"

"Wha-a-at? The Head cheeky?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Just that!" asserted Grundy.

"Oh, you idiot!" stuttered Gunn.

Grundy gave his former pals a glance, and slammed the door of Study No. 3 behind him.

In the passage there were manifold chuckles at Grundy's expense; but to two fellows, at least, Grundy's attitude was causing thought.

Wilkins opened the study door and looked in rather tentatively. Grundy was ensconced in the armchair, apparently having recovered sufficiently from his licking to be able to sit down again. He glanced up at Wilkins, but it was not a welcoming glance.

"Cut!" advised Grundy briefly.

"But, I say—"

"Do you want me to chuck you out, George Wilkins?"

"Nunno! But, Grundy, old man—"

"You're not my pal any longer, Wilkins! I've finished with you and Gunn. Fellows I can't trust—"

"But we advised you not to go to the Head!" roared Wilkins. "Wasn't that chummy? All we got for our pains was a biff apiece—and then you have the cheek to pose as the injured party! I jolly well wish you had my jaw to nurse, you footling idiot!"

Grundy appeared to reflect. Certainly, put as Wilkins had put it, his chums had a case. And Grundy, at that moment, was direly in need of sympathy.

"You can come in!" he said magnanimously. "I don't know if I can ever forget your cheek, but I suppose you can't all keep up to my example. Come in, and shut up!"

Wilkins and Gunn, accepting that kind invitation, came in. For several moments Grundy's fate trembled in the balance. In those moments he came within an ace of being yanked out of his chair and bumped unmercifully on the study carpet.

"After all, he's had enough!" said Wilkins.

"Eh?"

"It's all right, old fellow. Tell us how the Head was cheeky, old man. We'll keep it to ourselves."

"You'd better!" observed Grundy.

And in a few words he told them. It was a great credit to Wilkins and Gunn that they did not grin once during Grundy's account.

"Awful!" agreed Wilkins, when Grundy had finished.

"Shocking!" added Gunn, stifling his mirth heroically.

"I'm going to do the Head's lines," said Grundy. "You fellows may remember that I've got two lots to do now—a couple of hundred for Knox, and now this ridiculous rot for the Head. Knox will expect his lines by to-night—I'm going to let him expect!"

"Dash it all, he was piling it on too thick, after a flogging!" ejaculated Gunn. "You could complain to Railton; he'd jolly soon put Knox in his place!"

"Knox is getting too big for his boots!" said Grundy calmly. "But I can deal with him. I don't want any help. The Head doesn't recognise me as a prefect; I don't recognise Knox. Everyone is entitled to his opinion. When



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Knox asks for his lines, I shall tell him I haven't done them, and don't intend to. We'll see how he likes that!"

"He will probably give you the asphalt," said Gunn.

"Rot! I shall cow him."

"Cow a prefect!" gasped Wilkins. "What with?"

"My personality!" said Grundy calmly. "I admit he got the best of it this afternoon. But you'll see a change next time. There's no need for you fellows to get the wind up. I've decided what to do. Chuck over that ink, Gunny!"

Gunn "chucked" over the ink, with a rather dazed expression.

The rest of the evening in Study No. 3 passed without comment from Wilkins and Gunn. It was useless to attempt to dissuade Grundy; his resolve was as fixed as the celebrated laws of the Medes and Persians.

But what his resolve would lead him into was a moot question.

The three juniors were just finishing supper when Darrell looked into the study and announced that it was bedtime.

Wilkins and Gunn accompanied their leader to the Shell dormitory with deep misgivings. They felt that a storm was brewing, and was about to burst with startling violence on the devoted head of George Alfred Grundy.

Grundy himself was keeping an eye open for Baggy Trimble of the Fourth. He had recovered from his licking, and he felt that he ought, for dignity's sake, to kick Trimble. There was a yell of alarm from Trimble as he spotted Grundy on the staircase.

"Yarooop! Help! It's Grundy!"

Grundy made a jump, and several fellows staggered and clutched at each other. For perhaps a second they staggered and clutched; then, amid a chorus of yelps and roars, about a dozen fellows rolled over on the stairs and bumped in a struggling heap to the bottom.

"Ow! My head! It was that idiot Grundy!"

"My eye! Some blithering idiot has jammed his hoof in it!"

"Grundy! The owl! Scrag him!"

At the top of the stairs Trimble was dodging, but he dodged in vain. He gave a wild howl as Grundy's hefty boot clumped on the seat of his tight trousers.

"Yarooop! Fire! Murder! Levison, Gussy—help!"

There was a rush of juniors to the rescue—the dozen who had fallen downstairs in the van. Myriad hands were laid—not gently—on various portions of Grundy's anatomy, and he was dragged from his victim. But a sharp voice stayed the proceedings.

"Stop!"

"Oh, my aunt! Knox!" breathed Wilkins.

Knox it was.

It was not Knox's duty to see "lights out" for the Shell that evening. He had come for Grundy's lines.

The prefect's eyes gleamed as he approached. Grundy had been bullying again. Knox had never liked Grundy, the lofty Shell fellow had not enough respect for him. And persecution was one of Knox's keenest delights. He was beginning to enjoy his battle with Grundy.

"Bullying again, I see," observed the prefect coolly.

"I wasn't! I was—"

"What about your lines?" asked Knox grimly. "Have you done them?"

Wilkins and Gunn hung on Grundy's reply. Even Grundy could not have the nerve to defy a prefect to his face.

But Grundy was quite cool. He, too, was feeling an exhilaration in the encounter.

"I'm not going to do them, Knox!" said Grundy, with the utmost calm. "I'm fed-up with your rotten persecution. My advice is that you leave me alone in future. If you don't, I warn you there will be trouble!"

"T-trouble?" stammered Knox.

"You can't say I haven't warned you!" said Grundy.

He turned towards the dormitory, as if he regarded the interview at an end.

But it was only just beginning, as far as Knox was concerned. He made a leap after Grundy, and swung him back.

"Not just yet, you young scamp!" he said, letting his asphalt slip down into his hand. "Hold out your hand, Grundy!"

Grundy coloured, and put his hands behind his back. His jaw set obstinately.

Knox wasted no more time in words. With a powerful grasp, he swung Grundy into a convenient position, and the asphalt rose and fell on Grundy's shoulders.

It rose and fell with tremendous vim, and even Grundy could not repress a yelp.

Knox cast him aside when he had finished, and Grundy's face was pale and set. He had stood punishment that day before which many a fellow would have flinched, but he was still game.

"Take that as a lesson!" snarled Knox.

He strode away without another word. Perhaps he realised that he had overstepped the mark by more than a little—that Grundy could, by reporting the matter to his Housemaster, have made things very unpleasant for Knox. But his savage temper had gained the upper hand. Grundy had defied him.

Grundy stared after Knox as he went, and then suffered himself to be led into the dormitory by his chums.

"I should chuck it, old chap," murmured Wilkins. "You can't back up against Knox all on your lonesome, you know. Railton would see that he didn't pitch into you over nothing!"

"You're only getting the benefit of the cad's spiteful temper," said Gunn.

"I can look after myself," said Grundy thickly. "I'm not going to Railton. Leave me alone."

And Grundy's chums wisely left him alone.

When Darrell looked in, a few minutes later, to see the lights out, he noticed nothing unusual in the Shell dormitory.

Tom Merry & Co. had mercifully left Grundy to himself. As for Grundy, he was awake long after the rest of the dormitory was asleep. He was thinking, and in that strenuous exercise he almost forgot his physical discomfort.

It was in the still watches of the night that Grundy came to a decision and arose. He dressed silently, and left the dormitory with hardly a sound.

He crept down the staircase and headed like a shadow for the Sixth Form passage. The Sixth-Formers had their beds in their studies, each secreted in an alcove, and Knox was presumably fast asleep at this time.

But Grundy had recollected speaking to Knox's fag earlier in the day, and he had more than a suspicion that Knox was gone on one of his little jaunts to the Green Man that evening.

If that was so, Grundy's plans were cut and dried.

He tried the door with infinite caution. It was unlocked. He turned the handle. It scraped, and his heart leaped into his mouth. But a breeze blowing across the room reassured him.

Knox had gone, leaving the window open a little for his return.

On tiptoe, Grundy crept across the study and drew aside the curtain which screened the bed from the rest of the room. He stared for a moment at a dark shape between the sheets, and listened. The shape did not breathe, and he felt it.

It was a dummy. For a prefect to break bounds was a very serious matter indeed, and Knox had taken all precautions.

Grundy chuckled softly, and the ache in his shoulders seemed easier to bear. He glanced around the study, and in the dim light from the stars he set to work.

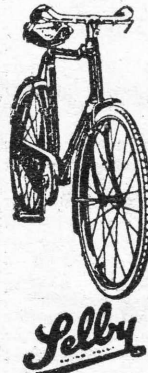
His mission in Knox's study demanded silence, which was a hindrance; but, for all that, much could be done without making a noise.

Grundy began on the clock by unscrewing the hands and tossing them into a corner. Then, taking the jar of honey from the study cupboard, he proceeded to fill the interior of Knox's handsome marble clock with it.

He could not actually break anything, for fear of discovery. But Knox's pictures were "touched up" with jam and treacle, and his desk was upended and the papers mixed with soot and gum.

Knox's favourite pair of slippers became lakes of soot, gum, and honey, intermingled, while the last of the treacle went into a camera Knox had recently purchased.

Grundy next turned his attention to the chairs, which he piled on the table. That done, he began to pull up the



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carpet and roll it into a corner. Two or three bottles of ink emptied at random considerably altered the pattern of Knox's Persian carpet.

Grundy surveyed the havoc with something approaching satisfaction.

"I think that will do," he murmured. "I'd give a quid to see Knox's face when he spots this!"

Grundy left the study and returned to the Shell dormitory. He felt much better, and fell asleep almost at once. And he slept with a seraphic smile on his rugged features.

CHAPTER 4.

Utterly Reckless!

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Trot off!" advised Monty Lowther.

"Roll away and pick snowdrops!" suggested Manners.

"I'm speaking to Tom Merry—"

"Don't!" said the captain of the Shell cheerily. "Take Lowther's advice and trot, or take Manners' and roll; but, anyway, shut the door behind you!"

"It's Knox!" hooted Baggy Trimble.

He really had not the appearance of a departing guest. His podgy features were crimson with excitement, and his whole manner suggested that he had news of transcendent importance to impart.

It was early; rising-bell had pealed not long before. The fact that Trimble was down was surprising enough in itself. It was popularly supposed that an earthquake would have failed to awaken Trimble unless the dormitory floor fell in; yet here he was, bursting with excitement in Study No. 10 barely a quarter of an hour after the bell had gone.

"What about jolly old Knox, you fat newsmonger?" inquired Lowther. "He must have got up jolly early in the morning to have done something sensational already!"

"Perhaps he went on the tiles last night and got lagged!" grinned Tom Merry. "If it's anything really important, Trimble, you can cough it up!"

"Ain't I trying to tell you, you—you fatheads!" spluttered Trimble. "Shut up a minute, and give a fellow a chance. Knox is fairly raging—"

"He often is!" agreed Monty Lowther, with a nod.

"His study has been ragged during the night!" said Trimble impressively.

"Which?"

"Did you say ragged, Trimble? Let's hear it again!"

"That's it! Somebody has made an awful mess of it—painted the pictures, smashed the clock, and poured ink on the carpet!"

"My only sainted Aunt Sempronia!" gasped Lowther. "What mighty man is this who should have done this thing? I fancy a visit to Knox's study will be worth our while!"

"Rather!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "But—but what frightful chump would have the nerve to wreck Knox's study for him? It'll mean a Head's flogging, at least, when he's caught!"

"Surely that ass Grundy wouldn't—" began Manners, agast.

"We know Grundy is every kind of an ass," said Lowther. "But even Grundy, I should imagine, draws a line somewhere!"

"Here we are!" chirruped Trimble, in the van.

The Terrible Three joined a throng of juniors and seniors round Knox's doorway, and shoved their way through to front positions.

"Look!" said Trimble.

Tom Merry & Co., standing with Study No. 6 in the forefront, looked. Then they gasped.

Trimble had not exaggerated. The study was wrecked. In the broad light of day the damage appeared greater than it had done to Grundy overnight.

Knox was in his study, with Cutts and Lefevre of the Fifth.

They were engaged in putting matters to rights. Knox had declined, without thanks, the offers of several cheery juniors to help, perhaps suspecting them of complicity in the deed.

The expression on Knox's face, as he strove to pour honey out of his expensive marble clock, was, as Monty Lowther remarked, worth a guinea a box.

"Bai Jove, you know. The fellow who is responsible for this is goin' to pay the pipah!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, screwing his eyeglass a little more firmly into his eye—perhaps to get a better view of Knox spooning a treacly compound out of his carpet slippers.

"When I catch the young villain who did this—" breathed Knox. He left the sentence unfinished, and one or two of his helpers grinned. They saw something rather comic in the way Knox continually harped on that statement.

"Want any help, Knox?" called Lowther. "We're ready

and willing, if you like. How are you going to get the ink out of that carpet?"

Knox's eyes gleamed hungrily, and he breathed hard. It was extremely doubtful if he would ever succeed in getting the ink out of that handsome Persian carpet; a circumstance on which Lowther had touched rather tactlessly.

But Knox did not vent his wrath on the humorist of the Shell. He was saving the mellowed vintage, so to speak, for the exclusive benefit of the fellow who had perpetrated this outrage. He spoke almost calmly to Lowther.

"Have you seen Grundy, any of you?"

Tom Merry and his chums exchanged glances. There might be doubt in many minds as to the actual identity of the culprit, but in Knox's there was obviously none. Luckily, the Terrible Three had not noticed Grundy particularly that morning. And if any of the Shell fellows in the corridor had done so, they did not mention it.

"Sorry, Knox," said Tom Merry. "I haven't seen him since rising-bell."

"Cut off and find him, then!" snarled the prefect. "And when you find him, you can tell him from me that his career at St. Jim's is finished!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove! Has the Head appointed you in his place, dear boy?" asked Arthur Augustus innocently.

"Take five hundred lines, D'Arcy, and bring them to me by to-morrow teatime!" said Knox, between clenched teeth.

"I say, draw it mild, old man!" ejaculated Cutts of the Fifth, wiping a smear of jam off what had once been a handsome oil painting. "You don't even know for certain whether Grundy is the culprit or not, yet!"

"Yaas, wathah! I shall wefuse to do your wotten lines, Knox! You cannot vent your wotten spite on me, dear boy!"

"That's the spirit!" chirruped Monty Lowther approvingly.

Knox clenched his fists till the knuckles showed white under the skin. But he realised that he was allowing his temper to get the better of him. He had just and sufficient cause now to get Grundy a Head's flogging; with that he would be satisfied. He did not speak to Gussy again, and the swell of St. Jim's and his comrades left the Sixth Form passage and went obediently in search of Grundy.

Knox had ordered them to find him, possibly presuming that, when found, Tom Merry & Co. would bring the culprit along for judgment. Tom Merry's idea was to give Grundy a friendly warning of what was toward. If he was innocent, he would probably be grateful. The Shell captain hardly dared think of the consequences to the great George Alfred if he were not.

Meanwhile, the task of renovating Knox's study was progressing as fast as Knox and Cutts and Lefevre could make it.

The marble clock had been forced to disgorge most of the honey it had contained; but there was still sufficient left to hinder the accurate performance of its duties. It was obvious that Knox's favourite slippers were done for, and the carpet also fell into that category. The study pictures, too, had far too jammy and sticky a look to decorate the walls of a prefect's room; and Knox's new camera, it was feared, would never perform again.

"I don't think we can do much more!" said Cutts, straightening his back. Relaying Knox's carpet had been a strenuous task. "You'll have to get a lot of new things, Knox!"

"I know that!" said Knox, between his teeth. "I'll make Grundy pay every penny, if I can, too! Look at my papers and books!"

Cutts suppressed a smile as he glanced at the sooty, treacly, jammy, gummy heap which had been shoved into a corner of the study. Nearly all the contents of Knox's desk were in that heap. A number of school books that had been lying about the study were there, too. Grundy had missed little.

But he had overlooked the bookcase, apart from improving the glass doors with jam and treacle. The glass doors had been cleaned, and now the bookcase was ready to receive books again.

"I'll leave you fellows to shove those books in!" said Knox, setting his lips. "I'm much obliged for your help. I'm off now—"

"To find Grundy?" grinned Cutts.

"And take him to the Head!" said Knox grimly. "Make way, you kids!"

Knox left his study, forcing an avenue for himself, and glancing neither to right nor left. He had already run his eye eagerly over the throng, but the rugged features of George Alfred Grundy were not among them.

Grundy was not usually a much sought after youth, and Knox had never felt any pressing desire to see him before. Now, Knox would have given anything rather than deny himself the pleasure.



There was a yell of alarm from Baggy Trimble as he spotted Grundy on the staircass. "Yarooop! Help! It's Grundy!" Grundy made a jump for the fat Fourth-Former, and several fellows staggered and clutched at each other. The next moment, amid a chorus of yelps and roars, a number of them rolled over on the stairs to bump in a struggling heap at the bottom. (See Chapter 3.)

He headed for the Shell passage first. It was unlikely—highly unlikely—that Grundy would be in his study, calmly awaiting the storm. But Knox had to make certain.

He did not trouble to knock at the door of Study No. 3. He threw open the door and glanced round the study with a glance very akin to a hawk. It was bare of human habitants—quite bare.

The prefect strode along the Shell passage, looking into each study in turn, greeted in a good many cases by cheery grins from those juniors who were at home. But the breakfast bell was due in a few minutes, and most of the studies were empty.

In the Shell passage Knox drew blank. The Fourth Form corridor became his next objective, but, though he received a large amount of chaff, he did not light upon his quarry.

It was with a set jaw and a gleaming eye that Knox descended into the Hall, where a bunch of fellows were standing by the letter-rack. Wilkins and Gunn were there, but not Grundy. But Wilkins and Gunn were something. Knox bore down upon them.

"Wilkins, do you know where Grundy is?"

"We—we've parted company!" said Wilkins, looking very uncomfortable.

Knox eyed him grimly. He was not in the mood to stand on ceremony.

"If you know, say so!" he snapped. "You and Gunn are usually about with him. What do you mean? Have you had a row?"

"Yes," said Wilkins. "Gunn and I left him after coming down from dorm, and we don't know where he is at present. Come on, Gunn!"

And Wilkins and Gunn walked away rather quickly.

"What on earth is the ass up to now?" asked Gunn, as soon as they were alone.

"He said it was up against Knox. I'm glad we refused to be in it, Gunny!"

"Hear, hear!" said Gunn fervently.

Meanwhile, Knox was continuing his search with unabated energy. He combed the cloak-rooms, and glanced out into the quad. But there was no sign of George Alfred Grundy.

A suspicion came into the prefect's mind that Grundy was hiding in the cloisters—an unfrequented spot—though what he hoped to gain by remaining in hiding was a mystery. But if he was skulking in some quiet corner, Knox was grimly determined to rout him out.

He descended the School House steps and strode across the quad.

Swoosh!

For one dizzy moment Knox tottered, and then he sat down with a heavy concussion.

An over-ripe orange had landed neatly upon his nose and burst all over his face!

CHAPTER 5.

Paying the Piper!

"GROOOCH!"

Knox of the Sixth sat up.

For the moment he did not realise exactly what had happened.

He gouged orange from his eyes and his ears and his mouth, and he wriggled as he felt a trickle down his back.

It was that trickle that brought the awful truth home to him. He, a prefect in the august Sixth, had been the target of some hidden marksman! It was unthinkable; it was unbelievable; but it had occurred.

The sudden shock of meeting an orange in full flight had temporarily diverted Knox's thoughts from Grundy. Now his wrath returned in full force and with an added impetus.

It was possible for any junior, or even senior, in the whole of St. Jim's to have thrown an orange at Knox. But Knox was certain—more certain than if he had been Sherlock Holmes—that Grundy had done it.

He rose to his feet, his face almost purple with anger. He had caught the sound of a chuckle, but that might have proceeded from the group of juniors in the School House doorway.

Tom Merry & Co. were grinning, when they really ought to have been helping Knox to his feet; and at any other time

Knox would have paused to give them lines. But he spotted—or thought he spotted—a movement among the old elms in the quad, and he was off like the wind.

As Knox dashed among them he spotted a flying form, and there was a gasp of alarm.

"Oh crumbs!"
"Stop! Stop, you little scoundrel, or I'll make it the worse for you!" hissed Knox.

"Oh crikey!"
The flying form disappeared behind the tree-trunks, and Knox rushed in pursuit. His inviting offer had not been accepted, but the Sixth-Former was certain of running his victim to earth.

But the fleeing form had the advantage, and it dodged among the elms with great agility; so much so that Knox, never in the best of condition, soon had bellows to mend.

But he was close on his quarry now, and he held on. The fugitive doubled suddenly and headed for the School House. At the same moment Knox made a jump. His grasp closed on the flying junior, and they crashed down together.

"Got you!" hissed Knox exultantly.
"Yarooop! Help! Fire! Oh crikey! It—it wasn't me, Knox—"

"Wha-a-at?" ejaculated Knox, peering a little more closely at his capture.

"Oh dear! I—I really haven't had time to do the lines, you beast! I—I mean—"

"Trimble!" said Knox.

Nothing could convey the anger and disgust which Knox infused into that word. He glared at Baggy Trimble as if he had been some particularly loathsome variety of insect. Certainly he had given Trimble lines a day or two ago. But Trimble's lines did not appear an important matter to Knox just then.

He felt almost tempted to kick Trimble as he lay and wriggled, but a shout of mirth from the House caused him to spin round. A fleeing form had emerged from the cloisters, and there was no doubt as to its identity this time. Even as he watched, Grundy was taking the School House steps three at a time.

"Stop!" shouted Knox.
His infuriated command had no effect. Grundy disappeared into the House; and Knox, throwing dignity to the winds, went after him like a champion of the cinder-path.

"Look out!"
"Room for Knoxy!"

"Oh, my hat! Yarooop!"
Knox was going full speed, and he did not observe Ernest Levison. Levison went spinning aside and sat down with a roar, while Knox swept onwards on the trail of vengeance.

Grundy was mounting the staircase like a deer when Knox entered the Hall; he was in the Shell passage while Knox was negotiating the stairs. There was a thrilling finish along the Shell corridor.

The door of Study No. 3 stood open, and Grundy dashed in. He spun round to close the door, and met Knox head on. The two collided and crashed against the study table. The table rocked and overturned, and Knox and Grundy went over with it.

"Wow-wow! Mind my napper, you idiot!" hooted Grundy, as his head came into violent contact with one of the table legs.

Knox did not mind Grundy's "napper" for him. Indeed, he was probably pleased to see damage come to Grundy in any shape or form. While Grundy was still rubbing his head, Knox secured a good grip on his collar and hauled him to his feet.

"Well?" inquired Knox grimly.

Grundy glared, having recovered a little. He thought for a second of wriggling out of Knox's grasp and taking to his heels again, but he dismissed such a course as undignified. There had to be a reckoning with Knox sooner or later. And he might as well show the prefect that he did not intend to stand any "rot" at once. His reply, with those thoughts in his mind, was not meek.

"Let go of my collar, you rotter!"
Knox's eyes gleamed.

"What about ruining my study?" he exclaimed.

"Can you prove that I did it?" asked Grundy defiantly.

"You—you young scoundrel—" stuttered Knox.

If it came to that, he was not sure that he had actual proof of Grundy's guilt. But he had an overwhelming array of circumstantial evidence.

"You've caught me!" said Grundy coolly. "What are you going to do? I can tell you flat I've had just about enough of your rot lately, Knox! I don't think much of the Sixth, anyway—and you're about the worst specimen of the lot!"

If Grundy expected that frank statement to soothe Knox's savage breast, he was disappointed.

"You—you don't think much of the Sixth?" gasped Knox.

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"Weak-kneed crowd!" commented Grundy, with great calm.

Knox eyed him. He felt that if Grundy was to be dealt with adequately, some of the tortures of the Spanish Inquisition would have to be revived.

"You'll come with me to the Head!" he said at last.
"I'll come, with pleasure!" said Grundy at once. "I've told him once that I ought to be made a prefect—"

"You told him what?" ejaculated Knox.
"He didn't agree," said Grundy, more in sorrow than in anger. "But I think I shall mention the matter again. Ready when you are, Knox!"

"Come!" said Knox, setting his lips.

The procession of two had to march through a number of the Shell and Fourth, who had collected in the Head's corridor, and Wilkins and Gunn cast beseeching glances at their mighty chief.

"Grundy, old man—"

"No need to worry, Wilkins!" observed Grundy cheerily.

"But—but if you spring any of your silly rot on the Head—"

began Gunn.

"My what?" ejaculated Grundy.

"For goodness' sake, don't cheek Knox in front of the Head!"

gasped Wilkins.

"This way!" said Knox, knocking at the Head's door.

Followed by glances of the deepest interest from the juniors, the procession entered Dr. Holmes' study, in response to his "Come in."

The distance was too great to hear what was going on inside the study, but there was no lack of comment.

"I'm afraid old Grundy's for it this time!" said Tom Merry.

"He can't say he hasn't asked for it, the fathead!"

"The Head will ask him why he ragged Knox's study

and the silly ass is sure to say he disapproves of Knox, or

some potty thing!" said Wilkins.

"Knox would get into a row if Grundy told Dr. Holmes how many lickings he'd captured lately!" said Blake

practically.

"Of course he would!" said Gunn. "Anybody but Grundy

would have complained before this. Knox knew he

wouldn't be seen dead asking for a master's protection—"

"Something in that!" said Lowther. "But there's no need

to put on a lot of swank instead, as Grundy does. Hallo!

What's that?"

It was the sound of a steady swishing that the juniors

could hear. They did not need telling what it meant.

"Grundy's going through it!" said Tom Merry soberly.

"Poor old chap!" said Wilkins miserably. "This is the

third licking he's captured within the last day or two!"

"It's too thick!" said Gunn, frowning angrily. "Knox

ought to be exposed!"

"We'll have to take the dear man in hand for you!" said

Monty Lowther comfortingly. "Tommy will think of a

wheeze to put Knox in his place. Won't you, Tom?"

Tom Merry did not answer.

The sound of swishing had ceased, and the door of the

Head's study opened.

Knox emerged first, grinning. He walked down the

passage with a jaunty air, and gave Wilkins and Gunn a

glance as he passed.

"Better keep your pal in order in future, Wilkins!"

"You rotter!" murmured Wilkins.

Knox passed on, and Grundy appeared. He closed the

Head's door carefully behind him and walked rather un-

steadily towards his chums.

Wilkins and Gunn did not ask if he had got it bad. They

could see he had. Each of them took one arm, and Grundy

was glad of the support. Hefty fellow though he was, he

had evidently suffered a severe castigation at the hands of

Dr. Holmes.

"Come on!" said Tom Merry quietly. "Grundy isn't in

the mood for conversation just at present, you chaps!"

The juniors took the hint, and left Wilkins and Gunn to

escort their chum to the study.

Grundy did not speak on the way, and he looked very

thoughtful as he rested against the mantelpiece.

"That rotter made it pretty hot for you, I suppose?"

asked Gunn, closing the door to keep out prying eyes.

"I've been through it," said Grundy. "But I shall feel

better by to-morrow!"

"Of course you will, old chap!" agreed Wilkins, rather

surprised at that philosophical way of regarding a flogging.

Undoubtedly Grundy was right, but it was unusual for a

fellow to see the matter in that light immediately after the

infliction.

"Knox thinks he has finished with me," went on Grundy.

"He thinks he's licked me into submission."

Wilkins looked rather alarmed. His hefty frame might

be in need of a rest, but Grundy's spirit still flamed high—

too high in the opinion of Wilkins.

"Give Knox a rest, old fellow," he remarked. "He's a

bit difficult for a junior to hit at, being a prefect."

"Knox looks on himself as a prefect," said Grundy,

drawing a fine distinction that escaped Wilkins and Gunn. "But I don't!"

"That's—that's rather rot, old man!" said Gunn as gently as he could.

"It isn't rot, Gunn!" said Grundy, with a return of his usual manner. "I suppose you fellows know that in a big campaign the moment when everything seems to be going wrong comes just before the turn of the tide?"

"The darkest hour comes just before the dawn," said Gunn. "Do you mean you're going to develop a little sense by to-morrow, Grundy?"

Grundy glared—quite his old glare. Argument seemed to be acting as a stimulant on him.

"I'm aware you fellows don't know any history," he observed calmly. "But I think Hannibal, or Napoleon, or any of those military johnnies would say the same—it's no good caving in when the outlook seems black."

"I'm sure Hannibal or Napoleon wouldn't recommend your making a silly idiot of yourself, Grundy," said Wilkins. "It amounts to this—" said Grundy firmly. "Ow! My back aches! But I'm going on!"

Wilkins and Gunn stared mutely. Words were wasted on Grundy.

He sat down, making himself as comfortable as he could, in the armchair.

"I could do with some breakfast, if you fellows don't feel too tired to get it!" he said sarcastically. "I'm not going down to the Hall, to be grinned at. Linton won't say anything. Get a move on, you chaps! And while you're getting the brekker I'll think out my next step to down Knox."

Wilkins looked at Gunn, and Gunn looked at Wilkins. The breakfast-bell pealed, and the chums of Study No. 3 were not seen at breakfast that morning. Eggs and bacon were served to Grundy in state, what time he exercised his powerful brain in evolving the next step in his campaign.

In the Shell Form room Grundy continued thinking, unmolested by Mr. Linton. Mr. Linton tactfully ignored Grundy's breach of discipline in not presenting himself for breakfast, and he let Grundy down lightly in the Form work. All of which Grundy accepted as a matter of course. He was still thinking when the Shell were dismissed for dinner.

CHAPTER 6.

The Last Straw!

"FAG!"

Grundy heard, but he heeded not.

There was no especial reason why he should.

Two or three days had elapsed since Grundy had been hauled before the Head and flogged. Even Grundy had felt the need of a rest ere he resumed hostilities against Knox.

It was Wednesday, and a half-holiday. Grundy and his chums, Wilkins and Gunn, were standing in the open doorway of the School House, arguing. At least, Grundy was doing most of the talking. Wilkins and Gunn were filling their usual roles of humble listeners while Grundy exercised his lower jaw.

Gunn favoured the pictures, and Wilkins had a predilection for a cycle spin. But Grundy had decided in favour of a long ramble, whereafter there was really little more to be said.

It was not surprising that he failed even to notice the call of "Fag!" Wilkins and Gunn were occupying all his attention.

"You fellows agree, then?" inquired Grundy. "A good long tramp will do us good!"

"Oh, if you like!" said Gunn.

"Not much choice, if you've made up your mind!" grunted Wilkins.

"Fag!"

"Who's that keeps yelling for a fag?" ejaculated Grundy, looking round. "There's plenty of fags out there in the quad!"

"Grundy, didn't you hear me calling you?"

Wilkins and Gunn turned, and their gaze followed that of their leader. It was Knox who had been calling for a fag, and he was standing close behind them. His expression suggested that he was in a bad temper, but even Knox could hardly blame them for the fact that no fag had answered his call.

"I called for a fag!" said Knox tartly. "You heard me plain enough, Grundy!"

"I dare say I did!" said Grundy. "What about it? I'm not supposed to fetch you a fag when you want one, am I?"

"Don't be a bully, Knox!" said Tom Merry, who was standing near. "Grundy didn't annoy you in any way!"

"If you want a hundred lines, you've only got to say so, Merry!" observed Knox smoothly. "Grundy, I was speaking to you. I want a fag for the afternoon. The kid I usually have is ill, or something!"

"Young Gibson, you mean?" asked Wilkins.

"Yes."

"He's not ill. I saw him go out of gates with some other kids ten minutes ago," said Wilkins dryly.

Knox bit his lip.

"Well, he's not here!" he exclaimed, his eyes gleaming. "And somebody has got to get my tea ready. I'm bringing a few friends in. You'll do, Grundy. A good spread, mind. If it's not satisfactory, I shall hold you responsible!"

There was a chuckle from the fellows near enough to hear, and Wilkins and Gunn could not help grinning. The matter was serious—deadly serious. The Shell did not fag in any circumstances whatsoever. But the expression on Grundy's face was worth seeing.

He stared, and gulped, and began to glare before replying.

"Are you asking me to fag for you, Knox?" he asked at length, in a dangerously calm voice.

"No. I'm ordering you to," responded Knox coolly. "As a prefect, I command you to prepare tea in my study by half-past four. If it isn't done, I shall punish you severely!"

"Of all the nerve!" breathed Lowther.

"Sheer cheek!" added Manners.

"Because he's got Grundy into the Head's bad books, he thinks he can bully him to his heart's content!" said Blake. "If I were Grundy I wouldn't stand it!"

Blake's remark was audible, and Knox coloured a little. But his eyes were still fixed on Grundy, who stood irresolute. Knox let his ashplant slip down into his hand, in readiness for an outbreak. It was hardly to be expected that Grundy, of all fellows, would take such an insult lying down.

For the Shell to fag was unheard of, and Knox knew it. But in his capacity of prefect, he could give any orders he chose, and theoretically the juniors were bound to obey them. Prefects were expected to respect the unwritten laws of the school, but evidently Knox was making an exception in his own favour.

"I—I say, old chap—" began Wilkins, touching Grundy's arm rather gingerly. He hardly knew what to advise his chum to do, but he felt that open resistance would be playing right into the enemy's hands.

"I ordered you to go to my study, Grundy!" said Knox.

Grundy met the prefect's glance, and for a moment Knox's determination faltered. There was a look in Grundy's eye that he did not like.

But at Grundy's reply there was quite a sensation.

"Very well, Knox. I'm going."

Knox stared, and then he smiled. He tucked his ashplant under his arm again. He had rather looked forward to using it, but after all, this complete submission was good for his future authority. If Grundy took his orders without a murmur, less unruly mortals would scurry at his frown.

"Get a move on, then!" he snapped ungraciously. "I can't have my fag wasting time when there's work to be done. You can clean the grate if you've any time on your hands, Grundy!"

"C-clean the grate?" gasped Grundy, his face taking on a purple shade.

"You might dust the place, too," said Knox thoughtfully. "You'll pay for anything you break, remember."

"Yes, Knox," responded Grundy meekly, though his eyes showed plainly enough how he felt.

"That'll be all," said Knox kindly. "I'm going out now. Tea at half-past four, sharp!"

"Yes, Knox!" breathed Grundy.

The prefect grinned complacently, and turned to the door. But he paused and glanced over his shoulder.

"You'll take a hundred lines for impertinence, Merry—and you as well, Blake!"

"Oh, my hat!"

And with a sour grin on his narrow features, Knox strode off on his afternoon jaunt with Monteith and Webb, of the New House.

In the Hall, fellows gathered round Grundy in great excitement. Fagging a Shell fellow—even if he was only Grundy—was an offence against the Form, and Tom Merry's look was grim as he spoke to Grundy.

"You won't do it, of course, old man? If Knox has the cheek to make a fuss, Railton will jolly soon tell him the Shell don't fag!"

Grundy smiled—a smile which he had worn since Knox left the House, and which gave his chums dismal forebodings. When Grundy smiled like that he had usually set his mind on something more than usually reckless. He smiled reassuringly at Tom Merry.

"Don't worry, Merry. I'm handling Knox without anybody's help. I've got a wheeze!"

"H'm!"

"We know what Grundy's wheezes are like!" said Lowther expressively.

"Leave it to Tom Merry, as Form captain!" said Noble.

"If it's too big a job for me to handle, it isn't likely that

Tom Merry could do much, is it?" asked Grundy. "Knox will have the surprise of his life when he comes home. Leave it at that."

And, though their curiosity was far from appeased, the juniors could get nothing more out of Grundy. He insisted on carrying his own scheme into execution first, and there must be an end to the matter till the nature of the scheme became known.

He repaired at once to his study, taking Wilkins and Gunn with him, and then, after a few preparations he led them to the Sixth Form passage.

Kildare was coming out of his study as Grundy entered Knox's, and he stared.

"Playing a little jape during Knox's absence?" he inquired genially.

"Nunno. Fagging for Knox!" explained Grundy.

"What? You—fagging?" gasped Kildare.

"Prefect's orders," said Wilkins. "Honest Injun, Knox ordered Grundy to fag for him, Kildare!"

"Well, I'm blowed!" ejaculated Kildare. "This just about takes the biscuit. Mind you don't get up to any tricks while I'm down at cricket!"

And Kildare, still surprised, walked on.

"Good!" breathed Grundy. "He's playing cricket with the rest of the Sixth. We shall have the place to ourselves."

"What on earth are you going to do?" asked Gunn.

"If you get up to any japes, Knox will be down on you like a ton of bricks!"

"Knox has asked for it!" said Grundy judicially. "He can't grumble if a fellow gives it to him."

"He will, though," objected Wilkins. "Refuse to fag if you like, but don't start ragging like you did before, or you'll be bunked from the school next time!"

"The worst of you, George Wilkins—"

"Chuck it, old man!"

"Is that you're all jaw, like a sheep's head!" said Grundy. "I believe I've mentioned that before. Shut up, and give a really brainy fellow a chance to think!"

Wilkins breathed hard and deep, but he subsided. It was a waste of breath to argue with Grundy. While their chief got to work, Wilkins and Gunn stood back and watched.

As they watched their eyes opened, and they gasped.

Grundy's methods were drastic. He had wrecked Knox's study once before, and made a good job of it. But, compared to what overtook the study now, the former wrecking had been but a passing zephyr.

All the Sixth, with the possible exception of one or two swots at a distance, being on the playing fields, there was no necessity for absolute silence. Grundy had poured honey into Knox's handsome marble clock on the former occasion. He dealt with it in a more summary manner now. A shove landed the marble clock in the fender, where it fell with a crash and ceased to tick, probably for ever. It was the work of a moment to sweep the mantelpiece free of ornaments. Two vases splintered on the coal-scuttle, and the fragments flew all over the study. Grundy picked up the poker from the grate. He intended to start in real earnest now. Grundy was beginning to enjoy himself, which was more than could be said for Wilkins and Gunn.

"You—you blithering fathead!" gasped Wilkins, grasping his chum's shoulder. "You'll do quids' and quids' worth of damage if you go on like this!"

Grundy nodded.

"I intend to!" he remarked coolly.

"But you'll be bunked!" said Gunn. "For goodness' sake chuck this silly rot while there's time! You could tell Knox the clock was an accident—"

Grundy drew a deep breath.

He eyed his chums grimly. He had had a lot to put up with lately. He felt that. It was the last straw when his chums turned on him in this manner. He clenched his fists.

"If you don't like the way I'm fagging for Knox you can clear out, Wilkins and Gunn! Take your choice. Shut up and help, or hop outside! Pretty rotten pals you chaps are, and no mistake. Which is it to be?"

Wilkins opened his mouth to reply, but Gunn turned to the door.

"If Grundy wants to ask for the sack, let him!" he said grimly.

"But—but he's not really responsible for his actions, you know!" urged Wilkins.

Gunn paused.

"Perhaps you're right, Wilky," he agreed. "Let's take him back to the study to cool down."

"It's for your own good, you know, Grundy," said Wilkins, as he and Gunn advanced on their leader.

Grundy's eyes gleamed. Between them Wilkins and Gunn could have handled Grundy once they had deter-

mined upon it. But Grundy did not wait to be "handled." He made a sudden rush.

Wilkins and Gunn were taken quite unawares. Grundy's famous right landed on Wilkins' eye, and Gunn went reeling back from his left. Grundy flung open the door and shoved his chums into the passage. He slammed and locked the door before either of them had a chance to recover. There was a hammering on the panels, at which Grundy smiled.

"Let us in, you silly idiot!"

"Nothing doing, Wilkins!"

"You'll be expelled, you lunatic!"

Grundy did not trouble to reply, and the remarks of his faithful henchmen ceased. Grundy, for his part, was fully occupied during the next half-hour.

When he left, Knox's study presented a scene of almost unique desolation. The bookcase was on its side, the glass front lying in splinters about the room. The chairs were no longer chairs, but had been resolved into their component legs and seats and spars again. The table was upside-down, and most of the study furniture lay in a heap on top of it.

Knox was rather proud of his set of crockery. If he had the patience to collect and stick together each little piece into which Grundy had broken it, he might still remain proud of it. But he had a long task before him to collect the fragments.

Grundy had gone the whole hog, sparing nothing. Ink and gum and treacle decorated the walls, and not one of the prefect's books had remained untouched. When he had finished Grundy regarded the scene with satisfaction. He felt that the deadly insult offered to him by Knox was wiped out—that the score, if anything, was on his side.

With a last look at the debris, Grundy left the study, thoughtfully locking the door behind him. Locking the door would not postpone the reckoning indefinitely, but it would postpone it. And time was of value to George Alfred Grundy just then.

CHAPTER 7. Grundy's Way!

"H E'S coming!"

"Eh? Who is?"

Wilkins and Gunn looked quite startled as they beheld Baggy Trimble in the study doorway. Trimble was grinning, and he made the announcement to the accompaniment of a fat chuckle. Whoever was coming appeared to afford Baggy Trimble some amusement.

"Choke it up, you fat idiot!" ejaculated Gunn, jumping to his feet. "Is it Knox?"

Trimble chortled afresh. He knew quite well the reason for Gunn's anxiety. He had not secured the pseudonym of Paul Pry of the Lower School for nothing, and he had been at a discreet distance—a witness of Grundy's argument with his chums in the doorway of Knox's study. He really could not help chortling at the expression on Gunn's face.

But he broke off suddenly and emitted a fiendish howl as Gunn, losing patience, grasped him by the shoulders and bumped his bullet head against the doorpost.

"Ow! Wow! Yaroooh! You cad! Ow!"

"Tell us who's coming, you fat clam!" hissed Wilkins. "It must be Knox. We're for it, Gunny. He won't believe we didn't have a hand in Grundy's fool tricks."

"Yow-wow-wow! I won't tell you now, you rotters! Yoooop!"

Perhaps the strain of Grundy's companionship during the last week was beginning to tell on Gunn. But he was evidently indisposed to stand on ceremony with Trimble. Baggy's head banged against the doorpost, and he roared. But he realised that it was time to part with his information.

"Grundy, you chumps! Grundy's coming! I saw him leave Knox's study, grinning like a hyena. I bet he's made an awful mess of the place. And you fellows funkled helping him. He, he, he!"

Wilkins and Gunn, hardly hearing the gibe, drew breath again. They would at least hear to what extent Grundy's foolhardiness had led him, ere they were called upon to face the music.

Grundy's heavy step sounded in the passage, and Trimble backed out of the study. He did not leave the Shell corridor, however. While keyholes were put in study doors Trimble was never likely to remain ignorant of anything he wanted to know.

Wilkins and Gunn had no attention to waste on Trimble. They fixed their gaze on Grundy as he entered the study, expecting to be called over the coals for their desertion. But Grundy's greeting showed that he had already forgotten that little matter.

"I've done it!"

"Oh dear!"

"Knox's study looks as if a cyclone has just been through it!" said Grundy impressively.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Or a tornado!" added Grundy.

"You idiot!"

"What?"

"Oh, you fathead!" groaned Wilkins. "Can't you realise that directly Knox reports this to the Head you'll be flogged and very likely expelled as well?"

"Rot!" said Grundy decidedly.

"But it isn't rot!" roared Gunn excitedly. "You can't rag prefects' studies just when you like, you fearful chump!"

"It's no good jawing! He's done it now!" said Wilkins hopelessly.

"Do you think I went into this without thinking the whole thing out first, George Wilkins?" inquired Grundy, with a glare.

His chums stared. It was news to them that Grundy had reflected on the matter at all. How any fellow could do what Grundy had done in cold blood was more than Wilkins and Gunn could imagine.

"Oh! You mean to say you thought about it?" asked Gunn.

"Of course!" said Grundy crushingly. "I know as well as you fellows that Knox will be waxy—"

"Waxy!" murmured Wilkins. "He'll be raving!"

"But I've got all my plans cut and dried," continued Grundy firmly. "I've been expecting this dispute between Knox and myself to come to a head, and now it's happened I'm ready. You fellows remember I laid in supplies from the tuckshop after dinner."

"I thought you were stocking for a siege, or a house-warming, at least!" grinned Gunn. "You must have spent all your ready cash I should imagine."

Grundy nodded.

"I've got enough grub here to last us three a week or more," he announced calmly.

"What the thump—" Wilkins stared. An awful thought had entered his mind. The same thought appeared to have entered Gunn's. They both eyed Grundy with some trepidation.

"If you fellows watch you'll see what I mean to do," said Grundy, with the utmost calm.

"But—" began Gunn.

"You see—" commenced Wilkins.

"Watch!" said Grundy. "There's nothing for you fellows to do except obey orders. I've done all the thinking, as the only fellow with any brains in the study."

"You—you—" gasped Gunn.

But Grundy did not heed. He had an important task on hand, and he had no time to waste.

While Wilkins and Gunn watched in silence, Grundy opened the cupboard and brought out his tool-chest. He extracted a screwdriver therefrom and selected with great care four long, strong screws.

The door of the study was shut. Grundy stood in front of it and began coolly to drive one of the long screws into the woodwork. He worked swiftly and efficiently with screws and screwdriver. There were few things that Grundy could do, but he could drive screws—and his chums had ample evidence of that fact now.

When Grundy turned from the door he seemed a little surprised at the looks which Wilkins and Gunn gave him. From Grundy's point of view everything was going satisfactorily; there was really nothing for brainless fellows like Wilkins and Gunn to look excited about. But Wilkins and Gunn were looking excited—very excited indeed. The terrible suspicion that had flashed into their minds had become a certainty. And, for once, there was open mutiny in Study No. 3.

"Do you think—" began Wilkins.

"We're jolly well not going—" interrupted Gunn.

Grundy held up his hand.

"One at a time," he remarked calmly.

"What does this silly rot mean?" demanded Wilkins grimly.

"Yes—what fool game are you up to now, Grundy?" inquired Gunn. "Whatever it is, it's got to stop! We've had enough!"

"My dear idiots," began Grundy patiently. "I should have thought even you chaps could have seen the idea by this time. It's a barring-out!"

"Just what I thought!" breathed Gunn.

"And we let him screw up the door without saying a word!" added Wilkins. "I wonder what the prize lunatic will think of next?"

"We're holding the fort here until Knox caves in and apologises!" observed Grundy determinedly. "He's got to apologise for the way he has treated me lately—and I shall insist on having a trial as a prefect. I think I deserve that for suffering Knox's persecution with such patience. When

the Head sees the stand I've taken he'll realise that I mean business. There's no need whatever for you fellows to worry. We shall be out of here in a day, at the most."

"We're going out of this study this afternoon!" said Wilkins. "Of all the potty imbeciles, you take the cake, Grundy! Chuck over that screwdriver!"

"What did you say, George Wilkins?" ejaculated Grundy.

"If you want to keep up this idiotic rot you can do it—by yourself!" snapped Wilkins. "We're going outside now!"

"You—you're actually going to desert me?" hooted Grundy.

Wilkins did not reply. He was already busy with the screwdriver, undoing Grundy's handiwork. Gunn sorted out a second screwdriver from the chest, and he joined Wilkins at the door.

Grundy gasped. His chums were acting just as if he did not exist. He—George Alfred Grundy—was ignored, and in his own study. It was more than flesh and blood could be expected to stand.

"How are you getting on, Grundy?"

"One out, so far. The idiot put them in tight enough, confound him!" grunted Gunn.

"There's another one!" said Wilkins, with satisfaction.

Grundy glared, and his massive jaw set in its most truculent expression. It was a time for action, not words.

He strode forward.

Wilkins was working industriously at his task, and a third screw was half out of the thick wood. Gunn was devoting his attention to the fourth and last, and he had no eyes for Grundy.

But both Wilkins and Gunn became aware of his presence when their coat-collars were rudely grasped, and their heads met with a terrific concussion.

"Yaroooh! Oh, my hat!"

"You fool, Grundy!" hissed Gunn. Gunn was hurt, and he did not feel inclined to mix his words.

"You're going to put those screws in again—quick!" said Grundy, in his grimmest tone.

"We'll—we'll brain you, you fooling chump!" roared Wilkins.

He leaped on Grundy, and Gunn leaped with him. If they made up their minds to it, it was within the power of Wilkins and Gunn to "handle" even the hefty Grundy with success—and they meant to handle him on this occasion—hard!

But Grundy, in addition to his deadly determination, had fortune on his side. He sent Wilkins spinning into a corner with a drive that would have doubled up many a better man; and Gunn, for a few moments, bore the full brunt of Grundy's wrath. The conflict was fierce, but brief. It ended with Gunn sitting on the floor in a dazed fashion, feebly dabbing at a streaming nose. Wilkins, with some show of spirit, returned to the attack, but that first terrific slog had told on him. He was knocked right and left, and finished on the floor beside Gunn.

Grundy stood over them victoriously, breathing hard, but practically untouched. He did not like to deal with his chums in this manner, but he felt that they had asked for it.

"Well?" he inquired grimly. "Is there going to be a barring-out, or not?"

"Ow! Yes! Anything you like!" gasped Wilkins.

"We're in for it!" murmured Gunn dismally. "We may as well make the best of it!"

Unwillingly Wilkins and Gunn screwed up the door again.

"If either of you had a grain of sense, I shouldn't have had to lick you!" said Grundy kindly. "Sit down and shut up, now. I've got a declaration to draw up!"

Wilkins blinked, with a rather swollen eye, but he had no energy to ask for an explanation. He and Gunn spent the next few minutes recuperating. Grundy, on the other hand, sat down at the table and drew pen and paper towards him. He chewed the handle of the pen for some moments and then began to write.

"I think that will do," he said at length. "What do you fellows think—not that your opinions are much use, of course?"

"Of course!" agreed Wilkins, glancing over Grundy's handiwork. "Oh, my hat! Is that how you spell 'declaration'?"

"Now I didn't ask for cheek!" said Grundy, breathing hard. "If either of you want a thick ear, you've only got to criticise my spelling!"

"Perfect!" said Wilkins hastily.

"Unique!" supplemented Gunn, perhaps with more truth.

"Now to stick it on the outside of the study," said Grundy cheerily. "For all the school to see."

"Going to unscrew the door again?" asked Wilkins, with a gleam of hope.

"Fathead!" retorted Grundy. "There's sure to be a fellow in the passage."

He thumped on the panels of the door and shouted. A voice answered—a voice that, as a matter of fact, had never been far away from Study No. 3 since Grundy had entered it.

"Hallo! That you, Grundy?"

"Yes, you fat bounder! I'll bet you've been listening at the keyhole. Have you?"

"What do you want?" asked Trimble, ignoring that question.

"I'm going to shove a declaration under the door. I want you to stick it on your side of the door. We're holding a barring-out in here."

"More fools you!" observed Trimble candidly.

"What?" roared Grundy.

"If I were Wilkins and Gunn I should brain you, Grundy!" went on Trimble, happy in the knowledge that the door of Study No. 3 was securely fastened. "Though that would be a job, wouldn't it, seeing that you haven't any brains, what? He, he, he!"

Grundy crimsoned, but he suppressed his wrath. Wilkins and Gunn looked almost cheerful.

"Buck up! I haven't time to hang about," urged Trimble, safe on the other side of the door. "I've got to see a fellow."

"Bung this up now, then!" breathed Grundy, pushing a large sheet of paper under the study door.

Trimble picked it up with great interest, and he chuckled unmusically as he read the declaration.

"You can't spell for toffee, Grundy!" he ejaculated. "Fancy spelling 'apology' with a 'g'!"

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

"There's two 'p's' and two 'l's' in 'apology'!" said Trimble seriously. "Shall I alter it for you, Grundy?"

"No! Leave it as it is!" hooted Grundy. "Bung it up and leave it alone, you fat clam!"

"I'm not at all sure that I ought to fag for the Shell," said Trimble, with a very thoughtful air.

Grundy spluttered wildly, but he slid half-a-crown under the door. Trimble received it with a fat grin.

"Make it five bob and I'll do it!" he said coolly.

"You—you—you fat bandit!" stuttered Grundy. "Bung it up!"

"Right-ho, old man!"

Grundy swallowed the "old man" as best he could, and listened while the job was done. He had slid some drawing-pins under with the paper, and even Trimble could not make a botch of pinning up a notice.

"Done it!" announced Trimble. "It looks a regular startler, Grundy."

"Good! Cut off, then, kid!"

Grundy turned a pleased glance towards Wilkins and Gunn. But Wilkins and Gunn were not so pleased. They were full of dismal apprehensions.

CHAPTER 8. Deserters!

"**B**LESS my soul!" There was both astonishment and anger in Mr. Linton's usually mild exclamation.

"The impertinent young scoundrel!" That observation came from Knox.

Knox of the Sixth had enjoyed his stroll out of gates that sunny afternoon. He had returned at peace with the world, feeling quite kindly disposed even towards Grundy. He expected to find the study swept and garnished, so to speak, and a spread laid out in honour of his two visitors, Monteith and Webb.

What he had found had sent Knox into a towering rage; indeed, it was well for him that his language on observing the state of his study had not reached the ears of a master.

Monteith and Webb had done their best to calm him; Knox even suspected that they saw something funny in the affair—something quite hidden from Knox himself.

Knox had calmed down sufficiently to fetch Grundy's Form master on the scene; Mr. Railton, the Housemaster, being out. Mr. Linton had been shocked at the wreckage of Knox's study, though not nearly so shocked as Knox. And now, standing outside the screwed-up door of Study No. 3, Mr. Linton and Knox were reading the startling declaration which Trimble had pinned there.

It was a striking notice, though not one that Mr. Linton, as Grundy's Form master, could feel very proud of. The spelling was Grundy's own.

OYESS!

This is a
DEKLARASHUN!

I, George Alfred Grundy, hereby DEKLARE that I will not come out of this study till Knox of the Sixth has APOLOGISED and I have been promised a trial as PREFEKT!

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,009.

"The boy must be mad!" ejaculated Mr. Linton, placing his glasses a little more firmly on his nose. "Tear down that utterly ridiculous effusion, Knox!"

"Certainly, sir!"

A score of juniors had seen that notice, and grinned over it. They had retreated now to a respectful distance, and Knox tore down Grundy's "deklarashun" with satisfaction.

"The Head must deal with Grundy," said Mr. Linton, pursing his lips. "I understand that he has already been punished severely for—ahem—wrecking your study on a former occasion, Knox?"

"The Head flogged him, sir," said Knox sourly. "It



"Bai Jove, you know," gasped Arthur Augustus, screwing his eyes a treacly compound out of his carpet slippers, "the fellow who gleamed. "Yes," he snarled, "wait until

doesn't seem to have had any effect on the young rascal. He's asking to be expelled!"

"That is for Dr. Holmes to decide," said Mr. Linton. He rapped sharply on the panels of Study No. 3. "Grundy!"

There was no reply for a moment, but then Grundy's voice came back, respectfully enough.

"Yes, sir? I'm here."

"I have read your ridiculous announcement on this door, Grundy. It has been taken down. You are a very foolish boy, Grundy."

There was no answer to that.

"You will open this door at once!" continued Mr. Linton severely. "I have tried it, but it is locked."

The juniors hung with bated breath on the pause which followed.

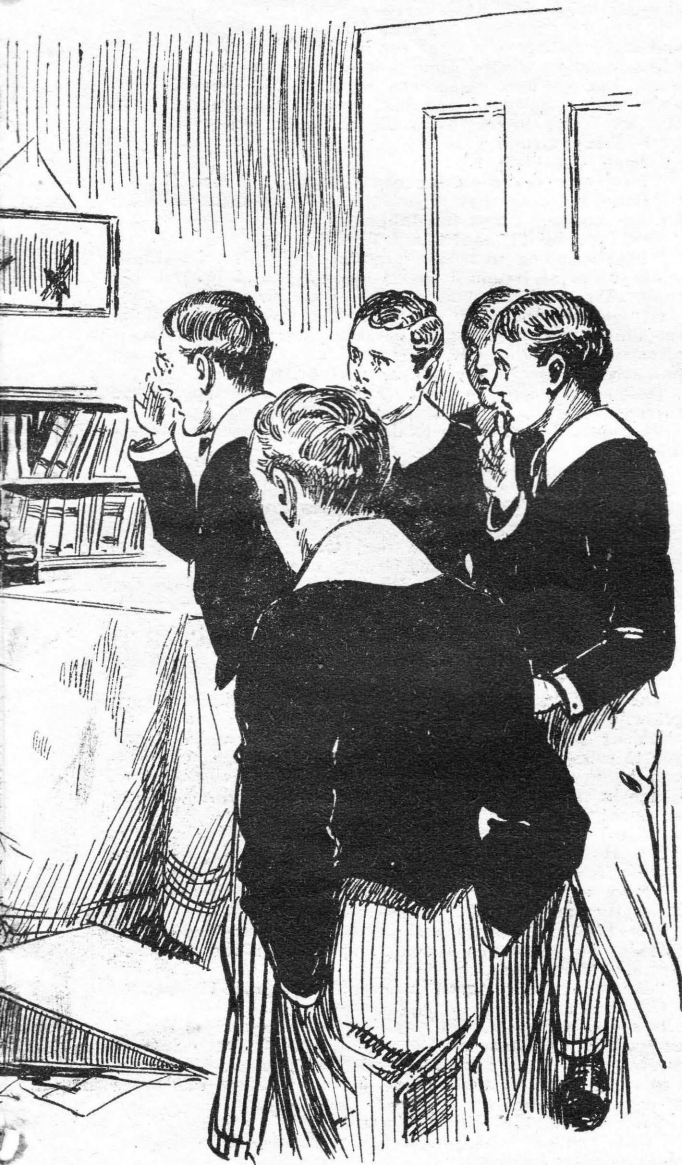
"Sorry, sir!"

"I beg your pardon, Grundy?"

"I said sorry, sir!" repeated Grundy from inside his study. "I mean what I wrote on my declaration. I'm not coming out till I'm given a trial run as a prefect, and Knox must apologise for the caddish way he has treated me lately. Those are my terms, sir, and I'm not budging from them!"

"If I had you out here—" muttered Knox.

"Do you realise that you are setting up in defiance of



Press more firmly into his eye to get a better view of Knox emptying responsible for this is goin' to pay the pipah!" Knox's eyes catch the young villain!" (See Chapter 4.)

authority, Grundy?" ejaculated Mr. Linton. "This is nothing less than open rebellion!"

"We're sticking it, sir. I think my demands are reasonable."

"You are not alone in this—this foolish enterprise?"

"Wilkins and Gunn are helping me, sir. We've got food enough for a siege, if necessary!"

"Bless my soul! Wilkins!"

"Y-yes, sir?"

"Cannot you persuade Grundy to abandon this tomfoolery, Wilkins?"

"I jolly well wish I could, sir!"

"What? You traitor, George Wilkins!" roared Grundy.

There was the sound of a bump and a crash from inside the study.

"Grundy! How dare you ill-treat Wilkins because he refuses to participate in your lawlessness? It will be the worse for you when you are dealt with. Gunn!"

"Anything to say, Gunny?" came Grundy's voice.

Mr. Linton compressed his lips. His eyes gleamed at the closed door, but there was nothing to be done. He turned a set glance on the group of juniors at the end of the corridor.

"All boys who do not belong to this passage will disperse at once," he said. Then, turning to Knox: "Come, my boy. We will lay the matter before Dr. Holmes. Perhaps he will be able to bring this unruly lad to order!"

Mr. Linton and Knox had barely left the Shell passage ere there was a buzzing group round the door of Study No. 3.

"They've gone, Grundy!" squeaked Trimble, who had taken cover in Tom Merry's study. "I heard Linton say he was going to fetch the Head. Are you going to defy the Head?"

"Let 'em all come!" responded Grundy recklessly. "I'm holding the fort at all costs, and Wilkins and Gunn are awfully keen to back me up—aren't you, chaps?"

The juniors chuckled as they heard Wilkins' and Gunn's plaintive reply.

"You won't have the Head to deal with for a bit," called Blake. "I happen to know he's gone to play chess with the vicar. He won't be home till late; but Railton is sure to come up."

"Cave! Here he is!"

The vicinity of Study No. 3 was untenanted when Mr. Railton, fresh from his afternoon stroll, reached it, in company with Knox and the master of the Shell. Mr. Railton's expression showed that he was not inclined to stand any "cheek" from Grundy, though how he proposed to get at him was something of a mystery.

"Grundy! Boy!"

"Is that you, Mr. Railton?"

"It is I. I have learned from Mr. Linton that you have some foolish intention of defying authority."

"Only until my merits are recognised, sir!" interrupted Grundy. "I want to be appointed prefect—"

"You are not setting the example of a prefect at present," said the Housemaster tartly. "But that is beside the point. Kindly open the door at once!"

"Nothing doing, sir!"

"What—what?"

"Nothing doing, sir!"

"Very well, then, Grundy," said Mr. Railton ominously. "The matter will be left in abeyance till Dr. Holmes has been consulted. You will have the remainder of the day in which to reflect, Grundy. To-morrow, if you still persist, stronger measures will be taken. But you will be well advised to submit before then."

"Never, sir!"

Mr. Railton said no more. He left the Shell passage in an uproar. Grundy's barring-out was the subject of excited discussion on all sides, and the rebel chief, as Monty Lowther playfully nicknamed Grundy, had a constant stream of callers at his door. Tom Merry and his chums were among the first.

"How goes it, Grundy? Wilkins and Gunn still backing you up like wildfire?" chortled Monty Lowther.

Grundy ignored Monty's question. But he wanted to speak to Tom Merry.

"I say, Merry, will you shove up a new notice if I push it under the door? That rotter Knox tore the other one down!"

"If you like," answered Tom Merry good-naturedly. "I'd advise you, as a pal, to chuck this silly rot while there's time, though. Once the Head gets on your trail it'll be the push for certain, old man!"

"Fiddlesticks!" responded Grundy. "I've just finished a fresh notice that everybody can see."

"Let me shove it under the door, old chap," sounded the voice of Wilkins. "It'll save you getting up."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Monty Lowther.

A paper appeared from under Grundy's door, and Tom Merry stooped and picked it up. As he did so, a smaller sheet, hidden under it, fluttered to the floor.

"Thanks, Wilkins! All serene, Merry!" called Grundy.

"A secret message!" whispered Lowther. "Look! Wilkins wants us to help him and Gunny escape!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's all the cackle about?" inquired Grundy.

"Your notice; it's so funny, old man!" said Monty Lowther blandly. "Stick it up, Tommy!"

Tom Merry pinned up Grundy's new "deklarashun"—an exact copy of the original—and then the Terrible Three repaired to Study No. 10 to peruse Wilkins' appeal in secret.

"They're getting reckless," grinned Lowther, as they finished the appeal. "But we'll rally round like true pals. What do you fellows say?"

"They're best out of it," agreed Tom Merry. "No need for Grundy to drag them into his potty rot."

And so it was settled.

At lights out that night a keen observer might have noticed that the Terrible Three did not undress completely before slipping into bed. When half-past ten chimed from the old clock-tower, Tom Merry and his chums arose, and crept forth from the dormitory, bearing with them an improvised rope, composed of several sheets knotted securely together.

They reached the quad, via the box-room window, without mishap. The windows of the Shell studies on Grundy's side of the passage looked out on a shadowy portion of the quad, which was all the better for the purpose of the Terrible Three.

Tom Merry took a handful of pebbles and tossed them lightly against the window of Study No. 3, and was answered almost immediately by a glimmer from a bicycle lamp. Then the window was pushed up, slowly and cautiously, and a dim form could be described in the opening.

"Catch!" called Tom Merry softly.

The rope of sheets, weighted at the end, flew through the air, and Wilkins made a good catch at his end. It was the work of a few moments only to fasten it to a leg of the study table, and then Wilkins could be seen clambering out on to the sill. He shinned rapidly down the rope, and gave a gasp of relief as his feet landed on terra firma.

"If Gunny doesn't wake the bounder, we're out!" he murmured.

Gunn, if anything, was more cautious than Wilkins, and he lighted in the quad at last.

"We shall have to leave the sheets," grinned Monty Lowther. "But it's worth it to see you two revolutionaries out of the soup!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's awfully sporting of you fellows!" said Wilkins gratefully. "Goodness only knows how that blithering ass will get out of this hole! Not that I care much."

"Nor me," added Gunn. "Look at my nose!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked and chuckled.

That night Wilkins and Gunn slept the sleep of the just in the Shell dormitory, as usual, while Grundy, oblivious of the fact that his garrison had deserted him, slumbered with equal bliss. But he was booked for a surprise in the morning.

CHAPTER 9.

Keeping It Up

CLANG, clang clang!

Grundy of the Shell opened his eyes.

He yawned and stretched, and discovered, to his surprise, that he felt chill and stiff.

"My hat! Which of you silly idiots left the window open?"

Grundy had appropriated the study armchair to sleep in, being convinced that the floor was good enough for Wilkins and Gunn. He glared round the room now, expecting to see his chums curled up in their rugs. But of Wilkins and Gunn there was no sign.

"Wilky! Gunny! Where are you?"

Grundy was getting alarmed now. The open window suggested that a raid had been made by the enemy, and his faithful henchmen spirited away in the night. Only, if that was the case, it was remarkable that they should have left Grundy himself in peace.

He leaped to the window and peered out. His jaw dropped as his gaze lighted on the rope of sheets, still dangling into the quad, and damp with the dew.

For a few seconds the horrible truth refused to sink home. But when it did Grundy fairly gasped with rage.

"Mum-mum-my hat! Wilkins! Gunn! Wait till I see you again, you rotters! Traitors, leaving a pal in the lurch! Oh, if only I had them here!"

It was perhaps just as well for Wilkins and Gunn that they were out of range, so to speak, at that moment. Grundy glared with almost homicidal fury at the sheets down which the garrison had flitted. He was about to haul them up when a well-known figure crossed the quad, and paused with a start at the sight of Grundy.

Knox had, for once, been astir before rising-bell, and he made a dash for the dangling sheets.

"Would you, you rotter? No, you jolly well don't!"

Grundy, perceiving the prefect's intention, hauled valiantly on the rope, and jerked the end out of Knox's reach. He gasped with relief at the thought of what might

have happened had an attempt to climb it been made before he woke up. The rear entrance of his fortress had been open all night, and it was fortunate indeed that Knox had only just discovered it.

"You young scoundrel! You're going to be routed out of that this morning!" hissed Knox.

"You're welcome to try!" grunted Grundy disdainfully.

Knox spun on his heel and walked away. There was nothing to be gained from parley with the rebel.

Grundy, somewhat cheered by the encounter, grinned. After all, he reflected, it would be perhaps easier to hold the fort without Wilkins and Gunn getting in his way. Doubtless their nerve had given out, he reflected; they couldn't help being weak-kneed rotters.

It was with a cheery air that Grundy lit the spirit stove and fried rashers and eggs for his breakfast. He was not without callers during that repast. He received plenty of chaff, but he was impervious to that. He paused, however, with a piece of egg half way to his mouth, when Wilkins' voice broke in on his thoughts.

"I—I say, Grundy!"

"That you, Wilky?"

"I suppose you're getting on all right, old man?"

"Better without than with you, to be candid!" retorted Grundy coolly. "You felt funky, what?"

"Oh, you idiot!" murmured Wilkins.

"They're going to break into the study after breakfast, while we're at lessons!" said Gunn. "You're booked, old chap. You can't say you haven't asked for it!"

Grundy did not deign to reply. The breakfast bell drew the juniors away, and after breakfast lessons claimed their attention. Grundy, having cleared away his own repast, prepared to receive a visit from authority.

He had not long to wait. There were footsteps in the corridor, and then Mr. Railton's stern voice.

"Grundy, I have come to demand your surrender immediately!"

"I'm sticking here, sir, till my terms—"

"There is no question of terms, you foolish boy!" interrupted Mr. Railton. "If you refuse to submit, I shall bring the Head to deal with you!"

"I mean no disrespect to the Head, sir; but I'm not knuckling under!" responded Grundy cheerfully.

"Pray inform Dr. Holmes that Grundy is still obstinate, Knox."

"Certainly, sir."

Grundy waited coolly for the arrival of the august Head of St. Jim's. His resolve was the same; only superior force would overcome it.

The Head came along the Shell passage, and spoke very gravely.

"Your headmaster is speaking to you, Grundy. I ask you to reflect. If you persist in this reckless defiance, force will be used to bring you to submission. I will deal as leniently as I am able with you if you cease this nonsense at once!"

"Are my terms agreed to, sir?"

Dr. Holmes breathed deeply. He was not used to making terms with junior boys.

"Pray use what force you consider necessary, and then bring the boy to me!" he said curtly.

The Head's footsteps had hardly died away down the corridor ere there was a deafening crash on the panels of Grundy's study door.

"By Jove! They mean business!" ejaculated Grundy.

Crash, crash!

Study doors at St. Jim's, although strong, were not of exceptional thickness, and it was obvious that the door of Study No. 3 would not stand up to that treatment for long. From the sound of the crashes, a coke hammer was being used.

"It's giving, Mr. Railton!" came Knox's voice.

"Once you have made a breach, the rest will be simple," observed Mr. Railton.

Grundy looked grimly at his door. It was shaking and shivering under the strain of Knox's blows, and as he looked there was a sudden splintering of wood.

The panel had split; and there was a gap now big enough to allow Knox to put his hand in, if he desired to. Knox's face appeared, grinning, in the opening, and he sneered as he met Grundy's glance.

"You've come to the end of your rope, my pippin!" he growled. "Another few minutes—ah! Wow! You—you dangerous maniac!"

The sneering features of the prefect had been too much for Grundy. He had not troubled to erect a barricade of furniture behind the door, but he had other methods of defence. As he had mentioned to Wilkins and Gunn, he had thought the whole matter out before embarking on his course.

As Knox opened his mouth to speak, Grundy whipped the study poker out of the fire, where it had been heating since breakfast.

Quite half of the poker was glowing red, and the tip was approaching white heat. Grundy made a rapid pass with the poker in the direction of Knox's face, and the heat from the tip almost singed the prefect's nose.

Knox leaped back with a yelp of alarm. "What is the matter, Knox?" came Mr. Railton's voice, somewhat testily. He had not seen the poker.

"That—that reckless young fool—"

"Better language, please!" said the Housemaster sharply.

"He's got a red-hot poker in there—and he jolly nearly caught me on the nose with it!" hooted Knox.

To him the poker was looming large—very large indeed. The heat from the end of it had been terrific, and Knox did not want to be disfigured for life.

"Oh! A—a poker!" repeated Mr. Railton. "The boy is utterly reckless! However, he will not have the effrontery to resist further when the door is broken down. Carry on, Knox."

"Go it, Knox!" chuckled Grundy, peering through the crack in the door. "Let me give you fair warning first, though!"

"What?"

"If you make this hole any bigger I shall take drastic measures to keep you out!" said Grundy calmly. "I'm giving you the straight tip for your own good. I mean what I say!"

"Give me the hammer, if you do not relish the task, Knox!" ejaculated the Housemaster.

Mr. Railton had served in Flanders, and brought home a souvenir in the shape of a damaged "fin," but he was willing to take a turn with the coke hammer, rather than listen to the gibes of the rebel.

"I'll have him out, sir!" gasped Knox, taking a fresh grip. "Touch me with that poker if you dare, Grundy!"

Crash!

Crash, crash!

Knox stood as far away from the door as possible this time—well out of range of Grundy and his red-hot poker. Under the smashing blows the breach lengthened, and soon there was room in the upper part of the door for Knox to insert his head and shoulders.

But he did not insert them. He took his breath a yard or more from the breach, and grinned as Grundy appeared in the opening again.

"Giving in?" grinned Knox. "It's only a matter of a few seconds if you don't!"

Grundy might have been expected to look rather worried at the progress which the enemy was making. Once the door was down—and that, as Knox had said, was merely a matter of moments—his resistance was at an end.

But Grundy did not look worried. His face was a little grim, that was all.

"Hands up!" he rapped.

Both Knox and Mr. Railton started violently.

Grundy's sharp command was totally unanticipated; and his attitude was, to say the least, alarming.

He held a water-pistol, and it was aimed directly at Knox. Fortunately for Grundy, the harmless water-pistol looked uncommonly like the real thing. It certainly alarmed Gerald Knox.

Grundy held the "gun" unwaveringly, and his eyes gleamed down the barrel.

"Hands up! And sharp!" he repeated, curling his finger round the trigger.

"Grundy! Boy!" thundered Mr. Railton. "What does this mean? Have you taken leave of your senses?"

"Not at all, sir!" responded Grundy smoothly. "I'm holding the fort, that's all. I should be sorry to let fly at you, sir—"

"Bless my soul!"

"Or at Knox, either. But it must be understood that I'm not here for a joke, sir. You can clear off as soon as you like, Mr. Railton!"

"Why, I'll—I'll smash you!" roared Knox, leaping forward.

"Keep back!" ordered Grundy, with the water-pistol aimed full at Knox. "I shall catch you on the waistcoat if you come any closer! I mean that!"

"Oh!" ejaculated Knox.

He jumped back quite quickly.

Mr. Railton, usually a master of resource, seemed equally at a loss. He did not believe—he could not believe—that Grundy would have "nerve" enough to fire if he approached nearer. And had the Housemaster known that the glinting weapon was just a harmless water-pistol things might have been different. Unfortunately for Mr. Railton, he did not know.

"I—I do not see what we can do, sir!" gasped Knox.

"Nor, at the precise moment, do I!" said Mr. Railton very thoughtfully. "If Grundy were foolish enough to fire—"

Grundy grinned, but his aim remained steady. He was

(Continued overleaf.)



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ready—quite eager, in fact—to let fly at Knox. The matter, naturally, did not appear quite so serious to him as it did to those whom he covered.

"I'll—I'll tell the Head, sir?" volunteered Knox, keen to get away. He had an uneasy feeling that Grundy might be tempted to pay off old scores if he remained much longer.

Mr. Railton nodded, and Knox hurried away. The House-master, with a pink flush in his cheeks, followed him.

Grundy forbore chivalrously to chuckle.

With a pistol at close quarters there was really no room for argument. And Mr. Railton, who had faced the "Boche" in the trenches with the utmost calm, left the scene with a heightened colour.

There was no doubt that Grundy was showing up quite unexpectedly as a man of brains as well as brawn!

CHAPTER 10.
The Head's Decision!

THROUGH the breach in the door of Study No. 3 Grundy beheld a mob of juniors, and he grinned. Morning classes were over, and there had been an immediate rush to see if Grundy was still going strong, or whether he had left St. Jim's, inconspicuously in charge of a master.

General opinion rather tended towards the latter view, and Grundy's grinning features were greeted with a yell.

"Good old Grundy!"

"What's happened?"

"How did you keep them out, old man?"

George Alfred's grin became broader. This, he felt, was a moment worth living for. The fellows would have to admit that he had handled his campaign up to the present with unexampled coolness and generalship.

"Seen Knox, you chaps?" he asked, with a chuckle. "I think I gave Knox rather a turn."

"Spill the news, old man!" urged Lowther. "We're dying to hear the details of the great siege! Your door looks as if it has stood something!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Knox and Railton tried to get in," said Grundy. "But I don't think they'll come back in a hurry. I threatened to shoot 'em—"

"What?"

"With a water-pistol!" continued Grundy calmly. "You fellows would never have thought of a thing like that! You ought to have seen Knox's expression when I aimed at his waistcoat—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've told you chaps before that I've got practically all the brains in the Shell," said Grundy modestly.

"My hat! It was a jolly good wheeze, though!" admitted Monty Lowther. "I rather fancy the beaks will have a job to shift old Grundy if he keeps that up!"

Wilkins and Gunn eyed their leader almost with awe. They felt that they had, for once, misjudged him. Grundy spotted them, and nodded affably.

"You fellows sorry now that you deserted me?" he grinned. "Left out of a good thing, what? Too late now, you know!"

"You've won so far," said Wilkins. "But do you think you can keep it up much longer? They'll starve you out if everything else fails!"

"When my grub supply gives out I shall rely on you chaps smuggling in some more, of course!" said Grundy. "That goes without saying. Apart from that, I've got Knox and Railton, and the Head, too, by the short hairs!"

"Got the Head by—the short hairs!" repeated Gunn dazedly.

"Oh, you ass! They'll find some way of dealing with you!" gasped Wilkins. "If you chucked it now, perhaps you'd get off with a flogging—"

"Don't be any more of an ass than you can help, George!" Wilkins, remarked Grundy, glaring.

"Mind, you fellows! I want to speak to Grundy. He, he, he!"

Baggy Trimble, grinning as if in possession of a huge joke, rolled up to the door of Study No. 3.

"Hallo, Grundy! Knox is coming!"

"I've got my pistol ready!" said Grundy calmly.

"He's got a message from the Head!" chortled Trimble.

"I happened to hear what it is, too. You've fairly asked for it, you know!"

"Not—not the sack?" gasped Wilkins.

"Here's Knox! He, he, he!"

Trimble subsided into the background as Knox of the Sixth, looking rather dubiously at Grundy, approached the study. Grundy gave him a grim glance and levelled his water-pistol in a businesslike manner. If Knox had come asking for trouble, trouble was all ready and waiting for him.

But, though Knox was not on a pleasure jaunt, he had not come to ask for trouble.

"The Head sent me to tell you, Grundy—" he began rather hastily.

"That's close enough!" observed Grundy. "You know what will happen if you try any tricks!"

Knox's cheeks burned, but he did not venture to approach nearer. His respect for Grundy's armaments was patent.

"The Head gives you one more chance to throw up this silly rot and abide by his judgment!" announced Knox, with relish. "He promises to deal as leniently as he can with you. If you refuse I can give you his answer now!"

"I refuse fast enough!" said Grundy contemptuously. "I'm standing up for my rights—and an apology from you, Knox! So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

"Very well, then!" said Knox, unmoved. "You are expelled!"

"Oh!"

There was a murmur from the juniors near enough to hear. Grundy himself said nothing. He appeared to be digesting Knox's remark.

"You are expelled!" repeated Knox, with great enjoyment. "If ever there was a cheeky young ruffian who asked for the sack, it's you, Grundy! Now you've got it!"

"You jolly well can't expel me!" began Grundy hotly. "The Head would do that himself!"

"When I've told him that you persist in going on with your insubordination, he will!" snapped Knox.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Grundy.

For the moment even his supreme confidence was shaken. That the Head, not deigning to bandy words with him, would give him the blunt choice between surrender and expulsion had not occurred to him.

When the Head desired to speak to a junior, he sent for him to go to his study. In the present circumstances, sending for Grundy was useless. As the mountain would not come to Mahomet, it was time for Mahomet to come to the mountain. But Mahomet, as represented by the Head, had not come to the mountain, as represented by Grundy. He was treating the rebel with contempt.

All Grundy had to expect from the Head was a formal visit to inform him that he was no longer a St. Jim's junior. After that, a master would come to take him away. It was really a disastrous blow to Grundy.

"For goodness' sake call Knox back while there's time!" gasped Wilkins, as Knox tramped off down the corridor.

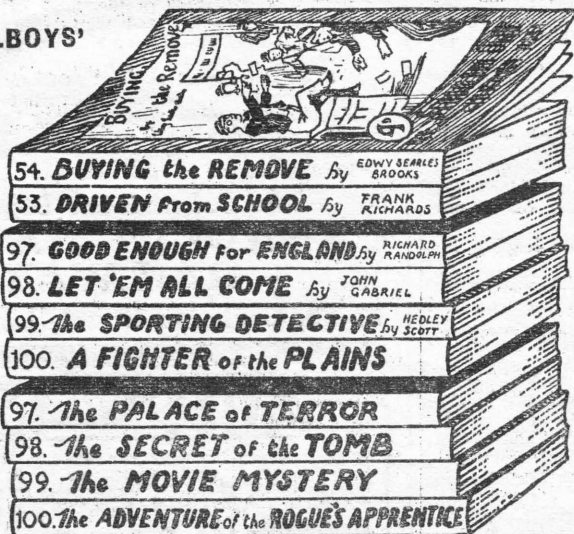
"It's your only chance, Grundy! You can't keep this rot up for ever!"

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"Can't you realise that you'll be booted out—that you'll have to go to another school, you fathead!" pleaded Gunn.

From the tone of Grundy's chums, it might have been supposed that they were really fond of him. But in adversity they forgot their little disputes, and did their best to din sense into their chum's rather wooden intellect.

But it was no good. Grundy had made up his mind. Quite how important a matter that was had never occurred to Wilkins and Gunn with such force before. But they had proof of it now.

"I know you fellows mean well," said Grundy kindly. "But it's a matter of principle. Knox owes me an apology for lots of things, and I don't intend, after making a public claim for recognition like this, to climb down meekly at the finish! Is it likely? Another day or two, and the Head will begin to see reason—"

"Weally, Gwunday! It's weally time to stop wottin', you know!" interrupted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "I believe what Knox said is twue, an' if you persist in defyin' Doctah Holmes, you will be bunked, deah boy."

"I know my own business best!" said Grundy tartly. "And I'm going on—that's flat!"

"Grundy—" began Wilkins.

Slam!

It was not the door; Grundy could not slam that in the faces of unwelcome visitors now. It was the seat of an old chair, and he had clapped it over the breach made by Knox's coke hammer. A few seconds later the sound of banging intimated that Grundy was nailing the chair-seat into position, ensuring privacy again.

Evidently he had no more to say. He was going on.

Wilkins and Gunn moved away from their study miserably, their thoughts identical. It was the last of Grundy, unless some miracle turned up in the nick of time.

There were times, often, when Wilkins and Gunn yearned to slay their leader for his many overbearing ways; but when it came to the point of losing him, even though he would be able to continue his existence in some other part of the globe, they felt sorry for poor old Grundy.

"I suppose he can't help being a silly, blithering, fat-headed jabberwock, Gunny!" observed Wilkins, as they strolled thoughtfully under the elms in the quad.

"A born idiot like old Grundy is hardly responsible for himself!" said Gunn. "I wish the Head could see it!"

"Of course, he had some reason to buck against Knox," said Wilkins, in defence of his chum. "That rotter overstepped the mark altogether. If the Head knew how Knox treated Grundy, he might take his claim to a prefectship as a joke—"

"Knox isn't likely to confess that he bullied Grundy, and beg him off!" grunted Gunn. "That would straighten matters out."

"If only a fellow could catch Knox bending—" began Wilkins.

"How?" asked Gunn.

"And force him to help old Grundy out of his hole—" went on Wilkins.

"Likely that Knox would, isn't it?" observed Gunn.

"My hat! I've got it!" gasped Wilkins.

He proceeded to explain.

As a rule, George Wilkins was far from a bright youth, intellectually. Gunn was the brainy man of the study, if anybody. But on this occasion, spurred by circumstances, Wilkins had outshone himself, and Gunn's eyes began to gleam.

Wilkins unfolded his scheme, and Gunn became enthusiastic.

"And if we work it right, Grundy gets off with a flogging!" said Wilkins triumphantly. Had Grundy heard that, he might not have been so enthusiastic as Gunn. But while Grundy played the goat, as Wilkins put it, his chums were looking after the facts.

"We want young Gibson!" said Gunn. "Keep your weather eye open!"

The dinner-bell was due at any moment, but by good fortune Curly Gibson of the Third was run to earth near the chapel. He was with another fag, but a motion of Gunn's boot sent the latter scuttling away.

"I say! What's the matter? I haven't done anything to you fellows, have I?" ejaculated Gibson in alarm.

"Keep cool, kid!" grinned Wilkins. "I'll give you half-a-crown if you can tell me what we want to know!"

"Honest Injun?" inquired the fag doubtfully.

Wilkins produced the coin, and Curly Gibson's eyes glistened at the sight. With such a windfall, there would be kippers for tea in the Third Form-room that evening.

"You get to know a good deal about Knox's movements, fagging for him?" asked Wilkins casually.

Curly Gibson grinned. He knew much more about Knox's little manners and customs than the prefect would have cared for him to know, though he kept that circumstance dark.



It was the work of a few moments only for Wilkins and Gunn to fasten the rope of sheets to a leg of the study table, and then Wilkins could be seen clambering out on to the sill. He shinned rapidly down the rope to where the Terrible Three were waiting for him in the quad.

(See Chapter 8.)

"Knox often goes on the randan late at night, doesn't he?" asked Gunn.

Gibson nodded. He did not intend to give away more than was necessary, in case of subsequent unpleasantness from Knox.

"I suppose you don't happen to know when he's going out again?" asked Wilkins.

He gazed tensely at the fag. On the answer to that question a great deal depended.

"What do you want to know for?" asked Curly Gibson suspiciously.

"Because we do," said Gunn evasively. "Cough it up, kid. You don't want a bumping, I suppose?"

The suggestion took effect.

"I gave a note to Piggott to take to the Green Man to-day," he responded. "I shouldn't be surprised if he's going there after lights out to-night?"

"Worth risking!" said Wilkins, looking at Gunn.

Gunn nodded.

"That's all, kid, and thanks. Here you are!" said Wilkins.

Curly Gibson took the half-crown and hastened after his friend in the Third. In a few minutes he had forgotten his encounter with Wilkins and Gunn.

But Grundy's pals, considering that their mighty leader was under sentence of expulsion, were looking very cheery indeed.

CHAPTER 11.

Loyal Pals!

"MIND my eye with your elbow, Gunn!"

"Gerroff my toe, you dummy!"

"Quiet!" breathed Wilkins.

Wilkins and Gunn held their breath.

The night was rather chilly, but Grundy's chums had left their warm beds at the call of duty. It was getting on for eleven now, and they had been in their cramped position in the box-room for nearly half an hour.

From where they lay concealed, the two juniors had a clear view of the moonlit quad. If Knox left the school via his study window, as was quite likely, they could not help seeing him go. And if he preferred to make use of the end box-room, he would pass within a yard or two of Wilkins and Gunn.

Once Knox had left the school on his expedition to the Green Man, Grundy's chums had their plans cut and dried. But it began to look as if Curly Gibson's information was not so valuable as it had seemed.

"Did you hear anything, Gunny?" asked Wilkins suddenly.

"No, ass! Only a mouse! Oh, my hat! There goes eleven!"

Boom!

The first stroke of the hour sounded from the old clock-tower.

At the same moment Wilkins made a sudden bound for the window.

"Oh, good! Look! That's Knox, sure enough!"

Gunn peered over his shoulder, and nodded excitedly.

It was impossible to be mistaken in the bright moonlight which bathed the quad. Knox had appeared for a second in the full radiance as he left his study window, though now he was taking advantage of every shadow in his circuitous route to the masters' gate. As a prefect, Knox was provided with a private key, though the Head would have been surprised had he known the use to which it was put.

"What luck!" grinned Wilkins, quivering with excitement. "Give him a couple of minutes to get clear, and then to work, Gunny!"

Gunn took out his watch, and solemnly allowed two minutes to elapse.

"Time's up!" he said at length. "Go it, Wilky!"

Wilkins, fairly trembling now that the success of his masterly scheme seemed assured, led the way towards the main staircase. The chums listened for a moment, and then descended cautiously. Fearful of showing a light, Wilkins felt his way ahead until now they stood in the Sixth Form corridor.

"Quiet now, for goodness' sake!" breathed Wilkins, in the faintest of whispers.

He approached Knox's door, and slowly, with infinite caution, turned the handle. It turned, but the door did not open.

"Locked!" murmured Gunn. "Got the keys?"

Wilkins drew a bunch of keys from his pocket. With great foresight he had borrowed a bunch of skeleton keys from Glyn that afternoon, and now he proceeded to insert them silently in the lock. Fortunately, Knox had not left his key in the inside, and Wilkins drew a sharp breath as the mechanism turned.

A slight push, and the door swung open.

The moonlight streamed into the study, and at a casual glance, there did not appear to be anything amiss. And Knox was taking no risks, with a locked door between his inquisitive prowler and his vacant bed.

Wilkins and Gunn slipped silently into the study; the former made a bee-line for the window. As he had anticipated, Knox had left the lower sash open a couple of inches, so that he could slip it up easily on his return.

"This is where Knox gets left!" grinned Wilkins.

He pressed lightly on the sash, and it slid down. Wilkins snapped the catch over, and chuckled.

"I think that about finishes Knox's hash!" said Gunn, with satisfaction. "He won't get that open from the outside!"

"The only way would be to smash a pane of glass!" said Wilkins. "And I rather think that would attract somebody's attention!"

"We've finished there, then!" observed Gunn in a whisper.

Wilkins and Gunn left the study without a sound, and in another minute they were out of the Sixth Form corridor.

Proceeding carefully in the darkness, Wilkins headed for the Shell passage, and Gunn followed.

They halted outside Study No. 3, and grinned.

Wilkins rapped on the door, and called in a subdued voice:

"Grundy, wake up, old man!"

There was the sound of a movement in the study.

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Snor-r-r-re!

Gunn chuckled. Grundy had evidently rolled over in the armchair, and now his penetrating snore echoed in the silent corridor.

"And he won't believe it when we tell him he snores!" murmured Wilkins. He rapped again. "Grundy—Grundy, old chap! Grundy, you snoring fathead! Wake up!"

The snoring ceased, and a sleepy voice responded in the darkness:

"Wharremarrer? What? Who's that in the corridor?"

Grundy had awakened with a start now, and his chums grinned.

"Us!" replied Wilkins ungrammatically. "Your old pals are rallying round you, Grundy!"

"Oh! What on earth do you want at this time of night?" ejaculated Grundy.

"We've come to save you from leaving St. Jim's on your silly neck!" said Gunn. "While you've been snoring in the armchair, we've been up and doing—looking after you, old man!"

"Huh!" remarked Grundy, without much enthusiasm.

"We've cornered Knox for you!" said Wilkins, coming to the point.

"You've done what? Are you talking out of your hat, as usual, George Wilkins?"

"No, you chump!" growled Wilkins. Really, Grundy might have shown a little more graciousness in receiving news of his reprieve. Perhaps he had not a great deal of faith in his pals as strategists.

"If you do exactly as we say, Grundy," said Gunn, taking up the running, "you'll have Knox in the hollow of your hand. He's gone on the razzle again to-night—"

"By Jove! Then I've got a scheme! One of you fellows run down to his study and shut the window—"

"Wha-a-at!"

"And he won't be able to get in!" said Grundy triumphantly. "The Head will have to expel the pair of us then! And if Knox owns up, like a decent fellow, I might get off! Get a move on, Wilkins! This is a time for action, not jaw! See?"

"My dear chap," began Wilkins, "your brain works too slow! Leave these little things to your pals—we're the intellect of the study, you know! We've already fastened Knox's window—"

"Oh, good!"

"And the box-room window as well. So Knox won't be able to get in again to-night, unless—"

"Unless what? There's no other way in! He's too big to squeeze through the pantry window."

"Unless you let him in," finished Wilkins calmly.

"Me? I'm jolly likely to, I don't think! Don't be an ass, Wilkins! You've shown quite a lot of gumption so far, you know!"

Grundy made that remark in his most patronising voice, and Wilkins glared at the door. But he exercised great self-control, and continued.

"Suppose we put it in words of one syllable, Grundy? Gunny and I have thought it all out. Knox will come home some time after midnight, and he will find that he can't get into the school. But he will spot a light—"

"Where? Everybody's gone to bed already!" said Grundy.

"Here. In this study!" said Wilkins. "You can put the gas on, I suppose, ass?"

"If you call me an ass again, George Wilkins—"

"Oh, dear!" murmured Gunn.

"Give your lower jaw a rest, Grundy, old man, and listen!" urged Wilkins. "Knox will spot your light, and being the only one in the school, what do you think he will do?"

"He'll know it's in our study," said Gunn.

"My hat! I believe I see what you mean, Wilkins—" began Grundy.

"About time, too!" said Gunn unkindly.

"He'll ask me to let him in!" gasped Grundy.

"Exactly!" assented Wilkins. "And you do it—"

"On terms," said Grundy, with satisfaction.

"If we hadn't taken the trouble to find out that Knox was going out to-night and shut his window for him, you'd have been in the cart, Grundy!"

Grundy paused before replying. His loyal chums had done well—indeed, if the scheme proved successful, they had smoothed away most of his troubles. And Grundy was not the fellow to refuse praise where praise was due.

"Not bad!" he agreed at length. "In fact, quite brainy, Wilkins. You're improving, old chap! My influence is taking some effect. You, too, Gunny. I shouldn't have believed you fellows had the nerve. But there's one point that I expect you've forgotten, in your usual incompetent way. How is Knox going to get up to my window?"

Wilkins and Gunn were silent.

There was an expressive silence within and without Study No. 3.

"You didn't think of that—what?" asked Grundy, and his chums thought they detected a chuckle.

"Well, no," admitted Wilkins. "I think we had some idea of bringing a rope, but Gunn must have forgotten it."

"I like that!" ejaculated Gunn indignantly. "I thought you had it with you, of course."

"In my trousers pocket—what?" asked Wilkins sarcastically.

"It's all right. You fellows were bound to muck it up somewhere!" said Grundy kindly. "As it happens, I've got plenty of rugs and sheets in here. You fellows left yours when you deserted me, you know. If I use your overcoats, too—"

"Oh, my aunt!" gasped Gunn. "Why did I leave it in here?"

"I can manage!" announced Grundy carelessly. "I

With which classic retort, Wilkins and Gunn settled down in Tom Merry's study to await the home-coming of Knox.

CHAPTER 12.

Grundy Makes Terms!

"GOOD gad!"
Gerald Knox jumped.
After a merry evening with Mr. Lodgery and Joliffe, the landlord at the Green Man, the prefect had returned.

Knox's luck had been in—at first. But it had changed, as doubtless Mr. Lodgery had intended it to change, and most of Knox's available cash had found a way into the sharper's pockets.

The rascally prefect had crept into the school precincts,

CAMEOS OF SCHOOL LIFE!
LAWN TENNIS AT ST. JIM'S!



ST. JIM'S has many summer sports,
And as a variation
We sometimes to the tennis courts
Repair for recreation.
The junior courts are rather rough,
They need the roller badly;
But still, we vote them good enough—
We take our pleasures gladly!

Tom Merry is engaged with Blake
In our impromptu tournament;
Tom is an expert, no mistake,
While Blake is no mere ornament.
His service is a treat to see,
His volleys are terrific;
And all the lookers-on agree
He's skilled and scientific.

The umpire, perched on his high throne,
Is proud and haughty, very!
You ought to hear his drawing tone:
"Love all!"—or "Set to Merry!"
Gussy is this important swell,
Puffed out just like a bladder;
And he performs his duties well
Enthroned upon the ladder!

Two courts away is Sidney Clive,
Playing a match with Trimble;
Sidney is active and alive,
And nothing if not nimble.
But puffing Baggy, short of breath,
And bathed in perspiration,
Tickles the standers-by to death
By his quaint demonstration!

He misses each "return" of Clive's
(The latter's smiling sweetly),
Then one of Sidney's smashing drives
Doubles him up completely!
Poor Baggy takes it in the chest
And sits down with a bellow,
"Yaroooo!" he yells. "I give you best!
Play with some other fellow!"

And so the merry sport proceeds
Until the shadows darken;
And someone murmurs, "Study feeds!"
To which we promptly hearken.
"There's not a game," says Fatty
Wynn,
"From Rylcombe unto Venice,
That makes you ripe for a tuck-in
Like tennis—glorious tennis!"



shan't damage them any more than I can help, of course. You've got your old ones, anyway. I think I can make a rope that will just about reach to the ground!"

"If it's to save Grundy's neck, I suppose we mustn't grumble!" said Wilkins heroically. "Go ahead, Grundy!"

"Yes, do!" added Gunn.

"I've started already," announced Grundy. "When Knox comes back I shall be ready for him. He can't miss the light, and it will be his only chance. He'll do anything rather than wait outside and explain how he got there to the Head in the morning!"

"He'll do his best for you if you talk to him nicely, Grundy!" said Wilkins. "But for goodness' sake don't give the Head any of your rot about being made a prefect."

"I'm prepared to make one or two concessions," admitted Grundy, with dignity. "I can see that things are more or less at a deadlock."

"You mean you can see it's all up if you don't show a bit of sense?" interrupted Gunn heartlessly.

"No!" roared Grundy, in a voice that might easily have reached the ears of authority.

"Shut up, you idiotic chump!" hissed Wilkins. "Get on with that rope before Knox gets back. Gunn and I are going into Tom Merry's study. We'll be on hand when Knox arrives, in case you want any help!"

"Don't stay up for me," observed Grundy at once. "I can handle Knox."

"Bow-wow!"

making use of the masters' gate, in anything but a pleasant frame of mind.

He groped mechanically for the open sash of his study window.

It was then that he discovered that it was shut.

"Good gad!"

Knox was astounded, and startled. He knew quite well that he had left the window open at least a couple of inches. The fact that it was not open now could only mean that somebody had entered his study during his absence, and that he was known to have been out of bounds.

The prefect trembled in every limb as a dreadful vision of expulsion loomed before his eyes.

"Great Scott! I'm done!" he ejaculated, beads of perspiration standing out on his brow. "But—but how did they get in? I remember locking the door. Oh, heavens!"

Knox held his head between his hands and thought hard. For a senior—and a prefect—to be caught out of bounds after lights-out was a much more serious matter than for a junior; he knew that the punishment would be immediate expulsion.

But the door—the door had been locked. He was sure of that. Had he closed the window by mistake? Devoutly Knox hoped so. If that was the case, he had only to effect an entry into the school, unobserved, and get into his study. Fortunately, he had another key. But if a master was sitting up in the study, waiting for him—

Knox peered with a white face into the interior of his room. He could see no one. With a trembling hand he drew a penknife from his pocket and slipped it between the upper and lower sashes of the window. He ran the knife along. It stopped half-way. There was no room for doubt then; the catch had been fastened. Knox could not have done that himself after leaving the study.

Who had done it? If a master, surely he would have remained up to interview the prefect on his return? The windows of the masters' studies were dark. Was it a jape? Some junior perhaps? Knox almost gasped with relief at the thought. He had many enemies in the Lower School. If a junior was responsible, Knox resolved on the spot that he would make him pay dearly for this.

But he had to get into the school somehow. He moved in the shadows till he stood beneath the end box-room, which he had made use of often enough as a junior himself. He scrambled on to the leads, and strove to push the box-room window open. But, with a sinking heart, he realised that it, too, was closed and fastened.

The prefect dropped from the leads and hastened to the rear of the School House, where the kitchen quarters were situated. The pantry window was open, but Knox knew, as he looked at it, that it was far too small to allow of his ingress. He licked his dry lips and returned to the quad again, scanning the windows in the faint hope of spotting a light—any light but that in a master's window.

He almost chirruped for joy when he caught sight of a yellow gleam from a window in the Shell passage.

"Good! Oh, good! If I can get the fellow to come down and open the School House door—why, it's Grundy's study. Oh, gad!"

Knox halted underneath Grundy's window, with an expression of deep dismay on his face. He was not feeling any animosity towards Grundy now. In his extremity he thought of nothing but his own precious skin. But he felt that Grundy was hardly the fellow to request a favour from at such a time. It was more than likely, indeed, that Grundy would welcome company when he shook the dust of St. Jim's from his feet!

If only Grundy would come down and let him in. But Knox could hardly imagine Grundy leaving his fortress to aid the fellow who was the cause of all his own trouble. Still, it was the only chance. If it failed, Knox would have to remain out in the quadrangle till morning, and

then explain how he came to be in that remarkable position!

The prefect tossed a pebble against Grundy's window.

He was surprised to see the sash thrown up almost at once. He was surprised, in fact, that Grundy was awake at all. He did not know that Grundy was expecting callers.

A head appeared over the sill, and Knox moistened his mouth. On the persuasiveness of his tones now depended his fate. His voice was oily in its smoothness.

"That you, Grundy, old man?"

To be addressed as "old man" by a prefect was a signal honour, and Grundy ought to have been duly flattered. His tone did not suggest that he felt flattered. Perhaps he took the honour at its real worth.

"You've got back then, what?"

Knox smiled easily. It was the only course left open to him.

"I—I've mislaid my key!" he said, with remarkable calm. "I slipped out for a stroll, being unable to sleep, and I find I've rather landed myself in the soup!"

"You can't get in, is that it?" grinned Grundy.

With his enemy at his mercy, Grundy could not suppress that grin. He had suffered much from Knox without complaining, as he might have done. He regarded Knox very much as a prisoner of war, whose future hung in his hands.

"I'd—I'd be very much obliged if you could—could run down and let me in, Grundy, old chap!" gasped Knox, realising, as he asked, the enormity of his request.

Grundy, with the rope which he had just made out of rugs and coats, paused. That remarkable simple solution to the problem had not occurred to either him or his chums. Just like Wilkins and Gunn, he reflected, confounding a really brainy fellow's thoughts. It was really much easier to let Knox in at the Hall door than to manufacture a rope of rugs for his benefit. It was easier for Grundy also. But, thought Grundy, terms came first. He eyed Knox grimly.

"What will happen to you if I refuse, Knox?" he inquired coolly.

"No need to refuse, old fellow!" said Knox hastily. "I—I'll put in a good word for you with the Head in the morning. I—I might even see my way clear to tell him



Address all letters: The Editor, The "Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Write me, you can be sure of an answer in return.

JELLYFISH!

AN enthusiastic reader who signs himself "Scholar" wants to know how a jellyfish eats, and if it has a mouth? For a moment that double-barrelled query brought a wrinkle to my brow. I've seen a few jellyfish in my time, but honestly I have never concerned myself with them to any extent, except perhaps to get out of their way, for I believe they sting. However, to return to these queries. Fortunately, there are people in the world who make it their business to know all there is to know about jellyfish, etc. And one of these authorities states that the jellyfish eats by wrapping itself round its food, and absorbing it. So now my enthusiastic reader knows something that he didn't know before, and the same can be said for yours truly.

CONCERNING VOWELS!

Here's another query that jolly nearly bowled me out first ball. It comes from "Ted," of Southampton, who, by the way, has bagged five new readers for our paper in one week. Really, in the circumstances, I wouldn't mind being bowled out by Ted. Here's his "teaser": "Do you know of any words in the English language which contain all the vowels in their correct order?" Fortunately for me, another cheery reader who had written me a lengthy letter used the word "facetious," and, lo and behold, there was a quick answer to "Ted's" query. That happy start set me thinking for a bit longer on this subject of vowels, with the result that the

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word "abstemious" fell off my pen, so to speak. Now, I don't propose to give "Ted's" query any longer consideration, for to be perfectly honest, finding the word abstemious has resulted in my tea getting so cold that it's now undrinkable. Still, this neat puzzle might interest you other fellows. If you find any more examples do me the favour of letting me know. You see, I want to be ready for "Ted" should he try and bowl me out again.

"O.K."

Now that I've started on queries I think I'd better stick to 'em, for they appeal to me mightily. "Girl Reader," of Middlesex, wants to know how the term "O.K." originated. I believe it is derived from the French "Aux Cayes," from which place, once upon a time, as they say in the story-books, the best tobacco and rum came. Ultimately the term came to be used to express the good quality of anything.

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME:

"THE FAITHFUL FAQ!"

By Martin Clifford.

That's the title of the next long complete story of St. Jim's, and it deals with young Joe Frayne of the Third. Don't miss this treat, whatever you do, chums.

"BAGGY TRIMBLE'S CENTURY!"

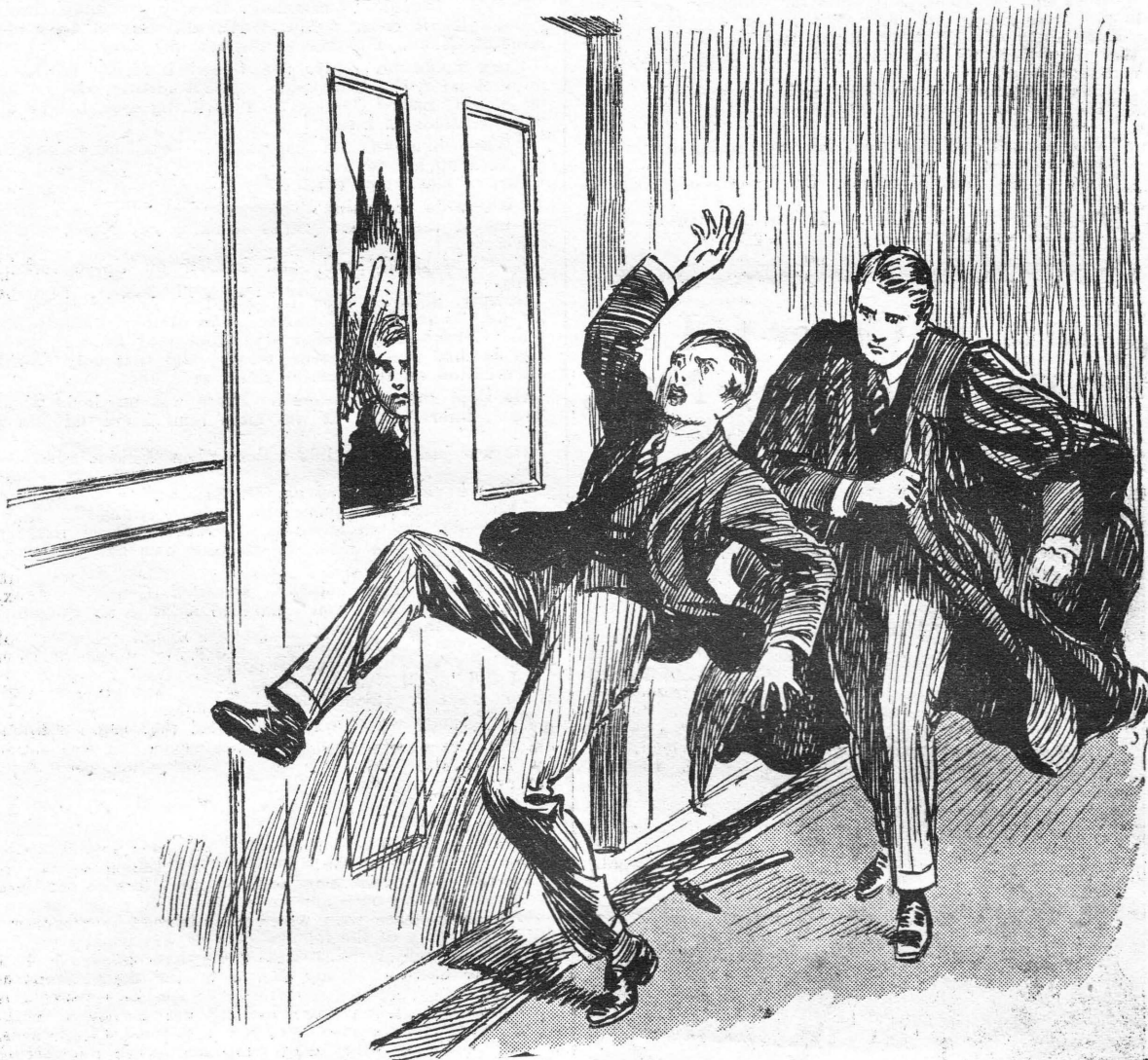
Is the title of the next "Cameo" by our special Rhymester, and it's distinctly good.

"BEYOND THE SILVER GLACIER!"

By Arthur S. Hardy.

And don't miss the next stirring instalment of our popular adventure serial, for it goes with a swing. Order your GEM early, boys. Chin, chin!

Your Editor.



George Alfred Grundy made a rapid pass with the red-hot poker in the direction of Knox's face, and the heat from the tip almost singed the prefect's nose. Knox leaped back, with a yell of alarm. "Yow!" "Why, what is the matter, Knox?" asked Mr. Railton, somewhat testily. The Housemaster had not seen the poker. (See Chapter 9.)

I, to a certain extent, goaded you to resistance. I—I can get you off with a flogging, if you like."

"Thank you for nothing!" grunted Grundy uncompromisingly. "If I choose I can leave you to cool your heels out there all night. It's no more than you deserve, you rotter! In the morning you'd be expelled—"

"Don't!" gasped Knox, dropping all pretence now. "I'll do anything you like, only don't leave me out here for goodness' sake! I'm in your hands!"

Grundy smiled, a lofty and condescending smile. In the moonlight Knox did not notice the condescension of that smile. But he realised that he had to eat humble pie to Grundy if he wanted to get into the House before the small hours.

Grundy was enjoying himself. He was getting a little of his own back for those terrific lickings. When he spoke it was in a curt tone that would have done credit to Knox himself.

"If you confess that you goaded me to defy you; tell the Head plainly that you licked me a jolly sight more than you're supposed to as a prefect, and I had to kick, I can chuck this barring-out now. Now the Head has formally expelled me we're more or less at a standstill. If I give in, and you tell the truth, Knox, the Head will call it off. Will you do it?"

"Anything you like!" agreed Knox. "Now come down and let me in!"

"Just a minute!" said Grundy, grinning. "I've got a paper here that I'd like you to sign first, in case you thought you'd like to go back on your bargain once you get inside."

"What! You cheeky young cub! I'll—"

"That's enough!" snapped Grundy. "You can stop out!"

He stepped back into the study, but a pleading call from Knox drew him back again.

"I—I apologise! There, is that good enough, Grundy? I'll sign your paper. Chuck it down!"

"I don't want any more cheek. Remember that!" warned Grundy, tossing a paper down to the prefect.

Knox caught it, and glanced at its contents by the light of a match. He bit his lips as he read it, and his eyes burned. It was not a flattering document, but it had to be signed, unless Knox preferred to face matters out with the "beaks" on the morrow.

"I, Gerald Knox, being caught out of bounds after a visit to the Green Man Public House, do hereby promise to confess how I bullied George Alfred Grundy, licking him over and above my proper authority, so that he was obliged in self-defense to hold a barring-out in his study, in consideration of being let into the House at midnite by the sed George Alfred Grundy.

"(Sined) _____"

The compilation of that document had occupied Grundy some little time, and he was rather proud of it. If Knox went back on his word afterwards, certainly the Head would be interested to see it. And there was no doubt, in that event, that he would see it.

"Buck up!" urged Grundy from the window. "I want to get some sleep to-night."

Knox drew out his fountain-pen and signed the paper. Wrapping it round a pebble, he tossed it up to Grundy without a word.

Grundy examined it carefully, and then nodded.

"There's one more thing!" he remarked.

"What's that?"

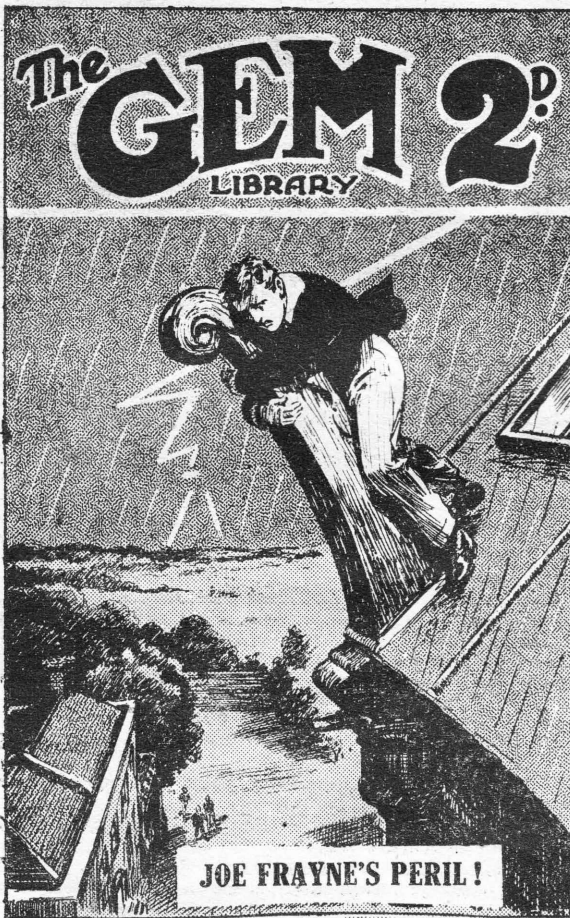
"You haven't apologised yet for your rotten conduct."

"You—you—"

"Just as you like, of course. Only you don't come in till you have."

"I apologise!" said Knox. It cost him an effort of will, but he was trapped.

**This is the Cover to Look
for on Wednesday Next,
Chums!**



"The Faithful Fag!"

Is the title of next week's grand story of the Chums of St. Jim's, and it deals with the adventures and misadventures of Joe Frayne of the Third.

DON'T on any account MISS IT!

"Good enough!" assented Grundy magnanimously. "Don't let it occur again, that's all. Sha'n't be a few minutes, Knox. I've got to unscrew my door."

Knox made no reply. He fumed inwardly until, ten minutes later, the House door opened silently, and he was let in. He passed Grundy with glittering eyes, but he did not lay hands on him.

"Where have you put that paper?" he asked, endeavouring to keep his voice calm.

Grundy closed one eye.

"Where do you think?" he grinned. "I haven't got it on me if that's what you're thinking of, Knox. Sold again!"

Knox breathed hard, and headed on tiptoe for his study.

Grundy, grinning cheerily, joined his faithful chums on the way to the Shell dormitory, and tumbled happily into bed. Even Grundy, champion idiot that he was, knew that he had had a narrow escape, and that only Knox's intervention on the morrow could save him.

He slept soundly, however. There was no doubt about Knox's intervention. It was more than Knox dare do to fail.

He was just sinking into a doze when Wilkins addressed him.

"You haven't thanked us yet, Grundy."

"Eh? What? Did you fellows do anything?"

"Did—did we do anything?" repeated Gunn dazedly. "If you think you did it all off your own bat, you burbling chump—"

"You may have helped," admitted Grundy sleepily. "But you can't deny that I handled Knox in an altogether masterly manner, what?"

"You conceited boulder—" began Wilkins. "Yarough! What silly ass buzzed that slipper?"

"I did," said Grundy grimly. "I've got the other one if you want it. Good-night!"

And Grundy went to sleep—without thanking his chums for their invaluable aid.

"Grundy!"

"Yes, Kildare?"

"You're wanted now—Head's study."

Grundy left his chums with a confident grin.

All St. Jim's had marvelled at the sudden end of Grundy's barring-out, and marvelled still more at the supreme confidence with which he awaited the reckoning. In the majority of the fellows' eyes he was booked for the "sack," though Wilkins and Gunn had informed Tom Merry & Co. and Study No. 6 of the actual state of affairs.

Wilkins and Gunn were looking very anxious when their chum left them to interview the Head. Even after Knox's confession they had deep doubts as to whether Dr. Holmes would agree to "call off" the sentence of expulsion.

In Grundy's mind there was no doubt whatever. He walked quite cheerfully to judgment.

He was absent some minutes, and when he reached the end of the Head's corridor again he was met by a group of juniors.

At the sight of Grundy, Tom Merry grinned, and Lowther chortled. Blake and Manners and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy smiled, and Herries and Digby chuckled.

Grundy, wriggling rather uncomfortably, glared.

"You grinning idiots—" he began.

"Flogged?" asked Wilkins, his face brightening. "You don't look like a fellow who's just been expelled."

"That's it," grinned Gunn. "He's got off with a flogging! You're a lucky bargee, Grundy, old man! If you weren't such a born idiot you'd have been bunked!"

Grundy gasped, and then he clenched his huge fists. He had been flogged but not expelled. The Head had taken into account Knox's story, and had considered that he might give Grundy one more chance. He had laid on the flogging with unusual vim, through all of which Grundy had failed to recover from his first shock of astonishment. He had not been congratulated on standing up for his rights. He had been "lectured" and flogged. And now his chums—his own bosom pals—were, in their relief at his escape, laughing at him.

It was too much.

Grundy, his fists whirling, made a leap.

Wilkins and Gunn ducked and dodged, and Tom Merry & Co. fled. After them thundered Grundy, thirsting for blood, his flogging forgotten for the moment.

It was the old Grundy, but it was the last of Grundy's Barring-Out!

THE END.

THE WHITE GODS FROM THE AIR! That's how the Hokahula tribe in Northern Africa look upon Adam Byrne and his white comrades who have landed in their midst. But gods or not, Adam & Co. realise that it is going to be a deuce of a job to give the slip to these natives, for their every movement is watched!

BEYOND *the* SILVER GLACIER!



A Grand Story of Peril and Adventure in
Central Africa.

By **ARTHUR S. HARDY.**

The Reunion!

PROFESSOR BYRNE blinked. "Bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "Old friends! Well, would you believe it?" "We have trekked together, hunted together, suffered together, shared the same bed, Symes and I," Del Rivo explained, with a nod and a grin. "Last met in the country of the cursed Hekebus. The party I was with was attacked, and I saved my life by flight. The rest, I have always believed, were killed. Truly the world is small! Friend Symes, it gives me the greatest joy of my life to see you again!"

Professor George Willis Byrne, the mildest and sweetest of men, beamed upon the reunion out of softened eyes. "Truly life is a wonderful thing!" he said. "Full of surprises. We will leave these old friends together, whilst we pay a visit to Rosa, my boys."

So they passed into the outer room of the hut. For one moment Adam stood to look back at Del Rivo and the bearded stranger whose name was Symes. He stayed in spite of his eagerness to see the sister he loved once again, and it seemed to him as he watched Del Rivo half lead, half drag, the stranger away, that the Portuguese whose voice came in a sibilant whisper, without Adam being able to distinguish a single word, was threatening his long-lost friend.

Inside the hut it was as cool as if the place had been built within a sheltered glade. The scent of spices was in the air.

With finger to lips, the professor advanced to an inner door and tapped upon it lightly.

A musical voice droned some reply to the knocking, and the professor opened the door.

The room was veiled in a soft half light. Half barring their entry stood a Hokahula woman, who might be called pretty even from a European standard. Her face was of the warmest brown, no sign of white showing till below the neck. Her round eyes were full of trust. She seemed anxious, until recognition of the professor put her at her ease.

With a low, obsequious curtsy she made way for him to pass.

The professor entered, with Adam and Harry Franklin close upon his heels; and as their eyes became accustomed to the strange light the friends saw a form stretched out upon a couch, half covered with a skin rug, the form of a girl who lay silent and still.

Adam, advancing to within a few yards, stopped dead, staring downwards and holding his breath.

"Rosa!" he breathed, with a gasp. "Rosa!"

It was his sister, and yet he was not quite sure about it, for the face that was propped upon pillows there was so white and so lovely that he gazed upon it in bewilderment. "Rosa!"

Harry stood at Adam's shoulder, watching spellbound.

He had last set eyes upon Rosa Byrne, then a mere slip of a girl, full of an almost boyish roguishness and charm, when the train had sped from the little station at Studley the day that her father and she had started upon their expedition.

She had changed with the years, but her beauty was now indescribable. Her eyelids were closed. Her death-like pallor caused icy fingers to grip at the hearts of the two boys as they gazed down upon her.

And then the professor spoke:

"It's all right, my dear—there are friends here. Steady! Don't let the nerves betray you. Our call has been answered, Rosa. Adam, my son, your brother, has come to save us—to rescue us!"

The girl awakened with a low cry—sat up.

Adam saw in the moment of closer scrutiny that her hair was bobbed in the modern fashion.

Two beaming eyes flashed into his. Rosa sprang from the couch on which she lay.

"Adam—Adam—my brother—oh!" she cried; and the next moment she leapt towards him, and, entwining her soft arms about his neck, kissed him several times.

Harry Franklin was greatly moved by her loveliness. His cheeks flamed to deepest crimson, then faded to deathly white.

The girl turned to him.

"Oh, Harry!" she cried, and gave him her hand.

WHO'S WHO IN THIS STORY!

ADAM BYRNE, accompanied by his three companions, **HARRY FRANKLIN**, **SANDY McTAVISH**, and **JIMMY BROWN**, set out in search of Adam's father, **GEORGE WILLIS BYRNE**, who, together with his daughter **ROSA**, left England four years ago to explore the African jungle, and both of whom are now prisoners in the hands of a strange people at Barcoomba, which lies north of the Silver Glacier and beneath the Mountain of the Hidden Crest.

Soon after leaving Baruda for the interior, the adventurers, aided by **MUTA**, a native friend of Adam's, rescue from a horde of hostile natives **JULIAN DEL RIVO**, a Portuguese, who on claiming to

be a friend of Adam's father is allowed to join up with the party. Resuming their journey the white men fall in with a tribe of pigmies, who lead them across the great icefields. Later they discover, tied to a post and dying with exposure, **KYHTE**, a native of the Hokahula tribe, who bears a written message from Professor Byrne. On regaining consciousness, Kyhte leads the party to the land of the Hokahulas where they find the professor crowned king of the race who took him captive. Rosa, is feigning illness in hospital, in order to evade an undesirable alliance with the native chief, **BEEDA**, who is madly in love with her. In Symes, Rosa's guard, Del Rivo recognises an old associate.

(Now read on.)

And then, whilst the room rang in echoes to their mutual rejoicings, the professor's sharply attuned ears caught a noise outside.

"What's that?" he cried. And even as he spoke the rushes which formed the curtain of the window were pushed aside and the horned head of a Hokahula priest became visible.

"Quick, Adam, my boy!" cried the professor. "Catch that man!"

The sudden and totally unexpected appearance of the face of the horned priest, or wise man of the Hokahulas, at the window was beyond question a complication. Brief though the time was since Adam and the rescue party had arrived in Barcoomba, Adam had learned that these men, very naturally jealous of the professor's power and ascendancy over the people, were dangerous. Now one of them had discovered that Rosa's illness was feigned, a blind, had seen her clasped in the arms of one white man and give her hand to another, and would know that the feigned illness was a ruse to save the beautiful white girl from marriage with their prince and blood chief Beeda.

The thought crossed Adam's mind in a flash, and he sprang instantly to action.

He leapt to the curtained window and vaulted through it. There was a drop of five feet outside, and he lost his balance on landing. When he rose it was to see a shadowy figure vanishing towards the trees which surrounded the clearing in which the hut was built.

The shadow vanished, and Adam, crestfallen, rejoined his father.

"I would that it had not happened—for those fellows will cause us mischief," said the professor thoughtfully. "However, it is done, and at least we know where we stand. Where there were merely myself, Rosa, and the man Symes—now I have you and Harry, your two devoted friends, and Julian Del Rivo besides—to say nothing of your wild black man, Muta. We are that much better off."

"And we have our arms. There are those south of Baruda who will wait eagerly for news of our expedition, dad, and who will send forth search parties if no news of us comes to hand," said Adam. "Indeed, for all I know—I have lost all count of time since our plane smashed and was burnt the night I found Mutt—such search parties may have already been despatched. If the worst comes to the worst, I think we may have a sporting chance of fighting our way out of Barcoomba, dad."

"The Hokahulas," said the professor, "are a friendly people. They have treated us well. I do not fear them—unless the jealousy of their chief Beeda is aroused, or we try to leave the country. They would certainly seek to prevent that, Adam, my son. We shall have to use tact—h'm! Yes—we shall have to use tact."

With a wave of his hand he dismissed the thought from his mind, and Adam and Harry turned to talk to Rosa.

Adam blinked as he looked at her in the soft light of the room. Moving round the rush-lined apartment, the professor, using a box of matches which Adam gave him, lit up several oil lamps which hung from the raftered ceiling. They were primitive lamps containing thick oil, and shaped like a sauce-boat—the wick protruding through the open spout. The soft light gave to the girl's face an added beauty.

"Rosa," said Adam, as he dumped himself down upon a cushion made of skin and stuffed with dried grass, "you are very beautiful!"

Rosa flashed a smile at him, revealing perfect teeth. Her bright eyes danced merrily. Her small and dainty feet were crossed as she sat upon the edge of her low couch. Her eyes were big, her regular features daintily shaped, her complexion perfect.

Harry, who had always worshipped Rosa, sat near to Adam, very silent and obviously entranced.

He could not take his eyes off her. She had been an awkward tomboy of a girl when she had left Studley. Now she was a woman in the full pride of her glorious girlish beauty—and such beauty! Harry gasped. And Rosa, maybe fully conscious of the effect she had upon him and Adam, accepted the tribute modestly enough.

"Think I am, Adam," she said. "It's nice of you to say so. Do you remember what you called me the day before daddy and I sailed? An ugly, freckled, little beast." And her merry laughter echoed far too loudly for any invalid.

At last it was time to go.

"You'll have to take me back into the palace now, daddy," said Rosa when they left. "And, after all, now that Adam and his friends have arrived"—here she shot a keen and approving glance at Harry, who, to escape the bother of

the daily shave, had grown the shortest and finest of beards—"I shall have enough devoted and loyal slaves to protect me from Beeda."

"Certainly," said the professor, with his hands upon his daughter's shoulders. "The ruse that you are dying has been exploded, my dear. Maybe it is as well."

"I think after seeing that face at the window I should be afraid to stay here much longer," said Rosa, after a pause.

"We will take you away to-morrow," her father promised. "And now I must think out which is the best way to relieve the man Symes."

"Let me send Mutt to guard her," suggested Adam.

"No," cried Harry eagerly. "Let me take on the duty, please."

Glancing swiftly at him, Rosa coloured deeply.

"You will find it dreary and uncomfortable sitting out there on the step, and the nights are cold as the days are hot," she reminded him.

But Harry insisted, saying that he was in no way tired despite the long day's journey and the amazing things that had happened to them.

So he had his way, and when the others were stretched out and enjoying their sleep Harry Franklin, watchful and wakeful, his keen eyes sweeping the all-pervading darkness of the night, sat with a rifle set between his knees within the shelter of the isolated hut—hardly moving till the dawn broke.

The Great Reception!

THE day that followed was a busy day for the friends.

They had to make an early appearance upon the raised dais or rostrum, which was used on all ceremonial occasions in the City of Barcoomba.

The news of the arrival of more white gods, who, it was told, had flown to the land of the Hokahulas by air—and who brought with them the long-lost and sacred charm Oyorara, had spread like wildfire—and from all the surrounding villages came swarms of people eager to see with their own eyes the white gods.

Also they stared in awe at the great, broad-chested, huge-bodied Muta—who claimed to be the son of their lost and now dead Queen O-Kama.

The travellers were grouped beside the white king, Professor Byrne, with Julian Del Rivo, Jimmy Brown, and Sandy McTavish forming a group of three who were seated apart—whilst Muta sat upon a throne by himself looking like some great, grotesque metal image.

Adam wore the magic charm suspended from his neck so that all could see it.

Giant guards of Hokahulas, picked men whose skins of brown and white were marked with singular uniformity, kept the great square.

Ranged behind them and their glittering spears crowded the people, surging like a mighty human tide from all directions to the scene.

Musicians furnished with drums covered with hide, horns strangely shaped, and all kinds of reed instruments besides, kept up a monotonous thrumming and droning.

The horned priests were gathered in a great army on one side of the dais, and throughout the ceremony performed a curious ritual to an accompaniment of shouts and abasements on the part of the people.

There were minor priests who burned incense in hard wooden shells which they swung to fan the glowing embers within.

And apart from all, princely in his height and of imposing personality, sat Beeda, the Hokahula chief, who had resigned his throne to the white god, Professor Byrne, the crowned king of the Hokahulas.

Adam, taking close stock of Beeda, thought that he liked him. Beeda, a striking-looking man, would have been quite handsome, in fact, had his expression not been marred by a furtive and suspicious leer.

It seemed to Adam, who hated any sort of function, that the long-drawn-out ceremony would never end.

It must have lasted three hours, at the mildest computation, before the end came, and with it great shoutings and rejoicings, the crowd breaking up.

And then came the first jarring note of the morning.

Stepping close up to King Byrne, the head of the horned priests said, accompanying his words with a flash of his keen eyes:

"And now, O white King of the Hokahulas, it behoves me to say what is only right for me to say; that since the beautiful white princess, daughter of our king, has not died of the sickness that caused such grief and lamentation

throughout the kingdom, it is our desire that she should be wedded to our chief Beeda without undue delay."

The professor blinked.

"But it is impossible for a sick girl to marry," he objected. "Besides, there is no need for hurry. The daughter of your king is in no hurry to find a mate. In the time to come, perhaps—"

"Perhaps"—the voice of the horned priest was smooth as velvet, though his eyes snapped angrily—"our great white king has other reasons?"

"No, no!" answered the professor hastily. "I honour and admire the chief Beeda, my friend. But we'll let it bide—we'll let it bide."

The high priest, turning to Beeda, crossed his arms and bowed obsequiously.

"Our king has no objections to make," he said, "but the time is not yet ripe, he says. The white princess will soon recover from her sickness, and then the marriage will take place as arranged."

Now Beeda rose and strode across to Adam.

Speaking rapidly and in a tone of deep intensity he reeled off sentence after sentence, swinging his arms, and making a highly dramatic performance of it.

Adam turned to his father, frowning in his perplexity.

"I don't understand one single word of the gibberish," he declared.

The professor, beaming, took out a pair of horn-rimmed glasses, which he slipped upon his nose.

"Adam, my dear boy, Beeda is questioning whether—ahem—it is possible for anyone, even a god, to draw a—er—weapon—a stick is the word he used—and with it shoot a living thing dead. The bow, the arrow, and the spear are the weapons of his people. He is anxious for you to—er—demonstrate with rifle or revolver."

"To shoot as I did yesterday?" asked Adam.

"It might not do, perhaps, to kill another sacred bird," the professor advised. "But they simply do not believe the

magic of the rifle or the revolver, my boy. Is your aim deadly? It used to be. Still is? Very well, then, why not show them what a rifle can do, it might ease the position for us; if ever they ran amok."

Adam laughed, swift to catch the idea.

"If only you can get me a decent target—some breakable thing that I can aim at, at say a hundred or two hundred yards' range."

"It shall be done."

The professor-king of the Hokahulas talked, and some great earthenware jars were brought and set one upon another. Jimmy Brown, to improve the mark; fetching some white chalk, smeared a white ring upon a four-foot high and bulky jar, leaving a bullseye in the middle.

This jar, while the ground was cleared, was set up as a target upon another and smaller jar a hundred and fifty yards away. Commands were given, the Hokahulas were cleared away from behind the target lest the bullet, after going through it, should strike one or other of them.

And when all was in readiness Adam, who had fetched a rifle he had often used, adjusted the sights, went down upon one knee, and with his first shot hit the middle out of the jar, then with a second bullet, shifting the barrel just a fraction, shattered it to pieces. As it fell in bits the onlookers raised a mighty shout.

The spit of the flame, the puffs of smoke, and the echoing report of the rifle frightened the Hokahulas.

The chief Beeda, smiling, bowed his head.

"It is well," said he to the professor. "I believe in your fire magic. Had a man been there he must have died."

He half-turned away.

"Great white god and king," he cried, raising his right hand imperiously, "I will wait a little while before I make the white princess my bride. But beware lest you tarry too long."

(Now look out for next week's instalment, chums. Every line contains a thrill.)

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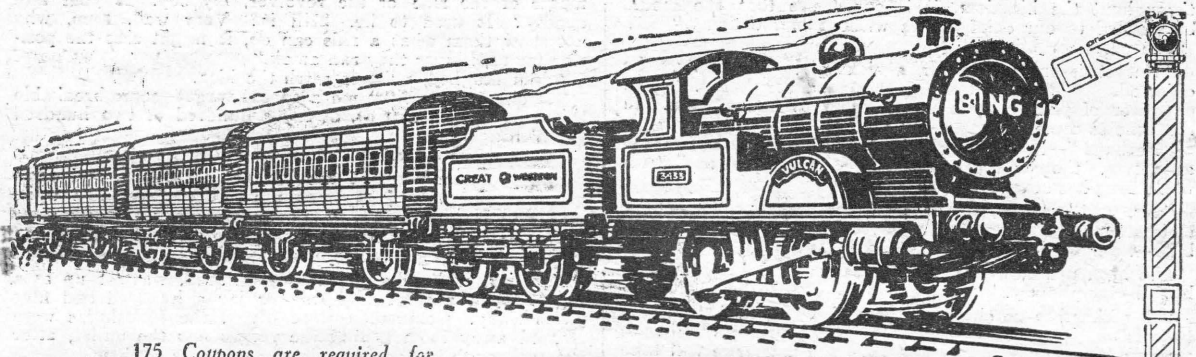
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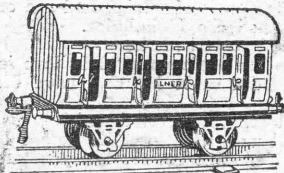
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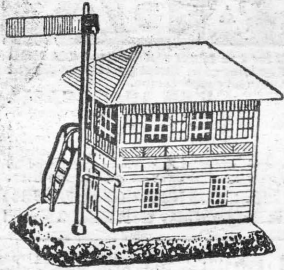
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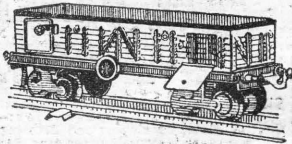
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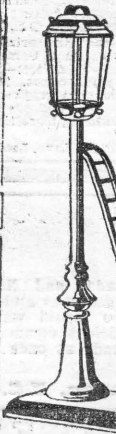
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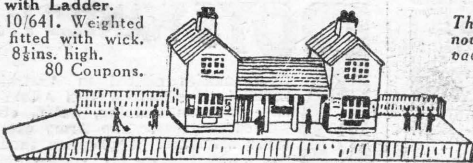
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