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**GRUNDY PUTS HIS
FOOT IN IT!**

(See the splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co. inside.)

A SPLENDID EXTRA LONG SCHOOL STORY FEATURING

The NEW HOUSE

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

Envy, jealousy, and prejudice have kept George Alfred Grundy from taking his proper place in School House affairs—is the opinion of George Alfred. But in the New House, whether the burly Shell junior is transferred, things are going to be different. So thinks Grundy. It remains to be seen just how valuable is Grundy's opinion.

"Something's got to be done!" repeated Tom, sliding down from the study window-seat, where he had been seated. "Can't you fellows think of a wheeze to put the kybosh on those cheeky New House chaps?"



CHAPTER 1.

New Leader Wanted!

"SOMETHING'S got to be done!" Tom Merry spoke emphatically, yet dismally. The youthful leader of the School House juniors at St. Jim's was wearing a very worried look indeed. His two chums, Monty Lowther and Manners, also wore worried looks. In fact, that usually cheery trio known as the Terrible Three were looking as if all the woes and troubles of the universe had settled upon their young and hitherto careless shoulders.

THE GEM LIBRARY. No. 1.026.

"No, old chap," said Lowther pointedly. "It's up to the giddy leader to do the thinking, eh, Manners?"

"That's it!" grunted Manners. "Thinking out wheezes and strategy is your job, Tommy. I'm sorry to have to join Monty, in pointing the fact out; but there it is, old chap!"

"Oh, rats!" snorted Tom Merry crossly. "Why should

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—TOM MERRY & CO., THE CHEERY CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S!

RECRUIT!

you fellows always leave it to me to find the wheezes?"

"Because you're the giddy leader——"

"Leader fiddlesticks!" said Tom. "A leader expects the support of his followers at times, anyway."

"Well, don't we back you up always?" said Lowther warmly.

"Well, yes, in a way, I suppose," admitted Tom. "You're better than those Fourth fatheads, at all events! They're so blessed cheeky for one thing; Blake even claims he'd make a better leader than I! Cheek!"

"Awful!" grinned Manners. "He even says the leader should come from the Fourth!"

"That's rot!" snorted Manners, his grin fading abruptly.

"Silly rot!" agreed Lowther.

"And even that silly dummy, Gussy, claims that he'd make a better leader than I do," proceeded Tom, shaking his curly head and frowning darkly. "And he isn't the only ass, either! Glyn says we need a change, and suggests himself—and it's the same with Clive and Noble, and Julian, and Grundy——"

"Grundy? Oh, crumbs!"

"Yes, Grundy! And even that cad, Racke, and that fat worm, Trimble, and that awful chump, Skimpole, and that mad Irishman, Mulvaney, and goodness knows who else, they all think they'd make a better leader to put it across the New House," grunted Tom. "The plain fact is——"

Tom paused, and flushed.

"They're getting fed-up!" said Manners ruthlessly.

"Fed-up with getting licked by the New House!"

"Well, I suppose that's it," admitted Tom, with another worried frown. "They're getting rather restive, and that's why I say we've simply got to do something! We've had bad luck, of course!"

"Sheer bad luck both as regards japes, and footer, and everything else," resumed Tom Merry gloomily. "Take that jape yesterday! It was a ripping wheeze to chuck that bladder full of water into the New House Common-room when Figgy and his pals were holding a meeting there; you must admit that."

"Ahem! Yes!"

"A tophole idea; but how was I to know that old Ratty had just gone inside to tell 'em to stop making such a row," asked Tom Merry indignantly. "Of course, old Ratty reported us to Railton and got us licked just because it happened to burst on him. That was bad luck if you like!"

"Very—for us!" agreed Lowther feelingly.

"And take the match this afternoon," said Tom. "If old Talbot hadn't been crooked, and Levison hadn't had to meet his uncle in Wayland, and that awful ass, Gussy, hadn't muffed that certain goal through dropping his eyeglass or something, we should have licked the New House easily. As it was they licked us. That was bad luck!"

"Rotten luck!"



"But the fellows won't see it," growled Tom, with deep indignation. "They blame me; and, as I say, something's got to be done! We've got to find a way to dish those New House worms somehow, you fellows."

"Yes, but how?"

"That's the trouble! Now I believe Figgy's up to something even now," said Tom reflectively. "You saw how the New House rotters rushed off directly the match ended? Well, they've got something on—perhaps a celebration feed! Didn't we see Kerr and Redfern carting a trestle table into the gym? Well, what does that mean?"

"A feed, I bet! Phew! I never thought of that," said Lowther.

"Looks like it!" said Manners. "But——"

"Thinking it over," said Tom, "it wouldn't be a bad idea to scout round the gym. And if—— Outside, Fatty; casual ward is on the next passage—the Fourth!"

"He, he, he!" As he rolled into the study Baggy Trimble of the Fourth—for it was that fat junior who interrupted Tom just then—gave vent to a fat chuckle, choosing to ignore the injunction. "He, he, he! I say, you chaps, how would you like a really ripping free feed?"

"And how would you like a really ripping free kick, Baggy?" said Lowther with interest, raising his boot.

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry quickly, eyeing Trimble's excited face rather, curiously. "What d'you mean, Baggy?"

"What I say," said Trimble, eyeing Lowther's boot warily. "Grundy's giving it—in his study, you know!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,026.

He's just shoved a notice about it on the notice board, inviting chaps to a giddy meeting with a feed to follow."

"My hat! But what for?" asked Tom Merry, staring.

"He, he, he! About you, Tom Merry!"

"Eh! Me?"

"Yes, old chap! It's to get the chaps' support in kicking you out of the job of skipper, you know. Grundy thinks you're no good, and that he's just the man for the job."

"The burbling ass!"

"Of course, he's right in a way," said Trimble, shaking his head seriously at Tom Merry. "You are no good for the job, Tom Merry, as a matter of fact. What's wanted is a fellow like me, with brains, and no end of ideas, you know."

"You fat ass——"

"You're rather a back number, Tom, if you don't mind my saying so," said Trimble. "But Grundy's an awful ass to think he's any better. Still, a feed's a feed, and I'm going to back him up for all I'm worth until the feed's over."

"Oh, dry up and get out!"

"But I haven't explained what I've come for yet," grinned Trimble. "You chaps know the New House cads licked you hollow at footer this afternoon."

"If you're looking for a thick ear, Trimble——"

"I'm not," grinned Trimble. "No need to get waxy, you fellows. You know that; but now I'm going to tell you something you don't know, I bet. Those New House cads are going to hold a great celebration feed in the gym—to celebrate their win this afternoon. How's that?"

"Is—is that a fact, Trimble?" exclaimed Tom Merry, his eyes suddenly gleaming hopefully.

"Absolutely!" said Trimble, with a chuckle. "I've been scouting round watching the rotters, and I've heard 'em talking about it, too. Figgy thinks he's kept it secret from us; but he didn't count on little me! He, he, he!"

"Then I was right," breathed Tom Merry, looking eagerly at his chums. "You're quite sure, Trimble?"

"Quite, old chap! They're getting ready for it now—it's going to be a tremendous feed," said Trimble impressively. "No end of grub, and every New House Lower School chap—even giddy fags—are going to be there! Now, my idea was for you chaps to back me up, and we'd raid the feed."

"Back you up? Oh, my hat!"

"Exactly! But now this feed of Grundy's has turned up, I've decided to make sure of that," explained Trimble calmly. "A feed in the hand is worth two in the bush, you know! I should miss Grundy's feed if I went raiding the New House cads, and probably miss that, too, if you chaps make a muck of things like you always do."

"Why, you—you——"

"Hold on! Now, what I suggest is this," explained Trimble. "While I'm at Grundy's feed, you chaps can be raiding the gym. Then if it comes off, and you get the grub, we can have a ripping feed in the dorm to-night."

"Very nice, Baggy! You get two feeds and we take all the risk, what?"

"Well, ain't it my idea?" said Trimble. "I'm not missing Grundy's feed, anyway. Grundy's an awful idiot, of course, and after I've had the feed I'm going to pull his silly leg——"

"Oh, are you?"

Trimble wheeled round to see Grundy himself standing in the doorway. His jaw dropped.

"So I'm an awful idiot, am I?" said Grundy, in deadly accents. "And you're going to pull my silly leg, are you? Why, you fat little sweep——"

"Yaroooooh! Keep him off, you fellows!"

Trimble howled in apprehension as the burly George Alfred made a sudden rush at him.

"Yooooop!"

The Terrible Three roared, and Trimble roared—in a different manner—as he shot through the doorway, Grundy's hefty boot just catching him in the rear as he went.

"Cheeky young sweep!" growled Grundy, coming back into the room. "Wait until he does turn up for the feed, that's all! Stop that silly cackling, you men, and listen to me."

"We're listening, O Mighty One!" grinned Lowther. "Is it true about the feed, then, Grundy?"

"Eh? Of course it is!" snapped Grundy. "Now, Tom Merry, listen to me. I'm a plain chap, and I always make a point of speaking plainly—no sneaking methods about me! I've come to tell you straight what I think about you, and just what I mean to do."

"Go ahead, then," grinned Tom. "Only make it short!"

"I'm going to. The fact is, Tom Merry, you're a complete wash-out!" explained Grundy, giving the junior skipper rather a pitying look. "You're a decent enough chap as you stand, but you're absolutely no good as a leader."

"Is that your view, Grundy?" asked Tom cheerily.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,026.

"Just that!"

"Thanks very much! If I'd earned your praise, Grundy, I should go and drown myself!" said Tom.

"Oh, don't rot, for goodness' sake!" said Grundy testily. "This is a very serious matter! I'm sick of seeing the School House let down by bad leadership. You know what happened this afternoon—School House licked by two goals. If you'd shown decent leadership, and played me that wouldn't have happened."

"Well, I suppose you're right!"

"You admit it, then?"

"Yes. We should have been licked by thirty goals if I'd played you, old chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther and Manners.

"You—you cackling dummies!" spluttered Grundy. "It's no good acting the goat about it, Merry! Up to now I've never had even a chance to save School House from being licked. You've kept me out of footer, and always refused to let me lead the House in a rag. Result is New House licks us all along the line. It's going to stop!"

"Good! Glad to hear it, old chap! Now run away and play! Your voice is rather trying, you know!"

"You silly ass! You'll see!" snorted Grundy, glaring at the grinning trio. "I've come to give it you straight from the shoulder, Merry. I'm going to get you shifted from your job, and I'm going to take it on and save School House from any more disgraces. I'm just warning you, as I'm not the fellow to do things behind another's back. See?"

"Ha, ha! I see!"

"I'm holding a meeting in my study," said Grundy, frowning. "You can come along and hear my speech, for all I care, though I warn you there'll be some plain speaking, Tom Merry!"

"Thanks, but I'd rather hear a lecture on Socialism by Skimpole," smiled Tom.

"Oh, all right—be frivolous if you like!" said Grundy bitterly. "Talk about that chap fiddling while Rome was burning—bah! It's time you took your job seriously, Merry! I warn you I shall show you up at my meeting!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Don't be an ass!" he exclaimed. "The fellows will only come for the feed, you dummy! Drop the idea, Grundy!"

"Likely, isn't it?" grinned Grundy. "I see you've already got the wind-up, Tom Merry."

"Fathead! Dry up and clear——"

Tom paused and frowned.

Trimble's confirmation of his suspicion regarding the feed in the gym had been great news for Tom, and he had already got a half-formed plan at the back of his mind to get hold of that feed and thus recover his lost prestige somewhat. But to do that he would require all the School House men he could get. And some were bound to go to Grundy's meeting—not to support him, but just for the free feed.

"Now, look here, Grundy!" he exclaimed patiently. "Don't be a silly ass! Listen! I've just heard something good. Those New House bounders are holding a celebration feast in the gym this evening—they're getting ready now, in fact."

"Well, let 'em!" sniffed Grundy. "Like their cheek, but what does it matter?"

"Just this," said Tom. "I've got a wheeze, I think—a wheeze that'll make 'em sing small fairly. I'm going to get the fellows together and raid the feed, see? And I shall want every man I can get—even you, Grundy. For goodness' sake drop your silly idea of a meeting—or postpone it, anyway."

Grundy stared.

"Well, I'm blowed!" he said. "And you want me to postpone my meeting so that you can make another muck of things?"

"Look here——"

"Rats! Likely, ain't it?" sneered Grundy. "Catch me postponing my meeting for that! Let the New House worms feed if they want to—let 'em celebrate, too! They won't have much to celebrate about when I get going!"

"You won't join in then?"

"No, I jolly well won't!" said Grundy derisively. "Catch me backing up you again—after letting us down like you've done! I don't like to have to be frank, Tom Merry, but you're an awful duffer—a duffer at games and a duffer at leadership! You're rather an ass, you know! I speak as I find, Tom Merry, and I must say that the fellows have been potty to stand your footling fumbling and rotten inefficiency for as long as they have. But I'm going—Here, what——"

George Alfred got no further. Indeed, Tom's chums wondered that Tom had allowed him to get so far as he had. But Tom's patience was exhausted now—especially now Grundy had refused his request.

A nod from Tom was quite enough for Lowther and Manners.

The next moment Grundy felt that an earthquake was

happening to him; or something equally sudden and overwhelming.

He was grasped in three pairs of strong hands, and he was seated on the carpet with a thump that fairly shook the room. Three times more he dropped, and then, before he scarcely knew what was happening, Grundy found his head rammed into the study coal-scuttle.

"Now, that's done," remarked Tom a trifle breathlessly, "we'll trot along and talk things over with Blake. As Grundy refuses, we'll have to manage without him. Come on!"

And, leaving Grundy grovelling on the hearthrug, roaring with wrath and anguish, the Terrible Three chuckled and went along to Study No. 6 in the Fourth to discuss Tom's plan for raiding the enemy's celebration feast.

CHAPTER 2.

Mutiny!

"CHEEK!" said Wilkins.

"Awful cheek!" said Cuthbert Gunn wrathfully. "We're not standing it, Wilky. I'm fed-up to the chin with Grundy and his mad-brained schemes!"

"Same here," said Wilkins. "If he thinks he's going to turn this study into a blessed feeding-room for chaps like Trimble, and Mellish, and Tompkins, and all the giddy spongers, he's jolly well mistaken!"

"Yes, rather!" said Gunn.

"None of the decent chaps will come, of course," said Wilkins, with a sniff. "Everybody knows Grundy's an awful duffer, and the chaps who come will come just for the feed and not to hear that silly ass spout!"

"Of course. Of all the born idiots—" said Gunn.

"Of all the piffing, footling asses," added Wilkins, "old Grundy takes the bun! He thinks he's a born leader, and nothing on earth will ever make him see that he's just a born idiot!"

"Absolutely nothing!" agreed Gunn.

Wilkins and Gunn were in entire and emphatic agreement on that—they always were in entire agreement when discussing Grundy's many shortcomings and failings. As a study-mate and study-leader, George Alfred Grundy left much to be desired. True, he was very generous indeed—his frequent whacking remittances from his Uncle Grundy enabled him to stand sumptuous study spreads, and Grundy was always generous to his study-mates—and anyone else for that matter. He could afford to be.

But he was very trying indeed for all that. For he ruled the study with an iron hand, and he always wanted his own way, and he usually got it by making swift and terrific use of his huge fists if his study-mates happened to take it into their heads to rebel. Moreover, he had a most amazing opinion of his own remarkable capabilities in sport and everything else—despite the fact that, as everybody was aware at St. Jim's excepting himself, he was a hopeless duffer at everything—excepting his ability as a rough-and-ready "scrapper."

And now, once again, Grundy had got it into his head that he was a born leader—the very man to take Tom Merry's place as leader in the recently revived warfare against the New House. And it was the sight of Grundy's notice on the notice-board that had aroused his study-mates' dire wrath now. Grundy had not troubled to mention the proposed spread to his chums, and they had only just seen the notice when coming in from the footer-field.

"We're not standing it," resumed Wilkins. "Fancy having a lot of spongers like Trimble and Mellish grubbing in here! If Grundy must act the goat like this, he'll have to do his feeding and spouting somewhere else!"

"Here he is now!" said Gunn warningly.

A heavy tread sounded in the passage, and Grundy marched into the room. His rugged face was red, excepting where it was smeared with black smudges, while his unruly mop of hair was dishevelled and smothered in coal-dust. Moreover, Grundy appeared to be in a towering rage.

Wilkins and Gunn stared at him.

"What's happened, Grundy?" gasped Wilkins. "You look as if you've fallen down a coalhole, old chap!"

"Those cheeky kids on No. 10!" explained Grundy, his voice trembling with wrath and indignation. "They—they bumped me and upended me in the dashed coal-scuttle! What do you fellows think about that?"

"Perhaps you asked for it?" suggested Gunn incautiously.

"Eh? You shut up, Gunny—I want no cheek from you!" said Grundy threateningly. "Asked for it, eh? All I did was to tell Merry what I thought about him—told him the truth! You'd hardly believe it, but the cads suddenly rushed at me, and after bumping me they rammed my head in the dashed coal-scuttle!"

"Awful cheek!" said Wilkins, winking at Gunn. "Some fellows can't stand being told the truth, though!"

"Truth be blowed!" said Grundy, wiping his face on his handkerchief. "It was sheer jealousy—and funk! Tom Merry's fairly got the wind up. He knows I mean business, and he's afraid I shall show him up and collar his job!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Gunn.

"And he's got good reason to feel funky, too," said Grundy. "I do mean business—right from the word go! I'm fed-up with seeing School House let down by Tom Merry's footling leadership! You fellows seen my notice?"

"Yes, we have!" snorted Wilkins.

"What do you think about it?" smiled Grundy.

"We think you're a cheeky boulder, Grundy!" said Wilkins, with some heat.

"Eh? Look here—"

"Cheeky isn't the word for it!" added Gunn. "Where do we come in, you ass? You ought to consult us before asking a scrubby gang of spongers here, Grundy!"

"Well, I like that!" said Grundy, astonished. "Why should I ask you, you cheeky pair of owls? You'll be coming to the spread, won't you—what more do you want?"

"There's not going to be any spread—not in here, anyway!" said Wilkins angrily. "You footling idiot! Can't you see the fellows will only come for a free feed? Think they're asses enough to come here to hear your silly chin-wag?"

Grundy set his lips.

"That's cheek!" he said.

"Is it? Well, here's some more, then!" said Wilkins recklessly. "You're a born idiot to expect the fellows to back you up, Grundy; and only a born idiot would back you up! You haven't the brains of a bunny, and even a fag can pull your silly leg!"

"You—you cheeky cad, George Wilkins!" gasped Grundy. "If you're asking for a thick ear—"

"I don't care!" snapped Wilkins independently. "And as for the feed, you're not jolly well having it in here! That's flat!"

"Absolutely!" said Gunn, a trifle uneasily.

"Oh! Is it?" choked Grundy. "So—so this is how my chums back me up, is it? Oh, all right! Things are coming to a pretty pass when my own study-mates question my authority like this! It's mutiny—nothing else! I don't like to handle my pals, but I see it's necessary to show you kids what's what! Put your hands up!"

"Oh crumbs. Look here—"

"Put 'em up!" roared Grundy.

With that he shoved back his cuffs and rushed at his suddenly-alarmed chums. Grundy was always a high-handed fellow, and evidently he deemed it necessary now to show his study-mates what was what!

"Back up!" gasped Gunn desperately.

"Grundy!"

It was a sudden, stern voice from the doorway, but the excited and wrathful Grundy failed to hear it. A hefty drive sent the hapless Gunn crashing into the fireplace, and a second drive took Wilkins in the chest and deposited him on top of Gunn.

Crash! Clatter! Crash!

"Grundy! How dare you? Grundy!"

It was Mr. Linton's voice—Grundy did not fail to hear it this time. He jumped back and turned a flushed face to the open doorway wherein the Shell master was framed.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Grundy.

"Grundy!" thundered the scandalised master. "You quarrelsome boy, how dare you! How dare you, I say?"

"I—I—" Grundy stammered and stopped. Wilkins and Gunn staggered to their respective feet—Wilkins rubbing the back of his head and Gunn hugging his chin.

"There can be no excuse this time, Grundy, you utterly reckless and quarrelsome fellow!" said Mr. Linton angrily.

"There is scarcely a day passes without trouble of some sort in this study, and I am convinced that it is entirely owing to your quarrelsome nature."

"You—you see, sir—"

"Silence! You are the most troublesome boy in my Form, if not in the School House, Grundy! On this occasion there can be no excuse whatever. While about to pass this study I distinctly saw you attack these boys, though it was obvious they did not desire to fight with you. You are nothing less than a pugnacious bully, Grundy."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Silence! I will listen to no excuses! Go to my room and await me there! I intend to cane you severely!"

"Oh, crumbs! But look here, sir—"

"Silence! Go!"

"But—but—"

"Go!" roared Mr. Linton.

Grundy went, looking quite dazed, and almost bursting with indignation. To be called a bully was a deadly insult indeed to Grundy of the Shell.

He went, and Mr. Linton followed him, scarcely glancing at Wilkins and Gunn.

"Well, my hat!" said Wilkins, breathing freely again. "He's for it now, Gunny!"

"Serve him jolly well right!" said Gunn heartlessly. "I hope Linton lays it on well! Perhaps he'll postpone his silly meeting after this."

"I don't care whether he does or not," said Wilkins, setting his lips. "But he's not jolly well having it in this study. Now's our chance, Gunny. We'll lock the study up and take the key, and then we'll have tea in Hall. If that awful idiot wants to stand those spongers a feed he can do it somewhere else."

"Good egg!" said Gunn grinning.

"Come on, then!"

And, taking the key from the inside of the lock, Wilkins placed it in the outside. Then he and Gunn went out, Wilkins locking the door and placing the key in his pocket. For once, Grundy's sorely-tried study-mates were determined to defy their leader and chance the consequences.

CHAPTER 3.

Getting In Supplies!

THE face of George Alfred Grundy was a study in expressions as he walked before Mr. Linton to the latter's study. Grundy—as he was wont to tell all and sundry—was down on bullying. It was the one thing Grundy couldn't stand, and never allowed. Grundy liked to look upon himself as a strong character, noble, unselfish and just, with iron will-power and great self-control—yet, nevertheless, gentle in his strength, and a guide and protector of the weak.

That was Grundy's view of himself. That his high-handed and iron-fisted methods might be considered as bullying never even occurred to the self-satisfied George Alfred. He looked upon it as his bare duty to keep his study-mates in their places.

And now, Mr. Linton, his own Form master, had actually called him a pugnacious bully!

Grundy could scarcely believe his own ears. He was staggered. He was also seething with deep indignation at the charge, and he was resolved to demand an explanation from Mr. Linton.

But Mr. Linton never gave Grundy the chance of an explanation.

As he entered the study he picked up his cane and whisked it through the air in a suggestive way that made Grundy blink at him uneasily.

"Look here, sir—" began Grundy warmly.

"I will listen to no excuses, Grundy," snapped the master of the Shell. "I am perfectly weary of these continual disturbances in your study. The scene I have just witnessed was yet another proof to me that you are the sole cause of them. You are a bully and a very quarrelsome fellow, and I intend to cure you—or hand you over to others to cure. Hold out your hand!"

"My hat! Look here, sir—"

"Hold out your hand, boy!"

It was almost a bellow. Grundy hesitated.

"But—but, sir—"

"Hold out your hand!" roared the master.

"Oh, crumbe!"

Grundy held out his hand, his face red with wrath and indignation. Mr. Linton brought the cane down—hard!

Swish!

"Now the other!"

Swish!

Three on each hand was the punishment, and Grundy was squirming when it was over.

"Let that be a lesson to you, Grundy!" gasped Mr. Linton, laying down his cane. "If I have any further trouble with you I shall speak seriously to your House-master, Grundy, as to the advisability of bringing your conduct before Dr. Holmes. Now go!"

"Grooooh! Wow!" gasped Grundy, hugging his burning hands. "Yow! Look here, sir, I want to know—"

"Go!"

"But, sir—"

Mr. Linton reached for his cane again, and seeing the glitter in his eye, Grundy decided to go. He went out fairly sizzling with disgust and indignation. But even the pain in his palms was as nothing to his inward pain at the thought that he, George Alfred Grundy, had been charged with, and even licked for, bullying! It was monstrous, unheard of!

Grundy went dazedly back to his study. He found quite a little crowd outside the closed door. Racke and Crooke of the Shell were there, together with Mellish, Tompkins, Trimble, Gore, and several other members of the Fourth

and Shell—all of them either insignificant or shady members.

Grundy scowled at them.

"Here he is!" said Crooke, winking at Racke. "Good old Grundy! Come along, old fellow, we're waiting to hear you."

"And for the feed!" murmured Gore. "Especially the feed!"

"What's the matter?" asked Racke, noting Grundy's appearance. "Been licked?"

"Yes—can't you see I have?" snorted Grundy crossly. "That ass, Linton! Licked me for bullying—me, mind you! Talk about injustice!"

"Awful!" said Racke solemnly. "But what about the meeting, Grundy?"

"And the feed?" said Mellish. "It's getting rather late, old fellow."

"Blow the feed!"

"Eh? But look here—"

"Blow the dashed feed!" sniffed Grundy. "I've been licked for bullying—me, mind you! I'm not letting a thing like this pass! I've a jolly good mind to go back and tell Linton what I think of him! But it can wait. Now you fellows are here we'd better be getting down to business."

"Good! I'm hungry!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I'm not bothering about the feed now, though," said Grundy loftily. "We'll just have the meeting as time's getting on."

"Oh!"

"I'll just give you fellows an outline of— Here, where the thump are you going?"

"If there's going to be no feed," said Gore grimly, "I'm going for some tea somewhere else! I'm hungry!"

"Same here! You can go and eat coke, Grundy!"

"Here—hold on!" Grundy roared out as several fellows started to walk away. This did not suit Grundy's book at all. The few fellows who had turned up were not important members of the Lower School—far from it; but they were better than none at all, and Grundy did not wish to lose their support. "Hold on!"

"Well, is there going to be a feed?"

"Yes, you footling duffers!" snorted Grundy in deep disgust. "All fellows think about is their dashed tummies! Still, as I promised a feed I'll stick to my word. Are you the only fellows who've turned up?"

"Looks like it," grinned Racke.

"Bah! Half of you duds and the other half blackguards!" sniffed Grundy. "Well, you're better than none at all, I suppose, and your dashed votes will be as good as those of decent chaps, I suppose."

"Oh!"

"Wait here!" snapped Grundy. "Or wait inside my study, and I'll trot down to the tuckshop and get the grub."

"But your study door is locked," said Gore.

"Eh?" Grundy tried the study door, and then he understood and gave a roar. "Why, the—the cheeky cads! They—they've had the dashed nerve to lock me out—me! Oh, won't I just smash 'em for this! Oh, the—the—"

Grundy fairly spluttered with wrath as he understood what his study-mates had done. But time was pressing, and he saw his kind supporters were getting restive.

"Does this mean that the feed's off?" asked Racke unpleasantly. "If so, I'm off, too!"

"Ha, ha! Same here!"

"No, of course it doesn't!" said Grundy wrathfully. "Oh, the—the cheeky cads! Fancy locking a fellow out of his own study!" He peered through the keyhole and saw there was no key inside. "They've cleared off, of course! Well, we can have the feed just as well in some other study. Tom Merry's will do."

"Oh, my hat! Will it?"

"Yes! Why not? He's gone off on some silly game of raiding the New House grub in the gymnasium. It'll be all right, and I'll be responsible," said Grundy, with lofty carelessness. "You fellows just go inside and make yourselves at home."

With that Grundy marched away.

"Oh, the awful chump!" snorted Gore, in disgust. "Catch me going into Merry's study without Merry's permission! Not much!"

"Why not?" said Racke coolly. "It will suit me down to the ground—just to take that cad Merry down a peg or two! And remember Grundy says he'll be responsible. We'll let him be, too! He'll get it if there's a row!"

And with that Aubrey Racke crossed the passage and entered Study No. 10 a little higher up, the door of which stood invitingly open. And after a moment's hesitation Crooke grinned and followed him. And a moment later, tempted by their example, the rest of the hungry band had followed—most of them a trifle gingerly it must be admitted. But Racke seemed willing to take the risk, and after all it was Grundy's funeral and not theirs! So they stayed.

Meanwhile, Grundy had reached the tuckshop under the old elms. He found several fellows in the shop, and he glared as he recognised they were all New House chaps. Any other fellow might have been cautious and cleared off at the sight of them. But not so Grundy; Grundy was a fellow who barged in where angels feared to tread, as it were.

The fellows were Figgins, Kerr, Redfern, and Lawrence, and they had bags with them into which they were storing foodstuffs piled up on the counter before them—quite a delicious-looking supply of grub it was. Figgins looked round and grinned on sighting Grundy, but he went on packing the goods into his bag.

Behind the counter Mrs. Taggles was putting jam-puffs into a paper bag. She was obviously busy serving the New House fellows, and really Grundy ought not to have chipped in as he did. But Grundy was not as other mortals—he often did things he ought not to have done.

"Out of the way, you New House worms!" he snapped in his usual lordly manner. "Now, Mrs. Taggles, I want a few things—sharp, if you please! You can attend to these kids afterwards. I'm in a hurry. I want some of those jam-puffs to begin with—a couple of dozen will do for a start."



A hefty drive sent Gunn crashing into the fireplace, and a second drive took Wilkins on the chest and deposited him on top of Gunn. Crash! Clatter! "Grundy! How dare you!" It was the stern voice of Mr. Linton. (See Chapter 2.)

"I'm sorry, Master Grundy"—Dame Taggles spoke regretfully, for Grundy was a good customer—"I'm sorry, but I've only just got a dozen, and Master Figgins has just ordered them!"

"Oh, has he?" said Grundy, glaring at Figgins. "Like his cheek! I want them! School House comes first, ma'am! I'll trouble you to hand them over!"

"Well, my hat!"

"Figgy," burst out Fatty Wynn indignantly, "you—you hear that? We're not going to allow this cheeky cad to collar our jam-puffs?"

Figgy grinned cheerfully.

"Why not?" he asked calmly. "You forget what an important fellow Grundy is, Fatty! If Grundy really wants them he must have them, I'm afraid."

"Eh?" Fatty Wynn fairly gasped, while the rest of the New House fellows looked at their leader. "Figgy, you awful ass—"

"You shut up, Wynn!" sniffed Grundy, with a satisfied grunt. "Figgins knows better than to refuse me, you fat ass! Think I'm going to go without so that you New House sweeps can scoff them? Not likely!"

"Certainly not!" said Figgins. "Grundy must have them!"

"I'm glad you see that, Figgy," said Grundy loftily. "The fact is you fellows are not the only ones to have a feed this afternoon. I'm—"

"So you know we're having one, eh?" said Figgins quickly.

"Eh? Of course I do!" Grundy laughed. "My dear chap, I knew all about it. Tom Merry told me you were having a celebration feed in the gym this afternoon. Thought we didn't know—what? Like your cheek to do it at all! Well, you'd better make the most of it, Figgy! It'll

be the last victory you'll have to celebrate over the School House after this, my pippin!"

"Oh, will it?" said Figgins, giving his chums a meaning look.

"Yes, it jolly well will!" said Grundy, with a jeer. "The fact is we're fed-up with Tom Merry as a leader. He's a back number, and I'm going to take over the job—see?"

"Oh! So—so that's it!" gasped Figgy.

"Just that! I'm going to make you New House worms sit up from now on, I can tell you! That's a fair warn-

ing, Figgy! Now what about those puffs? Hand 'em over!"

"Certainly!" said Figgins, taking the bag from Dame Taggles. "You're quite sure you want them from us, Grundy?"

"Eh? Of course!"

"Here you are, then!" said Figgy, and he plastered a jam-puff swiftly over Grundy's nose. Another one he plastered over Grundy's big mouth as he opened it in a startled howl.

"Groooh! Ow! Mmmmmmm!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy staggered back with a spluttering yelp.

"That's only two of them," said Figgins. "Now, you fellows, don't stand staring there; help me hand Grundy the rest."

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"Wow! Groooh!" Grundy spluttered again. "Why you—Here, what—Leggo!"

Grundy roared as he was grasped on all sides, and went crashing down, with a muffled bellow, as the New House fellows swarmed over him. They understood now, and they were only too willing to allow Grundy to have the jam-puffs in the manner demonstrated by Figgy.

As one man they fell upon the astounded Grundy, and the jam-puffs were rubbed over his red and wrathful features, into his eyes and mouth and nose, and rubbed well into his hair, and down the back of his neck. Grundy was as fond of jam-puffs as anyone, but he didn't like them like that, and he roared with wrath and dismay.

But Figgy was evidently in a generous mood, and to finish up he grabbed a syphon of lemonade from the counter, and took aim at the grovelling Grundy.

"Stand back, you chaps!"

"Swoosh!"

The New House fellows jumped away as a stream of lemonade hit Grundy in the face and spread over him, fairly drenching him.

He jumped up, bellowing with rage, with jam and pastry plastered over features and clothes, and with lemonade streaming from him, and then he made a wild rush at Figgins.

He was instantly collared, and the next moment he went flying out of the tuckshop, all arms and legs. He fell in the Close with a crash and a roar of anguish.

But he was up again at once, and he made a blind rush at the laughing New House fellows in the doorway. Instantly he was grabbed again, and the process was repeated.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come again if you want some more, you cheeky School House worm!" invited Figgy.

But Grundy declined the invitation—he had obviously had enough. He tottered to his feet, almost beside himself with wrath, and shook a furious fist at the hilarious New House chaps. But he contented himself with that, and he did not attempt to enter the tuckshop until Figgins & Co. had completed their purchases.

They went away towards the gymnasium, kissing their hands at the raging Grundy, and roaring with laughter. But suddenly Figgins became thoughtful.

"You heard what that born idiot said," he remarked, with a frown. "He said Tom Merry knew about our celebration feed!"

"Well," said Redfern, with a chuckle, "what about it?"

"What about it?" repeated Figgy witheringly. "Can't you see the danger, fathead? We imagined they knew nothing about it! But they do—Grundy's let it out nicely! It means we shall have to keep our eyes peeled!"

"My hat! Yes, rather!" agreed Kerr, frowning in his turn.

"It's no good underestimating those School House worms," said Figgins, with a sage shake of the head. "We've licked them often enough lately; but Tom Merry isn't the fellow to give in easily."

"Rather not!"

"And now he knows about the spread in the gym," went on Figgins, "it's a thousand to one that Tom Merry won't let a chance like that pass! I'll bet my Sunday bonnet those School House cads will raid the gym and try to mess up the feed!"

"Jolly likely," said Redfern nodding. "But—"

"It's a jolly good job we saw that fathead, Grundy," said Figgins grimly. "Otherwise we might have been done in the eye, or had our spread mucked up. As it is—well, forewarned is forearmed, my pippins! I vote we take all precautions."

"Yes, rather, Figgy!"

"We'll get the fellows to work at once," said Figgins, hastening his steps. "And we'll get some ammunition ready to be on the safe side. It's rather lucky that old fire engine and hose is kept next door to the gym. It's just struck me it might be useful, chaps!"

"Phew! Yes, rather: Good wheeze!"

"Oh, we'll be ready for 'em if they do happen to try any games on," said Figgins, with a deep chuckle. "Many thanks to dear old Grundy for—Hallo! Look there!"

"Lowther!" breathed Kerr. "He's scouting round the gym."

The New House fellows' eyes gleamed as they suddenly sighted Lowther of the Shell slip from behind the gym, and walk carelessly away through the elms. But his carelessness did not deceive Figgy & Co.

"That settles it!" chuckled Figgins. "Tom Merry's sent him to find out the lie of the land! It's pretty certain now they've got some game on, anyway. Well, so much the better! A bit of a dust-up will give us an appetite for the spread, and we'll be ready for 'em!"

"What-ho!"

Figgins' loyal followers did not doubt that. The New House fellows were certainly forewarned now, and—with the commandeering of the fire-hose—they would certainly be amply forearmed as well.

CHAPTER 4.

Tom Merry's Scheme!

"LOOKS to me as if we're not going to have much of a tea," said Jack Blake glumly. "Blessed if we wouldn't do better if we went down to Hall for it."

Jack Blake, the leader of Study No. 6 on the Fourth passage, was standing in front of the study-cupboard. From his remarks and expressions there was nothing much to look at in the cupboard in the eating line. Nor was there in point of fact. There was rather a famine in that famous apartment known as Study No. 6.

"Well, we mustn't weally gwouse about it," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy mildly, shaking his head. "Aftah all, it is vewy seldom we have to go short, you know, Blake. It is wathah hard lines that my wemittance hasn't turned up, and we all happen to be wathah hard up at once. Still, such things do happen, and we must make the best of it."

"Rats!" sniffed Blake. Evidently D'Arcy's philosophic outlook did not appeal to Blake just then. "Rats! I'm hungry, and a couple of stale sardines won't satisfy me even if you want to go without. I'm almost hungry enough to go to Grundy's free feed."

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus raised his eyeglass and regarded Blake severely. "Bai Jove! I weally twust you do not mean that wemark, Blake? I considah it wathah dishonest to accept Gwunday's hospitality when you have no intention of supportin' him. I weally twust you will not disgwace this studay by doin' anythin' of the kind, Blake!"

"Well, if I get much hungrier I might think about it," chuckled Blake. "After all, Grundy's motives are good, even if he does happen to be a born idiot. That's his misfortune not his fault—just as it is with you, and for the same reason, Gussy."

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus looked rather suspiciously at Blake. "I do not quite undahstand that wemark, Blake—"

"Don't try," said Blake kindly. "You may bust something if you do, old chap. You see—Come in, fat-heads!"

Blake broke off to address the Terrible Three who had just appeared in the doorway.

"You chaps had tea yet?" asked Tom Merry.

"No. We're just discussing how to divide two stale sardines into four portions so that each of us will get a fair share," said Blake solemnly.

"That means you're on the rocks, I suppose?" grinned Tom.

"Exactly! It's either the sardines, Grundy's free feed, or tea in Hall for us," said Blake regretfully. "That is unless you chaps have come to invite us to tea."

"Nunno!"

"Then do you advise us to accept Grundy's kind invite—"

"No, I don't advise that!" grinned Tom Merry. "We've just left Grundy on our hearthrug, with his fat head in our coal-scuttle. But never mind that. We've come to put you chaps on something else as well as a free feed," added Tom briskly. "And time's precious. Figgy & Co. are holding a giddy celebration spread in the gym, and I want you fellows and all the fellows we can rake up to help me raid 'em!"

"Phew! Is that a fact?"

"Yes. And I've got a wheeze," said Tom. "Listen, as we've none too much time to waste. I've found out that it's going to be a whacking affair. They don't know we know, and that's where we're going to score, I fancy."

"What's the wheeze?" demanded Blake cautiously. "Your giddy wheezes have

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S "HIDDEN NAMES" PUZZLE!

1. Clubs are taking big sums now in gate-money; and players, when inspired, win golden opinions. (Wingate, Redwing.)

2. It is selfish to eat a bun—terribly selfish, when a tramp is tottering hungry beside you. (Fish, Bunter, Stott.)

3. Ever a keen rivalry exists between each "Co." Kerr tells me. (Rake, Coker.)

4. Sing heartily another item, please! Your voice is angelic, and we love such ebullitions of melody. (Singh-Temple, Angel, Bull.)

5. We will agree never to run a risk in nerve-racking exploits; there is no operation worth it. (Greene, Skinner, Snoop.)

6. We cap persons who are our superiors, as we go quelching or pottering or toddlng down the lane. (Capper, Quelch, Potter, Todd.)

been—well, just a bit off-side lately, you know! As a matter of fact, Tom Merry, it's about time a fellow out of the Fourth had a go at leading for a change. You're getting played out in your old age, old chap!"

"Why, you Fourth Form waster—" began Tom Merry. "But there's no time for squabbling, Blake. Dry up and listen!"

"Go ahead, then!" chuckled Blake. "If there's a chance of a feed—"

"There's a jolly good chance," said Tom, his eyes gleaming. "Now, as you know, the roof of the gym is mostly glass, with a big double skylight down the middle. It's usually kept wide open during fine weather, and it's bound to be open now."

"Go on!"

"Well, my idea is this: Figgy's men have carted a big trestle table into the gym for the feed. They're bound to shove it just underneath the skylight, aren't they—no other space, in fact. Well, what about some of us shinning down ropes and grabbing the grub?"

"Fathead! How the thump—"

"Wait a bit," said Tom.

"What I mean is, why not some of us—two would be enough—shin swiftly down ropes from the skylight, and hook loops in the ropes round the ends of the trestle table? Then other chaps could haul the table with the giddy grub on it up to the skylight."

"Well, of all the rotten ideas!" said Blake witheringly.

"Wotten!" said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head. "It wouldn't work, dear boy!"

"Of course it wouldn't!" scoffed Blake. "My hat! I can see old Figgy letting us do it—I don't think!"

"I haven't explained all yet, ass!" said Tom. "If we act jolly quickly, Figgy and the rest wouldn't spot the game until it was too late to stop us. You see, my idea is to time it just when the rest of you chaps make an attack on the gym. That would draw Figgy and his men with a rush to guard the windows and doors. Then, when their backs are turned, we'll shin down the gym ropes—plenty hanging from the beams—hook the ropes on to the table, and shin back to the beams again, leaving other chaps to haul up the grub. If we're quick we ought to do it easily before anyone spots us. See the idea?"

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove! It is weally not so bad, aftah all, Tom Mewwy!"

"Jolly good!" said Herries; and Digby nodded.

"Well, it might be worked," agreed Blake, looking keen enough now. "We should have to be jolly quick, though."

"Well, it all depends on that, of course," said Tom. "But I'm ready to risk it, anyway. We can easily get Taggy's ladder to get on the roof of the gym. Then, once we get the grub, we'll hand it through the skylight and get it lowered down to the ground. Then, when we've left Figgy and his merry men locked up in the giddy gym, we'll go and enjoy their feed somewhere."

"It's really a ripping idea!" said Tom modestly. "Think what a score it will be, Blake—collaring their giddy celebration feed!"

"Yes, if it comes off!"

Tom Merry got to his feet.

"It will come off!" he said, with determination. "We're not going to get licked this time, chaps! Figgins & Co. don't dream we know they're having a spread at all, and we

shall win by taking them by surprise, and we'll fairly put the kybosh on them. It wouldn't be a bad idea to get some stink-bombs from old Glyn—if he happens to have any made—and chuck 'em down among the New House worms when we've got the grub."

"My hat! That's an idea, and no mistake!" said Herries. "I do believe Tom Merry's improving."

"He's got the wind up about Grundy collaring his job!" chuckled Lowther.

"Oh, don't rot now!" said Tom Merry briskly. "You fellows are on, then?"

"Yes, rather! Death or glory—though I'm afraid it won't be glory!" grinned Digby.

"Oh, don't croak! Well, here are the orders. Lowther, you go and scout round the gym—get to know how the land lies, and mind you don't get spotted. You, Dig, can go and hunt for Glyn, and tell him what we want, and the rest can be roping in all the School House fellows they can get hold of. Warn them to mind their steps, and not get spotted until the time comes. Blake, you and I can be settling details. Now get a move on!"

"What-ho!"

And Tom Merry & Co. got a move on swiftly after that. More than one of the juniors had his doubts as to the possible success of the scheme; but they were not the fellows to hang back once they had put their hand to the plough, so to speak. As Blake said, there was a good chance that the attack on the gym might succeed, even if the skylight wheeze failed. It was worth risking, at all events. Besides, Tom Merry & Co. were hungry. And if the fellows did back Tom Merry up they would have a superiority in numbers over the New House feasters.

That was comforting, at all events, and the School House juniors rallied to Tom Merry's call willingly enough, few of them being out of gates at that hour. Meanwhile, Lowther had come back to report that he had seen Figgy & Co. cart a heap of foodstuffs into the gym, and that they had closed and bolted the doors of the gym after them.

"That means they must be all inside, Tommy," said Lowther, little dreaming that Figgins & Co. had spotted him. "In fact, I crept up and squinted through the window. They were all round the giddy table, and the grub was being unpacked."

"Then give the chaps orders to close in on the gym!" snapped Tom. "Got that ladder ready, Blake?"

"All serene, captain!" grinned Blake.

"Then let's get it up against the wall, then," said Tom. "We'll have to shove

it up where there's no window. We two will take on the risky job—that's hooking on the ropes to the giddy table-top! Lowther, Manners, D'Arcy, Digby, Glyn, and Herries should be enough to haul the grub up when the time comes. But another half-dozen chaps on the roof would be useful. When I whistle you can lead your men to the giddy attack, Noble. Get the idea?"

"Yes, rather!" grinned Noble.

"Then come on and let's get the ladder up," said Tom. And with that, Tom Merry & Co. got down to the real business in hand with a will. They fancied gleefully that Figgins and his fellow-feasters were booked for a shock before long. But then Tom Merry & Co. hadn't taken George Alfred Grundy into account. That blundering youth was a genius for putting his foot into it, and on this occasion—as on previous occasions—it was to cost the School House dear!

HERE'S A NOVEL PUZZLE, BOYS!

HIDDEN NAMES!



This week we return to our favourites of St. Jim's. The names of several masters and scholars belonging to the famous Sussex school will be found artfully hidden in the following sentences. See how many you can discover. The complete solution will appear in next week's issue.

1. As we rush northward in our car, dew-spangled meadows meet our gaze; but no bleating of lambs greets our ears. The riverside and the rippling brook especially delight us.

2. Don't go recklessly; grip the rail, Tony! There is a grave risk, imp. O! let's exercise caution.

3. "I owe not any man," said Levi, "so now I am happy."

4. It is fatal bothering, when troubles are on your track everywhere. When you are ill you wish you hadn't!

5. It is an ugly night; the dark, noxious air, as we rush, denotes danger.

6. "I don't care a fig; gin solaces me," says Taggles. "I never go all of a-trimble, or quail, at homilies from the Head."

CHAPTER 5.
A Wash-Out!

"GENTLEMEN—"
"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen!"

"Bravo! Go it, Figgy!"

"Gentlemen—"

"Hurrah! Go it, Figgy—"

"Only cut it short," said Redfern. "I'm hungry!"

"Hear, hear!"

There was a roar of voices in the gym, from the cheery New House fellows congregated round the trestle table. That table fairly groaned under the weight of good things, and all the faces of the New House feasters were bright and cheery. Figgins' own face was red and excited as he stood on his feet with a glass of lemonade in his hand. But while every other fellow's face was full of cheery good humour Figgins' face was, at the moment, full of exasperation.

"You—you burbling lot of owls!" he bawled, managing to make himself heard at last. "Can't you shut up for a minute? You're like a lot of cackling hens!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Go it, Figgy!"

"Silence!" roared Kerr. "Let Figgy speak!"

"That's it! Let the ass wag his chin and then we can get on with the grub! Let him get it over," shouted Redfern.

It was the general feeling apparently, and Figgins fairly glowered as he heard the roar of assent. But there was some measure of quietness after that, and Figgins made another desperate attempt to begin his opening speech.

"Gentlemen!" he roared. "Gentlemen and fellow New House men! We are gathered together, on this auspicious occasion—"

"My hat!" said Owen audibly. "I fancy I've heard that before somewhere."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly asses—" shouted Figgins, going crimson.

"Owen, you rotter—" "I recognised it by its grey whiskers," said Owen. "But go it, Figgy—"

"Silence!"

"Order, order!" bawled Kerr. "Chuck that ass, Owen out!"

"Get on with the washing, Figgy!"

Figgy glared at the humorous Owen and got on with the "washing."

"Gentlemen," he proceeded triumphantly, "we are called together on this sus—I mean auspicious occasion in order to celebrate yet another magnificent victory over our giddy rivals, the School House worms—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Bravo! Hurrah!"

"This time," went on Figgy, beaming round the festive board as his good humour reasserted itself, "we've put the giddy kybosh on our pitiable rivals by licking 'em to a frazzle on the footer field."

"Bravo! Go it, Figgy!"

"On the ball!"

"But this is only to be going on with," proceeded Figgins emphatically. "New House is cockhouse, and it's going to remain cockhouse—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hurrah!"

"We're going to keep it up!" said Figgins. "It won't be long before we're celebrating more giddy victories like this."

"Yes, rather."

"So here's to our giddy selves!" said Figgy, raising his glass of lemonade on high. "May our shadows never grow whiskers, and may New House always remain cockhouse and so say all of us!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hurrah!"

And amidst tremendous enthusiasm Figgy was just raising his glass to his lips when a shout came from one of the sentinels on guard at the windows.

"Look out! I say, Figgy—"

"What's the matter?" Figgy put his glass down swiftly.

"Is it—"

"I think I spotted some of those School House bounders sneaking up," called French excitedly. "Yes, my hat! I just spotted—"

Pheep!

A shrill, significant whistle from somewhere outside interrupted the sentinel's warning. It was quite enough for Figgy.

He was alert at once, and he gave a yell.

"It's a raid! Never mind the grub now!" he roared. "Man the fire engine, and get the pump working—sharp!"

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now! Get to the door and windows, you men! Look lively!"

"Oh, blow!"

There were snorts of disgust on all sides; but Figgins had already warned his men and given his instructions, and after longing glances at the good things on the table the New House men jumped from the forms and sprang to their posts.

In a moment all was bustling activity—and they were not a moment too soon, for scarcely had the foremost fellows taken their places at the windows when there came a terrific hammering on the door—which Figgins had taken the precaution of bolting on the inside.

At the same moment swarms of School House fellows appeared at the windows, and before the defenders could stop them the windows had been slammed up.

"Back up!" roared Figgins.

He grabbed a cricket stump—plenty of stumps and bats and other weapons had been placed handy for the purpose—and the next moment fierce fights were raging round the windows on each side of the gymnasium.

But the New House fellows had also armed themselves with paper bags of soot and flour in anticipation of the raid, and the swarms of School House invaders fell back spluttering and yelling before a hurricane of whizzing missiles which burst into black-and-white clouds as they found their marks.

"Go it, New House!" roared Figgins. "How do you like your goose cooked, you School House washouts? Thought you'd caught us napping, eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgy's gallant followers roared with laughter as the attackers fell back from the windows before the terrific "shells" of soot and flour. But they returned to the attack again the next moment with another furious rush, most of them already looking most fearful sights.

"Give 'em socks!" roared Figgins, almost helpless with laughter. "What's happening to that dashed fire-hose? Kerr, you awful ass, why— Mum-mum—my hat!"

Figgins almost fell down at the sight which met his gaze as he turned from the window to see what was happening to Kerr's gang, who had manned the ancient fire engine just by the front door.

Just as he happened to turn, two forms dropped down from the gym climbing ropes that were hooked to the beams under the skylight.

The two were Tom Merry and Jack Blake of the School House. In that swift glance Figgy also glimpsed several more forms seated astride the beams up above, under the open skylight.

Even as Figgy stared, hardly able to believe his eyes, Tom Merry and Blake acted swiftly.

From somewhere above two other ropes dangled down, with big loops at the ends, and grabbing these Tom Merry and Blake slipped the loops like lightning round the ends of the big trestle table-top.

Almost instantly the ropes tightened as the fellows up above started to haul, and next moment the table-top—with its weight of good things—began to lift.

Then Figgy woke up, and his yell was enough to wake the famous Seven Sleepers.

"Look out! The grub!" he bellowed; and as he roared out the warning Figgy made a frantic leap for the swaying table-top.

It was a wonderful leap—a leap that did Figgins' long legs great credit—and as if by a miracle his fingers got a grip on the table-top.

His weight fairly dragged the table lower—the fellows up above not expecting such a happening—and next instant the wildly swinging table seemed to lurch sideways, and one of the loops slipped off.

Immediately the whole thing tipped over, and a shower of bottles and crockery and foodstuffs—tins and packets, jellies and ices, tarts and cakes galore—swamped down on Figgins, bowling him over amid a fearful crashing of breaking glass and crockery.

"Yaroooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

From up above came a howl of laughter—despite the unlooked-for and luckless accident to their scheme, the School House fellows could not help it.

But they did not laugh for long. And Tom Merry and Blake never had the chance to laugh. They were already down on the gym floor with swarms of New House fellows on top of them. Figgy's yell had brought every fellow round from doors and windows, and before Tom Merry and Blake could jump for their ropes to escape, they went down before the swift rush of fellows.

George Figgins scrambled up from the wreckage around him—looking a wreck himself. He seemed to grasp the situation in a flash.

"Hold 'em, some of you!" he roared, clawing jelly from

his crimson features. "Back to the windows the rest you, you awful idiots! What the dickens— Oh, good!"

At that moment the pumps of the engine started to clank as Kerr and his men got the ancient thing working, and Figgins grabbed the nozzle of the hose as the water came on with a rush.

"Look out!"

Swoosh! Swoooooosh!

Just in time, the New House defenders jumped away from the nearest window, and the stream of water burst in a cascade against the swarm of School House attackers who were taking advantage of the momentary confusion to clamber through.

The terrific stream of water cleared the window in a matter of seconds, and from outside came bumps and howls from the drenched and furious attackers.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The triumphant defenders roared with laughter. But it was only the beginning, and in a very few seconds more Figgins, dragging the hose behind him, had rushed round all four windows and had cleared them of every yelling attacker. Then, as the bolts were hurriedly drawn and the door flung open, Figgins rushed the hose out.

"Look out!"

It was a yell of alarm from the School House attackers round the door, and as they leaped back Figgy chuckled and let them have it.

Swoooooosh!

It was more than flesh and blood could stand, and the School House swarm broke and fled in the wildest confusion, howling with dismay and fury and most of them drenched through with water.

But Figgy hadn't finished yet.

"Move that ladder, chaps!" he yelled. "Quick—while I keep the rotters back!"

There was a rush of New House fellows to obey. The ladder which was up against the wall was hurriedly pulled away, before those above—who had scarcely realised what was happening yet—could think of swarming down it.

"Here!" roared Levison, grabbing at the ladder in vain as it fell away. "Bring that ladder back, you rotters! Why, you're stranding— Oh, great pip! Figgy, you awful cad! If you dare—"

Swoooooosh!

Figgins did dare, and the six hapless invaders on the roof above howled and skipped like dervishes as the deadly stream of water played upon them. In a matter of seconds they were one and all drenched through.

And just then the forms of Lowther, D'Arcy, Herries, Manners, Digby, and Glyn appeared on the roof, having been chased there by New House fellows who had swarmed up the gym ropes after them.

They stared, and then, as they grasped the situation, they jumped back to seek shelter under the skylight.

But they were too late—Redfern, who had thought of the idea of chasing them out and had anticipated such a move, having swiftly closed and bolted the skylight on the inside.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Lowther. "Figgins, you awful rotter—"

Swoosh!

Once again that terrible stream of water sought out each of the luckless six, dodge and duck as they would, and soon there were twelve drenched and howling forms on the roof.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the New House fellows.

"There, I fancy that will about do," said Figgins, with no little satisfaction. "I think this is our win, you chaps, eh?"

"Yes, rather!"

"New House for ever!"

"You chaps can get back now," said Figgins, "and we'll carry on with our interrupted feed. It's rather mucked up, but there'll be plenty of good things to go round! Ta-ta, you School House burglars! Hope you enjoyed your bath!"

A howl of fury was all the answer the cheery Figgins got from the hapless juniors stranded on the roof, while another howl came from the School House fellows who were still standing, undecided, some distance away well out of range.

But Figgins was not disturbed by it, and he led the way back into the gymnasium. He knew that with the fire-engine in his possession he held the situation in the hollow of his hand. It was extremely unlikely indeed that School House would attack the gym again that evening!

He found Tom Merry and Blake seated on the gym floor with their hands tied behind them. They were covered in flour and soot, and had evidently been well rolled in the stuff by Kerr, Wynn, Redfern, and French who were standing round them on guard.

"So here we are again!" grinned Figgy cheerfully. "Who's cockhouse now, eh?"



Figgins grabbed a syphon of lemonade from the counter, and took aim at the grovelling Grundy. Swoooooosh! The New House fellows jumped away as a stream of lemonade hit Grundy in the face. (See Chapter 3.)

"You—you rotters!" panted Tom Merry, glaring up at his captors. "If you hadn't had that blessed fire-hose it would have been the other way about, you bounders! You wait!"

"I fancy you said that last time," said Figgy cheerily. "Still, I must say you might have done us if we hadn't been on our giddy guard!"

"How the thump did you guess we were going to raid you?" snorted Blake, glowering. "You couldn't have known—"

"My dear man, you'd better ask dear old Grundy," grinned Figgy. "I'm blessed if I know why you don't shove that awful ass in a padded cell!"

"Eh? Did Grundy give the game away?" said Tom Merry quickly.

"You've hit it," grinned Figgy. "He was in the tuck-shop, and he very kindly informed us that you knew we were going to have a celebration spread in the gym this evening. It was enough for us."

"Oh!" panted Blake. "The—the footling cad!"

"The born idiot!" breathed Tom Merry. "Look here, Figgy, you bounder, let us go! I'm going to spifficate that thumping ass, Grundy!"

"Not yet, old chap!" said Figgy, shaking his head. "Wouldn't be fair to let you chaps off so lightly when your giddy men got off so heavily. Bring some farts here, chaps; these fellows evidently wanted some, so we'll let them have some."

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"

"Look here—" began Blake apprehensively. "No larks now!"

Both Blake and Tom were apprehensive, and their fears proved to be well founded. The next moment the grinning New House fellows gave them far more than they wanted. They gave them as they had given them to Grundy—down the victims' collars, plastered them over their faces, and rubbed jam and chocolate and cream and custard into their hair.

By the time the humorous and ruthless New House juniors were satisfied, Tom Merry and Blake were more than satisfied in another way, and they looked appalling sights.

"There!" said Figgins, as the New House japers stood back to admire their handiwork. "It's a shocking waste of good stuff, but thank goodness there's plenty more left, and these were damaged, in any case. Now you can go, you School House worms! You'll find the ladder outside, and you'll be able to let your giddy pals up above down. I expect they're getting rather worried by this time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins cut Tom Merry and Blake free, and the hapless two staggered out in a state of mind bordering on frenzy, and a state of appearance that was woeful in the extreme. A roar of laughter followed them, and then the doors were slammed and the windows fastened securely; and then, amid great rejoicings, Figgins and his triumphant New House followers started to get the table to rights again. It was not a long job—as Figgins had said, there was plenty of grub left—and soon they were seated round the festive board again, some of them rather wet; but none the less happy and chirpy. It had been a New House win without the shadow of a doubt, and that was all Figgy & Co. cared about.

CHAPTER 6. Grundy Again!

"O W! Yow! This is awful, Blake!"

Tom Merry gave a hollow groan as the doors of the gym slammed behind them. Blake echoed it with a growl—a deep growl of disgust and wrath.

"Awful!" he stuttered. "I should jolly well think it was! And it's all your fault, you fearful idiot! This comes of backing up a silly, potty Shell-fish idiot in his idiotic wheezes!"

"Look here—"

"I'm looking!" hooted Blake. "I see the biggest idiot, the most footling duffer at St. Jim's! Even a born idiot like Grundy wouldn't have let us in for this!"

"Look here—"

"Rats! Hallo! What the thump—"

Blake halted and looked upwards as a chorus of angry yells came down to them from the roof of the gymnasium. Both he and Tom Merry jumped as they sighted the drenched, bedraggled, unfortunate twelve stranded there.

"Let us down, you footling idiots!" roared Glyn.

"Fetch that dashed ladder!" bellowed Lowther.

"Bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!" wailed Arthur Augustus. "I am drenched through, and my clobber is uttably wuined! Pway be quick with that w'etched laddah, someone!"

Most of the School House fellows had vanished—apparently they had realised the attack was hopelessly "off," and had gone to change wet clothes—or to get some tea! But one or two still hung about, and as they saw Figgins & Co. vanish into the gym with their terrible hosepipe, they hurried up and grabbed the ladder.

Tom and Blake joined them, and soon the ladder had been placed against the wall again, and the drenched and unhappy raiders clambered down it to the ground.

Tom Merry was inwardly seething with indignation at being blamed for the reverse by Blake. But he seethed still more as, the moment they reached the ground, the rest of his followers turned on him with one accord.

"You—you burbling idiot!"

"You potty duffer!"

"Oh, you ass, Tom Merry!"

"This comes of letting a Shell-fish lead us!" gasped Herries excitedly. "This is how he leads us—into a silly trap!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus heatedly. "I considah Tom Mewwy has let us down feahfully, and I considah he is an incompetent duffah!"

"We might have known this would happen!" snorted Blake, clawing some custard from his collar and wriggling uncomfortably. "Oh crumbs! We'll never hear the last of this. Tom Merry, you jolly well ought—"

"Oh, cheese it!" gasped Tom, nearly choking with indig-

nation and wrath. "Fancy blaming me, you silly idiot! How was I to know—"

"Oh, rats!"

Blake and the rest turned to tramp away in high dudgeon.

"Here, hold on!" said Tom, with some excitement. "We're not done yet! You're not giving in as easily as this, are you?"

"Eh? What's that?" Blake and the rest turned back.

"What d'you mean, Merry?"

"Why, there's a chance yet of putting it across those New House worms!" said Tom excitedly, his eyes gleaming. "I've just thought of a ripping way. We should have licked them easily if they hadn't had that hosepipe. Well, what about turning the water off at the hydrant—it's in the quad somewhere—and then making another attack? You see—"

"Well, I'm blowed! You—you want us to try it on again?"

"Yes."

"Under your leadership?"

"Ahem! Yes. You see—"

"Scrag him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here—" roared Tom in alarm; but his protests were unavailing. After glaring at him a moment speechlessly, Tom's fed-up followers made a simultaneous rush at him.

"Scrag him!" roared Blake. "We've had enough, but evidently he hasn't. Give him some more!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Yaroooooh!"

Tom struck the earth with a fearful bump and a howl. Then his irate followers—or former followers—rolled him over and over on the dusty gravel. Then, feeling a trifle better, the School House band drifted dismally indoors and made for bath-rooms and dormitories.

Tom Merry scrambled up and followed them, almost frantic with wrath and indignation. His followers' treatment of him was the last straw. When he joined his faithless chums in the Shell dormitory a little later he refused to speak to them. But as they went downstairs again he thawed, so to speak.

"It wasn't my fault," he said.

"Oh, no!" said Lowther, with heavy sarcasm. "It wasn't your wheeze at all, was it? And you didn't make the plans and lead us, did you?"

"But it wasn't my fault, for all that!" protested Tom Merry warmly. "It was all Grundy's fault from beginning to end—the frightful duffer! He's to blame, and nobody else!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Manners.

"I tell you it's a fact!" snapped Tom Merry. "Blake knows it as well as I do. If Grundy hadn't let on to Figgy that we knew about the celebration the whole wheeze would have come off a treat. I'm absolutely certain of that!"

Lowther and Manners blinked at him.

"You mean to say Grundy did that?" yelled Lowther.

"Of course—Figgy told us!" snorted Tom Merry. "If you'd only listened to me instead of going for me bald-headed like that—"

"Grundy told Figgy—gave us away?" stuttered Manners.

"In the tuckshop it was!" snapped Tom. "He was bragging as usual, I suppose, and he let it out to Figgy that we knew about the feed. That put Figgy on his guard naturally, and—and well, this is the dashed result. Figgy was ready—he had fellows on guard, and he had ammunition ready, and especially that awful hosepipe. But for that the wheeze would have come off a treat. It was all Grundy's fault."

"Well—well upon my word!" said Lowther.

"We—we might have known it!" stuttered Manners. "If anything goes hopelessly wrong it's generally through that footling fathead Grundy! I vote we— Hallo, here's Blake!"

There was a tramp of feet in the Shell passage, and Blake & Co., followed by quite a crowd of fellows—Talbot, Levison, Glyn, and several others who had suffered direly in the defeat—came along.

"Oh, here you are!" snapped Blake, sighting Tom Merry and his chums. "Merry, old chap, I'm sorry we went for you just now. I've remembered what Figgy said about Grundy, and I've told these chaps, and it's all right now."

"Oh, is it?" snorted Tom. "It's a pity you didn't remember before, you frightful chump! You, at all events, knew jolly well it was all Grundy's fault!"

"Well, in the excitement of the moment I forgot," admitted Blake. "But it's all right. We've just come along to find that ass Grundy. We're going to give him the ragging of his life."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Rag the footling duffer bald-headed!" said Noble wrath-

fully. "Come on! We're wasting time! He's holding his silly meeting, I expect."

He walked along to Grundy's study—No. 3—and the fellows, in a wrathful and vengeful crowd, surged after him. Noble and several others banged furiously on the door when they found it locked.

"He's not in there," grinned Wilkins, coming along just then with Cunn. "We refused to allow him to have his silly feed in our study, and locked the door, taking the key with us."

"Oh! Then where the thump—"

"Hallo! That's his voice, ain't it?" ejaculated Blake suddenly, as a familiar voice came booming down the Shell passage. "Why—"

"It's from our study!" yelled Tom Merry. "Why, what's the cheeky cad doing in there?"

There was a rush for No. 10. It did not take the Terrible Three long to realise why Grundy was inside. The hum of voices, the clatter of crockery told their own story.

"Well," gasped Tom Merry, quite overcome—"well, the—the cheek of it! The—the frightful impudence! Well, this takes the bun even for Grundy! In—in our study! Having his silly feed in our dashed study, without our permission!"

"Have him out!" roared Lowther. "The cheeky sweep!" Bang, bang, bang, bang!

He started a furious bombardment on the door.

"Hallo!" came Grundy's voice from inside. "Who the thump's that?"

"We'll jolly soon show you that when we get in!" bellowed Tom Merry furiously. "Grundy, unlock this door!"

"Run away, you kids!"

"Wha-at?"

"Run away and play!" called out Grundy in an exasperated voice. "I'm just busy making my speech, you cheeky, interfering young sweeps! Go away and eat cokes and chop chips!"

"You—you—you—"

"As I was saying, gentlemen," resumed Grundy, evidently going on with his speech—"as I was saying, something's got to be done! Tom Merry's footling leadership, his idiotic incompetency, his hopeless inefficiency, is bringing ridicule on the House and defeat after defeat. Why, the duffer doesn't even know a footballer when he sees one. I'm sick and tired of laying my claims before him, and he simply refuses to give me a chance. That alone brands him as a hopeless incompetent."

"Bravo! Go it, Grundy, old man! Pass the tarts, Mellish!"

"This cake's good—"

"Yes, rather! Hand it over!"

"Good old Grundy!" Within the study the hum and clatter went on—likewise Grundy's speech. That speech was likely to go on just as long as the grub lasted, but no longer. Tom Merry fairly danced as he listened. Then he and his chums started another bombardment on the door.

But it was useless. Grundy disregarded it for a time, and then he threatened to come out with the poker if they didn't stop interrupting his speech. As Tom Merry & Co. madly wanted him to come out—even with the poker—they redoubled their efforts on the door.

Grundy, however, did not come out—evidently being wise in his generation for once. And the raging chums gave it up at last.

"It's no good!" panted Tom Merry, almost dancing with rage. "We'll have to try some other way. I've got it. What about Taggy's ladder? The window's bound to be open still, and—"

"Oh, good idea! Come on!" gasped Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a rush to follow Lowther down into the quad. In next to no time Taggy's ladder was in use again—this time being placed against the wall of the School House under the window of Study No. 10.

"Gently does it!" breathed Tom Merry. "Quiet! We don't want the rotter to hear us! Quiet!"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway be quiet, you fellows!"

"Shut up!" hissed Tom.

"Weally, Tom Merry—"

"Dry up, or we'll rip your jacket off and tread on it!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus subsided after that terrible threat. Tom stepped on the bottom rung and swarmed up the ladder, making as little noise as possible, and the rest followed swiftly on his heels.

Luckily the window was wide open at the bottom, and in a flash Tom was over the sill and into the room. There came a sudden yell of alarm inside the study, but it was too late then.

Grundy, Racke, Mellish, and the rest of the feasters jumped up with yells of alarm as Tom Merry & Co. swarmed over the sill and dropped into the room.

"Look here—" roared Grundy.

It was all he had the chance to say then. Blake grabbed him, and he came backwards over his chair with a fearful crash and a howl.

"Yoooooooooop!"

Racke dashed to the door, swiftly twisted the key and tore the door open. He flew for his life, and after him went the rest of Grundy's audience like bolting rabbits.

Tom Merry & Co. let them go—Grundy was their prize. What happened next seemed like some horrible nightmare to the leader of Study No. 3 in the Shell.

Bump, bump, bump, bump!

Again and again Grundy smote the carpet, despite his frantic struggles and howls, and then the avengers rolled his head among the cinders. Next, they grabbed anything they could find on the table and gave it to the yelling, squirming George Alfred. They rammed tarts down his collar and over his rugged, furious features, and they emptied tea-leaves over his devoted head.

But they hadn't finished even then. They twisted George Alfred over the nearest chair, and then Tom grabbed the fire-shovel and gave him a good twenty across his tightly-stretched trousers.

That finished the punishment, for just as Grundy dropped from the chair there was a rustle in the doorway and Mr. Linton entered the room. He gazed about him angrily, and then his eyes suddenly fell upon George Alfred.

"Grundy!" he gasped. "Boy! You again! Well, upon my word!"

"Groogh! Mum-mum-m-m-mum—" gurgled Grundy.

"You—you utterly hopeless dolt!" gasped Mr. Linton, evidently in no mood to mince his words. "I heard this disgraceful disturbance from afar, and I imagined I heard your voice! Is it possible that after my words this afternoon you have again been quarrelling with your Form-fellows? I—I am perfectly disgusted with you!"

"Mum-mum-my hat! Look—look here, sir—" spluttered Grundy.

"Silence!" thundered the master. "You—you are impossible, Grundy! I am weary of your idiotic buffoonery!"

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"Mum-my hat! Look here, sir——"

"Explain this disturbance without delay, Grundy!" stormed the master of the Shell.

"It wasn't my fault!" hooted Grundy. "I was only giving a feed—here, and these rotters chipped in and went for me—mucked my speech up and everything else."

"Merry——"

"Well, we wanted our tea, for one thing, sir," said Tom Merry indignantly. "Grundy should have let us in. He locked us out of our own study, sir——"

"Bless my soul! Am I to understand, Grundy, that you took charge of this study, locking the owners out?"

"Well, I was locked out of mine," said Grundy sulkily, "and I had to have the spread and the meeting somewhere."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Linton, eyeing Grundy blankly. "You—your impudence is astounding, Grundy. I—I scarcely know how to deal with you. You were certainly in the wrong—utterly in the wrong in the matter! But these other boys should have come to me and complained instead of taking matters into their own hands."

"Look here, sir——"

"Silence, Grundy! Go to the bath-room and clean yourself without delay! I shall not punish you myself!"

"Oh, sir!"

"But I shall report the matter to Mr. Railton, and I shall request him to consider the advisability either of requesting Dr. Holmes to remove you from the school, or of transferring you to the New House."

"Mum-my hat!"

"I have been seriously considering this latter alternative of late," said Mr. Linton sternly. "It is very evident that you cannot live on peaceable terms either with your own study-mates or with the rest of the boys in this House. Such a state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue, and doubtless, rather than expel you from St. Jim's, Dr. Holmes will agree to give you another and final chance in the New House."

"But—but——" The hapless Grundy almost fell down with dismay. "But, sir—dash it all!"

"Silence! Go, wretched boy!"

There was finality in the master's stern words, and Grundy went. Mr. Linton glared at the staring juniors, and then he followed Grundy out of the room.

"Well, I'm blown!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, old Gwunday is for it, dear boys!"

"Phew! He's done it now!"

"Well, he's asked for it if anyone has," said Blake, with a growl. "He'll wriggle out of it, though—you see if he doesn't!"

"Blow him, anyway!" snorted Lowther.

"Hear, hear!"

"Yes, blow him!" agreed Tom Merry, grinning, as he looked over the table. "I say, you fellows, this is not a bad spread, is it?"

"Phew! Rather not!"

"They only seem to have just started on tea," remarked Tom, scratching his curly head thoughtfully. "As Grundy's done us out of the New House feed, I'm wondering if it wouldn't be a bad idea to commandeer this."

"Oh, ripping!"

"Yes, rather! Good wheeze! I'm hungry!"

All the juniors were hungry, and the sight of the good things on the table—Grundy had certainly got in a fine supply of good things—fairly made their mouths water. Tom's suggestion was greeted with joy. True, it was entirely owing to Grundy that they had failed to raid the New House spread, and as Grundy had so kindly brought his tuck to Study No. 10 the chums saw no reason why they should not take charge of it.

"Grundy won't want it, after what we gave him," murmured Tom Merry, looking over the table with deep satisfaction, "and the rest of his dear pals have departed quite on their own. Even Trimble did not seem to want to stay for more. Yes, I think we shall be quite justified in taking charge of it. In fact, it will be really saving Grundy the trouble of carting it away."

"That's my view, anyway," said Tom. "Make some fresh tea, somebody! Pass those eggs, Lowther! Why, they're quite warm yet! Pile in, you chaps—our treat!"

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Tom Merry & Co. piled in. And soon, amid laughter and cheery chatter, they quite forgot how they had lost Figgins' spread as they "piled" into George Alfred Grundy's!

CHAPTER 7.

The Very Thing!

"I'LL do it! By James, I'll do it! Phew! Why on earth, in the name of fortune, didn't I do it before!"

Wilkins and Gunn jumped. They were just about to enter Study No. 3 when that triumphant cry met



Figgins almost fell down at the sight which met his gaze, as he turned. His warning came too late, for as his followers made a leap for the swaying table, it went smashing and crashing

their ears. It came from Grundy who they saw was seated in the armchair—or rather had been seated in it until he sprang out with that series of enthusiastic exclamations.

The spread was over in Study No. 10, and Wilkins and Gunn were just returning to their own study, being obliged to do so for prep. Having in mind Mr. Linton's knowledge regarding their locked study, Wilkins had slipped along and unlocked the door whilst Grundy was busy in the bath-room. And now, on returning for prep, they found Grundy in possession of the study.

Wilkins and Gunn were feeling none too happy at the prospect of meeting the mighty George Alfred after what had happened. As a general rule Grundy was a very

generous and forgiving fellow, and he rarely cherished wrath and ill-feeling for long. Yet, after looking him out of his own study and thus being responsible indirectly for his trouble with Mr. Linton, Wilkins and Gunn imagined they were "for it."

It was therefore with great uneasiness and trepidation that Grundy's faithless chums opened the door cautiously and looked in.

They jumped simply because they were quite surprised at the tone of Grundy's voice. He seemed quite cheery—gleeful, in fact, was the right word to describe the tone.



the window. "Look out!" he bellowed. "The grub!" But the table-top, one of the loops slipped off, and bottles, crockery, and foodstuffs fell to the floor. (See Chapter 5.)

"Come in, you fellows," he called, sighting Wilkins and Gunn. "I say I've got it!"

"Oh! Ah! Have you?" said Wilkins. "Oh good!"

"Ripping!" said Gunn, following Wilkins into the room. Neither of them had the slightest idea what "it" was; but they were quite willing to keep Grundy in his present remarkable good humour if they could. "Tophole!" went on Gunn cordially. "You mean Kildare's given you your chance in the Sixth match with Rookwood next week, old chap?"

"Eh? No—of course not."

"Not really?" said Wilkins, with assumed indignation.

"A rotten shame, I call it!"

"Scandalous!" agreed Gunn.

Pulling Grundy's leg was a very simple operation. And it always put Grundy in a good humour by even suggesting that Kildare might put Grundy in a House match, much less an important match than the Rookwood match.

He looked quite cordially at his chums now. Apparently he had quite forgotten recent differences.

"No, it isn't that, chaps," he said. "Though it is a rotten shame as you say. Still, my chance won't be long in coming now, I fancy."

"Oh! Won't it? You—you don't say!"

"I do!" Grundy smiled in self-satisfaction. "The fact is, you fellows, I've had a brain-wave!"

"Impossible—I mean, that is, just so!" amended Gunn hastily. "Go on, old fellow! What about?"

"It was Linton really suggested the idea to me," said Grundy, with suppressed excitement. "You fellows heard what he said in Tom Merry's study?"

"Oh, ye-es! But perhaps he didn't mean it all, Grundy," said Wilkins sympathetically. "And, after all, a fellow, can't help how he's born, can he? Linton was rather over-doing it when he called you an imbecile, old chap!"

"Oh, quite!" agreed Gunn, eager to "butter up." "You're not really as bad as that, old fellow! Just a bit—well, queer at times."

"That's it," said Wilkins. "Nothing for Linton to make such a song about, in my opinion. Besides, you may grow out of it in time, when you get a bit older and wiser, Grundy."

Grundy eyed his study-mates rather suspiciously. He frowned and wrinkled his brow, apparently in an effort to get the drift of his chum's remarks.

"If that's meant for cheek, you kids—" he began.

"Not at all!"

"Certainly not, old chap! Perish the thought!" said Gunn hastily. "But you were saying—"

"I don't care a hang what Linton said about me!" said Grundy, apparently deciding to let it go at that. "I'm referring to what he said about transferring me to the New House, you silly dummies!"

"Oh!"

"I must say," said Grundy, with no little enthusiasm, "such an idea never occurred even to me! Why, it's great! Just the very thing for me. Linton was quite right, really—I'll never get along well with the fellows here. Too much envy and jealousy about. The fact is, both Tom Merry and Kildare have got me marked. I don't say, mind you, that it's a conspiracy consistently to keep me out of footer, and cricket, and rowing, and swimming, and all that. But it looks remarkably like it to me. And as long as I stay in the School House—if I stay here until I'm as old as the hills, in fact—I shall never get my chance, I can see that!"

"Oh! Ah! Yes! Quite so!"

"I can quite believe that," agreed Gunn, winking at Wilkins. "You won't!"

"I've thought it all out," said Grundy impressively. "I've looked at the matter from all angles, in fact. So long as I remain in the School House I shall be kept under—kept among the brainless nonentities and noodles and duffers like you chaps!"

"Oh!"

"It won't do," said Grundy, shaking his head. "I'm jolly thankful indeed that Linton did say that. I see my way quite clearly now. I shall ask him to transfer me to the New House."

"What?"

Grundy nodded and smiled.

"Just that," he said cheerily. "I'm sorry to have to leave you fellows. Goodness knows how you'll get along with your prep and footer, and all the rest of it, without me to advise you. Still, it can't be helped, and, after all, you'll only be on the same footing as the rest of the kids when I'm gone."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Well, that's the brain-wave!" grinned Grundy. "What do you fellows think about it?"

"Great!" said Wilkins, with remarkable celerity. "Tophole!"

"Absolutely ripping, old chap!" said Gunn eagerly. "We're jolly delighted to hear it!"

"Yes, rather. Do it, Grundy, old chap—just the very thing for you."

"Oh, is it?" said Grundy.

He looked at his chums in rather a fixed way. It was not what he had expected—very far from it. He had fully imagined his chums would plead with him to reconsider his decision.

But they didn't. Instead, they showed the greatest delight at the thought of losing him. It was certainly not very gratifying to Grundy.

"Look here," he snorted, "you seem jolly pleased at the idea!"

"Not at all, old chap! We—we're only pleased that you're pleased," Wilkins hastened to explain. "We're really awfully sorry to lose you, old chap!"

"Frightfully!" said Gunn. "We shall miss our study feeds no end, shan't we, Wilky?"

"Oh, rather! But you've not pulled it off yet, Grundy! Railton may not like it!"

"Rot! I shall put it to him straight," said Grundy. "I shall point out that it's for the good of the school. As long as I'm stuck here with no chances of showing what I can do the school sports and everything else is going to pot! Railton will see that. I don't know much about Monteith, but he's not likely to be envious and jealous of my abilities like Kildare. As for that kid, Figgins—well, I'll soon wallop him until he sees my point of view!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"That's the programme!" said Grundy, straightening himself. "There's another point about the idea you've probably overlooked, too. I shall naturally take over the leadership of the New House juniors," added Grundy, with a grin. "I shall make School House squirm and realise what they've lost in me. They'll wish soon they'd made the most of me when they had me. I'm going to make New House cock House for good and all. You'll see! I'll soon put the giddy kybosh on this played-out old casual ward you call the School House!"

"Will you?" gasped Wilkins.

"Yes." Apparently Grundy already felt himself a member of the New House. "Yes, I've worked it all out, and the prospect's distinctly good! I'll trot along now and tell Linton I've decided to accept his offer of a transfer. I must say, old Linton doesn't realise just what he's doing in making the New House a present of the best fellow in the school. Cheerio, you kids! When I come back, mind, I'll be a New House chap, so you'd better mind your 'p's' and 'q's'."

"Oh crumbs!"

Grundy marched out in high feather. Wilkins and Gunn looked at each other speechless, and then—as Grundy's footsteps died away—they doubled up and roared with laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, of all the priceless asses!" gurgled Wilkins. "Grundy of the New House! Oh, my only hat! The—the prize idiot!"

"It may come off!" said Gunn gleefully. "In fact, it's pretty certain to—unless Ratty refuses to have him. But Railton has got more influence with the Head than Ratty, and both he and Linton are absolutely fed-up with the born idiot like the rest of us! They'll be only too glad to get rid of him—especially now he wants to go himself."

"But what about the study spreads?" said Wilkins in sudden dismay. "We shall miss them, Gunn!"

"Well, I suppose we shall," said Gunn. "Still, we can't have everything in this world just as we want it, Wilky—I ask you! But we shall get a bit of peace in this study at last, anyway. Let's go and tell Merry and the rest of the chaps."

"Ha, ha! Yes."

And Wilkins and Gunn hurried out to tell the glad news to Tom Merry and others. Actually, Wilkins and Gunn were rather fond of their robust study-mate, and they would certainly have been sorry indeed to lose Grundy for good. But just at the moment Grundy was very unpopular with them—they were, like Mr. Linton, fed-up with him. They looked upon it as a great joke—as did Tom Merry and the rest of the School House when they heard it.

For Wilkins and Gunn felt quite certain that Grundy would succeed in his new desire—and they were right. When Wilkins and Gunn returned to their study they found Grundy pacing up and down the hearthrug in high glee.

"It's all right, you fellows," he said in rather a lofty way. "Linton agrees with me that it would be a good thing. He's seen Railton, and Railton thinks the same. The Head's also agreed and—well, it's come off. Officially, I'm now a New House fellow, and to-morrow I'm moving across."

"Phew! Then you've done it!"

"I'm sorry for you chaps," said Grundy, shaking his head. "You'll miss me—I don't attempt to deny it. But you can't blame a fellow for wanting to get himself into the best house at St. Jim's."

"The—best house!" stuttered Wilkins. "Why—"

"Just that!" said Grundy, nodding. "I shall acknowledge you fellows just as usual out of doors and all that; but I warn you, I shall stand no nonsense from School House worms whoever they happen to be! Mind that! You'll

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hear of me quickly enough over there," added Grundy, with a deep chuckle. "I'm already working out some japes to play on you School House duds!"

"Why, you—you—" spluttered Gunn.

"I never really did think much of this hole," said Grundy disparagingly. "No scope for a fellow of ability! I've got rather a bright idea already. I'm going to stick a notice over the School House doorway to-morrow with the words on it, 'Lunatic Asylum'! How's that to begin with! Ha, ha, ha!"

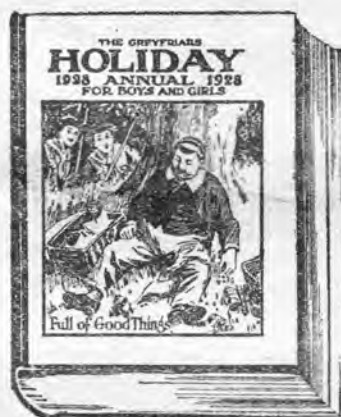
Grundy sat down at the table and started to scribble on a piece of paper—possibly making notes of fresh bright ideas. Wilkins and Gunn eyed him and then eyed each other, breathing hard. It was just as well that Grundy did sit down and get busy just then, for had he stood up talking like that much longer Wilkins and Gunn would have risked all and smitten him hip and thigh.

As it was they held themselves in with heroic self-control and went on with their prep. But they finished as quickly as they could and then left Grundy to himself, and went down to the Common-room.

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There was no little hilarity in the School House that evening over the news of Grundy's transfer. As Monty Lowther said, now the New House had Grundy on their side there was no possible need for worrying about the future in the School House. Grundy on the New House side was as good as a gift of a hundred new men to the School House. No New House jape could possibly be a success now Grundy was a New House man, whereas, they opined, every School House jape was certain to be successful.

Grundy himself, however, seemed blissfully ignorant of the general hilarity. He came into the Common-room later on with more than his usual bounce and swagger.

"Well, I suppose this is the last evening I shall spend in this dingy show," he exclaimed, glancing round him loftily. "You fellows have heard the news, of course? Railton's agreed with me that there's more scope for a fellow of ability and brains over in the New House."

"Yes, we've heard!" grinned Tom Merry. "We're rather sorry for Figgy and his lot. They're not bad chaps at heart, and they really don't deserve such a knock-out blow! And I'm blessed if I know how we've come to deserve such good fortune! It seems too good to be true!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—" bellowed Grundy.

"Considering the way we handled you this evening," went on Tom, "it's really extraordinarily considerate of you to leave us like this. You've a better heart and a more forgiving and kindly nature than we thought you had, Grundy! I propose a hearty vote of thanks to Grundy, you fellows, for getting himself transferred to the New House. All those in favour hold up their hands."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

All the juniors in the Common-room with the exception of Grundy, of course, put up their hands. Indeed, many of the fellows overdid it and put up both hands.

Grundy glared.
 "That's cheek!" he said. "If it wasn't my last night at this beastly casual ward, I'd mop the floor with the lot of you."
 "Go hon!"
 "Mind you, I'm not a School House chap now," said Grundy warningly. "There's no reason why I should consider any of you. I'm officially transferred already."
 "Then you're a New House man now?" said Tom.
 "Of course! Catch me being a rotten School House sweep any longer than I can help," said Grundy scornfully.
 "Good!" said Tom. "Then there's no reason why we should consider you, is there? When the New House cads come here throwing their weight about we usually put them through it. As you're a New House chap I now propose we put you through it. Collar him!"
 "Yaas, wathah! I considah Gwunday has fairly asked for it!"
 "Hear, hear!"
 "Look here—" bellowed Grundy. "Don't you fags dare—"

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But they did dare. There was a rush for George Alfred and he was grabbed on all sides, and for the next few, whirling seconds Grundy had the time of his life. He was bumped and he was rolled on the Common-room floor, and his head was rubbed in cinders and anointed with ink, red and black. Then he was turned over, despite his bellowing, and frog-marched to the door and flung out neck-and-crop into the passage.

Grundy did no more bragging about his transfer to the New House that evening, nor did he make any further disparaging remarks concerning the School House. Even Grundy realised that it behoved him to be a little more discreet—until he had reached the haven of his ambitious desires at all events. But the question was, would George Alfred find the New House such a haven as he imagined? George Alfred himself did not doubt it; but lots of fellows in the School House did!

CHAPTER 8.

Good-bye !

"HOLD ON! I want you fellows!"

It was just after dinner the following day. The Terrible Three had come from the dining hall, and they met Grundy in the Shell passage just coming out of his study. He was looking very dusty, and very hot and bothered.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry, grinning. "I thought you'd moved, Grundy? You don't seem in any too much of a hurry, anyway!"

"Shut up!" said Grundy. "I'm just going to move now, kids! I've been busy getting my things together. Those silly owls Wilkins and Gunn have cleared off somewhere.

blow them! I distinctly told them I should want them to cart my things across after dinner! The careless owls must have forgotten!"

"They must have!" chuckled Lowther.

"But it doesn't matter now—you kids will do," said Grundy loftily. "Two of you ought to be able to manage my armchair, and the rest of you can take the other things. It won't mean more than half a dozen trips at most. I want to get the job done sharp as I can't stand the atmosphere of this rotten hole any longer."

"Why, you—you—"

"Shan't I be glad to get fixed up over there," said Grundy. "I'm blessed if I can understand how on earth I've stuck this show all this time. Thank goodness, I've realised the truth at last, though. Anyway—get a move on sharp!"

"Well, my hat!"

"And no larks, mind!" said Grundy warningly. "Now I'm a New House chap, I shan't be as lenient to you kids as I have been formerly. Get on with the job while I'm cleaning myself up a bit."

Grundy strode away, evidently quite taking it for granted that his orders would be obeyed. The Terrible Three looked at each other expressively.

"Well, the cheeky owl!" gasped Manners. "Fancy asking us to do his blessed carting!"

"And in such a polite way," chuckled Monty Lowther, a mischievous look appearing in his eyes. "But why not—why not help Grundy to move? After all, he's an awfully important chap!"

"That's what I'm thinking, Monty," said Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "Important chaps usually get a good send off when they're leaving a place, don't they? We ought to see him off the premises in style—with musical honours and all that sort of thing."

"That's the idea," said Lowther thoughtfully. "Now the real thing would be a funeral procession—just to show our grief at losing such a great man!"

"Ha, ha! Just the very thing," said Tom Merry. "But we must really help him to move his things first, you know. After the kind way he asked us, we really can't do less. The quickest way, of course, would be to drop the things through the study window into the quad. They'll get into rather a mess on the flower beds—especially as it's been raining. But we can't help that. New House chaps must put up with little things like that."

"What about his arm-chair?" said Manners. "That's rather a hefty thing to chuck through the window."

"I'm just thinking about that," said Tom reflectively. "I think we'll carry that downstairs and shove it in the centre of the lily pond in the Close. It should look very nice there, and Grundy will be able to play at Father Neptune and sit there when he likes to wade out to it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good! Just the idea!"

"The sooner we get to work the more Grundy will be pleased," said Tom briskly. "We'll get as many Shell and Fourth chaps as we can—they'll be glad enough to do homage to such a great man as George Alfred. I'll shove off and rout out Blake and his lot, and you chaps can be looking after Grundy's stuff—before he comes back."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

Tom Merry hurried away hotfoot, and his chums entered Study No. 3. They found Grundy's things all stacked together—clothes, books, sporting outfits, and what not—and after slinging the whole lot through the window they took charge of the armchair.

It was not a large chair, nor was it very heavy fortunately. Between them they managed to squeeze it through the doorway, and then they started downstairs with it—helped now by quite a number of grinning School House juniors who entered into the game with zest.

Meanwhile, Grundy had washed and brushed himself down. Then, after looking into the dormitory to see if he had left anything behind, Grundy wended his way downstairs and looked into Study No. 3. He smiled as he saw how thoroughly his things had been cleared away in such a remarkably short time.

"Those kids are learning," he muttered, with a grin. "Pity, really. I couldn't stay here a bit longer, just for their sakes. I'd soon make men of 'em!"

He looked inside the locker that had been his, and then he looked in drawers and cupboards to make quite sure he was leaving nothing behind that belonged to him. Then he made his way downstairs.

He was feeling rather bitter about Wilkins and Gunn. Despite their assurances to the contrary, Grundy had a sneaking suspicion that they were glad he was going. It wasn't a pleasant suspicion, and Grundy felt an overpowering desire to knock their heads together before finally leaving the School House. But, apparently, Wilkins

and Gunn had anticipated such a desire on Grundy's part for they had made themselves scarce.

"Rotters!" murmured Grundy, as he came out on the School House steps. "Cheeky young cads! It's an insult, and nothing less, to treat a fellow like this. If those other kids hadn't turned up—"

Grundy paused and stared. He stared and stared again, transfixed out into the quad.

And well he might! At the bottom of the steps, drawn up two deep were at least thirty fellows out of the Fourth and Shell, with not a few grinning Third-Formers. At the head of them was Jack Blake with his cornet, and Noble with his Scout bugle. Behind him were swarmed juniors, armed with paper folded round combs, old tin cans, saucepan-lids and pokers, mouth-organs, and various other musical instruments both home-made and otherwise.

"What the thump—"

Grundy stepped down the steps, eyeing the crowd in amazement.

"Hallo, what's this game?" he demanded. "You footling kids up to some silly School House game, I suppose. Just you wait until I get going. I'll fairly show you—Here, what—"

Grundy got no further with his remarks, for just then half a dozen fellows grabbed him. He fairly yelled in astonished alarm. But before he could think of resisting, a looped rope was dropped over his devoted head and tightened round his arms, pinning them to his sides.

"Here—"

He started to struggle, but it was too late then. A large sheet was whipped round him like a shroud, and then he was rolled over, and lifted. The next moment he yelled again as he found himself jammed tightly into a large orange-box that stood on the ground with its top partition removed.

Grundy fitted the box like a glove. Apparently, he was to be the body, and the orange-box the coffin for the mock funeral.

"You rotters!" roared Grundy furiously, his red face just visible poking out of the sheet. "Oh, you—you-won't I just wallop you all for this! Lemme out! Lemme out of this dashed box!"

"Silence!" called Tom Merry reprovingly. "You're dead in this act, Grundy! How can you call your undertakers such names at a time like this? I am surprised at you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—"

Grundy spluttered with dire wrath as he understood what it all meant. He yelled and struggled, but both were useless. The "undertakers"—six of them—lifted the orange-box on high, and Grundy's glowering eyes beheld the band form into line and the "mourners" fall in behind. Then Tom Merry gave the word and the procession started.

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

Tar-rah-tah-rah-rah! Pom, pom, pom! Buzz, buzz, buzz, buzz! Ta-rah! Ta-tah! Rah-ta! Pom, pom!

With the pokers banging on the saucepans and tins, the combs buzzing and humming, and the bugle and cornet blaring with tremendous vim, the procession started round the quad, the mourners falling in behind and weeping copious tears of merriment into linen handkerchiefs.

According to Lowther the tune was the Dead March in "Saul"; but if it was it was certainly a new version and rendering—very new. At all events it was a most fearful row, and it brought seniors to the study windows surrounding the quad, while Kildare and Darrell came rushing out of the School House doorway.

They nearly fell down as they sighted the funeral procession.

"What—what— Here, Merry, you young idiot!" Kildare rushed forward and caught Tom Merry by the arm, almost causing him to release his end of the coffin. "Stop! What does this awful row and idiotic nonsense mean?"

"Leggo, Kildare!" said Tom. "I'm surprised at you causing a disturbance at a time like this."

"What—what—"

"This is Grundy in the coffin," explained Tom. "It's his funeral, you know! We're losing the poor chap to-day! So we're showing our grief at the terrible loss in a suitable manner. If you want to show your grief, fall in behind with your hanky. After all, you belong to the School House."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Darrell. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Roars of laughter were going round from the various windows until the quad rang with it above the noise of the funeral march. Kildare glared speechlessly, and then he spluttered; and, turning away swiftly, he bolted back for the School House.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, chaps!"

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"Stop it!" shrieked Grundy, the coffin swaying perilously as he struggled furiously to free himself. "Oh, won't I just smash you all to bits for this, you see if I don't! Oh, crumbs! Don't drop me, you idiots! Yoooop!"

The bearers didn't drop him—though it was a very near thing.

"Be still, then!" called Tom Merry, shouting to make his voice heard. "Blessed if I ever saw such a lively corpse in my natural! Well, if he gets dropped it'll be his own funeral!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bang, bang, bang, bang! Pom, pom, pom! Tar-rah-rah-rah-rah!"

Fellows were tumbling out of the New House now. From the doorway Figgins & Co. swarmed, and they stared in amazement at the unusual sight.

"What—what the thump—" gasped Figgins. "What—what is it?"

"It's a giddy mock funeral, or something," said Kerr. "My hat! I believe it's that awful duffer Grundy in that orange-box!"

"Phew! That's it! They're escorting him over to the New House. Phew! Then it must be true about that idiot being shoved on us."

"We're not standing it, if it is," said Kerr.

"Rather not!" said Redfern. "Figgy—"

"We're not jolly well standing it—you can take that from me!" said Figgins, his freckled face flushing in great wrath. "Fancy having a dud like that shoved on us! We'll make sure first, and if it is so we'll jolly well sling him back!"

"Yes, rather!" It was a roar, and the New House fellows went in a swarm to meet the procession.

"What's this game?" yelled Figgins, rushing up to Tom Merry.

"Funeral!" said Tom Merry briefly. "Grundy's as good as dead! He's been transferred to that casual ward you fellows belong to. I wouldn't be found dead in it! But Grundy—"

"Then it's quite true?" roared Figgins, in great wrath and dismay.

"Yes, quite true, old chap! We're just escorting him over now—to show our grief at a fellow being shoved among such a lot of dead-and-alive bounders! Go it, chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Figgins didn't laugh. He just stared for another moment, and then he gave a roar.

"Up and at 'em, chaps! New House for ever! Sling that rotten School House bouncer back again to where he belongs!"

"Here, don't you— Look out!"

Crash!

"Yarooooooh!"

As Figgins charged into battle the six bearers swayed, and then they doubled up, and the coffin with its hapless "corpse" swayed, rocked, and dropped.

The howl that came from the orange-box was enough to have awakened any corpse.

The next moment a terrific battle was raging over it.

"Back up!" roared Tom Merry. "Back up, School House!"

"Hurrah!"

School House dropped their musical instruments as one man, and they backed up and piled in with a will as the New House juniors rushed to the attack in great numbers.

The New House fellows had soon grasped the position—the rumour that Grundy was to be transferred to them had filled them with amazement and disbelief. But now they realised it was true enough, and their wrath was great.

Unable to get out of the orange-box, Grundy roared and roared as the combatants trampled over him, until quite a number had tripped and sprawled over the box, where they struggled and fought, almost smothering the hapless "corpse."

From underneath the pile came Grundy's frantic bellowing. And then quite suddenly came a new sound—the sound of swishing, followed by howls of alarmed pain.

"Look out! Prefects!"

It was the prefects right enough. From the Hall windows Kildare and Darrell and a couple more prefects had looked on, unwilling to spoil what they considered to be harmless fun. But this was different—they could not allow a riot to go on. And this was certainly a riot.

Amid yells and the swishing of ashplants, the combatants ceased scrapping as if by magic, and they scattered to left and right. Just then Mr. Railton, the School House master, came hurrying up, looking very much disturbed.

"Kildare—Darrell, what is the matter?" he demanded. "What ever does this amazing disturbance mean?"

"I heard— G-good gracious! Is that—that Grundy?"

Mr. Railton's startled eyes had fallen on the shrouded

form in the orange-box. Kildare, not troubling to hide a grin, stooped over the box and cut the ropes that bound Grundy into it. Then he tore away the sheet, and Grundy fairly rolled out of the box.

His face was crimson with wrath. "Owl!" he choked. "Ow-yow! Oh crumbs! Yow-wow! Oh, just wait until I get my fists on—"

"Grundy!" thundered Mr. Railton. "What— How dare you!"

"It's scarcely Grundy's fault," grinned Kildare. "Those young rascals have been giving him a mock funeral, sir."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Just an innocent rag, sir!" grinned Kildare. "I fancy Grundy has been rather gloating over being transferred to the New House, and the School House fellows have resented it a bit. They've been ragging him—escorting him across to the New House like this."

"Bless my soul!"

"Then the New House juniors chipped in," explained Kildare. "They don't seem to want Grundy there, sir. They were trying to capture Grundy so as to send him back to the School House again."

"Bless my soul!" Mr. Railton's mouth twitched as he understood. "What utter nonsense! The boys who took part in this—ahem!—this ridiculous disturbance must be punished severely. Will you kindly find out their names, Kildare. I will request Mr. Ratcliff to punish the New House boys who took part. Grundy, you had better proceed to a New House bath-room and make yourself presentable for afternoon classes."

"Owl!"

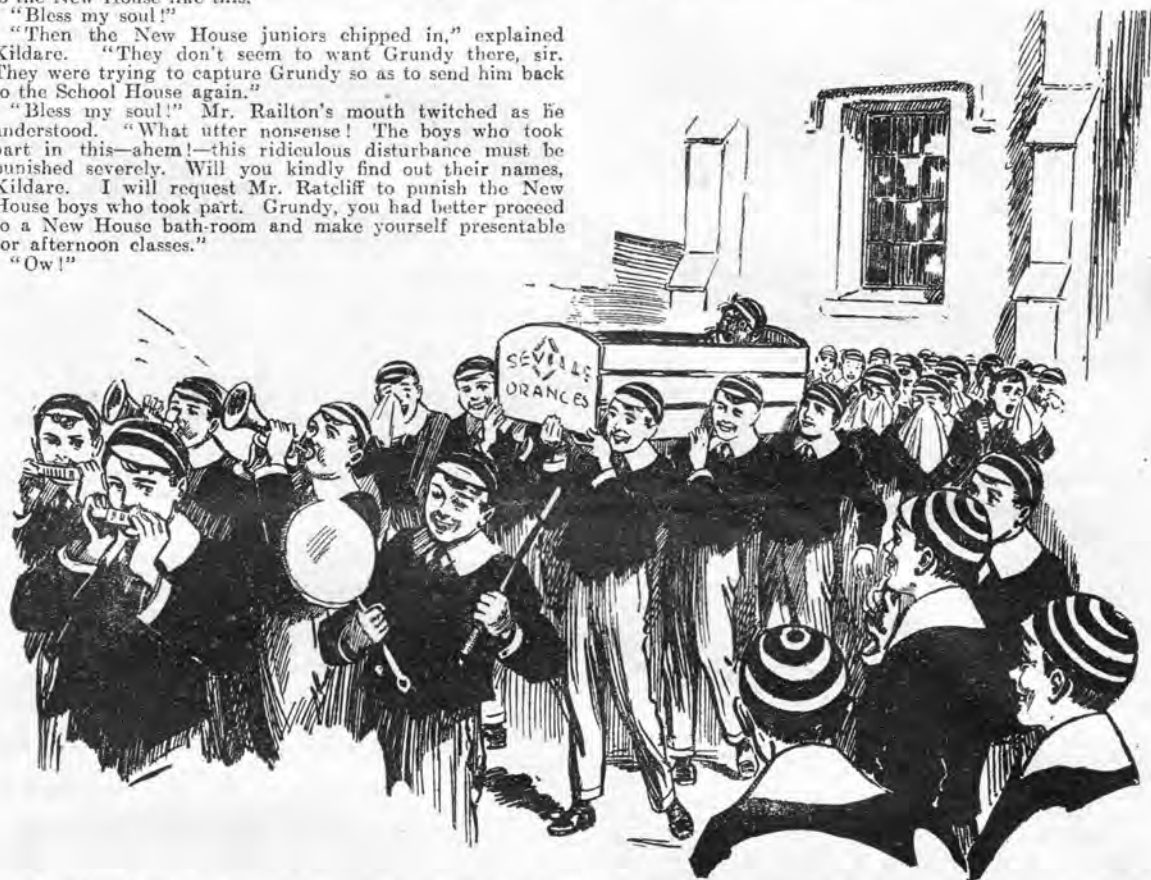
CHAPTER 9.

Not Welcome!

"O H, here, you are! Trot in, sharp, and close that door! I want to talk to you kids!"

Grundy was the speaker. He stood with his back to the fireplace in Study No. 1 in the New House, and his words were addressed to French and Jimson of the New House Shell. As French and Jimson were the owners of Study No. 1, and as they looked upon George Alfred Grundy as something worse than an interloper, it was, perhaps, no wonder that French and Jimson gasped at being addressed thus.

But that was like Grundy. French and Jimson were fated to do a great deal of gasping before they saw the last of Grundy in Study No. 1.



Grundy spluttered with dire wrath as his glowering eyes beheld the band form into line, and the "mourners" fall in behind. Then with a blaring of cornets, with pokers banging on saucepans and tins, and combs buzzing and humming, the procession marched round the quad. (See Chapter 8.)

"You have been placed in Study No. 1 in the New House, I understand. You had better have your things transferred there as soon as possible, if you have not already done so."

"Yow-wow!"

"Darrell, kindly instruct Taggles to remove this box."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

The Housemaster rustled away, trying hard to keep a straight face. Kildare pulled a wry face. Finding out the culprits was not going to be a very easy matter—in point of fact, Kildare discovered it to be a hopeless matter. But the ringleaders were known both from the School House and New House, and Kildare satisfied himself with handing in their names.

The result was that Tom Merry & Co. each got two hundred lines as their share—quite a light punishment really—though Figgins & Co., not so lucky, got five hundred lines each. Mr. Railton had left their punishment to Mr. Ratcliff, and that cross-grained gentleman did not look upon the affair in the same light as did Mr. Railton. And there was great wrath in the New House that afternoon in consequence—the wrath, curiously enough, being heaped upon the hapless head of George Alfred Grundy.

The new recruit certainly had made a bad start in the New House—though, for once in his life, he hadn't been the one to ask for trouble.

"Well, you—you cheeky School House sweep!" snorted French.

Grundy glared. He was in a raging temper, which was, perhaps, only to be expected in the circumstances. The sad fact that the New House were as unwilling to receive him as the School House had been glad to get rid of him was displeasing, to say the least of it. Moreover, Grundy had discovered by this just what had happened to his belongings, and it had cost him ten shillings to persuade Taggles and the gardener to recover the armchair from the lily-pool and haul it up to his new quarters.

"Now, I want no cheek!" said Grundy darkly. "You fellows had better understand this from the start. Trot in and listen to me. We may as well come to an understanding at once. As I'm going to be the leader of this study, you may as well know from the very beginning that I'm not the fellow to stand any nonsense from kids!"

French and Jimson looked at each other, and then they came in—with a rush. They both flung themselves at the lofty George Alfred, and that self-satisfied worthy went crashing down in the fender with a startled yell.

"Out with him!" gasped French. "We expected something like this. Going to be the leader of this study, is he? The cheeky cad! Well, we're not going to stand any

nonsense, either! Out with him—out with him on his neck, Jimmy!"

"Yes, rather!" gasped Jimson.

But it was much easier said than done. French and Jimson had heard a great deal about Grundy, and they knew he was a terrific fighting-man. None the less, they were not standing such fearful cheek from him. They had just been discussing Grundy's inclusion in their study with Figgins & Co., and Figgy had advised them strongly to sling him out "neck and crop" the moment he started any of his games.

French and Jimson intended to do that—if they could! As yet, owing to classes, they had not had the opportunity of meeting Grundy. But classes were over now, and they had met him.

So they piled in with a will, being determined, from the very beginning, to show Grundy just where he stood in the scheme of things in Study No. 1.

Unfortunately, they had rather underestimated Grundy's fighting qualities.

The next few moments their estimation in that regard underwent a transformation. Grundy, in his mildest moments, was a handful. He was not in one of his mildest moments now. Once over his startled surprise, he set about the task of showing French and Jimson just where they stood in his scheme of things.

It was a decidedly painful and unpleasant lesson for French and Jimson.

A deadly drive sent Jimson spinning into the corner, and a second deadly drive piled French on top of him. Then Grundy jumped to the door and turned the key in the lock—possibly anticipating an interruption unfavourable to him.

He had just done so when French and Jimson scrambled up and returned to the attack with a combined rush.

The combat which followed was fierce and brief. French and Jimson put all they knew into it, possibly realising that it was now or never in Study No. 1. But Grundy had already realised that himself, and he fairly put his beef into it.

It ended at last—with French sitting on the floor, groaning as he dabbed at a streaming nose, and with Jimson, after being knocked right and left round the study twice, joining him there, hugging a rapidly swelling eye.

"How's that?" panted Grundy. "Want any more?"

"Grooogh!"

"Oh, my hat! Rotter!"

Grundy stood over his new studymates victoriously, waiting for them to get up again, but French and Jimson wisely decided not to have any more for the present, at least.

"Ow!" panted Jimson. "Ow-ow! Oh, great pip! My eye! Oh, you rotter!"

"We've had enough!" gasped French. "Chuck it, Grundy, you cad!"

"If you don't want me to start again you'd better not talk like that!" said Grundy warningly. "You've got to learn a lot—I can see that! Now get up, you silly owls! I didn't want to have to do it. But it's necessary, at the very beginning, for us to understand one another!"

"Grooogh!"

Grundy turned back his cuffs and grinned. He felt much better now. French and Jimson felt decidedly worse. They scrambled up, giving Grundy deadly looks. But they did not attempt another attack. They had had enough—for the present. Grundy was breathing a trifle hard, but he was quite cheery now. He grinned genially at his study-mates. Grundy never cherished animosity after a scrap. Perhaps that was because he usually won.

"Now, you fellows, we can get down to brass tacks!" said Grundy cheerfully. "I'm a plain chap, and I talk plainly. I'm leader in this study from now on—by right of conquest, you know, and because brains have a right to lead. I don't want to hurt your feelings, but you can't expect a fellow in my position in the school to allow insignificant duds like you two chaps to boss me! That's not to be expected! I hope you can see that!"

French and Jimson did not attempt to argue the matter—they had no energy left. Moreover, they had had quite enough arguing with Grundy.

"It's like this," explained Grundy. "I've been shoved in this study against my will, as it were. I wanted a study to myself as befits a fellow of my standing, and I expected it. But they've had the nerve to shove me in here with you duffers, and I've got to make the best of it."

"Oh!"

"That's how the matter stands," said Grundy. "Rotten, but there it is! I'm going to make the best of things, and as long as you toe the line and behave yourselves we'll rub along quite nicely, I fancy. If we don't, then I'll be obliged to keep you under proper control, like I had to do with those duffers Wilkins and Gunn, in the School

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House. But I shall expect to be backed up. No more of this silly rot, mind, or I shall come down heavy! Understand that!"

"Ow! Yes! Anything you like, Grundy!" groaned French.

"That's the spirit!" said Grundy encouragingly. "I've got a lot of work to do in this House, and I shall need a bit of backing up, possibly."

"Possibly!" agreed Jimson significantly.

"I don't approve of Figgins as leader here," said Grundy. "He'll not like being superseded by a better man—incompetent fellows never do. But with the New House in the state it's in, a loyal chap like me can't afford to consider his silly feelings."

"Oh! Ah, yes!" gasped French. "But, look here, we want our tea, Grundy!"

"That's all right," said Grundy. "I'm going to treat you chaps just as I treated Wilkins and Gunn. I shall stand regular spreads like I did in the School House, of course."

"Oh!"

The voices of French and Jimson changed remarkably at that. They looked at each other.

"Yes," said Grundy, smiling. "You won't find me mean. Here you are—here's a couple of quids. Go and get some grub in, one of you—the other can get tea ready! I fancy we shall rub along quite nicely together now that the air's cleared a bit."

French and Jimson began to fancy that, too. After all, Grundy had been planted on them, and they had to make the best of it. And the two pounds Grundy generously handed over made all the difference to French and Jimson, who were always more or less stony. Indeed, Jimson and French began to feel that things were not going to be so bad, after all. They had heard stories of Grundy's generosity and his magnificent spreads.

"Good man, Grundy!" said French, quite genially, forgetting his swollen nose. "You're not such a bad sort—we know that! Yes, Jimmy and I will see to tea, old chap! Rely on us!"

And Grundy smiled and relied on them. And fifteen minutes later he and his new study-mates sat down to tea on quite the best of terms. It was a tea the like of which French and Jimson rarely sat down to, and they felt it was well worth being genial to Grundy.

But they did not quite know the great George Alfred yet. Had they known him better, they would have realised that such geniality in Grundy's study was too good to last!

CHAPTER 10.

-Backing up Grundy!

"WELL, I feel a bit better now," said Figgins, as he finished tea in Study No. 4. "My hat! Wonder how French and Jimson are getting on with Grundy? I was forgetting about them. I rather expected to hear sounds of trouble before this."

"Jimmy and French should be able to manage him all right," said Kerr.

"I told them to chuck the born idiot out on his neck," said Figgins. "They promised to give a yell for us if they found they needed help. I suppose we've got to put up with the silly owl; but we'll make things warm for him if he starts any of his silly games over here."

"Yes, rather!"

"I fancy I heard a row just as we were sitting down to tea," said Fatty Wynn.

Figgins got to his feet.

"We'd better trot along and see what's happened," he remarked, with a chuckle. "Grundy's a broth of a boy, and I can see some fun ahead! I believe he's going to make things hum here according to his own account! Well, we'll pull his leg till the cows come home, and if—Hallo! Talk of angels—"

Figgins paused and chuckled as the door flew open just then, and Grundy himself marched into the study, large as life and looking very determined.

"Oh, here you are, Figgy," he said, giving the New House leader a condescending nod. "I've just come along for a heart to heart talk, kid!"

"Been chucked out of your study yet?" asked Figgins, with interest.

"Eh? Chucked out? Of course not, idiot!" snorted Grundy. "I should like to meet the fellows who could chuck me out of my own study."

"But how did you get on with Frenchy and Jimson?" grinned Figgins.

"Oh, they're not bad chaps," said Grundy. "Frightful kids, of course. But I soon put them in their places. I've just left them finishing tea. They're going to back me up for all they're worth."

"Oh, my hat!"

It was surprising news for Figgins & Co.

"They—they're whatter?" yelled Figgy.

"Don't shout! I can't stand kids who yell," said Grundy. "Yes, they're going to back me up. That's just what I've come to see you about, Figgy, matter of fact! I want to know if you chaps are going to back me up, too, or if you're going to start any games."

"G-games?"

"Be insubordinate, I mean," explained Grundy grimly. "I thought I'd better have things out with you, Figgy, once and for all. I'm a straightforward chap, and I like to know just where I stand. I believe you fancy yourself as a bit of a leader over here, Figgy?"

"Just a few!" grinned Figgy.

"Well, you can put all fancies like that right out of your silly mind from now on," said Grundy. "Got that? You've no official standing like that duffer Tom Merry, and I shan't allow any Fourth Form kid to rule the roost while I'm here. I'm taking that job on—understand?"

"Perfectly, old chap!"

"Look here, Figgy!" gasped Fatty Wynn excitedly.

"Chuck the cheeky—"

"Hold on, Fatty," said Figgins cheerily. "Let Grundy run on! You forget Grundy's position in the school! Go on, Grundy, I'm quite interested. And I'm not the fellow to stand in the way of a better man, if that's what you mean."

"I'm glad to hear that, Figgy," said Grundy cordially. "You've more sense than I gave you credit for, kid or not! I think I'll make you my right-hand man."

"Oh! Ah! Thanks, old fellow!" gasped Figgins.

"I don't expect I shall need any help," said Grundy carelessly. "I'm used to doing things off my own bat. Now the position's this, Figgy. I'm not satisfied with the way things are run here. I'll admit you've been a bit lucky in putting it across the School House chaps lately. And you managed to lick them at footer yesterday by a series of remarkable flukes."

"Oh! D-did we?"

"Yes. Mind you, I'm a New House man now, and I'm going to go for the School House worms tooth and nail," added Grundy, grinning. "I've already got some ripping wheezes in mind! I'm going to lead New House to victory on the playing fields, and I'm going to make us cockhouse for good and all. Only, I shall need backing. What I want to know is, are you kids going to back me up, or are you going to start any silly monkey tricks? If you are backing me up, well and good. I may find you useful. If you're not, I'll be glad to hear it now," concluded Grundy, turning back his cuffs significantly.

"You mean you're going to lick us if we're not?" said Figgins meekly.

"Just that!" said Grundy, nodding. "Just say the word, and I'll mop up this study with the lot of you. And I'll go on mopping you up until you decide to be sensible and acknowledge me as leader. Got that?"

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn stared at Grundy. They had imagined they knew George Alfred Grundy; but they had scarcely expected him to start throwing his weight about quite so early as this.

"So—so that's the programme?" murmured Figgins at last.

"Just that!" smiled Grundy, quite failing to see the wink which passed between Figgins and his two chums. "Buck up and give your decision, as I want to call the chaps together for a meeting in the Close. The sooner I explain my programme to the fellows here the better. I've set myself some rather stiff tasks here."

"You don't say so!"

"I do. I'm going to put the kybosh on the School House to begin with. Then I'm going to get myself elected as junior skipper of the New House, and after that I shall have a go at Tom Merry's job. When I've shifted him out and pulled the footer round a bit, I shall tackle Monteith and Kildare about the Sixth footer. I'm not at all satisfied with it as it stands. I'm also after a prefect's job—should be easier to wangle that over here than in the School House, where there's so much jealousy and prejudice."

"Oh! Just—just so!" gasped Figgy. "I—I see!"

"But the urgent matter now is to get the fellows together, and explain things," said Grundy briskly. "Buck up with your decision, as I want to go and draft out my speech, Figgy. Is it a go?"

"Oh, yes!" gasped Figgins. "Oh, quite!"

"Good! I knew I could rely on a fellow who has the good of the New House at heart," said Grundy, with satisfaction, "though I feared you might be silly and object to a newcomer, even though he is miles above you in intelligence and sport."

"Oh! Ah! Quite so!" murmured Figgins, controlling his emotion with a mighty effort. "You leave it to us, old chap. Trot away and get your speech made—we'll rally

the fellows together in the Close in readiness. I'll get 'em together under the elm by the woodshed, Grundy."

"That's the idea!"

And Grundy hurried out, feeling quite kindly disposed towards Figgins & Co. Had he not departed so hurriedly he might have heard the yell of hysterical laughter that went up from Figgins and Kerr as the door closed.

"You—you burling idiot, Figgy!" snorted Fatty Wynn, who didn't quite catch on. "Why the thump didn't you kick the cheeky dummy out?"

"My dear fathead," said Figgy, with a gurgle, "we can easily do that another time. We'll do quite a lot of that presently. But we want to do a bit of leg-pulling first. That silly idiot was born to have his giddy leg pulled. Now let's go and get the fellows together."

"But—but, Figgy—"

"Come on!"

And, leaving the mystified Fatty Wynn still munching away at the tea-table, Figgins and Kerr hurried out. Ten minutes later Grundy looked in again. Fatty Wynn was just finishing tea, and he looked round and scowled.

"Figgy out?" inquired Grundy. "Gone down to the Close, I suppose? Good!"

Without waiting for an answer Grundy hurried down to the quad, and went round to the Close. He had a slip of paper in his hand and he seemed to be in fine feather. As a matter of fact, Grundy was feeling very cheery indeed. He had anticipated quite a heap of trouble with Figgins & Co. before he succeeded in bringing them to accept his claims of leadership. Even in the New House Grundy had anticipated having to break down a certain amount of envy and jealousy and prejudice—especially from Figgins & Co.

"I'll have 'em eating out of my hand soon," grinned Grundy to himself. "My hat! Fancy that chap Figgy climbing down without a blessed kick! I suppose he's heard how I handled those chaps in my study. I'll—Hallo! Oh, good!"

Grundy beamed as he came in sight of the old elm near the woodshed. There was quite a big crowd of New House fellows there—Shell and Fourth and Third. They gave a cheer as Grundy hurried up. It was rather an ironical cheer, and Grundy frowned as he noted a great deal of laughter as well.

"Here you are, Grundy!" called out Figgins, who seemed to be superintending matters. "This way, old chap! We've rolled this old tub here for you to stand on. Mind! Here, let me help you up!"

Figgins and Kerr kindly helped Grundy on to the tub. It was a large tub—a rain-water butt, in fact, that Figgins had rolled round from Taggles' Lodge when the school porter wasn't looking. Figgy & Co. had also gone to the trouble of filling the water-butt with water.

But Figgins did not inform Grundy of the trouble they had so kindly taken on his behalf, nor did Grundy see the water, the top of the butt being covered with a lid. It was rather wobbly, but Figgins steadied the burly junior on to it safely at last.

"Now, gentlemen—silence!" bawled Figgins, facing the expectant audience. "Grundy, late of the School House, and now one of our noble selves, desires to address you for a few minutes on the right way to put the kybosh on our enemies in the School House. Listen to his words of wisdom, and take no notice of his face. He can't help his face—he was born with it like that. Harken to the voice of Grundy, the new leader of the New House."

"Hear, hear!"

"Bravo! Go it, Grundy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy frowned. He was pleased at the chance to address such a crowd. But he didn't quite like Figgins' levity, neither did he approve of the laughter on such an occasion. But he drew a deep breath, glanced at his notes, and made a start.

"Gentlemen, and fellows of the school—I mean, New House," he bawled. "I have called you together to listen to me—that is, to—to—to—Grundy glanced hurriedly at his notes—"to—to hear my proposals in regard to—Yoooop!"

Grundy stopped and clapped his hand suddenly to his nose.

"What's the matter?" demanded Figgins. "Going to act as well as make a speech, Grundy?"

"No!" Grundy scowled, as he rubbed his nose. "Some rotter bunged a pea or something at me!" he snorted. "Let me catch him, that's—Yow!"

This time Grundy clapped his hand to his eye with a startled yelp of wrath and pain. There was no doubt about it being a pea this time—it rattled down on the lid at Grundy's feet. Evidently some miscreant was shooting peas with a pea-shooter. As Grundy glared about him a perfect volley rattled round his head, and he ducked and dodged desperately in a vain attempt to avoid them.

"You howling rotters!" he roared, suddenly sighting Redfern, Owen, Lawrence, and Kerr on the fringe of the crowd, armed with pea-shooters. "Why, I'll jolly well— Yarooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy yelped again as a pea struck his nose, and the next moment he was dancing frantically as at least a score of New House jokers brought out pea-shooters and started to work with deadly aim.

There was a brief vision of Grundy dancing wildly on the top of the barrel, and then quite suddenly the lid of the barrel gave way.

"Yarooogh! Oh, my hat!"

Splash!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy, howling with great wrath, collapsed in the barrel with a dismal splash, while a tidal-wave of water splashed up over the edges of the water-butt. Then Grundy's howling ended in a significant gurgling.

But he was soon up again, popping up like a raging Jack-in-a-box. And as Grundy popped up, Figgins suddenly grabbed a cord that hung from the branches of the elm-tree above Grundy's head, and pulled at it.

Swoooosh!

A thick volume of soot swept down on top of Grundy, enveloping him and the water-butt in a black cloud.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The New House fellows howled with laughter. It was only too clear now—even to Grundy—that they had not come there only to listen to his speech. It was all spoof. Grundy realised—if he was in a state to realise anything—that his noble leg had been pulled by Figgins & Co.

"Pooof! Splutter, splutter! Pooof!" gurgled the hapless New House recruit. "Rotters! Oh, you awful beasts! Pooof! Oh, great Scott! Groooogh!"

He hauled himself with great difficulty out of the rain-water butt, sprawling in a heap on the ground by the side of it.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the New House fellows. "Ha, ha, ha! What price the New House leader!"

"Oh, you—you—you—"

With a mighty effort Grundy scrambled to his feet, and then he made a blind, furious rush at his tormentors. They scattered to right and left, roaring with hysterical laughter. Grundy, looking a most fearful sight, with water dripping from him, and soot dropping in wet patches, gave it up at last, and started off for the New House dismally. All ideas of delivering his great speech were gone for the time being. Even Grundy saw then that the time was not yet ripe for that, and that the New House fellows would not be "eating out of his hand" so soon, after all!

CHAPTER 11.

Still Going It!

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY was the chief topic of conversation in the New House that evening. The New House fellows had looked upon the transfer of the burly Shell fellow from the School House to the New House as little less than an insult to the House. It did not please them to think that such a hopeless "dud" as George Alfred, a fellow apparently not wanted by the School House, should be "planted" on them.

Their only consolation had been in promising themselves to give Grundy a very warm time indeed.

Now, however, they found another consolation in the prospect of getting a great deal of entertainment out of him.

Grundy, certainly, was a most unfortunate fellow. He had a perfect genius for seeking trouble and finding it wherever he went. Actually, he had a great many good points—as anyone in the School House would have admitted frankly enough. He was good-hearted and he was generous. He was a fellow who would scorn to do a mean action, and he was loyal and chock-full of pluck, and overflowing with good intentions.

Unfortunately, he was also chock-full and overflowing with swank, and self-conceit, and a sublime but utterly erroneous belief in his own abilities and importance. And, naturally, these faults brought Grundy no end of trouble—which he undoubtedly often deserved, despite the fact that his intentions were good.

Yet Grundy was a stickler. Despite innumerable setbacks, his egregious self-confidence never failed him, and he always came up smiling after a defeat.

And so it was in this case. Having given up School House as a bad job, owing to lack of scope for his capabilities, and to envy, and jealousy, and prejudice, Grundy had now set himself the task of reforming and "bucking-up" New House, and he meant to see the job through. There were a great many things in the New House which Grundy didn't approve of—the chief being the fact that George Figgins was the leader of the juniors there instead

of George Alfred Grundy. Grundy was resolved to put that matter right at the earliest possible moment, and had come to the conclusion that the way to do it was to show the fellows the sort of leader he was.

Before prep that evening the flames of Grundy's enthusiasm was burning brightly again, and he had almost forgotten the sad ending to his meeting in the Close. Whatever that sudden plunge into the water-butt had done, it had certainly not damped his ardour for long.

"I've got it, you fellows!" he said quite suddenly, sitting up straight in his armchair. "Just chuck aside that rot for a bit and listen to me!"

French and Jimson were deep in their prep at the moment. Grundy wasn't troubling himself about prep that evening. As he had told his study-mates, he had far more important matters to think about. They grinned and looked at him as he spoke.

"Got what?" asked French incautiously. "A cold? Well, I'm not surprised, for the water in that rain-tub must have been awfully wet."

"Now, look here, I want no cheek!" said Grundy warningly. "Any cheek, and I shall come down heavy on you chaps. No reason at all why we three shouldn't pull along well in this study. But the thing I can't stand is cheek."

Jimson gave his chum a warning look. Tea that afternoon had been the best study "spread" they had enjoyed for a long time. So long as Grundy was ready to stand spreads like that, just so long were French and Jimson disposed to stand Grundy. French and Jimson were likely to change that disposition when they knew Grundy better; but for the present they were disposed to stand him in Study No. 1 on those terms.

"Sorry, old man!" said French hastily, reminded by his chum's warning look. "Sorry! No offence meant; I thought you meant that."

"Well, I didn't," said Grundy. "Think I'm the sort of fellow to catch a cold as easily as that. Rot! Now, I've been thinking about that rotten affair in the Close. I know who worked that."

"D-do you?"

"Yes. It was that rotter Figgins," said Grundy. "I really might have expected something of the sort. I ought to have been on the look-out for opposition from Figgins. He got the fellows to bung peas at me like that. And I believe now that the rotter arranged the lid of that tub so it would collapse when I got going."

"Go hon!" murmured French.

"Quite likely," said Jimson, trying not to chuckle. "It was too bad, old chap."

"I see that now," said Grundy. "I've thought it all out. Still, it just shows that Figgins is getting the wind up."

"Oh! Ah! D-does it?"

"Yes, he knows he's up against a better man," said Grundy, smiling grimly. "He'll be up to all those sort of games now—sheer desperation, you know. I told you fellows over tea what my programme was. Well, I might tell you that it'll take a better man than Figgins to turn me from it. I'm going ahead full steam."

"Good!"

"But I've got to lose no time!" explained Grundy. "At the moment Figgins holds the cards. The fellows are backing him up now. I've got to remove the prejudice against me, and, most important of all, I've got to show them what I can do. Once I've shown them a bit of real leadership the rest will be as easy as falling off a form."

"Splendid! Go on!" said Jimson.

French and Jimson were quite ready to listen to Grundy. He was entertaining, and any excuse was better than none to dodge prep for a bit.

"There's no time to be lost, though," resumed Grundy. "The sooner I get really going the better. I'm going to make a start to-night, in fact."

"Another meeting?" asked French, winking at Jimson.

"More tub-thumping?" added Jimson, winking back.

"No. Don't talk rot! I'm going to rely on example, not gas, in future—actions not words!" explained Grundy.

"Now what about a raid on the School House fellows after lights out to-night?"

"Is that a conundrum?" asked Jimson.

"Ass! That's the idea!" said Grundy, with enthusiasm. "A night raid under my leadership. Being an old School House man myself I know the ropes, and I shall know exactly what to do. With me to lead you, the raid's bound to be a success. Now the wheeze is this: We sneak across at about eleven, sneak into their dorms, and paint their faces blue-and-green—Shell blue and Fourth green."

"Oh, my hat! And where's the paint coming from?"

"I've thought of that!" grinned Grundy. "Have you forgotten the decorators are in? They're painting the woodwork and walls of the passages downstairs, you know. Well, I spotted the place where they're storing the giddy paint and brushes at night. They've shoved all the stuff



"Grundy!" hissed Figgy. "You born—" But George Alfred was beyond hearing. Bump! "Ow!" An involuntary yelp escaped Figgy as something hit him on the head with a painful jar. It was the end of a footer stocking, packed tight with paper. (See Chapter 12.)

in the cupboard under the stairs. We're going to borrow the paint and brushes."

"Oh! Oh, my hat!"

"But that's only part of the jape! When we've done that we're going to mix all their clobber up—one chap's bags to another chap, and another chap's jacket to another chap, and so on. It wouldn't be a bad idea to mix the clobber of Shell and Fourth chaps together. Just think," added Grundy enthusiastically, "what a muck-up there'll be in the morning!"

"Oh, crumbs! And—and you think they'll sleep through all that? Supposing they wake up?"

"I've thought of all that!" chuckled Grundy. "We're going to take lots of cord with us, and we're going to tie 'em down to their giddy beds first. Should be easy enough to do that without waking 'em, if we're careful. How's that for a jape? Not bad, what?"

"Oh, ripping!" said French, with heavy sarcasm. "But I want to know who the 'we' are."

"Eh? You chaps, and me, and about a dozen other fellows, of course. I think, perhaps, a round dozen will be enough, really. What do you chaps think?"

French and Jimson stared at him speechlessly. What they thought would have caused a serious disturbance in the study could Grundy have known it. Not that either French or Jimson had any serious criticism to level against Grundy's wheeze! Both of those cheery juniors had taken part in far more risky and seemingly impossible schemes. In fact, they privately thought the whole wheeze rather neat. But what staggered them was Grundy's astounding cheek in expecting them to follow his lead at all.

"Oh!" gasped Jimson at last. "You take it for granted that we shall back you up, Grundy?"

"Yes, I do," grinned Grundy. "And I'll tell you why. For one thing, if you two chaps refuse, for instance, I shall lick you until you do!"

"Oh!"

"But you won't refuse because I'm going to pay every chap who takes part five bob for his services. And if the jape's a success—as it's bound to be—I'm going to stand a whacking celebration spread in this study to-morrow."

"Oh!"

"Oh, I see!"

French and Jimson looked at each other. This was a different thing altogether, and it put a different complexion on the affair! Jimson and French would have followed

Figgy's lead just for the fun. They were quite willing to follow Grundy for the fun, and for the five bob and the spread to follow in addition. That made all the difference!

"Well, that's not a bad idea," said Jimson genially. "Will it be five bob down?"

"On the nail?"

"Yes."

"Oh, good!"

"Ripping!" agreed French. "And—a spread to-morrow! Fine! I think you can count us in, Grundy."

"Yes, rather!" murmured Jimson. "It's an honour to back up such a splendid leader as you, Grundy—especially for five bob and a feed!"

Grundy grinned. It was just as he had expected. Over in the School House he often got over little difficulties in a like manner. Lots of fellows were willing to back up Grundy if he made it worth their while to do so.

"I thought that would do it," he remarked, with satisfaction. "You see, the fellows here are prejudiced against me. I knew I had to get over that. Well, this is how I'm going to do it. Only to begin with, mind! When I've led 'em to victory, they'll have confidence in my abilities, and it won't be necessary. See?"

"Ahem!" coughed French.

"Just so!" murmured Jimson.

They felt extremely doubtful about that point. The fellows were likely to back up Grundy while the five bobs and feeds lasted—but not longer!

"Well, that's the programme," said Grundy. "But there's one thing I want to insist on—a very important point."

"What's that?"

"Figgy's Co.," said Grundy emphatically. "They're to know absolutely nothing about it. If they get wind of my great scheme they'll muck it up for a cert. Figgy knows that if I win the support and confidence of you fellows his number will be up. That's certain. Figgy mustn't be allowed to get wind of it. Mind that!"

"Right-ho! But—"

"There's to be no 'buts'!" said Grundy firmly. "All you fellows have to do is to obey my orders! I want you to understand from the start that you're the rank and file. If Figgy gets to know, the whole scheme's off. Mind that! I think we'd better leave that rotter Redfern and his pals out of it, too."

"Right-ho! But—"

"That's enough! I'll leave you chaps to pick out your men. You can leave the thinking out and all the rest to me," said Grundy briskly. "Now clear out and get your men fixed up."

"But we haven't finished prep—"

"Blow prep! Fancy worrying about that rot at a time like this," said Grundy, with withering scorn. "Clear out!"

"Oh, all right!"

French and Jimson grinned and went out, deciding they could afford to leave prep unfinished for once.

"Well, isn't he a prize-packet!" murmured Jimson, as the door closed behind them.

"A regular corker!" grinned French. "But—"

"Five bob is five bob!" said Jimson.

"It is."

"And a spread's a spread," went on Jimson, with a chuckle, "especially one of Grundy's spreads."

"Yes, rather! And it will be rather a lark! If Grundy's kind enough to keep this up we'll back him up till the cows come home, what?"

"Oh, rather!" grinned Jimson. "Let's go and get the chaps fixed up—I fancy they'll jump at it."

"No doubt about that," said French.

French and Jimson proved to be right. Five bob was five bob, and a spread was a spread; and as Grundy's study-mates were careful to pick out fellows who they knew were hard-up, they easily made up the dozen required. And when Grundy went to bed that night he was in high good humour, while both he and his men showed signs of suppressed excitement. Figgins noted it, as did Fatty Wynn and Kerr.

"There's something on," grunted George Figgins, as the trio went up to bed. "Something to do with that ass Grundy, too. I'm blessed if I can make it out, you chaps."

"Beats me," said Fatty Wynn. "Perhaps they've got a feed on. That awful ass, Grundy, may be getting round 'em with a feed likely as not. I believe he stood French and Jimson a stunning spread at tea-time. He's fairly rolling in tin, I believe."

"It's queer!" murmured Figgins, wrinkling his youthful brows. "And I don't like it. I noticed several chaps coming from Grundy's study, and there's been a jolly lot of whispering going on. Hallo! I say, Reddy, what the dickens is on? Something's on! Do you know?"

Redfern and his chums, Owen and Lawrence, stopped on the stairs as Figgins spoke.

"Blessed if I know," said Redfern. "I noticed it, too, though. I happened to overhear French gassing something about a raid and a feed to Thompson. But the beggars shut up when I came along. It's queer."

"Looks to me as if it's something up against us," growled Owen. "Better keep our giddy peepers open to-night."

"That's just what I think," said Figgins uneasily. "Anyway, you won't catch me going to sleep to-night until I know those chaps are off. It's jolly queer!"

To Figgins & Co. it certainly was. In the dormitory Figgins tackled several fellows about it, but the only answer he got was a chuckle or a grin. And it made him very exasperated and very uneasy. It made him also all the more resolved to keep awake in case anything was really "on" against them.

But—alas!—for Figgins's resolve. Figgins had had rather a tiring day, and half an hour after lights out Nature won the battle and Figgins drifted off into slumber. The only fellow left awake in the dormitory was George Alfred Grundy. Grundy had also had a tiring day—an extremely tiring day, in fact! But then Grundy was Grundy, with a burning enthusiasm that kept him awake.

When Grundy slipped out of bed at a little after eleven and roused his fellow-raiders for the night's fell work, George Figgins was safely in the Land of Nod. And, but for the fact that Fatty Wynn had indulged not wisely but too well on a supper composed chiefly of lobster, Figgins might still have been there when rising-bell went!

CHAPTER 12. Not a Success!

IT was a most terrific nightmare which awakened Fatty Wynn. Despite the fact that he was a redoubtable trencherman, Fatty rarely—if ever—suffered from indigestion, and he rarely suffered from nightmare.

But the lobster did it. On this particular evening the protesting lobster—or, rather, Fatty's protesting digestive organs—awakened Fatty after a most ferocious nightmare in which he was being chased by an enormous lobster bigger than an elephant.

Though Fatty had run at a terrific rate of speed, the lobster had caught him up and was just sitting on his chest when—Fatty woke up!

Never had Fatty Wynn been more relieved in his life as when he woke up and found it had been only a

nightmare, and not a horrible reality. But he did awake to find himself sitting up in bed streaming with perspiration, and he blinked round the gloomy dormitory in deep thankfulness.

But just as suddenly Fatty's relief fled. His eyes had suddenly become riveted on the dormitory window opposite to his bed. The window was wide open, and he was just in time to see a dark form, outlined for a brief instant against the starlight, and then abruptly vanish.

"Oh, dear!" panted Fatty.

It was a startling thing to see in the middle of the night—especially as the window was at least thirty feet from the ground.

Fatty stared and stared; and then, getting a grip of himself—for the plump junior was no funk—he slipped out of bed and ran across to the open window.

The next moment he was staring round-eyed into the dark well of the Close. For a few silent seconds he sighted nothing, and then his heart almost missed a beat as his eyes picked out shadowy forms stealing across the Close towards the School House.

"M-my hat!" breathed Fatty. "I—I'd better wake Figg!"

He was just turning away when his eyes became riveted on something else—a rope made from twisted sheets which stretched from the ground below to the sill of the window. Fatty's astonished eyes followed it, and in the gloom he saw that the end of the rope was tied to the nearest bed-rail.

Then Fatty Wynn's alarm abruptly fled, and he chuckled. "So that's it!" he murmured. "Some chaps have gone out on the giddy loose, or something. I'll just squint round first."

A moment later Fatty was making a round of the beds in the dormitory, and he chuckled again as he discovered that twelve of them were unoccupied, save for dummies made of bolsters.

Fatty waited no longer. He suddenly remembered Figgins' fears of the evening, and he soon had Figg awake after that.

"Well, I'm hanged!" gasped Figg, as he hurriedly scrambled into his trousers. "Wake the rest, Fatty! I see the giddy game now. Oh, blow it! I must have fallen asleep after all."

The two of them very soon had every fellow left in the dormitory awake, and Figgins roused them quickly to action.

"It's that villain Grundy, of course!" he snapped wrathfully. "He's got the chaps to follow him in a dashed raid on the School House. Goodness knows how he's managed to persuade 'em, but I've a good idea. Oh, the awful idiots!"

"They must be potty to follow that fearful chump!" said Redfern. "But why not let the idiots rip, Figg?"

If the asses want to be let down by that born idiot—

"Why not?" echoed Figg, with withering scorn. "You silly dummy; Grundy's bound to make a muck-up of it. That means a defeat for the New House, doesn't it?"

"Yes, but—"

"We're not allowing it!" snapped Figg fiercely. "Think how Tom Merry and his pals will crow! It'll be one up against the New House—unless we can chip in and prevent it. That's what we're going to do. You chaps ready?"

"Yes!"

A chorus of half-hearted answers came.

"Then come on!"

The next moment Figgins was swarming down the rope of sheets. His companions followed him, and soon all stood on the ground below. The fresh, clean night air, and the exercise of swarming down the rope swept away their sleepiness quickly enough. And now they were up and out the juniors began to feel better.

"After all we may be in time to stop Grundy making a muck of things," said Figgins briskly. "And if we do we'll make hay while the sun shines by having a go at the School House worms."

"Good egg!"

The prospect of a raid on their rivals raised the spirits of Figgins & Co. wonderfully. They were always more than ready for an expedition of this kind. Only—

The trouble was Grundy! If Grundy mucked things up the fat would be in the fire, for the School House fellows were in the majority, and only by taking them completely by surprise could the New House fellows hope to win.

There was no time to waste if they were to do that. Grundy had a perfect genius for putting his foot in it—for making a hash of anything he attempted or took part in. So the New House fellows fairly ran across the quad. They knew how to get into the School House—a far easier matter than getting into the New House after lock-up. It was just a matter of hauling oneself up to the low leads of an outhouse, and from thence to the window of

the lower box-room, the catch of which was known to be broken—an easy matter to an agile junior.

As they ran up in the gloom Figgins was just in time to glimpse a shadowy form vanishing through the window in question.

"Oh, good!" he breathed.

Evidently Grundy & Co. were taking their time—though actually it was Grundy who had caused the delay by falling off the outhouse roof and nearly breaking his valuable neck in the process.

At all events Figgins & Co. were thankful to see them only just ahead. There was time still to prevent Grundy getting to work if they were quick.

Figgins & Co. were quick! They were inside the School House in a matter of seconds, and soon they were hurrying along the familiar corridors and up the stairs—silent and deserted now.

They saw no sign of Grundy & Co. on the way up. But as Figgins peeped into the quiet Fourth Form dormitory he chuckled softly as he sighted a number of shadowy figures in the gloom of the room.

"Quiet!" he breathed. "We'll just slip in and warn Grundy! If the ass will only keep quiet now and leave the rest to me we'll mop the giddy place up with these School House worms. Quiet!"

Figgins advanced into the room, and his chums followed on his heels, the last one closing the door after him—a very necessary precaution, for Figgie neither wanted to bring the Shell on the scene nor to bring a prefect or master. There was likely to be a row soon enough! Figgins did not wish that row to start until Grundy & Co. had been acquainted with their presence, and the parties had joined forces against the common enemy.

But Figgins hadn't, at the moment, counted on George Alfred Grundy!

As Figgins advanced into the room, Grundy—who appeared to be doing something to one of the beds—turned suddenly. The next instant his voice rang out excitedly.

"Look out! Oh, my hat! It's those Shell rotters—Tom Merry's lot! Go for 'em!"

With that Grundy set the example, and went "for 'em!"—the "em!" being the startled Figgins & Co.

"Grundy!" hissed Figgins. "You born—Yoooop!"

But Grundy was beyond hearing a whisper just then. The next moment Figgins went crashing down under the force of Grundy's excited rush.

Bump!

"Stop!" gasped Figgins. Hurt and startled as he was Figgins did not forget the danger. "Stop, you footling—Yooop!"

An involuntary yelp escaped Figgins as something hit him on the head with a painful jar. It was the end of a footer stocking, packed tightly with paper—a really efficient substitute for a pillow, and a much more handy and more easily carried weapon.

Grundy & Co. had each provided themselves with one, in case of need—as Figgins & Co. found out the next few brief, whirling minutes.

For, like Grundy, his followers did not wait to hear anything beyond Grundy's call to arms. They felt that only a sudden and complete break through could save them now. Such a possibility that the newcomers could be Figgins & Co. never even occurred to them. They naturally jumped to the conclusion that the newcomers, whose forms they glimpsed in the dim moonlight, could only be Tom Merry & Co.

Scarcely had Figgins felt the weight of Grundy's stocking when other stockings, equally hard and efficient, were rattling and thumping about the startled heads of his followers.

Thud, thud, thud!

"Oh, my hat!"

"Oh, crums! You awful—Yow-ow!"

The air was soon humming with hearty thuds and yelps and gasps as the padded stockings got to work in real earnest. Grundy & Co., their plans having failed, and with the enemy—as they imagined—between them and the door, were desperate.

Amid a chorus of yelps and gasps and thumps the battle went on in the gloom, hopeless confusion soon reigning supreme. Figgins was already down, and over him sprawled Kerr and Redfern and Lawrence. Having brought no weapons—an omission already regretted by Figgins—they simply staggered and reeled dazedly under the attack.

A dim form sat up in one bed, and then another and another, and startled questions rang out.

"What the dickens—"

"Bai Jove! Whatevah is the mattah?"

"What the dickens! What—what—"

"It's a dashed raid!" came Blake's excited voice from his bed. "Up, you fellows—sharp!"

In a flash Blake was out of bed fumbling for matches. He found some, and next moment the gas flared up.

It lit up a scene that almost made Jack Blake fall down with amazement. He blinked at the battle-royal raging near the dormitory door as if stupefied. Figgins & Co. had given up trying to make matters clear to Grundy & Co. The thudding stockings had quite removed that desire from their minds. They were hurt, and they only wanted to hurt Grundy & Co.

They were doing their best to do that now, using their fists against the stockings of Grundy & Co., the danger from the School House fellows quite forgotten.

"M-mum-my hat!" gasped Blake. "It—it's those New House cads scrapping among themselves, by jingo! Run and bring Tom Merry and his lot here, Gussy—quick, you idiot! We'll soon show those worms what's what!"

Jack Blake grabbed his pillow and joined the fray with a will, his pillow smiting left and right. It scarcely took two seconds for his fellow Fourth-Formers to jump out of bed and follow his example.

That quite settled the New House raiders—both parties!

Alone, the School House Fourth were in the majority, and they very soon made their presence felt. And then a couple of minutes later the door flew open, and Gussy came rushing in, leading a swarm of Shell fellows, with Tom Merry at their head.

That did it. In three minutes all the fight had been thumped out of Grundy & Co., and the hapless and bemused Figgins & Co., and, under Tom Merry's orders, they were tied up and ranged in a row against the wall of the dormitory.

They looked a battered and dishevelled and unhappy gang. Tom Merry chuckled gleefully as they looked at them. From the ferocious glares of Figgins & Co. directed at Grundy, and from their cryptic remarks, Tom had soon gathered what the amazing affair meant. And as they understood the position the triumphant School House fellows gurgled and choked with laughter.

"Oh, my hat!" chortled Tom Merry. "We might have expected Grundy was responsible! Ha, ha, ha! Aren't you glad we made you a present of Grundy, Figgie?"

"I—I—I—" Figgins almost burst with wrath. "I'll smash the born idiot for this—smash him to a pulp!"

"Look here—" Grundy exploded with wrath, but Tom Merry quickly stuffed the end of a sheet into his mouth.

"Quiet, you footling duffer!" he gurgled. "We don't want the beaks here! It's a marvel they haven't heard the row, as it is! Now, chaps, what shall we do with the dear fellows? I fancy this is a School House win, and we're going to make the most of it!"

"They brought some paint and cord with 'em, I see," said Blake, grinning, as he picked up a tin of paint from the floor near one of the beds. "I see the game. They were going to tie us to the beds and paint our chivvies while we slept. Quite a neat wheeze, only—"

"It didn't come off—thanks to Grundy being leader!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Well, what about painting their chivvies?"

There was a groan from the New House unfortunates.

"You—you dare—" panted Figgins.

"You—you dare—" choked Grundy.

"Only I've a better wheeze than that," resumed Tom cheerfully. "Hold on a sec!"

He hurried to his locker, and took out a writing-block and a pen. After scribbling for some moments he held the result before Figgins' eyes. Figgins glared at it. The writing on the block read as follows:

"TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN!

This is to certify that we, the undersigned, members of that casual ward known as the New House, hereby admit that we have been hopelessly dished and done by the young gentlemen of the School House, that we are hopelessly outclassed by them in sports and in japes, and that we hereby humbly acknowledge ourselves to be inferior and below their weight in every possible way, and that

SCHOOL HOUSE is COCKHOUSE!

"Signed—"

"And—and you actually expect us to sign that—that awful lot of fibs?" choked Figgins, going red with wrath and dismay.

"Certainly, old chap!" said Tom pleasantly. "You sign it first, Figgie, and then each of these other chaps must sign it. If you do it nicely, and don't make blots or anything, we'll let you off, and you can go home to your little cots."

"I—I'll see you boiled in oil first!" gasped Figgins. "Why, you cheeky owl, to expect us to sign a thing like that!"

"Oh, all right, then!" said Tom. "Hand that paint here, Blake, and the big brush. We'll paint their faces first, and then we'll paint their hair—faces blue and hair green. I see there's lots of both. After all, I really think it will be more of a score to do that! The paint may come off their chivvies after a time, but they'll not get it out of their hair for weeks, I expect. They'll be just a walking advertisement to tell the world that School House is cockhouse!"

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"
"Whippin', Tom Mewwy!"

The New House fellows almost fainted at the thought. It was certainly a case of Hobson's choice! Indeed, Figgins knew only too well that Tom was right—that it would be far worse to be walking advertisements, as Tom said. They would be the laughing-stock of the school for weeks, showing traces of paint, to remind all and sundry of their defeat.

It could not be! Anything was better than that!

"Oh, you—you awful rotters!" panted Figgins, almost weeping in dismay at the prospect. "You—you daren't do that, you cads!"

"Just try us!" smiled Tom. "See how it looks on Grundy, for instance!" Tom dabbed the brush on Grundy's nose, turning it into a vivid green. "How's that? Well, are you going to sign it, old chap?"

"You—you—you—"

"Be quick!" grinned Tom. "I'll give you two minutes—not a second more."

"Oh, my hat! Oh crumbs! Oh, great pip!"

Figgins gave a hollow groan. From the gleam in Tom Merry's eyes he knew it was hopeless to beg for mercy.

"I—I won't!" he stuttered at last. "I'll see you bottled first! I'm not jolly well—Groooough!"

A dab of green paint touched his nose, leaving it a shining green hue.

"No good, Figgy!" groaned Kerr. "They've got us this time! Better climb down and sign—much better than the other."

"One minute gone!" said Tom ruthlessly.

Figgy glared round at the grinning faces of the School House fellows; but he saw no hope there.

"Oh, you—you beasts!" he gasped. "I'll jolly well—"

"Yes, or no!" said Tom ruthlessly, holding the dripping brush before Figgy's glowering eyes. "Yes, or—"

"Yes!" panted Figgy. "Oh, won't I just make you rotters sit up for this. And I'll get that paper back—never fear!"

Figgy's followers breathed in great relief. Unpleasant as it was, they much preferred to sign than to make the acquaintance of the paint. Writhing with rage, Figgins took the pen and signed the document, Tom releasing him for the purpose. It was done at last.

"Thanks," remarked Tom Merry coolly, placing the folded document carefully in the pocket of his pyjamas. "Much obliged! Now you can go off to bed, kids!"

"Not yet!" said Figgins, his voice trembling with wrath. "We've got that fooling idiot Grundy to thank for this, and we're jolly well going to thank him here and now. Collar him and hold him, you chaps."

"Yes, rather!"

"Look here, what— Here, leggo! Why, you—" Grundy's voice ended in a gurgle as Figgins clapped a hand over his mouth. And what happened next Grundy was not in a fit state to realise for several whirling moments. As one man Figgins, Kerr, Fatty Wynn, Redfern, and the rest of the New House fellows fell upon him, and grabbing a stocking each they smote him hip and thigh. He gasped and gurgled and struggled desperately but all in vain. Figgins & Co. were not in the mood to be merciful with Grundy.

Nor were they. They ended up by painting his hair green and his face blue, and when they had finished with the great George Alfred he was a most dreadful sight. He sat on the dormitory floor, and he gasped and panted and gasped as if for a wager. Then Figgins & Co.—which party now included French and Jimson and the rest of the erstwhile followers—left him there and departed amidst hysterical gurgles and suppressed laughter of their School House enemies.

Grundy's first day as a New House man had been full of incident; but it could scarcely have been called a success! None the less, Grundy was Grundy; he was a sticker, and Figgins & Co. were to discover that they hadn't finished with the New House recruit or his ambitious programme!

THE END.

(Now look out for "Who Wants Grundy?"—next Wednesday's brilliant story of the cheery chums of St. Jim's.)

THE ROOKWOOD DICTATOR!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

Amazing Story of Jimmy Silver & Co.,
the Heroes of Rookwood.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

Jimmy Silver & Co., the Chums of Rookwood, angered by the persecution of Mark Carthew, a bullying prefect of the Sixth, form a secret organisation called the Fascist Band of Rookwood.

Carthew is one day brought up for trial before the band, all disguised in white robes, and given the ragging of his life. The Fascists are careful to cover up their tracks by electing only a few of their number to act on each occasion.

Next on the list of victims are three of Carthew's cronies—Knuckles, Cutesby and Frampton. These three bullies are taken before the Grand High Council of the Fascist Band of Rookwood, and dealt with accordingly.

Later, Lattrey of the Fourth bumps into Captain Punter, a rascally bookmaker, who is seeking vengeance upon Jimmy Silver & Co., at whose hands he has suffered. Lattrey agrees to deliver a message from the captain to Carthew. Whilst Lattrey is in the Sixth-Former's study, however, Carthew throws up his desk and discovers just inside, a large white card, bearing the following inscription: "HANDS OFF THE FOURTH!—THE DICTATOR." In a flaming rage he turns on Lattrey.

"A likely yarn of yours, this," he roars. "Why, you're one of these Fascists. I've seen you hanging about the corridor. Hold out your hand!"

(Now read on.)

"I'm not, I tell you!" shouted Lattrey furiously.

"It wasn't half an hour ago!" snapped Carthew.

"I saw you; and it isn't easy for a fag to get into the Sixth Form corridor without being spotted! Hold out your hand, I tell you!"

"I tell you I didn't—yoooooop!"

Carthew made a leap.

He was quite beside himself at that moment.

The shadow of the Dictator, and the effort of keeping his hands off the junior he suspected, had told heavily on Carthew. Quite how he had restrained himself from slaying Tubby Muffin in the quad he did not know. And the card bearing the warning of the Dictator was more than he could stand.

His grasp closed on Lattrey, and the ashplant rose and fell on the hapless junior's shoulders. The dust rose in clouds, and Lattrey's yells filled the corridor.

"Whooooop! Yooooop! You rotter! Ow-wow-wow-wow!"

There was the sound of doors opening along the corridor. Other seniors were beginning to wonder what was occurring in Carthew's study. There was a knock at the door, and Carthew paused.

He jerked open the door and beheld the surprised features of Bulkeley. The next moment Carthew had whirled Lattrey through the opening, and Bulkeley skipped out of the way only just in time.

Slam!

The door closed in Bulkeley's face, and Lattrey sprawled, gasping and groaning, at his feet.

Within the study Carthew threw himself into an easy-chair to grapple with the problem of Punter—recurring now that his fortnight's grace had elapsed.

"Hold on a minute, you fellows—"

"Can't stop, Lattrey!" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Hop out of the way," added Baby.

Mark Lattrey's eyes gleamed at the Fistical Four.

It was the day after his interview with Captain Punter, and Lattrey had thought out his position.

Carthew, quite unintentionally, had helped to harden the resolve to which the cad was forced. A little reflection had convinced Lattrey that his career at Rookwood depended on his compliance with the captain's plans, rascally as they were. And the thought of personal danger spurred him to the decision. Smartering still, both in body and mind, from Carthew's licking, Lattrey sunk his scruples. He accented the Fistical Four now in the faint hope of being able to raise the sum of three pounds to pay off Punter. Even if he had the money, the man would probably force him into his scheme of revenge, but there was at least a chance.

The Fistical Four were in a hurry. They did not suspect that, unless they footed Lattrey's gambling debt they were to be the victims of a dastardly plot.

"But, I say—" began Lattrey, grasping at Jimmy Silver's arm.

"Uncle James" was the most good-natured of the four; the softest, as Lovell often described it. Uncle James lived up to his reputation now. He could not help noticing how worried Lattrey looked.

"Get it over quick, if you've anything to say," he said, pausing. "Anything a chap can do?"

"I'm in a hole—the very dickens of a hole!" muttered Lattrey, lowering his eyes.

"Well, choke up the giddy worst!" ejaculated Jimmy impatiently. "I suppose, if you want something, you can say so?"

"I'm in debt," said Lattrey.

"Oh!"

"Gambling!" said Arthur Edward Lovell, in deep disgust.

"I was—was swindled!" muttered Lattrey. "I owe a man three pounds, and if I don't pay this afternoon he'll come up to give me away! Lend me three pounds, Silver, and I'll pay you back somehow—honest Injun!"

"Phew!"

Jimmy Silver whistled.

Lattrey's appeal was pitiable enough. The gambler was paying for his "little flutter" in fear and apprehension. The Fistical Four would have helped him quickly enough; but three pounds was a sum beyond most junior pockets.

"How much have we got, you chaps?" asked Jimmy Silver.

Lattrey's face brightened.

"Stony!" announced Lovell calmly. "My last son went into picnic supplies!"

"What about you, Raby?"

"Three bob."

"We can't raise it," said Newcome.

"Who's the man?" asked Lovell, with a sudden start.

"Captain Punter. You fellows know him," said Lattrey, licking his lips.

"My hat! That rotter again!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"By Jove!" Arthur Edward Lovell's face was alight with enthusiasm. "If it's Punter, we'll interview him again, what? We warned him to clear out of the district, last—"

"And he hasn't gone!"

"He will after this dose!" said Lovell grimly. "Come on, you claps! This will give us an appetite for the picnic!"

"Rather!"

"Leave Punter to us, Lattrey!" said Jimmy Silver, grinning.

"Look here—" began Lattrey, in sudden alarm.

"Bow-wow! If Punter's still in the land of the living after we've done with him, he won't feel like coming within a hundred miles of Rookwood!" grinned Lovell. "Come on, Jimmy!"

And the Fistical Four disappeared towards the gates in great glee. There was little doubt that Lovell, at least, welcomed the opportunity of "handling" Punter again for his dealing with Teddy Lovell of the Third.

Lattrey stared after them with mixed feelings.

The three pounds were not forthcoming, and Captain Punter appeared "booked" for another licking. That did not worry the cad of the Fourth; but it was sure to increase Punter's already overflowing enmity. There was no help for it; the captain's scheme had to be gone through with.

Lattrey was cool and calm when he turned back into the House. On his actions during the next hour or two depended his future at Rookwood; he could not afford to make mistakes.

His first journey was to the dormitory.

It was no secret in the Fourth that the hoods and robes of the Fascists were pillow-cases and sheets respectively, and Lattrey intended to make good use of his knowledge now.

He took a couple of sheets and two pillow-cases from the big cupboard at the end of the dormitory, and hastened downstairs to his study. Two eye-holes in the pillow-cases, and black masks cut from an odd scrap of material, occupied him only a few minutes.

When Lattrey left the study he carried a small bag containing the sheets and pillow-cases. In the corridor and in the Hall fortune was with him, for he met nobody. Fellows were either on the footer-field, or picnicking, like the Fistical Four. The cad passed unnoticed across the quad, and had reached the gates when a voice hailed him:

"Hallo, Lattrey! Whither away?"

Lattrey glanced round, his face white.

It was Mornington who had called. Morny was lounging, as he often was on a half-holiday.

"I'm going out!" observed Lattrey shortly.

"So I observe, dear old bean. Care for my company, or is it private? Erroll, my staunch pal an' guidin' hand, is busy chasin' a ball on the footer field. I sneaked off when he wasn't lookin', you see."

"Sorry, I'm not looking for company," answered Lattrey, nodding.

He strode out of gates, and did not glance back until he had gone several hundred yards along the lane.

When he did, he noted with relief that Mornington was not following.

It was a short distance to the old stile at which he had arranged to meet Captain Punter, and Lattrey was early. He dropped his bag on the farther side of the stile and sat there, waiting. After a few minutes a well-known figure loomed up, and Lattrey slipped down from his perch.

As the figure approached, he stared.

It was the same figure, but there was a difference.

Captain Punter was lurching; and he had lost his cane. As he came closer, Lattrey could see that his clothes were rent and dusty, and that his tie streamed from a broken collar. His spats were dragging in the dust as he walked, and of his hat there was no sign. In his hand the captain held a handkerchief, stained a dark crimson. He applied it continually to his aquiline nose.

"By gad!" murmured Lattrey.

He did not need to be told what had happened.

Captain Punter had fought a duel of Jimmy Silver & Co.—as Lattrey had half expected. And, judging by appearances, the Fistical Four had driven home their arguments with even greater success than before.

The sharper caught sight of Lattrey and lurched towards him. He collapsed on the stile, gasping and swearing beneath his breath.

"Great—great Scott! What's happened?" asked the junior, though he knew well enough.

"Those—those young rascals—hounds—" Captain Punter broke into a string of oburgation that shocked Lattrey's ears, hardened as they were.

"I say, put the brakes on a bit!" he urged, after a minute or two. "You fell in with Silver & Co.?"

"I'll—I'll—I'll not rest until I've got them chucked out of Rookwood on their necks—chucked out and branded as hooligans!" snarled the captain, all the venom of his nature aroused.

"Go easy!" advised Lattrey coolly. "I've done my part of the job—it's time for you to do yours."

"Gad! You've got the robes you mentioned?"

"Yes. And Lovell's stick—"

"Great! What about Carthew?"

"We shall have to take our chance with him," said Lattrey. "There's quite a good likelihood of his coming out for a stroll some time before locking up—and, as you know, Silver and the rest will be out of gates for hours yet."

"You should have made certain that Carthew will come out, you young fool!"

"Too jolly risky!" ejaculated Lattrey. "When he's found stunned, I don't want somebody to remember that I got him out of gates. Besides, I couldn't do it. He's on his ear, the rotten cad, as I told you!"

Captain Punter smiled, in spite of his injuries.

And he was severely injured.

Both his eyes were dark and swollen, and were certain to be a rich black on the morrow. His aquiline nose was swollen, too, and he had continually to dab at it with his handkerchief. His clothes were rent in several places, and covered in mud and dust.

It was little wonder that, after that terrific ragging at the hands of the Fistical Four, his venom had increased in intensity, if that were possible. And the captain little suspected that it was due to Lattrey that he had captured that last ragging.

It was all filed to the account of the Fistical Four. Expulsion and shame were to be their reward for it all—if Captain Punter could engineer it.

(Continued on next page.)

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The Rookwood Dictator!

(Continued from previous page.)

"You say there's a chance of seeing Carthew at any minute?" he asked, beginning to recover his breath a little. Lattrey nodded.

"Better get the sheet and things on, then. We can crouch behind the hedge."

"I say, you're going to hit him, aren't you?" asked Lattrey uneasily. "It's nothing to do with me if it all comes out. I shall jolly well swear that I didn't think you meant any harm!"

"I shan't hurt the fellow, you fool!" hissed the captain. "Get into your rig, and keep your mouth shut!"

In the shelter of the thick hedge, Lattrey and the captain draped themselves in the robes and masks of the Fascist Band of Rookwood. In the bright light of day, they were sufficient to startle any beholder. Certainly Carthew would not expect to encounter the shrouded members of the Fascists in the sunny lane.

The wait was long and tedious, and to Lattrey especially irksome. He grew more and more "nervy" as the time

wore on, but Captain Punter was implacable. He did not appear to notice the passing of the minutes.

"Oh, my hat! I'm fed-up with this!" growled Lattrey, after perhaps a couple of hours.

"Quiet!"

There were footsteps in the lane—the hundredth time the concealed pair had peered hopefully through the leaves. Lattrey grunted, and relapsed into silence. It was the captain who startled him with a hiss of exaltation.

"Carthew!"

Lattrey stiffened. Now that the time had come, he found his knees trembling. He laid a hand on the captain's arm, his face white with fear.

"Punter! You can't—"

"Quiet, you fool!"

Captain Punter was as cool as ice—and his face was set and grim. His grasp closed more tightly on the stick Lovell's stick—in his hand. He peered through the leaves at the fellow who was approaching along the lane—Mark Carthew, of the Sixth.

(Look out for the continuation of this splendid Rookwood story in next week's GEM.)

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