

GRAND 25,000-WORD SCHOOL STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO., INSIDE !

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2^D

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GRUNDY & CO. IN THE HANDS OF THE GRAMMARIANS!

Gordon Gay & Co., the heroes of Ryloomba Grammar School, leave Grundy & Co. spluttering with wrath and water in the murky ditch! (An exciting incident from the grand, long, complete school story by Martin Clifford, in this issue.)



Your Editor Chats With His Readers.

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.

MY DEAR CHUMS.—It has often been said that the man who never makes mistakes never makes anything. That's all very well, but the remark need not be accepted as a direct encouragement to anyone to go jolly about amidst a thicket of errors in the pious hope that something good may turn up. In connection with next week's topping bill for the GEM this age-old question of blunders comes right uppermost. Mr. Martin Clifford has built up a simply grand yarn, all about a mistake. The title speaks for itself.

"THE HOUSEMASTER'S MISTAKE!" By Martin Clifford.

Our great St. Jim's author has got hold of the theme of the season. Blunders, it has been pointed out, are worse than crimes. Not always. Certainly the cap does not fit here. The story hinges on a blunder, but the mistake led to a discovery which ought to have been made long ago. Cutts has played his own game for long past, and his exits and entrances by way of that convenient box-room window have been kept secret; but when a definite charge of theft is levelled against him, and he has to disclose the contents of his pockets, certain facts come to light which reveal the real goings-on of the black sheep and bully. It was the last thing Cutts anticipated to be called upon to turn out his pockets. The results are extraordinary. Cutts is able to prove that he is no thief, but, alas, what a fall for the mighty! There is plenty of justice about the new tale, and lots of humour, to say nothing of a good glimpse of character, which is always appreciated by Gemites.

"THE MYSTERY OF THE MUMMY CASE!" By Geoffrey Prout.

This new sensation-story, by the brilliant author of "Knights Awheel," is sure of a good reception. It gives a further thrilling adventure of those three sworn comrades, Sandy Munro, Denny Burdett, and Bob Harkley, who are plunged into the thick of a first-class mystification, and behind it all is a plot which calls for investigation. It has been well said that Sandy and his two chums are "in the van," for, as participators in a remarkable series of episodes, they lead all the time. This new story is one of the breathless sort which keeps the interest to the last line.

THE TUCK HAMPER!

Many are the compliments received about the prize Tuck Hamper, but some of these flattering words might well be devoted to the bright little yarnlets which decorate our famous Readers'

Page. Just remember that chances come when least looked for, and that the smart storyette always has a look in. Send your entries to the Editor, the GEM, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4, and bear in mind as well that for a picnic, or a rousing day up the river, a Tuck Hamper is an unbeatable companion.

GOOD OLD BRUM!

Compared to the GEM, all other magazines are quite weak and feeble. So says a cheery correspondent in the Midland City, and she proceeds to distribute compliments with a generous hand. Of course, Cardew comes in for some of the good things, and he well deserves them.

"THE SECRET OF THE GALLEONS!" By Roland Spencer.

For sheer brilliancy of narrative and amazing rush of incident, the next instalment of the serial takes premier place. We see the quest for the treasure buried fathoms deep, and the risks attendant on the search. Brian Carr and Dan Derrick meet with a rare grueling experience far down under the sea, and finis might well have been written to their account, but for the fact that their rivals in the hunt come to their aid. One hears of honour turning up all sparkling in the most unlikely places. So it is here. It is good to think that, notwithstanding deadly enmity and the fiercest rivalry inspired by the greed for gold, there is yet a certain point in life when duty alone—duty to a brother man—stands supreme. Next week's instalment, with this bright reminder of what life really is, will please readers of the GEM as much as, if not more than, any incident so far described in a wonderful narrative of the sea.

AN S.O.S. FOR STAMPS!

A loyal supporter of the GEM, namely R. Shiels, 14, Clifton Street, Invercargill, New Zealand, sends an appeal for stamps. He is a keen collector, and very desirous of corresponding with stamp collectors. He will answer all letters received.

MORE BARRING-OUT!

A Manchester chum asks for another barring-out series. You might come to think there was nothing jollier than a general rising with all the attendant excitement. Perhaps there is 'not. An upheaval in a just cause, sort of gives tone to the proceedings. This correspondent also wants a railway serial. Both suggestions are duly noted.

ANOTHER GLYN STORY!

A Wigan reader dotes on Bernard Glyn, and is simply longing for more details of the young inventor's brainwaves. My Lancashire chum looks at the matter differently to Mr. Rateliff. The unpopular Housemaster would much prefer to hear nothing more of Glyn and his well-laid schemes.

"MY READERS' OWN CORNER!"

OUR TUCK HAMPERS ARE PRIME!

Remember, boys and girls, we award a delicious Tuck Hamper for the best storyettes sent us each week—also half-a-crown is paid for each other contribution accepted. Cut out the coupon on this page, and send it, together with your joke, to me.

This Week's Winning Effort. THE REMEDY!

Waiter: "The customer over there is very fussy, sir." Manager: "Well, we can't afford to tell him, so let him fuss." Waiter: "But he says the soup isn't fit for a pig." Manager: "Then take it away and get him some that is!"—The Tuck Hamper has been awarded to Miss Molly M. Drover, Brighstone, Mill Hill, Cowes, Isle of Wight.

VERY UNCALLED FOR!

A man at a cricket-match was very disgusted at the players, and, turning to the man beside him, said: "Fancy putting on a rotten bowler like that!" "Well, returned his listener angrily, "it's better than your old straw any day!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to John Spence, 52, Barrington Road, Crouch End, London, N. 8.

HIS HAUNTING FEAR!

Lucy was saying good-bye to her lover, whose firm had given him a post out East. It was a long business, that farewell, and involved many more fond, affectionate kisses. "Darling," asked Lucy anxiously, as a tear stood in her bright blue eye, "will you be sure to write to me every day when you are far away?" "Yes, I will," he answered fervently. "Promise that you will write to me from every city you visit." "I will," he added, more fervently than ever. And then, as a doubt entered his mind, he asked a little anxiously: "Is it love that makes you say this? Swear to me! Do you really love me, or are you merely collecting foreign stamps?"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to Gordon Bartram, 2, West View Villas, Eastchurch, Sheerness, Kent.

MISUNDERSTOOD!

Angry teacher to small pupil during geography lesson: "Where's the Baltic? Where's the Baltic? Confound you, boy, where's the Baltic?" Nervous boy: "P-p-p-please, teacher, I ain't got it, b-but I saw Jimmy Figgins stuff summat up his jersey!"—Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. Middleton, 19, Lincoln Street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.

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THE GEM LIBRARY. No. 357.

Your Editor.

George Alfred Grundy looks for trouble—AND FINDS IT!

GRUNDY'S FEUD!



CHAPTER I. Grundy Intervenes!

"WOW-WOW!"
George Alfred Grundy of the Shell halted under the old elm trees in the quadrangle at St. Jim's when that dismal sound broke upon his ears.

"Wow-ow!"
He turned in the direction from which the noises proceeded, and saw Baggy Trimble standing near a tree in an attitude of dire distress. The fat junior's face wore a look of unutterable woe; he was wagging both plump hands in the air as if his life depended on it, and he was moaning and groaning in a heart-rending manner. Grundy walked up to him with a sympathetic look. It was plain to see that Baggy Trimble of the Fourth was suffering.

"What's the matter?" asked Grundy in a curt, but good-natured way.

"Ow-wow-wow-wow!"
That was all that Baggy seemed capable of saying. His look was most agonised; he appeared to be suffering tortures untold.

"What's up, kid?" demanded Grundy. "Been licked?"

"Yow!"

"Lathom been pitching into you?"

"Wow!"

"Has Knox been bullying you again?"

Baggy Trimble wagged his hands energetically.

"Grooogh! Yes, it's Knox!" he moaned. "The rotter! Knox, the beast! The bullying cad! I'm hurt! Ow-ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Oh, Knox!"

Grundy frowned portentously.

He did not usually feel much sympathy for Baggy Trimble; in fact, Grundy had often licked Baggy himself. He was a high-handed fellow, ready to administer a "whopping" on the least provocation. But Grundy, even if he was high-handed in his methods, and came down heavily on those who incurred his wrath or disapproval, was not a bully, and he did not hold with bullying.

Knox of the Sixth was a bully of the first magnitude. All the juniors hated him, and regarded him as their natural enemy. Knox, being a prefect, had powers which put him out of the reach of his victims' revenge. Grundy had had many a rub with Knox on the subject of bullying—usually with disastrous results to himself.

Only half an hour ago, in fact, Knox had boxed Grundy's ears for whistling in the corridor. Boxed his—Grundy's—ears! The enormity of it had quite overwhelmed the great George Alfred. His ears, and his heart, were still smarting.

"The rotter!" he exclaimed. "It's time something was done to stop Knox's bullying. He's too jolly handy with his paws. What were you doing, Trimble?"

"Nothing!" moaned Baggy. "I shouldn't think of prying into Knox's desk!"

"Oh! So you were nosing into Knox's desk!"

"Really, Grundy, I hope you don't think I'm an inquisitive chap!" gasped Baggy, peevishly. "The rotter made me go up to his study to get his tea ready—"

"My hat!" exclaimed Grundy. "You ought to have refused, Trimble! Prefects aren't allowed to fag chaps over the Third."

"Yow! I know that, but Knox couldn't find any fags, and he threatened me with a licking if I didn't get his tea ready," moaned Baggy. "I had to go. I couldn't find the tablecloth, so I looked in his desk. He happened to have left the key in the lock of one of the drawers, so I opened it. Of course, if I hadn't been looking for the crockery—I mean the tablecloth—I shouldn't have dreamed of opening Knox's drawer."

"You prying little rotter! You knew jolly well that the tablecloth wouldn't be in there!" said Grundy curtly. "You saw that Knox had forgotten to take the key out, so you poked your nose in, as usual—"

"Oh, really, Grundy!"

"And I suppose, you fat worm, that Knox came in and caught you nosing into his desk, and gave you a whopping!" said Grundy.

"I wasn't nosing, I tell you!" spluttered Baggy indignantly. "I only wanted the tablecloth! Knox returned suddenly and saw me with the drawer open, and the box of cigarettes, and the pack of playing-cards, and the racing paper, and the parcel in my hands—"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Grundy.

"How was I to know that he was hiding fags, playing-cards, racing papers, and bottles of whisky in his drawer—"

"What!" ejaculated Grundy, starting. "Bottles of whisky! You don't mean to say, Trimble, that you saw spirits in Knox's desk?"

"Ahem! I—I didn't actually see the whisky. I didn't have time to open the parcel—I mean, I'm sure there was whisky in that parcel. It simply reeked of spirits—just like that bottle we found in Taggles' lodge one day."

"My hat!" exclaimed Grundy. "We know that Knox smokes and gambles, and goes down to the Green Man sometimes, but to have firewater in his desk—actually in the school—"

"I'm going to the Head!" roared Baggy Trimble. "I'll jolly well show Knox up! He snatched that parcel out of my hands, and then went for me like a madman! That shows there was something in it he didn't want me to see! He simply lammed into me, and said he'd half murder me if I told anyone what I'd seen! But I'll show him up! The rotter! Knox is a disgrace to the school! I'll get him kicked out of St. Jim's! I'll—"

"You young sweep!"

A rasping, angry voice broke in, and, wheeling round, Baggy almost collapsed on seeing Gerald Knox stride up.

The prefect's face was black with fury, his eyes glittering with mad rage. He grasped Trimble by the coat-collar and shook him.

"So you've been repeating that lying yarn about me!" he hissed savagely.

"Yaroooh! Leggo! No, I haven't, Knox!" howled Baggy. "I simply told Grundy that I had made a mistake! Yoooop! I didn't mention anything about the cigarettes and playing-cards. Yah! I wouldn't think for a moment that

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you had whisky in that parcel— Yow-ow-wow-wow-wow!"

Knox grasped Baggy Trimble's ear and twisted it mercilessly.

"I'll teach you to mind your own business, you lying little hound! I warned you to keep your mouth shut, and now I'm going to flay you alive! Take that—and that—and that!"

"Yaroooooh! Ow-ow! Help! Yah! Ow-woooooh!"

The fat Fourth-Former reeled against the tree, with Knox's huge fists crashing upon him. He howled at the top of his voice, and blinked round wildly for help.

Grundy clenched his fists.

"Here, stop that, Knox!" he rapped.

Knox did not stop, but beat Trimble unmercifully. The fat junior's fiendish yells rang out across the Close.

Grundy, his eyes glinting and his jaws set squarely, stepped forward and grasped Knox's arm. He swung the prefect away from Baggy.

"Chuck it, Knox!" he exclaimed. "Trimble's had quite enough! You've no right to pitch into him like that, you bullying rotter!"

Knox dropped his fists in sheer amazement. For a junior to interfere with him was a new experience, and it took his breath away. But Grundy was not an ordinary junior. He was a tremendously big fellow, and his fighting powers were proverbial. Grundy had been known to lick a Fifth-Former more than once. Grundy feared no foe.

"Why, you cheeky little sweep—" began Knox.

"Leave Trimble alone!" said Grundy grimly. "He may have deserved a licking, and he's had one. I draw the line at bullying, Knox."

"You—you—you—"

Baggy Trimble, taking advantage of the interruption, darted behind Grundy for protection. George Alfred pushed back his cuffs and faced Knox fearlessly.

The prefect was beside himself with rage.

"I'll deal with you later, Grundy!" he snarled. "Come here, Trimble!"

"Yow-ow!"

"Keep behind me, Trimble!" said Grundy. "I'll see that the rotter doesn't bully you any more. I don't approve of bullying. I'll deal with Knox."

Knox turned purple with wrath.

At that juncture there was a rush of feet, and Tom Merry & Co., Jack Blake & Co., and several other juniors came up. They had been attracted to the spot by Baggy's mellifluous yells.

"Bai Jove! Whatevah is happenin', deah boys?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"What's the row, Grundy?" asked Tom Merry in wonder. George Alfred surveyed them with a frowning face.

"Knox has been bullying Trimble, and I'm keeping Knox in order!" he said.

"Oh, jeminy!"

"Grundy's keeping Knox in order!"

"Mind, I'm not a pal of Trimble's, and I should have given him a thundering good whopping myself if I'd caught him poking about in my desk," said Grundy darkly. "But at the same time, I'm down on bullying, and there are one or two things in this case that need going into. I'm taking the matter in hand, and—"

"Out of my way!" roared Knox savagely, taking a furious stride forward.

"Rats! Keep off, Knox! I'll not be responsible for my actions if you come any closer, so I warn you!"

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged amazed glances.

They were used to Grundy's heavy-handed ways, but to openly defy a prefect—and Gerald Knox, of all prefects—was a piece of cheek which, even for Grundy, was unnerving.

"Keep off the grass, Grundy, you idiot!" said Blake.

"Sha'n't!" retorted Grundy. "Knox is a rotten bully, and— Oh, my hat! Keep off! Yarooooooooh!"

Biff!

Knox wasted no more time in words. With a snarl of fury he swung round his left fist and landed a terrific, smashing blow right on the point of Grundy's chin. George Alfred went spinning, and he sat down with such suddenness that it seemed to him that the earth had risen to meet him. "Take that, you interfering young cad!" panted the prefect.

"Yah! Ow! Oh, crumbs!"

Grundy was not down for long.

Knox was just reaching again for Baggy Trimble when Grundy, with a roar like an infuriated bull, jumped to his feet and made a rush at him.

"I'll show him! Knocked me down! Why, I—I'll slaughter him, prefect or no prefect! Lemme get at him!"

Biff! Clump! Whack! Thud! Wallop!

"Yaroooooh! Yah! Gerroff! You little demon—Ah! Yah! Ooooooh!" howled Knox.

Grundy's fists whirled round like mowing-machines, and Knox, completely taken by surprise, staggered back under that terrific onslaught.

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CHAPTER 2.

Rough on Grundy!

"G O it, Grundy!"

"Make rings round him, old chap!"

Tom Merry & Co., now that Grundy had started on Knox, were all enthusiasm. And the manner in which George Alfred punched into Knox, and drove him back under a swift succession of terrific upper-cuts and short-arm punches was really glorious to behold. It thrilled the juniors, who had long smarted under the injustice which the rascally prefect thrust upon them. As Monty Lowther remarked, it was worth half a term's pocket-money to see Grundy pitching into Knox.

Grundy's fists drove hard and heavily on the prefect, and Knox's yells awoke the echoes.

"Yaroooooh! Wow! Grooop! Gerroff! You little villain—Wow-wowow! Great Scott! Oh! Ah! Ow!"

"Knocked me down!" bellowed Grundy, prancing round the prefect and dealing him doughty blows from all points of the compass. "I'll show him! That's one for his nose! And that's for his eye! Knocked me down! I've had enough of Knox! I'll show him what's what! I'll bully him! I'll prefect him! Take that!"

Biff! Thud! Wallop! Whack! Crash!

"Yaroooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Grundy's on the warpath! Pile in, Grundy! Another on the boko—that's the idea!"

"Bai Jove! I weally admiah Gwunday for his pluck, deah boys!" said D'Arcy. "Knox has been askin' for this for a long time, and I hope Gwunday gives the wottah a weally feahful thwashin'!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Grundy!"

Fellows dashed up from far and near to see the glorious sight.

It was not often that George Alfred Grundy received the backing of his schoolfellows, but on this occasion they were with him to a man. Knox was the most unpopular fellow at St. Jim's. His rascality and secret dingy ways were well known, but, being a prefect, he had hitherto been beyond the pale of ragging.

Grundy was doing his best now, however—or, rather, his worst, so far as Gerald Knox was concerned!

The prefect was astounded and dazed, and he hit out clumsily. Some of his blows landed home, but Grundy was as hard as nails, and he gave liberal interest for all the knocks that he received.

The juniors chortled with delight. Grundy was certainly getting the better of the encounter.

"Yaroooo! Stoppit!" Knox was howling. "You ruffianly little sweep, I'll get you flogged for this! Yow-rowp! You'll be sacked—Woocooohoooooh!"

Wilkins and Gunn, the two faithful followers of George Alfred Grundy, came up and looked aghast at their leader.

"Grundy!" said Wilkins faintly.

"Draw it mild, Grundy!" gasped Gunn.

But Grundy paid no heed.

Knox was rallying now. Grundy soon developed a black eye and a swollen lip as a result of the prefect's desperate retaliation, but he had no thought of giving up. His injuries only spurred him on to further deeds of valour.

"He, he, he!" chortled Baggy Trimble, forgetting his hurts in his great delight. "Mop him up, Grundy! How do you like being bullied yourself, Knox? He, he, he!"

"Cave!" yelled Herries of the Fourth. "Kildare's coming!"

"Look out, Grundy!"

"Cave!"

Grundy did not take warning, even if he heard. He and Knox were still fighting furiously when Eric Kildare, the stalwart captain of St. Jim's, strode angrily on the scene.

"Grundy! Knox!" he shouted. "Are you both mad? Stop, do you hear?"

Knox stopped, but Grundy didn't. He drove the prefect behind a tree. Kildare strode up, grasped Grundy by his coat-collar and whirled him round.

"Grundy! You rascal!"

"Ow! Leggo! Lemme gerrat him!"

"Keep him off!" yelled Knox.

Kildare shook Grundy, and then held him fast. The burly Shell fellow wriggled and struggled, but, big as he was, he was helpless in the powerful grip of the school captain.

"Now, Grundy, what is the meaning of this?" said Kildare angrily.

"I stopped him from bullying Trimble, and he knocked me down," roared Grundy. "Knocked me down—me, you know! I've had enough of Knox!"

"The young sweep—yowp!—interfered with me in the execution of my duty!" moaned Knox. "I was punishing Trimble for insolence and telling lies, when this little hooligan pitched into me. Grooooooh!"

"He was bullying!" snorted Grundy. "I'm down on



Without allowing the prefect to see his face, Grundy made a grab at the parcel. Quick as a flash, Knox whipped it up, and as his unknown assailant's arm shot out he hurled it away from him. Splash! The parcel went clean into a ditch that ran through the wood near by. (See page 8.)

bullying. It's time that sort of thing was put a stop to at this school. It's your duty, Kildare, as captain of the school, to keep an eye on the prefects. You've let Knox run wild too long. You ought to see that there's no bullying, Kildare."

"You cheeky little rascal——"

"I mean it, Kildare!" said Grundy between his teeth. "I say what I mean! Knox's bullying has got to be stopped!" Kildare looked at Knox.

The rascally prefect was cowering. His face, which bore signs of ill-usage, was suffused into a baleful snarl.

He dropped his gaze on meeting Kildare's eyes.

Kildare knew Knox's reputation as a bully, and had often spoken to him about it. He turned to Trimble.

"What was Knox punishing you for, Trimble?" he asked.

"Nothing at all, Kildare!" piped Baggy. "He made me fag for him. He went out and left me to get his tea ready. While I was looking for the tablecloth I happened to——"

"Hold your tongue, Trimble!" choked Knox.

"Oh, really, Knox. I'm obeying Kildare's orders by telling him the truth," said Baggy. "Of course, I may have been mistaken about the whisky in your desk——"

"What's that, Trimble?" said Kildare sharply.

"Don't listen to the little toad, Kildare!" cried Knox, his face white to the lips. "He's made up a pack of lies to be revenged on me. I found him prying in my desk, and punished him, that's all."

"Yah! You're frightened in case the truth comes out!" roared Baggy. "I'm not going to shield you, Knox! I'll show you up, you rotter! Look here, Kildare, I found a box of cigarettes, some playing cards, a racing paper and some whisky in Knox's desk!"

"Great Scott!"

"It's a lie!" shrieked Knox. "Trimble found nothing of the sort!"

He looked round, and saw that all eyes were fixed upon him. Trimble's statement had created an impression, and Knox realised that he was in a most awkward situation.

"Trimble, do you realise what a serious charge you are making against Knox?" asked Kildare, looking hard at the fat Fourth-Former. "Do you contend that you found whisky in Knox's desk?"

"I found a parcel that smelt of spirits!" said Baggy. "Knox came in before I opened the parcel—not that I should have opened it, of course. I shouldn't think of such a thing. But it's funny that as soon as Knox saw me with the parcel he snatched it away and went for me like a madman. He was in a blue funk!"

"I wasn't!" snarled Knox. "You lying little toad! I caught you prying in my desk, and punished you for it, as you deserved. Kildare, you surely don't believe what this young rascal says? As if I would dare to bring spirits into the school, even if I was in the habit of drinking them—which, of course, I'm not. Trimble's yarn is a pack of lies from beginning to end!"

Kildare was silent.

The other fellows gathered round were silent, too.

Baggy Trimble's vivid imagination and habit of telling falsehoods were well known at St. Jim's. It was quite probable, of course, that there was no foundation for his accusation against Knox.

Yet, on the other hand, Knox's rascality was equally well known to all. Tom Merry & Co. had often seen the prefect breaking bounds at night, and they knew for certain that he was on intimate terms with Mr. Jolliffe, the landlord of the Green Man, and other disreputable "sporting" characters of the neighbourhood. They knew, too, that he smoked and gambled in secret, although they would not have given Knox away for worlds, as much as they disliked him. "Thou shalt not sneak" was an unwritten law among the boys of St. Jim's. Kildare himself had more than a shrewd suspicion of Knox's underhand ways. Nobody knew whom to believe, Knox or Trimble.

"Well, you say that Trimble is telling lies, Knox?" said Kildare at last, looking hard at the pallid, cowering prefect.

"Yes!" panted Knox. "You needn't take him seriously. For two pins I'd set about him again——"

"Look here, Knox, I reckon the matter ought to be brought up before the Head!" said Grundy. "In that case, you would have no objection to having your desk searched?"

Knox went a shade paler.

"Mind your own business, Grundy!" he hissed. "I've had enough of your interference already!"

"Grundy's right!" said Tom Merry. "You'd better let the Head see into it, Knox, and then you'll clear yourself."

Knox turned to Kildare, and the school captain nodded.

"I suppose you'll take Trimble to the Head, Knox, and thresh the matter out with him?" said Kildare.

"What do you mean, Kildare?" said Knox harshly. "You believe Trimble's yarn, then? You think I, a prefect, should have to have my private things searched, simply on the trumped-up statement of a Fourth-Form kid?"

"If I were in your position, Knox, that is certainly what I should do," said Kildare dryly.

Knox gave a gulp.

"I—I don't think the matter should be dragged before THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 357.

Dr. Holmes," he muttered. "I admit that I let my temper get the better of me, and that I pitched into Trimble more than he deserved. But he shouldn't have opened my desk drawer. I—I think that, on the whole, I will let that part of the business drop."

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked at each other in amazement.

Knox had publicly climbed down!

Knox scowled as he realised the impression he had created.

Kildare nodded curtly.

"Very well, Knox," he said in a quiet voice. "You know your own business best, of course, and it is for you to decide whether the subject should be pressed farther. As regards Grundy—"

"That young hooligan deserves to be punished for attacking me, and I appeal to you, Kildare, as captain of the school, to see that he gets his punishment," said Knox with a scowl.

"You rotter!" roared Grundy. "I'd give you another whopping now, if Kildare would let me go!"

"I certainly sha'n't let you go, Grundy!" said Kildare grimly. "Whatever the provocation, you mustn't take the law into your own hands with a prefect. Discipline's discipline, and you've got to keep your place as a junior."

"That may be so," snorted George Alfred. "But Knox deserves a thundering good hiding for his bullying, and—"

"This way, Grundy!"

"Wowp! Who are you dragging, Kildare? Yow! Hands off! Yooooooop!" roared Grundy, as the St. Jim's skipper hauled him away.

Kildare, whatever his opinion of Gerald Knox, was a stickler for discipline, and he led Grundy, wildly protesting, upstairs to his room for an interview on that subject.

Knox did not care to look at the juniors. With eyes averted and face white as an aspen, he slunk away after Kildare and Grundy.

"Well, my only hat!" said Tom Merry, drawing a deep breath.

"Carry me home to die, somebody!" said Monty Lowther. "Fancy Knox eating humble pie like that! It's the giddy limit!"

"A most extraordinary thing, deah boys!" said D'Arcy. "It has thwown me into quite a fluttah, bai Jove! I wathah fancy that Knox has somethin' in his desk that he is most anxious to conceal!"

"Yes, rather!" said Blake. "Fags and playing cards, no doubt, but whisky's a bit thick—even for Knox. You must have made a mistake there, Baggy!"

"I didn't!" roared Baggy Trimble. "I'm sure I didn't! But, even if I did, there was something secret in that parcel! You should have seen Knox's face when he saw me with it! I jolly well wish I had opened it—"

"Oh, ring off, you spying little worm!" said Tom Merry contemptuously.

"Really, Merry—"

Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. walked away together, leaving Baggy glowering.

Ten minutes later all St. Jim's was agog with the affair.

Nobody set a great deal of store by Baggy's statements, although it was generally believed that Knox had cigarettes and other evidences of his rascally habits hidden in his desk. That, indeed, was nothing new.

But the juniors, with one accord, chuckled over George Alfred Grundy's valiant attack on Knox. For once his heavy-handed ways met with universal approval in the Lower School. He had licked Knox, and in so doing had acquitted himself as a champion and a hero.

CHAPTER 3.

A Momentous Decision!

"YOW-O-WOW!"

Thus George Alfred Grundy.

He came down the Shell passage ten minutes later, with his hands tucked tight beneath his armpits in such an attitude that he appeared to be endeavouring to fold himself up like a penknife.

He was gasping and moaning dismally.

Tom Merry & Co., and a crowd of other juniors looked at him with sympathetic expressions.

"Hard cheese, old chap!" said Blake. "Did Kildare lay it on?"

"Groooooogh!"

"How many, Grundy?" inquired Kangaroo.

"Yowp! Three on each hand—and an impot of a thousand lines!" groaned the suffering George Alfred.

"It's too thick! I'm jolly well not going to do those lines!"

"Oh, Grundy!"

"I'm not!" howled Grundy. "I had good reason to whop Knox, and I'll do it again next time I catch him bullying! He's a rotten cad and an outsider, and a disgrace to the school! I quite believe what Trimble says, and I'm taking the matter farther!"

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"You—you're what?" gasped Tom Merry.

"I'm taking the matter farther!" said George Alfred Grundy, looking round grimly through one eye—the other one having shut up shop for the time being. "Nobody, so far, has had the pluck to look into Knox's rotten ways, or to raise a hand to stop him at his shady tricks. St. Jim's is no place for a cad of his class, and I shall do the school a service by showing Knox up in his true colours!"

This announcement from George Alfred Grundy almost took his schoolfellows' breath away.

"Great pip!" said Talbot. "You'd better keep off the grass, Grundy!"

"I will not keep off the grass!" said Grundy emphatically. "I mean what I say! I shall keep an eye on Knox, and go into this matter deeper. Trimble has put me on the scent, although he's usually a lying little rotter—"

"Oh, I say, Grundy!" expostulated Baggy Trimble.

"What sort of a parcel was it you saw in Knox's desk?" demanded Grundy.

"A large brown paper parcel!" said Baggy. "It simply reeked of spirits—just like old Taggles sometimes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Right!" said Grundy. "I shall make it my duty to find out what's in that parcel, and, if my suspicions are confirmed, I shall not hesitate to expose Knox!"

Tom Merry looked rather uneasy.

"Take my tip, Grundy, and leave Knox to go on his own sweet way," he said. "The rotter is bound to overstep the mark sooner or later, and then he'll come a cropper. Better let him rip, old chap, and have nothing to do with it."

"Thanks for the advice, Tom Merry, but I'll do as I please!" said Grundy curtly. "As captain of the Lower School, I should have thought you might have done something before now, but as you are content to sit tight and let Knox go on bullying and acting the blackguard, I'll see what I can do myself. And I will say, now I have started, that Knox had better look out. I'm Grundy, you know, and I can do things."

"Yes, we know you can do things, Grundy," said Tom Merry.

"We do—we does!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Gwunday, deah boy, you're no end of a sewappah, but I should leave Knox seawahly alone, if I were you," said D'Arcy gently.

"Bah!" The great George Alfred made a gesture of disgust. "I'm going after Knox—to show him up! You chaps just wait—you'll see something!"

"You'll have to get proof before you can show Knox up!" said Talbot.

"Don't worry—I shall get proof!" sniffed Grundy.

"Don't be an ass, Grundy!" said Tom Merry. "Knox is too wily a bird to be caught—especially now he knows that the school suspects him. You're bound to come a cropper—you always do. Fools barge in where angels fear to tread, you know."

"Piffle!" snorted Grundy. "I'll show you! Come along, Wilkins and Gunn!"

Grundy seemed to have quickly recovered from the pain of his licking.

His two study-mates blinked at Grundy without replying.

"I said come on, Wilkins and Gunn!" said Grundy, glaring.

"Wh-where to, Grundy?" asked Wilkins, with an uneasy look at Gunn.

"I'm going to keep surveillance on Knox, and I want you two to help me," said George Alfred. "Knox is in his study now, and I'm going to have him under observation. When he goes out I shall nip into his study and examine the desk!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"You two can keep cave, and help me in my investigations—do you understand?"

"Ahem!" coughed Wilkins.

"Ah-hum!" said Gunn.

They did not appear to be at all enthusiastic about helping Grundy keep Knox under observation.

"Well?" demanded Grundy.

"What about tea, old chap?" faltered Wilkins. "You must feel awfully peckish after your fight with Knox, you know. Let's go along and have tea."

"Blow tea!" snorted Grundy. "That can wait. I'm blessed if you chaps don't make me tired—wanting tea when Knox has got to be bowled out. Even now he may be destroying the evidence I want against him. Yet you want your tea! Talk about Julius Cæsar fiddling when Rome was burning!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Couldn't you carry out your investigations on your own, Grundy?" said Gunn. "We—we might be in the way, you know."

"Yes, you probably would," said Grundy. "But I must have help, and I'll make do with you. Follow me."

Grundy started to walk away, but Wilkins and Gunn did not move.

Grundy glared round.

"Are you fellows coming?" he demanded. "Or do you want me to whop you?"

"We—we're coming, old chap!"

Grundy's study-mates hastily followed him down the passage.

Wilkins and Gunn had found, from long and hard experience, that it did not pay to argue with George Alfred. He was too hard a hitter, for one thing. For another, he wasn't a bad sort of chap, and was very liberal in the study. They usually allowed Grundy to have his head, they meekly obeyed orders and making the best of things.

The other juniors in the passage grinned.

"So Grundy's out for Knox's blood!" said Tom Merry. "Good old Grundy! He means well, of course—he always does. But I think we should be doing him a kindness by going after him and persuading him not to play the giddy goat. It might save him heaps of trouble later on."

"Let Grundy rip, Tommy!" said Blake. "You'll never persuade him to leave Knox alone. When once Grundy gets an idea into his fat head, wild horses wouldn't drag it out again. If he gets it in the neck, it will be his own fault. Besides, it will be rather interesting to see what develops."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Little did the juniors dream, however, of the developments that were due to take place as a result of Grundy's feud with Knox.

CHAPTER 4.

Gordon Gay & Co. Assist.

"**S**HUSH!" said Grundy, in a stage whisper. "Shush yourself!" grunted Wilkins. "What the dickens are you looking at, Grundy? Can you see anything?"

George Alfred Grundy was bending down at the keyhole of Knox's study door, peering eagerly through it with the eye that was functioning.

In the ordinary way, Grundy would not have thought of getting information from a keyhole, as Baggy Trimble and Mellish and one or two others of the same kidney were wont to do, and he would have unhesitatingly "whopped" any fellow he caught at a keyhole. But in the present circumstances Grundy felt that he was justified in taking that course. Even as a poet has a licence, so Grundy felt that a detective—and what was he now but a detective?—had certain rights and liberties.

Wilkins was with Grundy, whilst Gunn kept anxious watch at the end of the passage.

"Knox is just going out—he's taken a parcel from his desk, and has left it unlocked!" muttered Grundy excitedly. "My hat! This is where we make ourselves scarce!"

Grundy & Co. promptly hid in an alcove round the corner as Gerald Knox strode out of his study.

They watched him go downstairs, with a parcel under his arm.

"Follow him, Gunn, and whatever you do, don't let him think he's being followed!" said Grundy curtly. "I'm just going to nip into his room and look in the desk. I shan't be a minute!"

Gunn went downstairs after Knox, whilst Grundy "nipped" into Knox's study.

Finding that the bottom drawer of the desk was unlocked, he pulled it open eagerly.

"By Jove!" muttered Grundy. "The artful rotter! I'm done, by Jove!"

The drawer contained a cigarette box which was filled with pencils, an old copy of the "Rylcombe Gazette," and a packet of postcards. There was a parcel, too, and on opening it Grundy found that it contained books.

He drew a deep breath.

"Now I know why Knox was messing about a lot at this drawer," he muttered. "He's removed the cigarettes, the playing-cards, the racing paper, and the mysterious parcel, and put these things in instead. That's his dodge, in case an inquiry was made into Trimble's yarn. The artful rotter! But he won't pull the wool over my eyes! He's got a parcel under his arm, and I reckon the incriminating evidence is all in that parcel! Come on, Wilkins—we've got to find out what's in the parcel Knox has just taken out!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Wilkins in dismay. "I—I say, Grundy—"

"Buck up, and don't jaw!" snapped Grundy. "Knox has had a start, and I don't want to lose his trail. This way!"

The two Shell fellows went downstairs and out into the quadrangle.

Gunn was at the gates, and he beckoned them over.

"Well?" demanded Grundy when he and Wilkins ran up.

"Which way did he go?"

"Down the lane towards Rylcombe," said Gunn. "Look here, Grundy, don't you think you'd better give this business up? If Knox catches us—"

"He won't catch us!" said Grundy emphatically. "I'm going to catch him!"

"What about our tea—?"

"I'll give you a thick ear, Gunn, if you stand there arguing with me. Come on!"

Wilkins and Gunn, exchanging grimaces, followed their leader.

They hurried down the Rylcombe Lane in the cover of the bushes towards the village.

Suddenly Grundy gave a gasp.

"There he is!" he exclaimed, pointing ahead. "Don't lean out like that, Wilkins, you silly cuckoo, he'll see you! He's just gone into the wood. Come on! This is getting interesting!"

"You won't be able to chase Knox through the wood without giving yourself away, Grundy!" said Wilkins. "You'll get into a fearful row if Knox does spot you following him. You're not going into the wood!"

"I am!" said Grundy. "And you two are coming with me!"

"Wh-what about that impot Kildare gave you?" said Gunn hopefully.

"Dash the impot!" snorted Grundy. "I'm not going to do it! I told Kildare I wouldn't do it, and I mean what I say. He wants it by eight o'clock to-night, but he'll be lucky if he gets it. Don't hang about, you idiots! Follow me!"

Wilkins and Gunn gave up hope of persuading Grundy from his purpose. Hoping for the best, they followed him into the Rylcombe Wood.

They trod carefully and quickly along the path that Knox had taken, and soon they saw Knox's burly figure ahead through the trees.

"There he goes!" said Grundy excitedly. "He's still got the parcel under his arm! He's taking the path that leads to the river—and the Green Man. I know where he's going! We'll have that parcel before he gets to the Green Man!"

"Oh, jeminy!" gasped Wilkins. "How—how are you going to capture the parcel, Grundy?"

"I'll run up behind him suddenly and shove him over on his face!" said Grundy. "You chaps can hold him down, with his face to the ground, while I take the parcel and run off. Then you can blindfold him with a handkerchief, and run after me."

"Oh!" said Wilkins. "Can we?"

"Will we!" said Gunn.

"Yes, you will!" said Grundy threateningly. "You've got to obey orders. You'll be safe enough, if you carry out my instructions. Knox won't know who took the parcel. Of course, if I find anything of an incriminating nature in it, I shall expose him openly at St. Jan's. It will be my duty!"

"Br-r-r-r-r-r!"

"Bow-wow!"

Wilkins and Gunn viewed Grundy's proposals with alarm and disgust, but they dared not say so.

Knox was plunging ahead along the narrow, thickly overgrown woodland path, with the parcel held tight under his arm.

Grundy & Co. crept up stealthily.

"Now," said Grundy, "you two keep back while I go on and jump on Knox from the rear. When I've got him down you come up as quickly as you can. Don't leave me in the lurch, or I'll slaughter you afterwards. Do you understand?"

"All—all right, Grundy!"

George Alfred crept close up behind Knox who, so far, had no idea that there was anybody on his trail. Then suddenly he gave a leap, and landed on Knox's back.

"Yah! What the dickens—" gasped the Sixth-Former, staggering forward, with Grundy on his back. "Yaroop! Gerroff! Ow-ow!"

Grundy's calculations did not work out quite as he had planned them, for Knox refused to fall flat on his face. He ran forward, carrying Grundy pick-a-back along with him. George Alfred hung on grimly and tried to overbalance Knox.

He managed it at last.

Bump!

"Yaroooooooooogh!" howled Knox, collapsing in a bramble-bush.

"Yow-wow-wow!" roared Grundy.

He, too, went sprawling into the bush.

The bush was prickly, and Grundy found that reposing in it was most uncomfortable.

The parcel fell from under Knox's arm.

Grundy saw it lying on the path, and with a wild spring out of the bush he made a grab for it.

"You young sweep! Leave that alone!"

Knox's voice, rasping with fury and alarm, broke in. Grundy did not allow the prefect to see his face.

He gave a roar as Knox kicked him aside and made a grab at the parcel.

Knox, quick as a flash, whipped it up, and, seeing his unknown assailant's arms coming out again towards it, he hurled it away from him.

Splash!

The parcel went clean into a ditch that ran through the wood near by.

Grundy beckoned wildly to his scared studymates.

With arms held across their faces to prevent Knox from recognising them, they dashed to Grundy's assistance.

Grundy was struggling with Knox.

The prefect gave a snarl of baffled rage when he saw the other two coming.

He realised that he stood no chance against three.

With a brutal heave he wrenched himself away from Grundy and, without more ado, he took to his heels and ran.

He disappeared among the trees, and Grundy & Co. heard him crashing heavily through the undergrowth.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Wilkins. "That's done it! Knox has got away, and has chucked the parcel in the ditch—"

"I'll soon have it out of there!" said Grundy promptly.

"Yes, but suppose Knox returns and sees us?" demanded Gunn. "What then, Grundy—hey?"

"Knox is a good way off by now," said Grundy. "It won't take me long to fish the parcel out of the ditch. You two keep watch for Knox while I look for the parcel."

"Oh, all right."

Grundy went to the side of the ditch, at the spot where he judged the parcel had fallen. He peered into the murky, slimy water and weeds.

"Grooooooh!" he gasped. "What a niff! No sign of the parcel, though. It must have sunk. Never mind! I'll drag this rotten ditch till I do find the parcel!"

Grundy jumped up and broke off a long branch from a tree near by.

He then clambered down the bank again to the water's edge, and proceeded to rake the ditch with the tree-branch.

This was by no means a pleasant task, but Grundy did not mind.

Rake, rake, rake!

"Ugh! There are plenty of frogs and weeds, but where's that beastly parcel?" muttered Grundy as he dragged energetically in the ditch. "Groogh! It must be here somewhere."

So engrossed was George Alfred Grundy in his task that he did not hear stealthy footsteps above.

Four junior schoolboys, wearing Grammar School caps, crept to the top of the ditch banking.

Three others had Wilkins and Gunn prisoners a short distance behind.

They were Gordon Gay & Co., the heroes of Rylcombe Grammar School and the St. Jim's juniors' deadly rivals.

Gordon Gay himself, Jack Wootton, and Frank Monk gazed down with interest at Grundy. Harry Wootton, Carboy, and Mont Blong were holding Wilkins and Gunn, with hands held tight over their mouths to prevent them from warning Grundy.

"Hallo, dear boy!" said Gordon Gay pleasantly.

George Alfred looked up, and he gave a start when he saw the Grammarians.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "What do you blighters want?"

"Well, we should like to know what you're doing down there, raking in the ditch!" said Gordon Gay blandly. "Is it a new sort of game, Grundy?"

"No, it isn't!" growled Grundy. "I'm looking for something that's dropped in the ditch. You Grammar School microbes can sheer off—you're interrupting!"

Gordon Gay turned to his followers with the sweetest of smiles.

"Such a nice, gentle, well-mannered boy, Grundy, isn't he?" he grinned. "What a pity that he should be going to so much trouble to rake in the ditch with a stick to find what he has lost! Would it not be better for him to get into the ditch? He would stand a better chance of succeeding in his search—what?"

"Yes, rather!" said the other Grammarians.

Grundy blinked.

"You kids needn't rot!" he growled. "Just clear off and leave me alone. You don't want me to thrash you, I suppose?"

"Dear me! No, not at all!" said Gordon Gay. "But perhaps you are a trifle nervous of diving into the ditch, Grundy? May we assist you?"

"Gerraway! I—I—"

"Oh, do let us assist you, Grundy!" chorused the Grammarians.

Grundy gave an alarmed shout and clenched his fists tight as Gordon Gay, Wootton major, and Frank Monk descended the ditch bank towards him.

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"Go back! Lemme alone!" he roared. "Don't you dare chuck me in, or—Yah! Wow! Yaroooooh!"

Gordon Gay extended his right foot, and, placing it against Grundy's waistcoat, gave a gentle, but insistent push. Grundy staggered backwards on the sloping, grassy bank and performed some weird and wonderful evolutions before he completely toppled over and went headlong into the murky waters of the ditch below.

Splash!

"Yerrooooooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Grammarians.

Grundy fairly floundered in the ditch.

"Now the others!" chuckled Gordon Gay. "I'm sure they'd be of use to Grundy in his search for whatever he has lost. In with 'em!"

Wilkins and Gunn, roaring and struggling wildly, were brought forward to the top of the bank and hurled downward.

Splash! Splash!

Grundy was just rising to the surface, his head and shoulders festooned with weeds, when his two studymates descended upon him and sent him back again into the ditch.

"Yerrrahhh!"

"Gug! Gug! Gug!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay & Co. awoke the woodland echoes with their laughter. And, mingling with the laughter, came the queer gurgling gasps of the three luckless juniors wallowing in the ditch below.

"Now you can hunt for what you have lost, and I hope you find it!" said Gordon Gay sweetly. "Chin-chin, old dears!"

"Cheer-awfully-oh!" said Frank Monk.

"Groooh! Yah! Gug! You—you—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And, leaving George Alfred Grundy and his two luckless followers spluttering with wrath and water in the murky ditch, the heroes of the Grammar School strolled away, chuckling.

CHAPTER 5.

Knox's Dilemma!

KNOX halted when he reached the towing-path by the Rhyl, and stood there panting for breath. The exertion of his run through the Rylcombe Wood was telling on him. Knox was not an athletic fellow.

His face was deathly white, his nerves strung to concert pitch.

"Oh, the parcel's gone! I had to get rid of it somehow!" The words came from the prefect in jerky gasps. "I—I only hope to goodness those little rotters, whoever they are, haven't found it! If they do, I can but deny that it was ever in my possession. Nobody would suspect that I had it. Yet Rossiter—"

Knox broke off, catching sight at that moment of two figures that were standing on the opposite side of the river, a short distance off.

One was a senior of St. Jim's, and Knox recognised him as Gerald Cutts of the Fifth. Cutts' companion was a thick-set, heavily built man with a handsome, but brutal face. He was flashily dressed, and was smoking a fat cigar.

Knox clenched his fists hard and drew back in the shadows of the trees.

"Good heavens! That's Rossiter—talking to Cutts!" he muttered. "I—I wonder whether Cutts has told him anything? Rossiter looks wild."

The man conversing with Cutts was making gestures with his right fist, and he appeared to be speaking angrily. Cutts was listening with his hands in his trousers-pockets, a cool smile on his face.

Cutts of the Fifth was always a cool customer. He was as big a rascal as Knox; he and the prefect were on intimate terms, and knew most of each other's little secrets.

Rossiter was an acquaintance of Jolliffe, whom Knox had met at the Green Man. He had gradually become intimate with the shady rascal.

Knox drew a deep breath when he saw Cutts take leave of his companion, cross the little iron bridge, and stroll along the towing-path towards him.

Rossiter then walked off and disappeared, much to Knox's relief.

The Sixth-Former stepped out into Cutts' path as the Fifth-Former strode up.

"Hallo, Knox!" said Cutts, with a short stare of surprise. "Fancy you being along here! What's up? You look scared to death. Has somebody been chasing you?"

"Three young rotters from the school set about me in the wood!" snarled Knox. "They tried to steal a parcel from me—"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Cutts. "Not the parcel you are minding for Rossiter?"

Knox gave him a quick look,

"Then Rossiter has told you?" he said. "He told you that I was hiding—minding—a parcel for him at St. Jim's?"

Cutts nodded coolly.

"I happened to meet Rossiter just now, and he asked me how you were," he said. "I told him of that business with Baggy Trimble this afternoon—about the mysterious parcel that Baggy said contained spirits, never dreaming that the parcel had any connection with Rossiter. He nearly had a fit when he heard about Baggy finding the parcel and spreading the yarn all over the school. He said he wanted to see you at once—to get the parcel back. So it belongs to Rossiter?"

Knox nodded.

"Yes; the rotter got me to mind it for him—he made me take it to St. Jim's," said the prefect. "I owe him money, you see. He gave it to me in the parlour of the Green Man, and some whisky he was drinking got upset over it. That accounts for the smell that young Trimble detected. I don't actually know what's in the parcel, but I think I can guess. Jolliffe told me that Rossiter is a thief. The parcel contains stolen property which Rossiter is anxious to have hidden for a little while. There could be no safer place than at St. Jim's, of course. The police hunting for the stolen things would not think of looking at St. Jim's."

Cutts nodded.

"Yes; that's so, Knox," he said. "I think you've hit the right nail on the head. I reckon it gave you a pretty bad turn when you saw Trimble poking about in your desk. If the parcel gets found, of course, and its contents disclosed, you will be put in the deuce of a situation. Everything will

be found out, and you'll be sacked from St. Jim's as sure as eggs!"

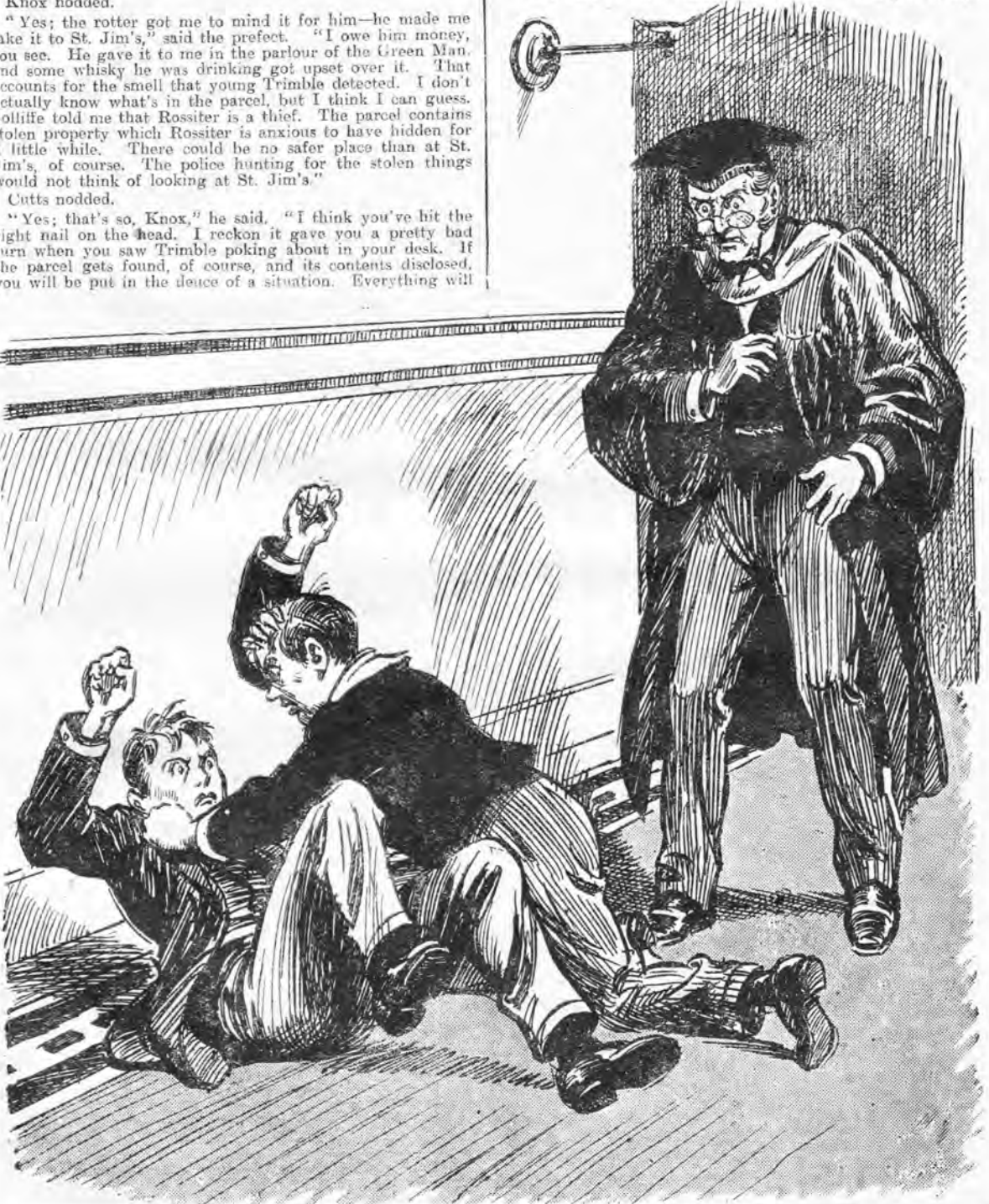
Knox's face was almost grey.

"The parcel's gone!" he muttered thickly. "I was on my way to return it to Rossiter just now, when I was attacked in the wood by three juniors. They had followed me from St. Jim's, and they were after the parcel."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Cutts. "Haven't you any idea who the kids were? Didn't you see their faces?"

"No," replied Knox. "They took jolly good care of that. But I can pretty well guess who they were. Tom Merry and a couple of his gang, of course."

"You may be right, Knox," said Cutts. "Merry is always



Dr. Holmes fell back amazed and horrified, as the struggling Knox and Grundy rolled right at his feet. "Knox—Grundy!" he cried. "Good heavens, can it be that you are fighting? A prefect and a junior fighting! Cease this hooliganism immediately!" (See page 12.)

up to tricks like that—nosng out things, and minding other people's business. Where is the parcel now? Did they get it?"

"I—I don't know. They would have taken it from me, but I threw it into a ditch. They may have taken it from the ditch by now—"

"You bet they have!" said Cutts. "This is a jolly serious matter, Knox. Although the parcel isn't your own, you've no right to be harbouring it for Rossiter. You've no right to be mixing with rotters like Rossiter, come to that. Knox, you've got to get that parcel back and hush everything up, otherwise it's the noble order of the boot for you."

"What did Rossiter say?" muttered Knox. "Was he wild?"

"Wild! I should say he was!" replied the Fifth-Former. "He wants that parcel back as soon as you can manage it. That was the message he gave me to give you."

"He'll have it, with pleasure, as soon as I lay hands on it myself," said Knox. "Let's go to the ditch, Cutts, and hunt for the parcel. The young sweeps may not have found it yet."

Cutts, grinning slightly, accompanied the prefect into the wood.

Knox found the spot where he had thrown away the parcel. He and Cutts searched up and down the ditch, but could not find the parcel.

Cutts pointed out a trail of slime and water and weeds that led up the bank and along the path near by.

"Looks as though somebody has been here recently—and fell in!" he said. "Perhaps one of the kids saw the parcel in here, and fell in trying to get it out."

Knox nodded dully.

"In that case, the parcel has been found," said Cutts. "You'll have to look at St. Jim's for it, Knox."

"Come on!" said Knox. "We'll get back at once. If inquiries get started I'm done!"

The two seniors hurried through the wood, and bent their footsteps towards St. Jim's.

Knox's heart was quaking with fear and apprehension.

Had the parcel been taken from the ditch? Had it been opened and inquiries started?

Cutts felt a sneaking sort of pity for his companion in blackguardism. He had long expected Knox to overstep the mark and land himself into disgrace, and he wondered whether the rascally prefect, by consenting to hide Rossiter's parcel at St. Jim's—a parcel which he knew contained stolen property which the police were searching for—he had brought about his own undoing.

CHAPTER 6.

Grundy in the Wars!

"YOU blithering idiot!"

"Groogh! You howling fathead!"

Wilkins and Gunn made those remarks, and they addressed them to George Alfred Grundy.

The trio squelched down the Rylcombe Lane, leaving a long, long trail of water, weeds, and green slime behind them.

They were verily sights for gods and men and little fishes.

Their heads and shoulders were liberally festooned with weeds, they were drenched to the skin in evil-smelling water, and were plastered with mud from head to foot.

Words could not express the feelings of Wilkins and Gunn. They blinked at their leader with looks like gargoyles.

"Gerrooogh!" gurgled George Alfred. "This is awful! I'd have—yoooch—whopped that Grammar School rotter if—"

"Yah! Chump! Scatter-brained idiot! Look at us!" snorted Wilkins, in deep exasperation. "It's all your blithering fault! Groogh! This is the outcome of your silly idea. You—you burbler!"

"Look here—"

"You chortling, raving lunatic!" howled Gunn. "You—you—Oh, bump him!"

Grundy's two infuriated followers seized him and whirled him over.

Grundy howled and struggled wildly, but the blood of Wilkins and Gunn was up. They could stand Grundy to certain lengths. They had many times been martyrs unto him. But this was too much. The worms were now turning with a vengeance.

"Leggo! Yah! Ooooh! Wharrer you at?" howled Grundy, as he was whirled violently over. "Yowp! You—you rotters! I'll slaughter you! Wow! I'll—Oooooooogh!"

Bump, bump, bump, bump!

The form of George Alfred Grundy rose and fell, and it struck the cold, hard, unsympathetic road with a series of terrific concussions.

"Woogh! Wah! Ow! Leggo! Yow-wow-wow!"

"Now chuck him into the hedge!" hissed Wilkins. "We'll show him!"

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Whiz!

"Yaroooooooogh!"

Grundy went crashing into the hedge, legs and arms waving wildly, and he disappeared into its yielding, prickly depths.

"There," said Gunn, "that will show him! Groogh! What will the chaps say when we get back? But we've given Grundy something to think about. The howler! Come on, Wilkins! Yah!"

Wilkins and Gunn, comrades in calamity, squelched their way onward to St. Jim's, leaving Grundy to rave and struggle in the hedge.

Tom Merry & Co., Blake, Herries, D'Arcy, and Digby were standing by the gates, looking for the postman, when they came up.

"Sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?" quoth Monty Lowther. "Ye gods! What are they?"

"Look here—" began Wilkins.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "So you've come back. Have you bowled out Knox?"

"Groogh! No fear! We—"

"Looks as though Knox has bowled them out!" grinned Tom Merry. "Did he throw you in a ditch, or something?"

"No. Gordon Gay and his set did that," moaned Gunn.

"Great pip!"

"Where's Grundy?" said Manners, in wonder.

"We chucked him in a hedge down the road. He'll be along in a few minutes," gurgled Wilkins. "We've fed-up with Grundy! He's off his rocker! He won't catch us foxing Knox with him any more. Blow Knox and blow Grundy! Br-r-r-r-r!"

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled as the two hapless Shell fellows crawled indoors. Then they waited eagerly for Grundy to appear.

They did not have long to wait, however.

George Alfred came limping into view some minutes later, and the juniors at the gates greeted him with loud roars of merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look at Grundy!"

"Gaze on him and weep!"

Grundy came up. He was in a parlous state. Never before had a junior looked such an utter, complete, and unholly wreck.

"Gerrugh! Yow! I'm blest if I can—ow—see any reason for you to cackle like a barnyard of hens!" he moaned.

"Where are those two rotters? I'm going to whop 'em!"

"You mean Wilkins and Gunn?" inquired Tom Merry.

"Oh, you needn't worry about them, Grundy. So you haven't got any evidence against Knox?"

"Wow! That's my business!" gasped Grundy. "I'll show him! This is all his fault. If he hadn't chucked the parcel into the ditch—"

"My hat! So Knox took a parcel out and threw it into a ditch!" exclaimed Blake. "That looks jolly fishy."

"You mind your own business, Blake!" snapped Grundy, blinking through the slime. "I'm dealing with Knox."

"Groogh! I'll bowl him out! You keep off the grass! Yah! Gerrooogh!"

Grundy limped away across the quad and entered the School House.

Loud chortles of mirth greeted him on all sides.

Several fellows, however, had to hold their noses as he passed. The reek from the mud and ditch-water was really most overpowering.

Grundy met Mr. Linton on the stairs and gave a groan.

The master of the Shell regarded him in horror.

"Good heavens! Is that you, Grundy? What the—"

Groogh! Keep away from me, boy!" he exclaimed. "What an unpleasant effluvia! Bless my soul! How dare you enter the school in that disgraceful condition, Grundy!"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Grundy.

"Are you not ashamed of yourself, Grundy? Groogh! Dear me! The odour is so obnoxious that I cannot bear to be near you. And look at the mess you are making on the stairs! Take five hundred lines, Grundy, and go upstairs and clean yourself at once!"

"Oh crumbs! Look here, sir—"

"Not a word! Go, Grundy, and do as I say!"

Mr. Linton swept onwards, with a handkerchief discreetly applied to his nose.

George Alfred gulped something down in his throat. His cup of bitterness was full almost to overflowing. He squelched upstairs, muttering as he went.

Wilkins and Gunn were in the bath-room when he arrived, busy with hot water, soap, and brushes.

They grasped a brush each in a threatening way when Grundy entered, but George Alfred's truculence was gone—for the time being.

He went on muttering, and some of his remarks concerning Knox and Wilkins and Gunn and Gordon Gay & Co. and Mr. Linton were most lurid.

Half an hour later George Alfred Grundy came downstairs, looking much cleaner after his scrubbing, but still having a much-battered and scratched appearance.

Fellows whom he met chuckled deeply, and he was chipped unmercifully concerning his shadowing of Knox.

Grundy gritted his teeth and bore up heroically against the gibes of his schoolfellows. It was ignorance on their part—sheer ignorance. Let them wait! He'd show them—and Knox, too!

He was stating his intentions regarding Knox to a small knot of juniors on the corner of the Shell corridor, when Kildare strode up.

There was a grim look on the captain's face as he fixed his gaze on Grundy. The juniors noticed that he held an ashplant in his hand.

"Well, Grundy, what about that imposition I gave you?" he demanded. "It's past eight o'clock."

"I haven't done the impot, Kildare," said Grundy. "I told you I wouldn't do it, and I've kept my word."

"You insolent little scoundrel!"

"Sorry to have to disobey you, Kildare," said Grundy firmly, "but this is a matter of principle, you know. That rotter Knox only got what he deserved, and he deserves a jolly sight more. If I had my way—"

"Enough of that, Grundy!" rapped Kildare angrily. "So you have deliberately disobeyed me and neglected to do that imposition!"

"Yes," growled Grundy.

Kildare compressed his lips and took a tighter grip on his cane.

"Hold out your hand, Grundy!" he commanded.

Grundy stood resolute, and did not remove his hands from his trousers' pockets.

Kildare's eyes glittered, and the juniors standing round saw the thunderclouds settle on his brow.

"Grundy!" he exclaimed. "Did you hear me?"

"Yes, I heard you, Kildare," replied Grundy. "But I'm not going to be licked, I tell you. I don't see why—Yaroooooh! Hi, what the—Yah! Wow! Leggo! Wow! Shurrup! W-wow-wow!"

Grundy commenced to roar and struggle wildly as Kildare grasped him with one hand and wielded the cane vigorously with the other.

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack!

"Yaroooooh!" cried Grundy. "Stoppit! Yah! Ooooooh!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"There!" said Kildare, allowing Grundy to go at last.

"Let that teach you to obey orders another time, you little rascal. You can't have matters all your own way at this school, understand, and I don't give orders for nothing."

Grundy moaned as Kildare walked away.

He felt that this was the last straw! His feelings were unutterable. This was the culmination of a period of calamity for him, and Gerald Knox was behind it all.

Wilkins and Gunn came forward.

"Cheer up, Grundy!" said Wilkins sympathetically.

"Hard lines, old man!" said Gunn. "We-we feel that we'd like to apologise for the way we treated you this afternoon."

"Yow! All right!" moaned Grundy. "You blighters deserve a wow-wow-whopping, but I'll say no more about it this time. Groogh!"

Grundy & Co. went into Study No. 3 for a very late tea. Tom Merry & Co. were about to go, when a heavy step sounded on the passage, and Knox strode up.

There was a most unpleasant look on the prefect's sallow face—a look of mingled rage and anxiety.

He was determined to find out the whereabouts of the incriminating parcel.

"Just a minute, Merry!" exclaimed the prefect. "I want a word with you little sweeps. You were out in Rylcombe Wood a little while ago!"

The Terrible Three looked surprised.

"Were we!" said Tom Merry faintly.

"Yes, you jolly well know you were!" hissed Knox.

"You can't deny it, you young scoundrels!"

Monty Lowther heaved a deep, deep sigh.

"Funny how old Knox finds out these things, kids, isn't it?" he said. "What's the use of trying to hide anything from him?"

"You can't hide anything from me, and that's it!" grated Knox. "I saw you!"

"Go hon!" said Tom Merry.

"Marvellous!" murmured Manners.

"With your own eyes, Knox?" inquired Monty Lowther innocently.

"Yes, you little rotters! You're bowled out!"

"We are!" said Tom Merry sadly.

"We is!" said Lowther.

"We can't get out of it now!" said Manners solemnly.

Knox's eyes gleamed.

"Well, where's that parcel, you little sweeps?" he demanded. "I want it!"

"Is that a conundrum?" asked Monty Lowther sweetly.

"Eh?"

"If so, one rode a horse, and the other rhododendron!" said Monty, with all the guilelessness in the world.

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled, and Knox gritted his teeth.

"Look here, you can't lark with me!" he said savagely.

"I want to know where the parcel is!"

"We haven't the faintest notion, Knox, where the parcel is, or anything about the parcel," said Tom Merry curtly. "And, what is more, we were not in the wood this evening."

"Why, you—you little liar!" spluttered Knox. "You just now admitted that you were!"

"No, we didn't," said Tom calmly. "You seemed so jolly cock-sure about it, Knox, that we let you have your way. But if you make one or two inquiries round the school, you'll find that none of us have left gates since tea-time."

Knox's face worked with fury.

"I will make inquiries!" he grated. "Look out, you little rotters, if I find you're trying to get out of it! That's all."

"Good-bye, Knox!"

Knox went away, fuming.

Apprehension and dread were gnawing at his craven heart. He must get back that parcel and allay suspicion somehow.

Knox was unfortunate that evening in his inquiries, however, and he spent a restless night.

CHAPTER 7.

More Trouble!

GRUNDY & CO. were in their study next morning after lessons when the door suddenly came open with a crash, and Gerald Knox strode in.

It was evident, from Knox's look, that he had at last heard something.

Grundy jumped up and doubled his huge fists. He faced Knox unflinchingly.

"Well?" he demanded. "What do you want, Knox? You might knock at a chap's door, anyway!"

"I want to know what you meant by attacking me in the wood yesterday and robbing me of the parcel I was carrying!" said Knox between his teeth. "I've got to the bottom of the matter, now. It was you three!"

Wilkins and Gunn looked nervously at their leader.

George Alfred did not display the slightest trace of nervousness, however. He was afraid of nobody, still less of Knox.

"So you've found out that we went for you, eh?" he said.

"Yes! I'll have you flogged! I—"

"You can leave Wilkins and Gunn out of it, Knox," said Grundy loftily. "They were acting under my instructions. It's me you have to deal with. I'm not going to make any bones about it, I did try to rob you of the parcel yesterday. I considered it was my duty to show you up as a disgrace to St. Jim's, which you jolly well are!"

"You—you—you—"

Knox was quite taken aback by this plain speaking.

"It is only a matter of time, you rotter, before I do finally bowl you out!" said Grundy. "I'm fed up with your rotten ways, and so is the rest of the school. You ain't fit to be here at all, let alone be a prefect. What did you have in that parcel, anyway, that you were so anxious should not be seen? Why did you leave those things in your desk as a blind, eh?"

Knox clenched and unclenched his fists. He wanted to fly at Grundy, but restrained himself.

"What do you mean?" he panted. "There was nothing in the parcel that I could be ashamed of! You have it, you little rotter, and I want it back. You took it out of the ditch after I had gone!"

"Whether I found it or not makes no difference," said Grundy evasively. "You won't get anything out of me!"

Wilkins and Gunn heaved sighs of relief, for at that instant the dinner bell rang.

Knox strode away, looking balefully at Grundy.

After dinner Knox met Cutts in the upper corridor and told him what had taken place between him and Grundy.

"I—I don't know whether he found the parcel or not," he muttered. "I wish you could make sure of it, Cutts."

"Right-ho!" said Cutts obligingly. "I'll try."

He strolled downstairs, and, seeing Gunn by the letter rack, he went over to him.

"I say, Gunn, how came you to be raking in the ditch yesterday when you got chucked in?" he asked. "I hear that you were looking for a parcel or something belonging to Knox."

"Grundy was, and Wilkins and I were unwilling assistants,"

grunted Gunn. "We're fed-up with this business. I wish Grundy would leave Knox alone."

"Then you didn't find the parcel?"

"No, fear! Blow the parcel!"

Cutts grinned and went up to Knox's study.

"It's all serene, Knox," he said, closing the door. "Grundy did not find the parcel. I didn't think he had, for the school would have heard something about it by now. He's dead nuts on you, Knox, and you can bet your boots he'll show you up here if he can."

Knox heaved a sigh of relief, and then snarled:

"So the young rotter hasn't got the parcel! It's probably still lying in the ditch!" he muttered fiercely. "Then he's got nothing up against me—he's got no proof of anything! Good! I'll make those three little hooligans smart! Send them up to me, Cutts, will you?"

"With pleasure!" grinned Cutts. "If they come!"

Knox picked up his stoutest cane and swished it.

"There'll be more trouble for them if they don't!" he said.

Cutts chuckled and walked away.

Ten minutes later Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn walked into the prefect's study.

Wilkins and Gunn were looking apprehensive, but Grundy, as usual, was fearless.

"You sent for us, Knox?" he said. "What's the trouble now?"

"You'll soon see what the trouble is, when you get it!" hissed Knox between his teeth. "You three attacked me in the wood yesterday, and made me drop a parcel into the ditch. You have admitted it."

"Well?" said Grundy.

Knox rose, grasping his cane.

"I'm going to give it to you hot for that!" he said. "Hold out your hand!"

"Oh, don't be funny, Knox!" said Grundy.

"What! How dare you speak to me, a prefect, like that!" exclaimed Knox. "Take two hundred lines!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Grundy.

"Make it five hundred!" fumed Knox. "And now hold out your hand, or I'll flog you!"

"My hat!" said Grundy, looking hard at the prefect. "Then you—you've got the nerve to cane me—me, Grundy?"

"It is against the school rules for juniors to attack prefects," said Knox. "You admittedly broke the rule yesterday."

"But I wanted that parcel, to—to bowl you out!"

"I don't understand you," said Knox. "The parcel contained nothing of importance—merely a blazer I was taking to the village cleaner's."

"Mum—my hat!" stuttered Grundy.

"Will you hold out your hand?" demanded Knox.

"No, fear! You can go and eat coke! You—ow! Ooooooogh!"

Knox set to work with the cane and he fairly flogged Grundy with it.

Grundy howled and dodged about the room, and then, giving a spring downwards, he caught Knox by the legs and brought him over on the floor.

Crash!

Grundy also fell down—on top of Knox.

"Yarooooogh!" roared Knox.

Wilkins and Gunn looked on in scared amazement.

"Gimme that cane!" panted Grundy. "I'll show you! I'm not frightened of you, Knox! Yow-wow-wow!"

Prefect and junior rolled about the floor in each other's embrace, fighting desperately. The din was terrific, and the two combatants fought fiercely, so fiercely in fact that they did not hear the door open suddenly to reveal Kildare, Darrel, and North.

The prefects almost fell down when they saw the struggling pair on the floor.

"Good heavens! So those two are fighting again!" ejaculated Kildare. "Grundy, you little rascal, get up!"

Bump! Crash! Biff!

The seniors hopped out of the way as Grundy and Knox rolled towards them. Over and over they went, right out into the Sixth Form passage.

"Bless my soul! Whatever is the meaning of this?"

Wilkins and Gunn groaned when they recognised the Head's voice in the passage outside.

"Oh, my hat!" said North. "That young lunatic will catch it now. The Head's there!"

Knox and Grundy, indeed, rolled right at the feet of Dr. Holmes, who happened to have come along the Sixth Form passage at that minute to see Kildare.

Dr. Holmes fell back, amazed and horrified.

"Knox—Grundy! Good heavens, can it be that you are fighting?" he cried. "A prefect and a junior fighting! Cease this ruffianism immediately!"

Grundy let go of Knox when he heard that awe-inspiring voice, and Knox jumped up.

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The prefect looked considerably the worse for wear. His hair was dishevelled and his face and clothing were smothered in dust.

Grundy, when he struggled to his feet, presented an equally unkempt appearance.

"Bless my soul! Knox, kindly explain this!" cried the Head.

"I was in the act of caning Grundy for an attack he made on me yesterday, sir," grated Knox, "when he flung himself at me, threw me to the floor, and attempted to wrench the cane from my grasp."

"Good heavens! Grundy, are you mad?" exclaimed the Head, in horror. "How dare you!"

By this time a large crowd had gathered, Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. being in the forefront of the amazed spectators.

"Grundy's been going for Knox again—my only aunt!" gasped Blake. "My word! He'll get it in the neck now, and no giddy error!"

Blake's words came true.

Knox, in a rasping, malevolent voice, told the Head of the attack on him by Grundy & Co. in the wood, and of Grundy's persecution of him since.

The Head's usually kind old face became grim. When Knox had finished he bent a stern gaze on Grundy.

"Good heavens! This affair is unprecedented! For a junior had thus to behave towards a prefect—I am amazed!" he said. "Knox, you should have come to me before, and left me to deal with these young rascals. It appears that Grundy is the ringleader, and he shall receive the punishment his unwarrantable behaviour deserves. Grundy, Wilkins, and Gunn! Follow me!"

"Look here, sir—" began Grundy; but the Head cut him short with an imperious gesture.

"Not a word, Grundy! There can be no excuse for you! Nothing you can say will mitigate your offences! You and Wilkins and Gunn will please to follow me immediately."

The three juniors did so, but they did not look pleased about it.

Tom Merry & Co. darted them sympathetic looks as they followed Dr. Holmes down the passage. Knox gave a sardonic, triumphant smile and dusted himself down.

His fellow prefects looked queerly at him, and turned away to their own rooms. Knox noticed this, and gave a scowl.

"Now you young sweeps, clear away from here!" he rasped, addressing Tom Merry & Co.

The juniors left the Sixth Form passage and went downstairs, making their way to the Head's room.

As they neared that dreaded apartment, they heard yelps in the unmistakable tones of Wilkins and Gunn.

A few minutes later those two youths emerged, rubbing their hands and moaning.

"Hard cheese, kids!" said Tom Merry. "Where's Grundy?"

"The Head's keeping him in there," gasped Wilkins. "Yow! I—I think he's going to catch it hot!"

"Bai Jove! Poor old Grundy!"

And Wilkins and Gunn walked away, leaving the rest of the juniors wondering.

CHAPTER 8.

The Last Straw!

THERE was considerable surprise at St. Jim's when the notice was read that evening. The order had gone forth that all Forms should assemble in Big Hall, by order of the Head. What was the trouble? they wondered.

Tom Merry & Co. felt very uneasy over the matter. Grundy had not put in an appearance anywhere since being marched away by the Head to his study, after the fracas with Knox. They could not help thinking that the summons into Hall had something to do with Grundy.

Excitement and wonder reigned supreme when the school assembled in Hall. Wilkins and Gunn looked worried and miserable. Hard as their life was with George Alfred Grundy, they had a real affection for their burly study-mate. "What's the row, Gus?" asked Wally D'Arcy nervously from the ranks of the Third.

"Weally, I don't know, Wally," replied the swell.

"D'you think the Head's found out who biffed the cricket-ball through his new cucumber-frame?" inquired Jameson anxiously.

"Bai Jove! Then you little wascals—"

"Silence!" rapped Monteith of the Sixth.

There was silence at once, and all eyes were turned on the Head as he strode in, a tall, imperious figure in cap and gown.

A buzz broke out next minute, when Taggles came into view, dragging a struggling junior behind him. It was Grundy! Kildare, Darrel and Rushden followed them.

"Silence, boys!" said the Head in a deep, serious voice. "A most flagrant breach of the school rules has taken place,



Grundy struggled as the school porter attempted to hoist him across his back. "I won't be flogged! I protest, sir!" he shouted. "Knox deserved all he got—and he ought to get the flogging, not me. Look at the rotter now. He knows I'm telling the truth." Knox's face paled, his lips twitched, and his eyes glittered like a fox's. (See this page.)

and I feel that it is my duty to make an example of the culprit before the whole school. Grundy of the Shell has been guilty of more than one violent and unwarranted assault upon Knox, a prefect. Such a thing is contrary to school discipline and prestige. It is my intention to bring this point home to this violent junior by giving him a public flogging."

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom Merry, in dismay.

A thrill ran through the school.

"Grundy shall be flogged before you all, as a lesson to himself, and as a reminder to the rest of the school that prefects must not be attacked with impunity," went on the Head grimly. "Taggles, do your duty."

Grundy struggled as the school porter attempted to hoist him across his back.

"I won't be flogged! I protest, sir!" he shouted. "Knox deserved all he got—and he ought to have the public flogging—not me! Then he ought to be kicked out of the school for the rotter that he is!"

"Grundy!" The Head's voice was terribly stern. "How dare you! Have you taken leave of your senses, boy?"

"No! I know what I'm talking about!" raged the burly Shell fellow. "I know that Knox is a blackguard who isn't fit to be at St. Jim's! He's a disgrace and a blight on the school! I made it my business to bowl him out and show him

up! Look at the rotter! He knows I'm telling the truth!"

Knox was leaning back against the radiator, his face pale, his lips twitching, his eyes glittering like a fox's.

Dr. Holmes grasped the birch and strode angrily forward.

"Grundy, you have no foundation for this wicked, libellous accusation of Knox!" he exclaimed. "I had never regarded you as a boy to bear malice, but I am convinced of it now. Kildare and Rushden, kindly assist Taggles to overpower that turbulent youth!"

Grundy shouted and hit out wildly, but he stood no chance against the two prefects.

The school looked on in hushed, thrilled excitement while Grundy was hoisted across Taggles' back.

Knox grinned evilly when he saw the Shell fellow overpowered.

"Now, Grundy, you shall receive the chastisement you deserve!" said the Head grimly.

He raised the birch aloft, and brought it down across the junior's back.

Lash, lash, lash!

"Oh deah! Poor old Gwundy's catchin' it now!" gasped D'Arcy in real concern. "He was wight in what he said, too—Knox deserves it more than he, bai Jove!"

"Yes, the cad!"

(Continued on page 16.)

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EDITORIAL!

By Tom Merry.

THIS special "Grammar School Issue" of the "News" is the outcome of my desire to provide as much variety as possible in the little journal by making it thoroughly representative of all phases of life at St. Jim's. That has, indeed, been my policy all along, and I feel that I should not be pursuing it if I ignored the Grammar School.

On the other hand, I couldn't very well sandwich a Grammarian's article between contributions from St. Jim's fellows, because oil and water won't mix, you know, and there's no sense in trying to make them do so. Therefore, I decided to expend the hospitality of our columns to the Grammarians to the extent of a whole issue.

Personally, I think they've done very well, especially for 'prentice hands. Gordon Gay & Co. don't have the same opportunities for practising amateur journalism that we do. The more credit to them for their achievement.

I made the stipulation that the issue was to be edited by me, and I'm glad that I did so, since it has enabled me to tone down some of the contributions with regard to certain references to St. Jim's. I was really loath to do it, from a purely journalistic point of view, since I am of the opinion that a contributor ought to enjoy the privilege of putting his views, for what they're worth, before his readers without the necessity for considering the Editor's pet prejudices.

But you will understand that this was a special case. Had I passed for publication all that Gay, for instance, wrote about St. Jim's, I should have got it rather badly in the region where Trimble rarely applies the sponge from our own fellows—as Gay, indeed, suggests in his article.

By the way, I was especially interested in Johnny Goggs' contribution. All that he says regarding his appearance is perfectly true. He really does look little better than half-witted. Yet, as a matter of fact, I suppose he's possessed of the best set of brains in the Grammar School, as we fellows, among others, have discovered to our cost. Still, it's interesting to have him explain why he deliberately creates the impression that he's a slow-thinking ass, and to hear his opinion on the subject of camouflaging your brain-power. I will leave you to guess what would have happened had he followed Gillette's advice, and unsuspectingly yelled the Grammar School war-cry in the quad at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry

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JUST A FEW WORDS!

By Gordon Gay.

IT'S quite a long time since I wrote an article for the "St. Jim's News."

I suppose that means very few editions have been appearing lately, because it's impossible that the poor little feeble-brained bits of cheese at St. Jim's are capable of bringing it out regularly all on their lonely own, without the assistance of outside contributors.

Journalism is a job that demands a certain amount of brains. I don't say it demands a super-brain, but, however, little grey matter was required for the job, it would be worse than useless to expect St. Jim's to supply it.

What the "News" must be like when they have to rely upon their own resources to write it up is more than I can imagine, but I'm willing to bet it's as feeble as a dying tortoise and as boring as a gimlet—without as much point, though.

For once, however, they've done the sensible thing in appealing to the Grammar School for help—and that, in itself, is matter for astonishment when one considers that sense and St. Jim's are as the Poles apart.

When Tom Merry wrote to me concerning this issue, he made certain suggestions, one of which was that I should write a column or so giving my opinion of St. Jim's from the point of view of an outsider.

Now, nothing would please me better than that. It's the sort of job I should revel in doing. My word! Wouldn't I just!

But it would be so much wasted time and ink. Because you can take it from me that, if I gave my candid opinion of St. Jim's, Tom Merry wouldn't print it. For one thing, he wouldn't dare to. If he did, I'm inclined to think that St. Jim's would just about go up in the air, and if they couldn't get hold of me—which, I might say, I should take jolly good care they didn't—they'd take it out of poor old Tommy for permitting it to be published—which would be most sad.

I wish I had sufficient space for an account of some of our latest kyboshings, handed out to St. Jim's in the earnest hope that they will thereby realise, once and for all, that the Grammar School is top-dog, and so save us the tag of having continually to knock the fact into their thick heads.

Only last week, for instance, Blake & Co. turned up in the quadrangle at St. Jim's with only their heads visible. The rest of them was tastefully draped in old sacks. As a matter of fact, they'd waddled from Rylcombe in that condition, and, as you may well guess, we were responsible for it.

And then Tom Merry has the cheek to ask me for my opinion of St. Jim's! Well, I'll give him one—in a couple of words:

Played out!

THE ONE AND ONLY!

By Frank Monk.

HAVING my choice of a subject for this article, I cannot refrain from selecting Gussy—though it is true that it would be far more correct than a subject.

Dear old Adolphus!

He provides the comic relief to every situation, however serious it might otherwise be. He is the little ray of sunshine in our midst.

It may be true that he is an ass. What of that? Is he not a perfect ass? And surely it is better to be an ass, and perfect, than something else that is imperfect.

I remember once being with a new chap, who'd arrived at the Grammar School about a week before, in the main street of Rylcombe. It came on to rain rather suddenly—only a shower, but jolly sharp while it lasted. Not being anxious to get wet through, we took shelter in a shop doorway while the clouds passed over.

When the sun came forth once more, we followed its example, and were just turning a corner when the new fellow happened to look behind him.

He clutched me by the arm, and pointed back in the direction from which we had come.

"See," he said, shading his eyes with the hand that he had used to attract my attention—"see! A rainbow!"

But it wasn't a rainbow. It was just Gussy, who had also been sheltering in the cafe farther along the street, and had just emerged in all the glory of his new spring attire.

But there was every excuse for the mistake my companion had made, though it is true that he ought to have known better than to suppose that a mere rainbow could possibly have been as gorgeous as the vision he was gazing at.

Gussy's glossy topper, his grey gloves, natty coat, and patent-leather boots were veritable dreams. His waistcoat was, indeed, far more than a dream. It was a positive nightmare. His tie might well have caused a sunset designer in the weather-clerk's office to chuck up his job in despair.

Merely, he was wearing spats, so we were spared the sight of his socks.

But undoubtedly it was Gussy's lucky day; for, just as I had persuaded the new fellow to believe that his supposed rainbow was really something that was very nearly human, and explained what the situation called for, Blake, Digby, and Herries appeared round another corner.

Ah, well! These things will happen! But I confess it was one of the greatest disappointments I've ever had. You never get the same real satisfaction out of ragging anybody else as out of Gussy when he's arrayed in his arrayest, so to speak!



"WHY I DO IT!"

By Johnny Goggs.

YOU'VE heard of me, of course? Johnny Goggs! Johnny the Jabberwock; Goggs the Gawk.

My name ought really to have been Lawrence, then they could have called me Lawrence the Looney.

I'm a bit touched, y'know! Bats in the belfry, rats in the attic, sparrows in the thatch, so to speak. Oh, I'm all of that, and a bit over!

But, bless you, I don't mind!

People mistake me for the village idiot. They say: "Poor soul! And so young, too! Ah, me! Ah, my! So sad!"

And then they shake their heads—to stir up their own brains a bit, and prevent 'em getting addled like mine have done, and wander off to tell their friend what a sad sight they've just seen.

Well, well! It only goes to prove that one fool makes many, especially if the first fool is trying really hard to make fools of the others, and isn't quite such a fool himself as the other fools suppose him to be.

Y'know, it's a queer thing that few people in this world ever seem to make the discovery that it pays to be an idiot—a first-class champion chump. But it does! Believe me, most certainly it does! And I know what I'm talking about, in spite of the fact that I'm a prize ass myself.

In fact, that's why I do know what I'm talking about. I'm a connoisseur of chumps.

You see, everybody loves an idiot! They can have such a jolly time with him. They can take him gently by the hand and lead him up the garden, and pull his silly leg and laugh at him until they're in such a good temper that they give him sixpence for himself.

And the silly jay only grins, and ambles away to look for someone else who wants to play with him on the same terms. He's enjoyed himself quite as much as they have, and he's sixpence better off, while they're so much the poorer.

But then, of course, being an idiot, he doesn't realise that fact—though whether I mean the idiot who got the sixpence, or the idiot who gave it to him, I'm not going to tell you.

We've got a softy in the village where I spent the happy days of my childhood. A poor, half-witted creature! Why, he's so much up the loop that when he's offered his choice of a shilling and a penny he takes the penny because it's the bigger.

The bright lads of the district often stop him and give him the choice of those two coins, just for the fun of seeing him take the penny. And he always has the penny.

I used to do it myself, especially when I'd got friends with me who'd never seen him before. They used to laugh like blue-nosed baboons to see such sport. And they also invariably—excuse my using a long word, but I simply love 'em—offered him a choice of two coins of their own.

One day I said to him—feeling sorry for the poor chap, you know:

"Giles, don't you know that a shilling is worth twelve pennies?"

"Ay, Oi knows that!" said he.

"You do? Then why do you choose a penny instead of a shilling when you've got your chance of either?"

"Haw, haw! Doan't 'ee really know that, Maister Goggs? Well, Oi'll tell 'ee! Ei so be as Oi took the shillin, they'd never give Oi the chance ag'in. Haw, haw! That's why!"

And the poor old softy went off down the village street, guffawing like a wooden donkey. Of course, he didn't know any better. He was silly enough to take a penny about twenty times a week instead of taking a shilling once, and never getting another offered to him.

But that explanation set me thinking quite a lot. It suddenly dawned upon me that

there might be more in the looney business than appeared at first sight.

You can't pick up a paper nowadays without coming across an advertisement for some institution or other that wants to show you how to sandpaper your brains so that they can be seen shining through your skull.

What's the result? People see you coming along in the distance, with the super-man expression—square jaw, mouth like a rat-trap, piercing eyes, and all the rest of it; strong, silent hero, complete in every detail—and immediately they lock up their cash-box, and count the spoons, and put their hands into their cash pockets with the fixed determination to keep them there all the while they're talking to you. And they keep themselves up to saying "No, no!" in case you're going to try to get something out of them.

Ten to one you've only come along for a pleasant little chat about the weather and the prospects for the potato crop; but it doesn't make any difference. Your glittering grey matter is too much in evidence for their peace of mind, and they make it pretty clear to you that the back of your spats is a more gladsome sight to their eyes than is the colour of your tie.

Their sight of relief when you turn to leave then helps you a dozen yards on your outward journey.

But the mild, dreamy-eyed sort of peecan, who looks as if his hat's the best part of what he's got above his collar, ambles up and provides ten minutes' amusement, and wanders off with whatever he came to get, leaving the other fellow thinking it over and wondering how it was done.

Now perhaps you understand why it is that I don't in the least mind people jumping to the conclusion that I'm tenpence-a-penny short of a bob.

The only regret that I have is that most of them—that is, the Grammar School and St. Jim's fellows—are beginning to suspect that, as the song has it, "I'm not quite so daft as I look." It's a great pity, because I don't get half the chances for livening things up that I used to have.

Even Gilette and Carker are beginning to learn a little sense, which is by way of being rather a miracle.

Possibly you have heard of Gilette and Carker. They are two exceedingly naughty youths, who do most of the things that good little boys would not dream of doing. Nobody loves them—not even their kind teachers. Banks, the bookmaker, occasionally makes a great fuss of them, I have heard, but I cannot think that his is a genuine affection. For Banks, I grieve to

say, has not a kind face, and I really cannot believe that one whose countenance is suggestive of such phrases as "a cross marks the spot where the body was found" can really be possessed of a truly loving heart. Whenever I see Banks, I always think of the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's.

But to return to Gilette and Carker. I well remember the manner of my coming to this ancient abode of scholarship. These two worthy lads were the first Grammarians I encountered. I met them in the village, and inquired my way to the Grammar School.

They were only too ready to assist me. Oh, dear, what nice obliging youths they proved to be. They not only gave me a full and detailed description of the way there, but they also gave me careful instructions as to how I was to celebrate my arrival.

So much depended upon the manner in which I made my debut, they explained. If I could only impress my future playmates in some fashion, how much easier would be my otherwise thorny path as a fresher.

And Gilette and Carker—good, kindly youths!—were more than willing to assist me in making such an impression.

It was quite simple, too. All I had to do was to go to the Grammar School, stand in the middle of the quad, and shout: "Grammar School is top dog! Down with St. Jim's!"

Gilette explained that it was a sort of war-cry, and by showing I knew it I should find myself no end popular with the fellows. He added that the effect would be even better if I happened to be wearing a Grammar School cap, and as I hadn't yet got one he kindly lent his to me.

Now, it's a most remarkable thing that I hadn't proceeded far before I began to feel doubtful in my mind as to whether I had really understood the directions with which Gilette had supplied me. So I hailed a certain bright sportsman of the village who happened to be passing, and from him I learnt that I really had made a mistake. A most sad mistake indeed, since, had I followed my nose in the direction Gilette had pointed out, I should have arrived at St. Jim's, which, I was informed by the aforesaid young sportsman, was a sort of rival establishment. He went on to give me some information regarding the relations that existed between the two schools, and added that a party of St. Jim's fellows were even then in the village tuckshop, and that if I chanced to fall foul of them, with a Grammarian cap on, I "shouldn't 'arf be for it!"

I decided to investigate, and approached the door of the tuckshop with due caution. A careful glance through the doorway afforded me a view of some six or seven gay young dogs imbibing lemonade.

It seemed to me that the situation called for a little attention from a loyal Grammarian, even though he was but a fresher. I doffed my cap, rolled it up, and threw it into the shop with very satisfactory results—from my point of view. It carried the glass from the hand of a youth who apparently required the aid of a monocle to prevent his face slipping through his collar, and distributed the contents fairly equally among his companions.

I was twenty yards down the street in a convenient doorway before they recovered and came pouring out of the shop.

Now, it was exceedingly unfortunate for Gilette and Carker that the name of the former was in the cap he had lent me, and which I had used much in the same manner as Samson used the jawbone of an ass. It was still more unfortunate that they were following me up to see me perform my war-cry in the wrong quadrangle.

Because they turned the corner just as the Saints came out in search of blood, and with the evidence of the cap, and the presence of Gilette and Carker on the scene of the outrage, there wasn't much left for my two future playmates to say.

Even if there had been, they wouldn't have had much chance of saying it.

The St. Jim's juniors did not deal with them sparingly. I can tell you. Gilette had two prize black eyes to return home with, and Carker—well, his damages were to the extent that he'll lie low for some little time to come.

And to think that if poor old Johnny Goggs didn't look such an ass, all this would never have happened. Dear, dear!

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"GRUNDY'S FUED!"

(Continued from page 13.)

Lash, lash, lash!

The birch rose and fell many times, but Grundy did not utter a sound.

The flogging he received would have made most juniors howl at the tops of their voices, but Grundy was made of sterner stuff. He was as tough as proverbial nails. Tom Merry & Co. felt nothing but admiration for the dogged way in which he bore his terrible ordeal.

"You may now go, Grundy!" said the Head, flinging down the birch at last. "Let that be a lesson to you not to allow your violent, unreasoning temper, carry you away in the future. Go!"

Grundy turned as he reached the door, his fists clenched, and his heavy jaws set squarely.

"I'm not finished with Knox yet, sir!" he said, between his teeth. "He's got the laugh of me now, but I'll make him laugh the other side of his face before long! Knox will hear more of this!"

"Grundy! How dare you! Silence! Will you go?"

Grundy went, and a buzz broke out in Hall.

The school dismissed, looking serious.

Sympathy for Grundy was evinced everywhere.

The boys of St. Jim's knew the truth of his passionate and dramatic denunciation of Knox, and they would rather have seen Knox in Grundy's place that evening.

Quite a crowd of juniors went along to Study No. 3 in the Shell passage. Wilkins and Gunn had hurried along there directly after leaving the Hall.

Grundy was there, with his study-mates, who were getting tea ready for him in the eager hope of cheering him up.

But Grundy's face was black and downcast as he sat at the table. That he was suffering great pain as a result of his flogging was apparent by the hard, strained look in his eyes, and the restless way in which he kept shifting about.

"We're awfully sorry, Grundy," said Tom Merry. "It's jolly rotten to have to get it in the neck for something you were really justified in doing. We told you to keep off the grass, but we're sorry."

Grundy gritted his teeth.

"Knox will be sorry by the time I have finished with him," he muttered. "I'll have that cad get his just deserts, or my name's not Grundy!"

"Now, don't get off the deep end again, old man," said Tom Merry. "Why not let the matter rest? Next time you fall foul of Knox, it will mean the sack!"

"Rats!" said Grundy viciously. "I know what I'm doing, and I say what I mean. Knox hasn't seen the last of this matter yet—not by a long chalk!"

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders, and the others, looking troubled, followed him from the study.

Grundy was still on the high horse. The flogging seemed to have made him more bitter and determined against Gerald Knox than ever.

CHAPTER 9.

Baggy's Ruse!

THE next day was Wednesday, a half-holiday at St. Jim's.

Shortly after dinner Knox came downstairs and walked out of the gates alone, shaping his course down the Rylcombe Lane towards the village.

He turned off in the wood and at length arrived outside the Green Man public-house. He tapped at the door of the little back parlour, and Mr. Jolliffe, the landlord, admitted him.

"Good-afternoon, Master Knox!" he said, with an obsequious smile. "You've come for a little game with your old pals—what?"

"No, I haven't!" snapped the prefect. "I want to see Rossiter. Is he about?"

"Oh, yes, Master Knox! He's in the billiard-room. I'll call him," replied Jolliffe. "Have a fag?"

Knox took the proffered cigarette and lit it.

Jolliffe returned a few minutes later with the burly, flashily dressed man whom Knox knew as Rossiter. He surmised that that was not the rascal's real name. Many of Mr. Jolliffe's circle of acquaintances went under assumed names—for the sake of convenience. They were shady characters for the most part, and Rossiter was, perhaps, the shadiest of Mr. Jolliffe's friends that Knox had ever met.

He had been introduced to him at the Green Man during one of his periodical midnight jaunts, and had allowed himself to fall more and more into the rascal's clutches.

Rossiter was a plausible gentleman, but his affability concealed a crafty, unscrupulous nature. Knox had soon found this out—after he had incurred debts with him to the tune of many pounds.

Although a big fellow himself, the prefect had become more or less a tool in the lawless hands of Mr. James Rossiter. It was because of the hold that Rossiter had over him that Knox had consented to hide the rascal's parcel of stolen goods at St. Jim's.

It had seemed safe enough—and in return Rossiter had made one or two concessions to Knox. The prefect now heartily wished he had never taken on the task.

Rossiter greeted him with a scowl of inquiry.

"Well?" The man's voice was deep and grating.

"Where's my parcel, Master Knox?"

"I don't know," returned Knox sullenly. "It's been lost."

"Lost! What do you mean?"

"Some kids at the school got wind that I had something hidden in the parcel, and made it their business to find out," said Knox. "They got so noseey that I decided to bring the parcel back to you. It wasn't worth the risk of keeping it at St. Jim's. But on my way through the wood yesterday the little sweeps attacked me, and I had to throw the parcel into a ditch to prevent it being captured. So far as I know, it's still in the ditch."

Rossiter's callow face became contorted with rage. His deep-set, raven-black eyes glittered like points of fire, and he raised an arm threateningly over Knox's head.

"You fool—you blundering fool!" he raved. "Do you realise what this may mean? The police are hunting high and low for the contents of that parcel, and for me, the one who stole the stuff. If the parcel is found and I am traced—"

"How could they trace you?" said Knox, cowering back. "I don't see that you've got cause to worry, anyway, Rossiter."

Rossiter shook his fist at Knox.

"No cause to worry!" he snarled. "If the parcel's lost my swag is gone—the biggest haul I've had in my life! I've been depending on the money. Look out for yourself, Master Knox, if that parcel is not found. I warn you to find it for me, and let me have it as soon as you like. That's all!"

The rascal lurched away.

Jolliffe, who had been an interested listener to this conversation, nudged Knox.

"He's got 'em again!" he whispered. "Mr. Rossiter 'as an awful temper, Master Knox, especially when 'e's losing at cards or billiards, or when 'e's 'ad a drop down 'im. 'E ain't a gentle or reasonable customer to deal with, either. You'd better get 'is parcel back, Master Knox, or it may mean serious trouble for you."

The senior nodded miserably.

He knew Rossiter's evil temper and vengeful nature. He reviled himself for ever having had anything to do with the miscreant. His reckless little "flutters" at the Green Man had sometimes got him into awkward predicaments in the past, but now Knox was in a deep dilemma, and he could see no way out of it, unless he could recover Rossiter's parcel.

"I must get it back—I must!" he muttered to himself fiercely.

He left the Green Man and plunged on towards the wood.

He did not notice a St. Jim's junior with a camera, who was lurking in the bushes opposite the Green Man.

It was Grundy.

Grundy had followed Knox from St. Jim's, and had been outside the Green Man all the time that Knox was within. He had been watching him through the open window, and had taken one or two snaps.

Grundy laughed grimly to himself as he trailed Knox through the wood, and saw him searching in the ditch, as he had done, with a branch pulled down from a tree.

Knox spent the rest of the afternoon raking the ditch and the bushes alongside it, but he found no trace or sign of the parcel.

Scowling with rage and biting his lips with disappointment and anxiety, Knox returned to St. Jim's, and went upstairs to his own room.

Grundy, as he also went back to the school, could not help wondering what had become of the parcel.

Its disappearance was mysterious, to say the least of it.

Knox had certainly thrown it into the ditch, but with equal certainty it could not be in the ditch now. Somebody had taken it out. But who?

Grundy took the dark slides from the camera as he crossed the Close, and, going into the School House, went up to Study No. 10 in the Shell passage.

The Terrible Three and Jack Blake & Co. of Study No. 6 were there, getting tea ready. An appetising smell of frying eggs and bacon and toast filled the air.

"Hallo, come in, Grundy," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Like to stay to tea, old chap. My 'old nurse, Miss Priscilla, has sent a hamper of cakes and tarts, and Gussy's in funds, so we've got heaps."

Grundy shook his head.

"Thanks for the invite, Merry, but I've got work in hand," he said. "Here's your camera, Manners. I'm greatly obliged for the loan of it. I've secured some topping snaps of Knox."

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry gave him a quick look.

"So you've been photographing Knox?" he exclaimed.

"Rather!" said Grundy. "I told you I'd bowl him out sooner or later, didn't I?"

"If I'd known beforehand that you wanted my camera to help you in this rot against Knox, I shouldn't have lent it to you," growled Manners.

"It's not rot!" said Grundy between his teeth. "It's something that ought to have been done long ago. I'm going to rid St. Jim's of that blackguard! This afternoon I shadowed him down to the Green Man and took photographs of him through the window of the bar parlour. In one of the pictures he's seen smoking with Jolliffe, the rotten landlord, you know."

"Have you developed the pictures yet, Grundy?"

"No. I shall do that in the vaults to-night, after prep," replied Grundy. "I wonder if you'd lend me the necessary materials, Manners?"

"Go and eat coke!" growled Manners. "I don't approve of this silly campaign against Knox. Let him bowl himself out. You'll only succeed in bowling yourself out, Grundy—out of St. Jim's."

Grundy snorted.

"Supposing those pictures do come out," said Tom Merry. "What will you do with them, Grundy?"

"I shall show 'em to the Head, and thus prove what I said about Knox to be true," said Grundy readily. "I shall then demand that Knox be kicked out of St. Jim's!"

"Whew!"

Tom Merry & Co. did not hear a slight movement outside the study door. Baggy Trimble, the Peeping Tom of St. Jim's, had crept up and had had his ear glued to the key-hole throughout the conversation.

The feed had drawn Baggy to Study No. 10. Baggy had a nose like a bloodhound for smelling out feeds; they attracted him like a magnet. He was more interested in the dialogue than the feed now, however.

"I—I say, Grundy, isn't it rather a serious matter, taking things like this to the Head?" said Tom Merry uneasily.

"Yes, Tom Merry, this is a serious matter!" Grundy said vehemently. "It's jolly serious for a prefect to be acting the blackguard when the Head believes him to be straight. It's only right that the Head should know the truth. I'm doing this for the honour of St. Jim's!"

"Quite so. But—"

"There are no buts in the matter, Tom Merry. When I have developed and printed these pictures I'm going to make 'em public, and show Knox up in his true colours. Then, perhaps, the Head will do the decent thing, and send that precious rotter packing."

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged glances as Grundy left the study.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Blake. "There'll be the dickens of a row if Grundy's photos turn out all right and he shows 'em to the Head. Of course, I'm not sorry for Knox. The rotter deserves it. Grundy is convinced that he is doing right, so we'd better not interfere, I suppose?"

"Wathah not, deah boy!" chimed in Arthur Augustus. "We'll give Grundy his head."

Grundy, to do him justice, was really actuated by a sense of duty, and not personal dislike, in his campaign against Knox.

He had tea with Wilkins and Gunn, and then went to Dick Julian, from whom he managed to borrow a ruby lamp, dishes, and other material necessary for developing the plates he had in his pocket.

Wilkins and Gunn accompanied him down to the vaults before prep, and Baggy Trimble watched them go with a smile on his fat visage.

It was evident that the wily Baggy was turning over some scheme in his mind.

He allowed a short time to go by, and then he, too, went down to the vaults.

Baggy crept on tiptoe through the darkness, making for a red light that showed dimly ahead through the arches.

Grundy's voice sounded deep and resonant in the eerie hollowness of the vaults.

"Good! Three have come out a treat! Look at this plate, you chaps, while I hold it to the light. It shows Knox in the parlour of the Green Man. This other one shows him giving an artful look round just before entering the Green Man. And the last one shows him again in the tap-room, smoking with Jolliffe."

"By Jove!" murmured Wilkins. "The pictures are clear enough. Wouldn't Knox have a fit if he knew you had taken these, Grundy?"

"He'll know to-morrow, right enough!" said Grundy. "When the plates are dry I'll print 'em. They'll be safe here for the time being. I'll rinse 'em in some of this quick-drying solution, and leave 'em here till after prep. When we've finished prep we'll come down again and print 'em off."

Grundy put the three negatives in a quick-drying solution, and left them on the small rack to dry. He left the ruby lamp burning.

Baggy Trimble detached himself from the blackness of the arches when Grundy & Co. had gone.

The fat youth of the Fourth gave a deep chuckle.

"My word! So Grundy's photos have come out, and there they are! All ready for me to take. He, he, he! Oh, I'm a cute card, I am! This little business won't take a tick."

Baggy took from the capacious recesses of his trousers-pockets three old, blackened photographic plates, taken from some of Manners' miscellaneous lumber in Study No. 10 after tea.

He dipped these in the hypo, and placed them, wet, upon the rack, first having removed the three negatives that Grundy had left.

Baggy then carried the stolen negatives carefully away.

Having reached the quadrangle without mishap, he chuckled softly to himself.

"All serene, so far! Grundy will think something has happened to his photos, and he'll be done in the eye. Now to print these by gaslight in the box-room. He, he, he!"

Baggy had well prepared himself for the execution of this little plot. Up in the top box-room were all the necessary articles for gaslight printing of photographs. Baggy dried the plates over a small methylated spirit lamp, and then proceeded with the printing process.

He wasted a whole packet of printing paper before obtaining any satisfactory result. But that did not matter to Baggy. He had not paid for the paper, neither was he ever likely to. He had raided it from Dick Julian's study.

Meanwhile, Grundy & Co. did their prep, and then descended into the vaults again to print the photos.

Grundy received a decided shock when, blinking in the red light of the ruby lamp, he saw that the plates reposing on the rack were of a deep black hue.

"Mum-my hat!" he gurgled. "Wh-what the—"

"The giddy negatives have gone black!" exclaimed Wilkins.

"You idiot, Grundy! You couldn't have fixed 'em properly!" said Gunn. "I thought you hadn't got enough hypo in that dish!"

Grundy was floored.

He picked up the negatives and looked at them—not through them, for their blackness was too dense for that. He rinsed them desperately in hypo again, but this had no effect.

"Oh crumbs! Then I'm done again, after all!" he gasped. "That must be rotten developer of Julian's—unless Manners' plates were duff. Anyway, the photos are no good, so we might as well pack up."

"Going to pack up this business with Knox, too, old chap?" asked Wilkins hopefully.

Grundy clenched his fists hard.

"No fear!" he said, in a voice that rang hollowly through the vaults. "I'll be on that rotter's track again soon, don't worry. I'll make Knox sit up! I'll bowl him out! I'm Grundy, and I'm never beaten!"

Grundy returned to the School House, disappointed with the results of the photographs, but still as determined as ever to show up Knox in his true colours.

Baggy Trimble descended from the top box-room in a very self-satisfied mood.

In his pocket, safely tucked away, were three dirty, but perfectly clear prints of the photos that Grundy had taken. The photographic tackle and the negatives he had hidden in the box-room.

"Now I shall have Knox under my thumb!" he chuckled to himself. "He'll do anything rather than have these photos seen, and I reckon he ought to stump up a few quid—the rotter! I'll make Knox sit up now. I shall hold the whip-hand with these photos. Knox had better look out now. He, he, he!"

And, feeling very pleased with the result of his evening's exploit, Baggy Trimble rolled onward to do his belated prep.

CHAPTER 10. In the Night!

BOOM! The last stroke of eleven tolled on the silent night air at St. Jim's. In the Shell dormitory all was quiet and still.

Grundy sat up in bed and looked round cautiously.

"Anybody awake?" he asked, in a soft voice.

Nobody answered.

"Good!" he muttered, under his breath. "Now we'll see what I can do for Knox to-night!"

He clambered out of bed and dressed himself, all but his boots. These he tied together by the laces and slung round his neck.

He was about to leave the dormitory, when a quiet voice broke through the silence.

"Where are you going, Grundy?"

The burly Shell fellow gave a start and wheeled round.

He saw Tom Merry sitting up in bed, regarding him closely.

Grundy's jaws set grimly.

"I'm going out, Tom Merry—after Knox!" he said. "I was watching his study just before bed-time, and I heard him tell Cutts that he was going out to-night. I'm going to break bounds, too, and catch Knox."

"Great Scott! Don't be such an ass, Grundy! You'll only catch it hot again for playing the giddy goat!"

"Go and eat coke!"

Grundy turned to the door, and in the same instant Tom Merry sprang out of bed and grasped his arm.

"Don't go out, Grundy. You'll be looking for more trouble if you do!" said the Shell captain. "Take my tip, and— Oh! You—you bounder!"

Grundy gave him a shove that sent him reeling against Monty Lowther's bed. Tom collapsed on top of Monty, and this latter youth awoke with a sleepy grunt.

"Yaw-aw-aw! Yow! Whassermarrer? Ow!"

"Grundy's gone!" panted Tom Merry.

The dormitory door had closed behind the burly Shell fellow.

"What in thunder is the matter?" gasped Monty Lowther, sitting up and rubbing his eyes. "Not a New House raid?"

"No," said Tom quietly. "Grundy's gone out. The ass intends following Knox in breaking bounds. Of course, he'll only get into more hot water. We've got to stop Grundy playing the goat!"

"My hat! Rather!"

Monty got up, and Manners was awakened.

The Terrible Three dressed hurriedly and left the dormitory.

They crept down to the lower box-room, and, as they had expected, found the window open.

They climbed out and jumped into the quad. The moon was just peering out from behind a bank of black cloud, and in its mellow light the juniors saw a figure clamber over the school wall by the old oak-tree.

"Then he's gone out of bounds!" muttered Tom. "I suppose Knox has gone out, too. I— My hat! Look!"

He was looking upward at Knox's study window, and gave a start when he saw a flickering light, as if a match had been struck.

The others saw it, too.

"Somebody's in Knox's room!" exclaimed Tom Merry swiftly. "Then Knox hasn't gone out—unless—"

"Unless it's Grundy up there!" said Monty Lowther. "Perhaps he waited for Knox to go out, and then went up to his room. In that case it would have been Knox we saw get over the wall."

"No, Monty: it wouldn't have been Knox. He goes out by the side gate," said Tom Merry. "It may have been young Mellish of the Fourth, or that little rotter Chowle of the New House, going out on one of their night jaunts. I vote we go up to Knox's room and make sure. It's possible that Grundy is up there."

"Right-ho, Tommy!"

They climbed back into the box-room, and made their way cautiously through the dark, deserted corridors until they came to Knox's room.

Tom Merry listened at the door, and a look of perplexity crossed his face.

Snore! Snore!

The deep, heavy snoring that came to his ears from Knox's room sounded familiar.

"My only hat!" he exclaimed under his breath. "If that's not Baggy Trimble, I'm a Dutchman! Let's have a look!"

He opened the door silently, and the Terrible Three peered within.

They gasped simultaneously.

Seated in the armchair, dressed only in pyjamas and slippers, was the fat form of Baggy Trimble. Baggy's chin was resting on his chest, and he was fast asleep.

"Baggy! Oh, my aunt! What's that little bounder doing here?" gasped Manners.

They looked towards the bed, and saw that it was empty. Then Knox was out! Baggy Trimble was the only occupant of his room.

"I wonder how on earth Baggy got here?" muttered Tom Merry, as he and the other two crept softly in. "He surely can't have walked in his sleep!"

Baggy Trimble snored peacefully on.

Tom Merry went over to him, and saw that Baggy had

three cards clutched in one fat hand. He gently removed the cards and looked at them.

"Wh-what the—" he gasped, in amazement. "Oh, jeminy! Well, I'm jiggered!"

"What are they, Tommy?"

"Look!" muttered Tom, holding out the cards. "They look like the photos that Grundy was talking about—the ones he took of Knox at the Green Man this afternoon, and which he said were spoiled. If these are not the self-same photos they must have been taken at the same time."

"By Jove, yes!"

The Terrible Three closely regarded the photos in the moonlight that came streaming in through the window.

The prints were clear and sharply defined, although they bore traces of hypo round the edges. There was no mistaking the subject—Gerald Knox of the Sixth. Two of the prints showed him inside the Green Man and one depicted him in the act of entering.

"My word!" said Monty Lowther. "If the Head got hold of these it would be all U.P. for Knox. How the dickens did Baggy come by them?"

"These must be Grundy's photos, and Baggy must have stolen the negatives somehow, and left the dud ones in their place," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Why, of course! The artful little rotter! That accounts for him being here now. He intended to use them to blackmail Knox, don't you see? He must have nosed out that Knox was breaking bounds to-night, so Baggy sneaked out of the Fourth Form dormy, watched Knox go out, and then came in here, to wait for him to come back. Look! There's the rope that Knox usually lets himself down from the window by. Baggy has pulled it in, so that Knox won't be able to get back. It's as plain as a pikestaff now. Baggy intended to get money out of Knox by means of these photos, but fell asleep while he was waiting."

"The rotten little worm!"

"Just like Baggy!"

Baggy Trimble slumbered on in the armchair in blissful unconsciousness of what was taking place.

Tom Merry slipped the cards into his pocket, and then turned to his chums with a grin.

"We'll give Baggy and Knox a surprise, my sons!" he chuckled. "Let's put Baggy into Knox's bed. He'll sleep there till wakened."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush! Don't wake the fat toad."

The Terrible Three lifted Baggy very, very gently. They placed him in Knox's bed and covered him over. Baggy did not wake.

Tom Merry & Co. left him comfortably ensconced in the prefect's bed and crept away, chuckling.

CHAPTER 11.

Struck Down!

GERALD KNOX stopped in the Rylcombe Wood and listened.

There was silence in the eerie darkness of the wood, and all about him the trees cast their heavy, sinister shadows. Breaking bounds at night was by no means a new exploit of his, and it was not the stillness of the wood, or the darkness that made his face go white and his hands tremble.

Knox had heard a sound—a footstep behind him.

More than once since leaving St. Jim's he had thought he had heard it, but now he was certain.

There it was again.

Somebody was following him.

Knox ground his teeth and crouched back in the shadow of some trees. As he stood there a burly schoolboy figure came into view, and Knox gave a start.

"Grundy!"

The word hissed from his mouth, and the Shell fellow heard it. He wheeled round, but next minute Knox had flung himself upon him in a paroxysm of mad rage.

"You prying little hound! So you are still spying on me!" he panted. "I'll make you leave me alone! I'll break every bone in your body!"

His heavy fist crashed on Grundy's jaw, and the junior went staggering back with a cry. Knox, mad with fury, followed this up with a terrific left-hander, which caused Grundy to stumble and pitch headlong to the ground.

Knox was on him in a minute, and Grundy had no chance to rise. The cowardly prefect struck him with fists and boots, kicking him mercilessly as he lay in the grass.

"Take that, and that! Perhaps you'll leave me alone after this!" panted Knox. "When you get back to St. Jim's you can tell them, and— Oh! Yah! Oooogh!"

Grundy came back at him, fists going like flails. The two came to grips and rocked side to side, fighting desperately.

Suddenly footsteps sounded on the path, and Knox, seeing the burly, flashily dressed figure of Rossiter come into view, let out a gasping cry.



North lit the gas and a strange scene was revealed. Lying on the floor, in a litter of scattered bedclothes, were George Alfred Grundy and Baggy Trimble. Grundy jumped up on the prefect's arrival and he looked blankly at the wriggling Fourth-Former. "Mum—my hat!" he gurgled. "Then—then it isn't Knox at all?" (See page 20.)

"This way, Rossiter! Help! Ow!"

Grundy fought him grimly and desperately, and seemed about to gain the mastery of the prefect, when the newcomer ran forward and flung himself on him.

The junior was held while Knox lashed into him with cruel, cowardly malice. Even Grundy, tough as he was, gave way under the terrific punishment inflicted on him by the savage prefect.

He fell to the grass, dazed and sobbing, and heard, as if from a distance, Knox's mocking, sardonic laugh.

"There. I've marked you all over, and you'll bear the traces for weeks. Go back and tell the Head I did it, and I shall satisfy him that I have been in bed all the time. It will be assumed that footpads attacked you. Perhaps it will be a lesson to you to leave me severely alone in the future."

With that Knox turned on his heel and strode away with Rossiter.

The pair walked to the edge of the wood, near the towing-path, in sight of the moonlit, rippling waters of the Rhyl.

Rossiter, who was evidently under the influence of drink, turned savagely to the St. Jim's prefect.

"Well, Master Knox, what about that parcel?" he demanded. "Have you managed to trace it?"

Knox shook his head.

"No," he said dully. "I've looked and inquired everywhere, but the thing seems to have disappeared. I've done my best—"

He was interrupted by an oath from his companion.

Rossiter's face was livid with rage, and Knox took a step back, not without some nervousness. He could see that Rossiter was working himself up into one of his vile tempers.

"So you haven't found the parcel—eh? Somebody's got it, Master Knox." The ruffian's voice was thick and heavy.

"That parcel contains valuables, and I want it. I want it, d'you hear?"

Rossiter's voice rose almost to a shout.

Knox was white to the lips.

"Keep quiet, you fool! We're in the open air, not in the tap-room at the Green Man!" he muttered. "I'm sorry, Rossiter, but the parcel's gone, and—"

"You've got it, you lying young rat! You're keeping it. The parcel can't have disappeared, and if it had been found we'd have heard about it by now. Where is it? Don't you try to double-cross me, Master Knox. I—"

"But I'm not!" panted the prefect, now thoroughly scared at Rossiter's truculent demeanour. "I tell you, Rossiter, I don't know where the parcel is. Heaven knows I'd give it to you if only I could lay my hands on it. Give me time to—"

"I want my parcel!" Rossiter took a threatening step forward, his hot breath hissing on the prefect's face. "D'you hear, Master Knox? You had the thing, and I want it! Mark me, young shaver, if I don't get it, I'll—"

He broke off, for a heavy tread sounded on the towing-path.

Knox gave a fearful look round and saw P.-c. Crump, the village constable, approaching.

Crump, hearing voices, was coming to see what was taking place.

Knox leaped away into the trees, not daring to let Crump see him. He expected Rossiter to follow him, but when he had got out of sight of Crump and looked round, no sign of the Green Man miscreant could be seen.

Knox stood irresolute, panting for breath. He bit his lip with fear.

Where was Rossiter? He must see him again, to plead with him, to come to some arrangement.

What was that?

It was a strange rustling in the darkness of the trees behind him.

Knox swung round, but too late.

He saw dimly a form leap at him out of the shadows, but next minute a hard weapon descended with cruel force on his head. It felled the prefect like a log, and he gave a low, hoarse cry. Through the swirling mist that enveloped his brain he heard a rustle in the trees as his assailant made off, and then Knox, with a sobbing groan, lost all consciousness.

CHAPTER 12.

Condemned by the School!

IT had taken some time for Grundy to recover from the cruel attack on him by Knox. He staggered at length out of the wood and made his way back to St. Jim's, aching and bruised all over, and feeling, not only utterly miserable, but savagely, madly incensed against the cowardly prefect.

The thought uppermost in his mind was revenge on Knox. He must get back to St. Jim's as soon as possible and get at Knox.

Grundy did not know how he got over the school wall, but he managed it somehow. The quadrangle was dark and deserted, and silent as the grave. Not a light glimmered anywhere in the old school. He clambered in at the box-room window and went straight up to Knox's room.

He thrust open the door and strode in.

He gritted his teeth when he saw that the bed was occupied.

"So the cad got back here first! He'll try to make his tale good! But I don't care! I'll make him smart for what he's done to me! I don't care if I get the sack for it this time!"

Grundy took a step forward and wrenched the clothes off the bed. Next minute he flung himself upon the occupant.

"Come out of it, you cad!" he roared. "Don't pretend you've been asleep in here all the time! You've got to settle with me, now!"

Crash!

"Yaroooooogh! Yah! Hellup! Ow-wow-wowow!"

Grundy went for the occupant of the bed hammer and tongs, and Baggy Trimble's fiendish howls awoke the night echoes.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Doors banged open and startled voices demanded to know the reason of this amazing midnight disturbance. To most it sounded as though someone was being murdered on the school premises.

Kildare, Darrel, and North flung open the door of Knox's room and strode in.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Kildare. "Whatever is the matter in here? It sounds like Trimble. North, for goodness' sake light the gas!"

North lit the gas, and a strange scene was revealed.

Lying on the floor, in a litter of scattered bedclothes, were George Alfred Grundy and Baggy Trimble. Grundy

jumped up on the prefects' arrival, and he looked blankly at the wriggling Fourth-Former.

"Mum—my hat!" he gurgled. "Then—then it isn't Knox at all!"

"Yooooogh! Wow! I'm hurt! Ow!" moaned Baggy.

At that juncture Dr. Holmes, clad in a dressing-gown and carrying a lamp, strode into the room. He regarded the scene in horror. Behind him came Tom Merry & Co., and a whole horde of startled juniors.

"Bless my soul! Grundy again!" exclaimed the Head in astonishment. "Grundy, how dare you— Why, good heavens, boy! What has happened?"

Dr. Holmes looked at Grundy's bruised and cut appearance in horrified amazement.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry. "Grundy looks as though he's had a fight. Baggy never did that to him, I'll bet!"

Grundy gritted his teeth.

"You may well ask what has happened, sir!" he said.

"Look at me! Knox did this! The cad broke bounds to-night, and I followed. He attacked me in the wood, and kicked me while I was down, and got a pal of his to hold me while he slogged into me. The cowardly cad! I—I thought he was here, and that's why I went for him again."

"Good heavens! I have never been more astounded in all my life!" exclaimed the Head. "So, Grundy, you and Knox have been fighting again, in the Rylcombe Wood, at midnight. I—I can hardly believe it possible. And, Trimble, what are you doing here?"

"I—I dunno, sir," stammered Baggy in confusion. "I must have—yow!—walked in my sleep, sir."

"Dear me! Boys, kindly keep quiet! You will all return to your dormitories. Grundy, you will go with the others. I will wait for Knox to come in and see what explanation he has to offer. I will deal with the matter further in the morning."

The juniors dispersed, Baggy going with Jack Blake & Co. and Grundy walking back to the Shell dormitory with Tom Merry & Co.

"Well, the giddy fat's in the fire now, and no mistake!" said Tom Merry. "What did I tell you, Grundy? You were an idiot to have gone out to-night after Knox!"

Grundy was silent.

He undressed and got into bed, looking sullen and down-cast.

It was apparent to the others that he was raging against Knox, and no wonder, judging by Grundy's appearance.

"Grundy must have had an awful hiding, to have got into that state!" muttered Talbot to Tom Merry in the next bed. "Fancy Knox being such a howling cad! I'm afraid Grundy's in for worse trouble now, though."

"Ye-es, I expect so," said Tom Merry.

Next morning St. Jim's received startling news.

Tom Merry & Co. were the first down, and they met Kildare on the stairs.

"What happened when Knox came in last night, Kildare?" asked Tom Merry. "Was the Head waxy?"

"Knox didn't come in till six o'clock this morning," was Kildare's quiet reply. "The Head's been up all night waiting for him."

"Good heavens! Where had Knox been?"

"In the wood," said Kildare. "He did not turn up, so the Head telephoned the police to look for him. At six o'clock this morning Knox was brought in on a stretcher."

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors looked horrified.

"Had he—had he had an accident?" asked Blake.

"Knox had been struck down in the wood, and he was unconscious when he was brought in," replied Kildare quietly. "He had evidently been brutally attacked. Grundy's school cap was found lying in the grass near by."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Knox is in the sanatorium now, and the doctor is attending to him," said Kildare. "I hear that his condition is serious, for he hasn't yet regained consciousness. This will mean trouble for someone."

He looked grimly at Grundy as he came down with Wilkins and Gann.

The burly Shell fellow looked tired and haggard. His face was cut and swollen in many places.

He gave a start when he heard the news.

"What! Knox struck down in the wood—brought in on a stretcher by the police—now lying ill in the sanny!" he ejaculated. "Oh, my hat!"

"Yes, and your cap was found in the wood near by!" said Racke with a sneer. "You'll have to explain that—that?"

Grundy looked at him with glittering eyes.

"What do you mean, Racke?" he exclaimed hotly. "Do you mean that it was I who struck down Knox?"

Racke shrugged his shoulders.

"I mean that it looks fishy," he said.

"What looks fishy, you rotter?"

"Everything!" said Racke coolly. "Your following Knox

in the wood last night; your fight with him; your cap being found near the spot. We all know how down you were on Knox. You meant to get your own back on him for that flogging, didn't you, Grundy?"

"You hound!" roared Grundy, clenching his fists. "You accuse me of attacking Knox, why, I'll smash you for that!"

Racke started back, putting up his hands, but not in time. Grundy, with blazing eyes, drove his fist full into the cad's face, and Aubrey Racke went with a crash to the floor.

"Hold on—"

"Stop him!"

"Grundy—"

"Let him get up!" shouted Grundy furiously. "I'll teach the lying cad to hint at me! Let him get up! I'll smash him!"

Half a dozen fellows caught hold of Grundy and dragged him back. He was struggling to get at Racke when Mr. Railton strode up.

The Housemaster's handsome face was dark and serious-looking. His frown deepened when he saw what was taking place.

"He accused me of attacking Knox in the wood last night, sir!" shouted Grundy. "Let me get at him!"

"Silence, Grundy!" rapped Mr. Railton angrily. "Your temper has brought you to a terrible predicament. I am afraid. Dr. Holmes wants to see you in his study at once, and you will kindly follow me there."

Grundy did not reply.

He looked at Mr. Railton and at his school-fellows in a dazed way.

A haunted look grew in his eyes, as he saw the looks of condemnation that greeted him everywhere.

He began to realise how terribly circumstances were against him.

Grundy's bitterness towards Knox was well known, and his hastiness of temper and heavy-handed methods were a by-word at St. Jim's.

He felt that a terrible blow was impending over him.

"Will you come with me to the Head, Grundy?" interposed Mr. Railton's quiet, deep voice.

Grundy followed him without a word.

The juniors drew aside to let him pass, and then remained in awkward silence as Grundy's and Mr. Railton's footsteps died away down the corridor.

CHAPTER 13. An Unexpected Clue!

ST. JIM'S was astounded.

Before the boys assembled in the various Form-rooms for morning school the announcement had been made by the prefects.

Grundy of the Shell was accused of a cowardly attack on Knox in the Rylcombe Wood last night—an attack that might even yet cost the prefect his life—and Grundy was to be expelled.

Dr. Holmes had threshed the matter out, had heard Grundy's explanation of his movements, but Grundy was not believed. The evidence pointed conclusively to the boy who had set himself up against Knox and who had suffered considerably as a consequence. Grundy's threat to Knox, made before the whole school after his public flogging, was still vividly in everyone's mind. Dr. Holmes himself had not forgotten it. He knew Grundy's turbulent temper, and was fully convinced that it was Grundy's temper and thirsting for revenge against Knox that had made him follow the prefect into the wood, and, after having received a further thrashing from the prefect, struck him down from behind.

The reason for Knox's breaking bounds did not excuse Grundy. He was to be kept in the punishment-room until Knox was well enough to speak, and then, unless his name could be cleared, Grundy was to be expelled.

Darrel and Rushden took Grundy to the punishment-room. A crowd of juniors gathered to watch him go.

Grundy looked miserable and dejected, but he walked with head erect, despite the sneering of Racke, and Crooke, and Mellish, and others of their kindred.

Tom Merry crossed over to Grundy and dropped a hand on his shoulder.

"Grundy, old man, can't you explain?" he asked.

Grundy shook his head.

"I can't explain how Knox came to be attacked," he said. "I've told the Head everything so far as I am concerned, but he—he believes me guilty. I'm innocent. I didn't strike Knox down in the wood. I came straight back here after he and his pal had given me that hiding, and I haven't seen Knox since. I remember losing my cap—it got caught in the branch of a tree as I was walking through the wood—but I didn't think much about it. I was half-dazed with the knocking about I had had. That's all I have to say, and it's true. You don't doubt me, Tom Merry?"

The young Shell captain shook his head.

"No, Grundy," he said quietly; "I don't doubt you. I

believe what you say, and I'll do my best to get you out of this scrape."

"Come along, Grundy!" said Rushden gruffly, but not unkindly.

It was a miserable day enough for Wilkins and Gunn.

They missed Grundy from Study No. 3. The place seemed empty and void without him. What had happened to Grundy was almost as bad for them. They were firm in their belief in him. They knew Grundy more than anyone else in the school, and they were agreed that such a cowardly thing as that attack on Knox was quite contrary to Grundy's nature. He would tackle anybody from the front and have his arguments out in fistic encounter, but he never hit from behind. Wilkins and Gunn would never believe Grundy guilty, come what may.

Their hearts felt as heavy as lead at thoughts of losing Grundy, but they were not the only ones. Tom Merry wore a worried look all day long. He could not help thinking of Grundy, incarcerated in the punishment-room with the dread shadow of expulsion hovering over him. Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. believed in Grundy, but it was more by instinct than reason.

Everything pointed to Grundy's guilt, and they knew that unless something turned up very quickly Grundy would be expelled from St. Jim's.

But what could be done? Who else would have attacked Knox last night? Grundy had mentioned that Knox had met a pal in the wood, and that this man had assisted in bullying him. Surely a pal of Knox's would not have struck him down? A footpad, perhaps? That was the only hope—that Knox would recover consciousness soon and clear Grundy by saying that a footpad attacked him. It was, however, a very forlorn hope. Grundy's cap had been found near Knox. Grundy had just been thrashed by Knox, and he owed the prefect more than one grudge. The case was clear against Grundy.

"Poor old Grundy!" said Tom Merry in Study No. 10 that afternoon. "Of course, all he says is perfectly true. Grundy doesn't tell whoppers, and he's not a cad. He didn't attack Knox."

"No; he's innocent, right enough," said Manners. "I'd love to be able to prove it. But—how can we?"

Tom Merry was feeling in his pocket for a pencil when his hand closed over some cards. He drew them out, and gave a surprised cry.

"Why, these are those photos we took from Baggy last night!" he exclaimed. "I had forgotten those. They're the ones that Grundy took of Knox, of course. Let's have a look at them now it's daylight."

The Terrible Three bent over the photos and examined them closely.

The first one depicted Knox looking round cautiously before entering the little parlour of the Green Man. Jolliffe could be seen just inside the door.

The second photo showed Knox and Jolliffe together in the parlour, Jolliffe smoking a cigar and Knox a cigarette. Manners' camera, which had taken the photos, was fitted with a very expensive lens, and every detail in the pictures came out distinctly, although they were taken from a distance.

When Tom Merry examined the third photograph his eyes narrowed and a swift exclamation escaped his lips.

"My only hat! Look at this, kids! It may serve as a clue to last night's rotten business!"

Manners and Lowther regarded the picture closely.

It showed the interior of the Green Man tap-room, taken from outside and seen through the window. Knox came out very distinctly. He was talking to a coarse-looking, flashily dressed man. Knox's companion had an evil, savage look on his face, and the photo showed him in the act of raising an arm threateningly over the prefect.

"Do you see that?" said Tom Merry swiftly. "The man with Knox is quarrelling with him. He seems about to strike him."

"By jingo! Of course!" exclaimed Lowther.

"It seems, then, that Knox has an enemy who frequents the Green Man," went on Tom. "The man in this photo certainly doesn't look very friendly towards Knox. This may be the means of clearing Grundy—if we can find out who that man is."

"My hat! That's topping!" said Manners eagerly. "Perhaps you're right, Tom. If Knox had an enemy at the Green Man, it may have been that chap who struck him down in the wood. It's a scent worth following up, anyway. How jolly lucky that Grundy happened to snap the camera shutter at that precise moment. In taking this picture he has provided us with a clue that may lead to the proving of his innocence."

"Rather!"

The Terrible Three were eagerly excited now.

They did not stop to finish tea, but left Study No. 10 and hurried out of doors.

They were bound for the Green Man, to find out the identity of the man who was seen with Knox in the picture.

They were walking together along the Rylcombe Lane, when three well-known figures came into view.

They were Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, and Carboy.

The Grammarian leader had a parcel under his arms.

"Pax!" said Tom Merry hastily, as they approached. "We're not out for a rag this afternoon, old sons—we have business on hand."

"All serene," said Gordon Gay cheerfully. "We're not out for a rag, either. As a matter of fact, we were looking for you. Does this parcel belong to anyone at your school?"

Gordon Gay extended the parcel, which was wrapped in a new sheet of brown paper.

Tom Merry took it with a start.

"Where—where did you get it from?" he asked.

"One of our chaps named Mumford raked it out of the ditch in the wood the other afternoon," said Gordon Gay.

"You remember we were out in the wood that afternoon, and saw Grundy and his two pals looking for something in the ditch. We chuckled 'em in."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monk and Carboy at recollection of that funny event.

"Yes; we remember," said Tom Merry. "Is this the parcel that Grundy was looking for?"

"I presume so," replied the Grammarian leader. "We knew nothing about it until to-day. Mumford isn't one of our set, you know—he's a queer, quiet bouncer. He happened to be in the wood, too, and he saw where the parcel dropped. He made off with it and took it to the Grammar School, unbeknown to anyone. It seems that he opened it, and found that it contained jewellery, and all sorts of things like that. There's a proper collection of burglar's swag in that giddy parcel."

"Great pip!"

"Mumford didn't say anything; I think he intended keeping the stuff until a reward was offered. Anyway, he kept it dark until we found it in his den to-day. Of course, we had to make him explain, as a kid at school has no right to be hoarding such valuable goods. Then Mumford told us how he got the parcel."

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Thanks awfully, Gay!" he said. "There's been a bit of a bother at our school over this parcel. It belongs to Knox—a prefect, you know. You're a sport for returning it, old chap."

"Oh, don't mench!" said Gordon Gay airily. "I should inquire, if I were you, what Knox was doing with all that jewellery. It looks jolly fishy to me. Knox is that awful bouncer who hangs about the Green Man a lot, isn't he?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry, nodding. "It certainly does look fishy. Anyway, we'll get back and get the affair settled up. Cheerio, you chaps!"

"Chin-chin, old beans!"

Gordon Gay & Co. nodded and strolled away.

The Terrible Three regarded each other in astonishment.

"Well, if this doesn't beat the band!" said Monty Lowther.

"Let's have a look at the giddy sparklers, Tommy!"

The parcel was opened, and a glittering array of diamonds, rings, and trinkets came to view. Tom Merry & Co. drew deep breaths.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Knox didn't come by these honestly, I know. Chaps, I think we'd better take this to the Head, but say nothing about Knox."

"Yes; that's the best idea, Tommy."

Tom had just wrapped up the parcel, when a movement in the trees on their right caused the three juniors to turn round.

They saw a man standing before them whom they all recognised instantly.

It was the man in the photograph, whom they had come out to trace!

Next minute, without warning, Rossiter flung himself on Tom Merry, snatched the parcel from his hands, and, quick as a flash, darted into the bushes at the side of the lane and disappeared.

CHAPTER 14.

The Truth Comes Out!

MANNERS was the first to recover from his momentary amazement.

"The rotter's got the parcel!" he roared. "After him—quick!"

He sprang into the bushes where the miscreant had gone, and Tom Merry and Lowther followed on his heels.

They were now on the fringe of the wood. On their right lay the open fields, and to the left was the Rylcombe Wood.

There was no sign of the fugitive on the fields.

"He's gone into the wood!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "This way, kids!"

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Reaching the wood, they each ran in different directions. Ten minutes later, Manners and Tom Merry heard a distant shout in Lowther's voice.

"Help! Help! He's here, you chaps! This way!"

Each of the two juniors dashed to the spot where they judged Monty to be.

They came upon him at length, struggling with the miscreant at the bottom of a deep gully.

"All serene, Monty! We're coming!" sang out Tom Merry.

He and Manners pounded down into the gully and flung themselves on Rossiter.

They had only just come in time. Monty, plucky and strong though he was, could not have held the miscreant any longer.

Rossiter fought like a tiger, his breath hissing out savage threats as he strove to get free of the three St. Jim's juniors. But the Terrible Three hung on. They drove him into the soft clay at the bottom of the gully, and Monty, catching up a handful of the clammy stuff, rammed it into his mouth.

"There! That will put the stopper on his lovely eloquence!" he chuckled. "Hold his legs, Tommy—I've got some cord in my pocket!"

Rossiter's legs were secured, and the juniors then sat on his chest.

He was a prisoner!

Tom Merry examined the parcel that had rolled a short distance away. The contents were intact.

"Well, you precious rotter, you are just the chap we were looking for!" he said, taking the clay from Rossiter's mouth. "First of all, we want to know about last night. You've got a grudge against Knox, and you attacked him in the wood last night—"

"I hope he's suffering—that's all!" snarled the man. "He ran away from me when I accused him of stealing these things—"

"Ah!" Tom Merry gave a triumphant cry. "Then it was you, you cad! Knox is hurt, and another chap is accused of attacking him. You've got to come to St. Jim's and own up, you rotter!"

Rossiter gave an unpleasant snarl.

"If you do take me to St. Jim's, I shall make it hot for a few of the young sparks there!" he panted. "I'll tell all I know about Knox, for one, and Master Cutts for another—and a few more."

Tom Merry & Co. looked uneasily at each other.

They were determined to clear Grundy now that they had found the real culprit. But they did not wish to bring any scandal to St. Jim's. There was enough trouble at the old school as it was, and the honour of St. Jim's was very dear to them all.

Tom Merry's glance rested on the parcel.

"This is your property, you say?" he asked Rossiter.

"Yes—yes! I gave it to Knox to mind for me, and he stole it, telling me a yarn about having lost it in the ditch—"

"The yarn was perfectly true, as it happens," said Tom Merry curtly. "Now, look here, you rascal, I don't believe the stuff in this parcel is yours either. I'm going to hand it over to the police, and you as well!"

Rossiter's face paled. His eyes glinted like a trapped fox. All his snarling defiance departed from him.

"Don't do that, young gent!" he whined. "I'll make things all right at St. Jim's if you'll let me go. I'll get right away from this neighbourhood—straight, I will. Give me a chance, that's all!"

Tom Merry thought for a moment.

"All right!" he said at length. "I'll make a bargain with you. You confess to attacking Knox last night, and then we'll give you a run for your money. We'll let you escape, and give you half an hour before we hand over this parcel to the police and tell them who we got it from."

Rossiter nodded eagerly.

"Monty, run off and fetch about half a dozen decent chaps here," said Tom Merry. "Bring Blake & Co., and Talbot, and Kangy, and Figgins if you can find 'em. We'll make this cad own up in front of them, and then let him go."

Monty Lowther ran off, and Tom Merry and Manners waited in the gully, holding Rossiter.

Monty returned sooner than the others expected him.

He brought with him, not the other juniors, but Dr. Holmes himself.

"I met the Head walking down the lane, and asked him to come here," said Lowther. "He can hear this rascal's confession from his own lips."

Dr. Holmes followed Lowther down into the gully, his kind old face depicting the surprise he felt.

"What does this mean, Merry?" he asked. "Who is this man?"

"He's the one who struck Knox in the wood last night, sir," said Tom Merry, darting a warning look at Rossiter.

(Continued on page 27.)

The great quest for the lost treasure of the golden galleons continues, and the Result's crew find themselves up against big odds!



THE SECRET OF THE GALLEONS!



By ROLAND SPENCER.

(Author of our Recent Success: "Tom of the Ajax.")

An Ordeal in the Deep!

DAN DERRICK, his brain awl, walked out into fairly deep water, then halted to think things over. What had happened to Brian? Beyond a shadow of doubt the Rat had been thorough enough to have agents already waiting to interfere with Guadiana's salvaging operations at Thirlbeach.

And what of the Don himself? Dan felt his heart thump the harder at the new thought. The Castilian had remained on the beach all night, on watch. With such a desperate man as the Rat at the head of their rivals, the spilling of blood would be considered a small matter!

Dan shuddered.

"Gosh, if they've done in the Don they'll do in Brian!" he muttered to himself. "This is a terrible start for our venture—"

The youngster shifted his ballast bags higher, so that the weight would pull his helmet down. Thus he could lie down on the sandy floor of the cove and rest. Brian had told him of this method of resting his limbs.

So far, he himself was safe enough. He would wait till morning, then emerge to the upper air in broad daylight. There would then be people on the beach, so an attack by the blackguards would not be possible.

Dan felt his brain throbbing. He could not think clearly. Out there in the cove by himself, with no comrade with whom he could discuss the situation, he felt a very lonely, forlorn person indeed. Jumbled thoughts kept chasing each other through the lad's mind.

"If they kill Brian and Guadiana they will cook their own goose," mused Dan, trying to seek comfort. "You can't kill men and keep clear of the police, too. The Don lying dead on the beach would at once result in all strangers at Thirlbeach being detained by the police—"

A wave of passion swept through the lad. Here he was, absolutely helpless. And inactivity would drive him mad! He must walk about. This terrible darkness was getting on his nerves. He was in seventeen feet of water, he could see by his luminous depth indicator. And the luminous hands of his helmet clock pointed to two o'clock.

Over three more hours of darkness!

And he could not light his lamp without those on shore seeing where he was, for with that diving-dress they had already peeled off Brian one of them could come out—

Dan gripped at his axe and felt to see if his knife was still in its place. Both were there. But the lad laughed hysterically. What a fool he was for worrying himself over idle fears. They'd never find him, provided he did not light his lamp.

CHARACTERS IN THE STORY.

DON ALONZO GUADIANA DE LA MANCHA, a Spaniard and financier of the expedition aboard the salvage boat Result.

SARKY MARLINE, a trustworthy, bow-legged old seaman in command of the Result.

DAN DERRICK, a cheery youth, and son of Captain Derrick—known as "Dare-Devil" Derrick—a rugged sea captain of some sixty-five years.

BRIAN CARR, a chum of Dan's, and son of "Amphibious" Carr, inventor of a patent diving-dress which Brian in his research work had perfected. Their unscrupulous rival, known as the "Rat," a round-shouldered, beady-eyed Mexican half-breed.

The story opens with Dan Derrick seated at the bedside of his sick father. A spell of delirium has just passed, and Dan promises the old sea captain to call upon Don Alonzo Guadiana, a Spaniard whom Captain Derrick had long since befriended, and ask for a job. He is setting out on his mission when he meets Brian Carr, who has perfected a patent diving-dress which has been the lifelong study of his father. The two visit the Don, who has come to England in quest of gold which lies hidden in a hermetically sealed box in the lazaret hold of the galleon, *Maria de Castellan*. A brief interview follows, and the lads, fully aware of the perilous times ahead and the rascality of the Rat, a Mexican half-breed, whose intention is to forestall them in their quest, show their willingness to accompany the Spaniard on his great adventure. With a note of introduction, the lads are sent to Sarky Marline, the jovial old seaman who is to command the result.

The great adventure begins, and, after two futile attempts by the "Rat" to delay the expedition, the party reach Thirlbeach, where Dan and Brian, garbed in the patent diving-dresses, wade into the depths to locate the Spanish galleon. They are scrambling up the shingle to report their find when some dark figures splash into the shallow water and charge upon Brian.

At a word from his chum, Dan plunges back into the water.

(Now read on.)

Dan shifted his ballast again, rose, and began to walk about, edging rather farther away from the dry land. If only he could sleep! That would be the best thing to do, of course, for who could know what fresh strain was to be imposed on him in the daylight?

"Heavens, haven't I enough will to do the right thing?" he ground out. "I'm a poor sort of diver, and I'm not worthy of poor old Brian's theoretical training. I will lie down, and I will sleep. Gosh, I'm tired enough!"

Hugging the lead box to him, Dan again lay down, and, calming his mind with a terrific effort of will, he began to doze.

He awoke with a sensation that he was not alone. Why, he couldn't say. Some fish brushed by his body, perhaps. He must have dreamt that he saw a beam of light—a momentary flash which died away as he moved. He muttered to himself, then rose.

A voice sounded in the receiver of his telephone. Dan's heart beat quickly. Was it old Brian escaped, after all? Or had he gone quite mad?

The voice continued:

"We might as well light up, my young friend."

Not Brian? Who in thunder could it be? Then Dan's heart missed a beat as the memory of his fear of a short while ago flooded back. It was one of their enemies in Brian's diving-dress. They had found him!

Dan acted promptly. He saw the light green of daylight above. And he still had the lead box. A powerful white ray shone out, and Dan saw the form of another diver close to him. The man, whoever he was, had found him and connected the telephone.

Dan backed, hugging his box tightly to him and hiding it. The other diver advanced.

"You did not think that your movements resulted in a cloud of phosphorus in the water, by which you could be traced, my friend, did you?" he said.

The voice was suavely unpleasant, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 657.

mocking. Surely it was the voice of the man Rayne they had met on the beach?

"Keep your distance," ground out Dan. "I know how to drown you in three minutes. Stand off!"

The man halted, obviously in fear at Dan's bluff. Then Dan got a grip of the telephone wire, tugged, broke contact, and as the rival diver blundered forward, hands outstretched in obvious rage, the boy flooded the water with an inky fluid which was held in a bladder round his waist.

Brian was proud of that idea. That ugly-looking fish called the squid provided the young inventor with the scheme. Indeed, it was the very fluid used by the squid which Brian had put into the bladders. It was meant as a screen for escape at any time. Nature had provided the squid with the fluid for the same purpose.

The ruse proved successful, and the beam from the other diver's lamp was drowned in the thick and cloudy water. Dan threw loose his ballast bags, and instantly rose to the surface.

He felt the surface water slamming on the observation port of his helmet. He beat the water with his free arm to try to turn so that he could see the shore. He held the leaden box tightly. To lose it now would probably be to lose it for ever.

His frantic, half-maddened efforts turned him round. He saw Sker Elbow like a grey, grim forefinger in the light of dawn pointing out to the westward. He saw a group of men on a high rock on the headland. They were observing with marine glasses. A boat lopped on the water just below them.

At last one man lowered his glasses swiftly and pointed out excitedly towards where he lay, like a derelict awash. The party made a rush for the boat. Were they friends or were they the Rat's party?

The boy's brain began to swim. A red mist seemed to float before his eyes. His ordeal was over now—one way or the other. Yes, one way or the other!

The boat drew near, and hands were stretched towards Dan. He felt the tough material of his diving-dress gripped. He felt himself being hauled upwards, and his foot fell on the rung of a Jacob's ladder over the transom of the boat. Soon he was aboard, and reeling as if in drunkenness, while nimble fingers twisted at the thumbscrews which held his helmet in place.

Dan's vision cleared for an instant. Then he gave a loud shout of joy, for there, distorted by the running water down the thick port of plate-glass, he saw the features of Don Alonzo Guadiana de la Mancha anxiously peering into the helmet.

The lead box was gently taken from his gripping, bloodless fingers as the helmet was removed. Then Guadiana, rubbing Dan's numbed hands, looked anxiously into the boy's blood-shot eyes.

Dan swayed heavily, but was supported by strong arms. A man extended a white handkerchief towards his face.

"Hold back," said Guadiana. "Let him bleed. That out-flow is life-giving to the boy this minute—"

Dan realised that his nose and ears were bleeding freely. But he was aware that this is usual with a diver after a too-lengthy stop on the bottom. Then he swooned, and knew no more till he woke in a clean little bed in a bright little room of the Warrior Bard Hotel, Thirlbeach.

The Faded Parchment!

WHEN Dan did open his eyes he found the fine features of Guadiana bent close to his face. The Spaniard's dark eyes were fixed anxiously on him, and the youngster smiled faintly. Guadiana was looking at him with real affectionate concern.

"All right now, senior," grinned Dan. "And as hungry as a foxhound—"

A look of real relief passed over the Don's eyes, and the man began to fuss about busily.

"Ah, you English," he said, "you are wonderful. Here, boy, here is food. Just what the doctor said you were to have, but you must not, as you express yourselves, wolf too much of it—"

Dan raised himself with surprising alacrity, considering what he had been through. And between mouthfuls of the food, which he needed badly, he pressed Guadiana for news of Brian.

"Alas, Dan, I know nothing of what they have done with him," replied the Castilian. "But the Result was signalled off the Longships at dawn. Sarky Marline will be here soon, and then we will all get down to the search before ever we make another attempt at this accursed galleon treasure. One life lost in its recovery will not be worth the whole of it, my boy, even to save the house of Guadiana la Mancha—"

"Don't speak of lives being lost, senior," said Dan. "Nothing terrible has happened just yet—that we know of. But what happened to you? You must have had a pretty sticky time!"

Guadiana laughed.

"I ran away, my boy," he said.

"Ran away!"

Dan almost shrieked out the words. Guadiana had run away, leaving Brian in the hands of those ruffians, whoever they were.

"Don't look so horrified, boy," put in the Don. "A countryman of yours would have rushed in like a bulldog, and he would have added one more to the number of our enemies' captives; but we Spaniards have a different way of working. I concealed myself in a point of vantage, saw the villains come down to the water's edge, six strong. I was about to get back to the village to raise a party to fight them, when you and Brian appeared. They got Brian, but I saw you break away and sink in the deep water. I guessed you had the box, since you had retreated. They peeled off Brian's dress then and there, and that tall man we met on the beach—his name is Jefferson Rayne—dressed up in the suit in a manner which showed that he knew something about diving. Brian was carried off and bundled into the sidecar of a motor bicycle combination on the road. Rayne had waded out into the water and sank, and the other men scattered, beating about for me. They had previously made a search, and I had had to lie closely hidden.

"I managed to scramble, unseen, out of my hiding-place in the rocks and run to safety. So I ran away merely to live to see another day—and to fight, if necessary. Remember, I was the only one who could give clues as to where Brian might be found, and you, too, should you have been captured. My boy, I almost shouted aloud, to warn you, like a madman,



As the rival diver blundered forward, hands outstretched in obvious rage, Dan Derrick flooded the water with an inky fluid which was held in a bladder round his waist!

when I saw the cloud of phosphorus, which was you, walking about on the bed of the cove. Did you not think of that—the movement stirring up phosphorus? Have you never rowed a boat on the sea on a summer night? Imagine my feelings, boy, when I saw Jefferson Rayne, also a cloud of phosphorus, following you. What happened, Dan?"

"I went to sleep to recover my strength, and when I woke I found that Rayne had connected the telephone, and was talking to me. I would have fought, if necessary, but I still had the box, so I darkened the water, discarded my ballast, and rose to the surface, where you spotted me."

"Thank Heaven you are safe, lad. If anything had happened to you, or if anything has happened to Brian, I shall wish that this secret of the galleons had never come my way. But the Result will be up by the evening. In the meantime, I have read the parchment in the leaden box. Shall I translate?"

"Please," said Dan, in a dull voice. The lad was thinking of Brian, but he paid attention to Guadiana, all the same.

The parchment, was, in fact, an abstract log of the galleon Maria de Castellon de la Plana, and was signed Miguel Rodrigo Guadiana de la Mancha. The exact positions of three galleons were given; Dolores del Moncayo los Huesca, north coast of Ireland, not far from Rathlin Isle; Santa Maria Medina Sidonia, off the island of Islay in the Inner Hebrides; Almanze Aguilhas, off Flannan, Lewis. Flannan is now known as the Seven Hunters. They are tiny, rugged islands, miles out to sea.

There was a lot of detail regarding bearings and landmarks. Guadiana had only once scanned the parchment before he read it out to Dan. But now the pair made a great effort to get the bearings by heart, so that they could erase the actual bearings from the parchment, thus making the latter merely an interesting relic, otherwise useless.

Dan paid little attention, though he made a valiant effort to commit the bearings to memory. Guadiana already had the Rathlin and Islay galleons positions off by heart. But when he began on the Lewis one, shouts and a wild stampeding on the stairs of the hotel made them both start suddenly.

Guadiana whipped out his blue-glinting automatic, and Dan was out of bed like a shot. The door of the room burst open, and four men sprang in. The handsome face of Jefferson Rayne was the first thing Dan saw.

The Raid!

THE table was overturned, and the Don's pistol barked. Dan himself grappled with a little tough Welshman who fought and scratched like a tiger. The parchment had been grabbed by Rayne, but Guadiana kept a firm grip of it. There was the sound of a crackle, then a tear, as the tough material parted.

Rayne disappeared, and, though Dan clung on to his adversary like grim death, that man, too, got away. That lightning raid was over almost as soon as it commenced, and Dan and Guadiana, both panting hard, looked at each other.

"So—so he's got the parchment, sir?" gasped Dan.

"Most of it, my boy. But he hasn't got the most important part. I kept a good grip of the part that matters. There were three sheets. He has stolen two and a half, and thought he was safe in getting quantity. Ha, ha, ha! The fool! First, he times his rush on you and Brian so quickly that you yourself have time to slide back into deep water and get away. Now he steals a lot of useless log entries about weather and course. See!"

Guadiana held the fragment of parchment towards Dan, and the boy stared at the faded, almost illegible scrawl in old Spanish. He could make out bearings, and the names of the islands and headlands.

"He's got the bearings for the Lewis galleon, anyway, senior!" cried Dan, pointing to the last entry. The word Flannan was the last on the sheet.

Guadiana laughed quietly.

"Yes, Dan, we've lost that bearing. But it is useless to them. 'Pointed rock N.E. by E.' or whatever it is, might be anywhere round the coasts of your isles. They have the bearings, but they don't know where to look for the landmarks! It is just Guadiana luck that that was the only bearing I had not yet committed to memory. So it is of no use to us, too, this knowing the third galleon as near the Seven Hunters."

"Never mind, senior," said Dan dryly. "I reckon we'll get all we want of everything in the search for the first two. Hallo! Who's this? By Jove, the police! You can have Rayne for theft, sir—"

Guadiana frowned as the local police-constable came hurriedly into the room, the frightened landlord behind him, and a group of servants crowding the doorway in the rear.

"You haf been attacked?" asked the Welsh constable.

"It is nothing," replied Guadiana. "Private quarrel be-

tween gentlemen, officer. I want no fuss about it."

"But, indeed, I heard a shot, sir," replied the policeman.

"There has been a fight!"

"Bit of a scuffle," replied the Castilian. "Paper stolen. But I don't want to make a charge."

"But my hotel!" shrieked the proprietor, bravely coming forward now as he saw there was no danger. "Guns going off! Gentlemen fighting! Shoutin! What was it all for, whatever?"

"I will compensate you for any loss you suffer," replied Guadiana. "I do not want to make a charge, officer."

The policeman was dissatisfied, but he was compelled to depart after examining Guadiana's permit to bear firearms.

Dan looked at the Don.

"Why don't you let the police harass Rayne a bit, senior?" he asked.

"Ah, Dan, you have no experience of police inquiries, I can see. A hearing—much delay. The county court—more delay. Remanded for the assizes—a long wait, and then more delay. Boy, we're out for quick results in treasure hunting. We must waste no time in getting the police to help us, for though they could help very considerably, their methods are too ponderously thorough, and we shall find the season gone if we do not get ahead quickly. Your English summer is short, you know."

Dan grunted. Guadiana seemed right. And the Rat and his assistants knew he could brook no police delay. Therefore they were bold and reckless in their methods.

Dan was a new man now he had been fed. And he again felt warmed up to the business by the little bit of fresh excitement they had just experienced.

"Now, senior," said Dan, "what are we going to do about Brian? Galleon treasure is all right, but our first duty is towards poor old Brian."

Guadiana looked a bit grey.

"Yes, Dan, I know. Sker House is the place where we must pursue investigations. We will reconnoitre there immediately after dark. We can spy the lay of the land. If the Result keeps on at top speed—and we can trust MacFadyen—she should be here before dark. I want Sarky Marline by our side, Dan."

The Spaniard gave Dan a terrible look, and the boy's eyes widened with surprise.

"Dan, the Rat is at Sker House. Must have gone by train after the episode at the Woolpack, in the London River. We want Marline, my boy."

Dan chafed. He did not hold that hump-backed, abysmal-mouthed half-breed with his fiendish laugh and his hideous yellow fang in such awe as did Guadiana. But he very soon learned to do so!

The Limb of Evil!

BRIAN CARR, crammed like a bundle of clothes in a clothes-basket, found himself, gagged and bound, in the sidecar of a powerful motor-bicycle.

The chief of the attackers, whom he recognised with surprise as the casual questioner of the beach—Rayne—had dressed in the diving-suit the villains had peeled off him. He was now out in the cove, looking for Dan, doubtless. And where was he himself being taken?

The motor-bicycle and sidecar were bumping swiftly along the surface of a very bad road. But the drive was short. He peered round as the bicycle stopped, and he could see that he was at Sker House, for the Elbow stood out bold and grim in the night hard by. Ungentle hands seized the young diver, and he was carried into the house and thrown into an inner room. There he remained in a half-stupor, for the food that he needed as a restorative after his trying work ten fathoms deep was not forthcoming.

Brian slept, if a coma of exhaustion can be called sleep, for many hours. Then he was hauled to his feet and his bonds were cut. His limbs were powerless, his hands still white and numbed from their lengthy immersion in the water.

He was half-carried, half-dragged out of the room, and taken to a lofty, comfortable apartment, where a big fire glowed, for the evenings were chilling, and it was evening now.

Before the fire sat two men. Brian, swaying in the grip of the men who held him, swept his hand across his wild hair, and his bloodshot eyes looked stupidly at the men. Then the youngsters started weakly. There before him sat the fiend Dan had called the Rat, the same evil, swarthy, thin, parchment-like face which had peered in at him through the attic window of his room off the Tottenham Court Road. The man was bareheaded now, and his sparse, coarse, grizzled hair stuck out in wisps on his bullet-shaped head. The beady eyes glittered with snakelike cruelty, and the sneer of

the mouth was more pronounced than ever. There was something sinister and awful about that sneer.

This was the third time Brian had seen the rat, and a terrible loathing now passed through his mind, making his whole frame shudder. How he longed to clench his fist and crash it full and square between those beady eyes, those evil eyes of a reptile, not a man.

Opposite the Rat, leaning back in his easy-chair, eyes a trifle bloodshot, and the lids heavy after his diving, sat Rayne, the casual questioner of the batch.

Rayne was smiling serenely.

"Let me question him, Morveno," said Rayne to the half-breed, as he sat with his clawlike hands gripping the arms of his chair, and his sneering, evil face pushed forward.

"Why?" snarled the Rat.

"Because, you incarnation of a fiend, you have a way with you which puts the back up of any plucky Britisher."

"I hev a way wi me to make any British vermin speak!"

"We will let that rest, my friend. I do the questioning. Understand that. We have Gurdley's instructions, haven't we?"

The half-breed merely snarled a frightful snarl, which made Brian's bloodshot eyes glitter dangerously. But he said nothing, and Rayne turned with a smile to Brian.

"First of all, let me congratulate you on the perfection to which you have brought Amphibious Carr's invention," he said. "I have never before dived in such a perfect dress."

"Cut it out, you blackguard!" rasped Brian. "Get to the point. I'm tired and nearly starved."

"You shall feed and you shall sleep, my boy. I admire your pluck. But listen!"

The man leaned forward in his chair and looked fiercely at Brian.

"My instructions are to negotiate with you. If I fail, then Morveno here, better known as the Rat, will do the negotiating."

"That conveys nothing!" snapped Brian. "My mouth is ever closed but my fist ever ready for any half-breed Mexican reptile!"

Rayne's white hand was raised.

"Boy, I warn you," he said, with genuine alarm, glancing quickly at the hump-backed half-breed, who had risen with a fresh snarl of terrible ferocity.

"That," said Rayne, pointing to the half-breed's face, "is worse than his snarl. Look out, Carr! You are playing with a veritable limb of evil. See, he likes to hear me talk so. You will be wise to allow me to do the negotiating."

"Now, we have the secret of your diving-dress. But what we mostly want is certain other information. What are the bearings of the galleon resting on the bed of Thirlbeach Cove?"

Brian said nothing.

"So you won't speak yet? Did your young diving pal—Derrick, his name is, I believe, and for bearing that name Morveno has a terrible grudge against him—did he have the box containing the papers of the Spanish officer who commanded that ship?"

Brian still remained silent.

"So we will pass on. The young cub got away from me before I could see if he carried anything. Your diving-dress is indeed ingenious, son of Amphibious Carr. Nature has been your model, and it is the best model you can have."

So Dan had got clear. Brian's heart leapt with joy, and he felt almost grateful to Rayne for letting him know.

"I haven't said we were successful in finding the galleon," he growled.

"No, you haven't said so, of course. But you will say things if Morveno gets to work."

"Your threats leave me unmoved. I suppose Morveno is one of those delightful fiends who torture to gain his ends. I infer that from your dreadful pauses and dramatic looks when you threaten to hand on the 'negotiating' to Morveno. Call yourself a white man, Rayne, allying yourself with a cur like that against your countrymen!"

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No sooner had the Result dropped her anchor than a boat was dropped overside. Then a man leapt into the boat and was rowed rapidly ashore.

Brian's words were interrupted by another horrible laugh from the half-breed, and the young man looked at the Rat with quiet disdain. He was secretly pleased to see Rayne wince at his words.

"I will tell you nothing," he ended.

Rayne turned to the Rat.

"The poor boy is not in his right senses. See, he sways weakly. He is at that stage of exhaustion when a man cares not what happens to him. He shall be fed, then he shall sleep. My son will see to his comfort. After that I will tackle him again. He will once more think life is worth living after a sleep and good food—"

"We ha' little time to waste!" growled the Rat, speaking out of the lower corner of his twisted mouth.

"He is in the last stage of exhaustion," repeated Rayne. "A further ordeal will rob him of his senses. Do you want that?"

"No!" snarled the Rat.

"Then don't interfere. Take him away to Master Tony, you men. Tony has had his instructions."

Brian was pushed from the room, and, being helped by his captors, mounted the staircase to the second floor. There he was bundled into a pleasant room fitted for the requirements of a boy under home tutorship. Lesson books rested on a desk in a corner, and the bookcase was packed with books of the type usual in schools which specialise in the classical education. A white-faced boy of about twelve years old rose in trepidation as Brian was pushed into the room.

"So—so they have sent you to me?" said the boy.

"Ay," replied Brian, speaking from his throat, "the curs! Your father said you would feed me and fix me up for a sleep. Will you? I need it badly."

Tony Rayne advanced and supported Brian's swaying body.

"I will do all I can for you," he said. "You will be well looked after here in my room. I have been told to do my best for you. But when you are strong and rested again, there—there—, Oh, I hate to say such things about my father, but there is a terrible ordeal waiting for you."

"Don't worry about me, kid," said Brian. "You look a jolly good little chap. Trot out the provender, will you, and I suppose I can sleep on that couch?"

Tony opened a cupboard and placed before Brian such a meal as he considered unpalatable and lacking in variety. He apologised for it.

"Don't worry," said Brian, now grinning as he attacked the food like a hungry wolf. "I'm a diver and I've just come up from the cove. This is the sort of grub I should have. Someone who knows a bit about diving chose it for me."

"My father," said Tony. "He's been a diver."

"Ay, and not so very long since!" said Brian grimly. Life seemed to flow back rapidly into Brian's veins as he fed and drank. Tony had walked to the window. Brian joined him with a plate of soup in one hand and a huge spoon in the other.

"Why have they shoved me up in this room with you, Tony?" asked the young diver at last.

"They're—they're all going out," replied Tony. "They've gone now. They've let the dogs loose in the house—"

"Gone out!" cried Brian. "Left you as my warder? What's to prevent me from tipping you in the grate and clearing, then?"

Tony looked frightened.

"I—I don't believe you would do that," he said.

"Wouldn't I? If I thought there was a chance of escape I would, if you tried to stop me. And somehow I don't believe you would be sorry to see me escape."

Brian peered out of the window, which he threw open wide. There was a big drop of two storeys to the ground below. There was no rain-water pipe, no ivy, no coping which he could use as a grip in making his escape.

The young driver whipped round on Tony.

"What did you say about dogs?" he asked, eyeing the door of the room.

"Two great Danes," said Tony, trembling. "The door is locked, and they are on watch outside."

"Couldn't I kill them?"

"They would be at your throat the moment you got the door open. Please don't try!"

"Don't you know the brutes? Can't you quieten them while I get clear?"

Tony shuddered.

"They are frightful brutes," he said. "I like dogs, but these brutes seem to be fiends. They belong to Morvono."

Brian thumped the palm of his left hand with his right fist as he walked jerkily about, teeth clenched, in his agitation.

He, alone in the house with Tony! Was there no way in which he could escape? A rope? One glance round the room showed him that there was no possibility of making a rope with anything. An attempt to lay out the dogs, which Brian could now hear snuffing at the door and growling quietly? No, too risky. The window? It seemed the only way, but how?

Instead of having the sleep he so badly needed, Brian paced about, racking his brains for a means of escape. But no scheme presented itself, and the evening drew on towards twilight. The sun bathed the sea in the westward a dull red. It was a glorious picture, but Brian was not moved in the least.

At last, Rayne and a party of five or six men, the hump-backed figure of the Rat amongst the group, returned to the house. So any possible scheme Brian might have worked out was beyond practising now. It would be best for him to sleep.

Tony had crept to his side by the window. The boy's white, strained face was turned up towards Brian's. The youngster looked troubled.

Suddenly Tony saw an eager look come into Brian's strained eyes.

"What's that smudge of smoke out there?" asked the young diver.

"It's a steamer of some sort coming round the point," said Tony. "She is closer to the rocks than I've ever seen a ship before. Here she comes—"

Brian stared for a moment. Then he gasped with delight and patted Tony Rayne on the shoulder.

"Cheers!" cried Brian. "That's the sort of seascape I like to see! Now, that setting sun and the little tug—"

Tony wondered at the young man's enthusiasm. But he said nothing. Brian watched the little vessel, fascinated.

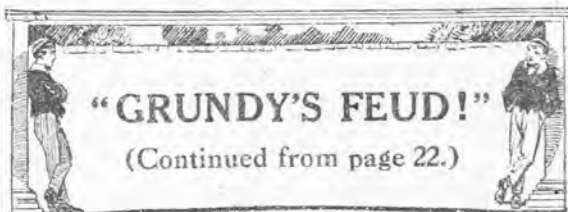
The salvage ship Result blustered fussily and in a great hurry across the cove, and down went her anchor opposite the village of Thirdbeach. A boat soured overside at once, and a man, shot from the tug by a pair of quick-moving, bowed legs, leapt into the boat and was rowed rapidly ashore.

Brian chuckled.

"Well, here's one for a caulk, old chap," he said, going over to the couch and heaving his weary legs up. "Wake me up if you hear any sort of a commotion inside or outside the house won't you?"

Tony, wondering, promised. Then Brian slept the sleep of utter physical exhaustion.

(Help was near at hand, and within a short time Sker House was to be the scene of a gruelling fight. Although facing great odds Sarky Martine was determined to rescue young Brian from his rascally captors. On no account should you miss next week's thrilling instalment of this powerful serial, chums.)



"It wasn't Grundy at all. Now then, you scoundrel, you've got to confess. It was you, wasn't it?"

Rossiter nodded.

"I didn't mean any 'arm, sir!" he muttered. "I'd had a drop to drink. Knox was minding something for me, and he lost it. I thought he'd stolen it, and when I saw him in the wood last night I was pretty mad. He ran away, and I followed him and knocked him down. I didn't mean to hurt him seriously—straight, I didn't!"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the Head. "Then Grundy is innocent! What association had you with Knox, you miscreant?" This he addressed sharply to the cowering rascal on the ground.

Again Tom Merry shot Rossiter a quick, warning glance. Rossiter saw it.

"Knox is all right, sir!" he whined. "I've been out of work for some time, and he took pity on me. I'm sorry I knocked him down, but I'd had a drop—"

He broke off, and with a sudden wrench jumped to his feet. Tom Merry had given him the opportunity to escape, and Rossiter took it.

With one leap he gained the top of the gully and disappeared from view.

Dr. Holmes started back in amazement.

"Good heavens! The miscreant has escaped! You were taken unawares, boys! I—"

"Mind that parcel, sir!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he jumped to the top with Manners and Lowther. "It contains valuables. We'll go after that rascal!"

The Terrible Three ran into the wood. Far ahead they saw Rossiter crashing through the trees, and Tom called him. He ran on ahead, and Rossiter stopped.

"We're doing wrong in letting you go, but we're doing it to save further trouble at the school," said Tom curtly. "You'd better take the chance now you've got it, and get out of the neighbourhood for good."

"I will, sir," said Rossiter. "You bet I will!"

"Cut off, then!"

Rossiter ran on and disappeared from view.

Some time later the Terrible Three returned to the gully, where the Head was still waiting.

"He's gone, sir," said Tom Merry simply.

"Never mind, Merry. I am more than thankful that Grundy's name has been cleared. The poor lad will be released at once."

Tom Merry & Co. felt that they had done best in giving Rossiter his chance to escape.

They had to explain to the Head about the parcel. Dr. Holmes looked astounded.

"Bless my soul! This must be stolen property!" The man who has just escaped is a thief, and this is the parcel that Knox minded for him! The police must be acquainted with this immediately."

Twenty minutes elapsed before Dr. Holmes and the Terrible Three handed in the parcel to the inspector at Rylcombe police-station. The articles were recognised at once as stolen property that the police were looking for. The hue and cry after Rossiter was raised, but he had had a good start, and he was never caught or heard of again.

Grundy was released and carried round the quad in triumph by the exuberant juniors. All were glad that Grundy's name had been cleared.

Knox, too, had recovered, and the next day he left the sanatorium. Dr. Holmes held an exhaustive inquiry into all the circumstances of the case, but Knox managed to give a plausible explanation of his dealings with Rossiter, and escaped with a severe lecture from the Head. He determined to lie low in future, lest Grundy made further efforts to show him up in his true colours. But George Alfred had really had quite enough of Knox, and Tom Merry & Co. persuaded him to leave the prefect alone. They thus put an end to Grundy's feud.

THE END.

(Another magnificent yarn by the pen of the famous Martin Clifford next week: "THE HOUSEMASTER'S MISTAKE!" All "Gemites" will vote this as being the finest yarn of Tom Merry & Co. they have ever read.)

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