

The

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EVERY  
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## THE SCHOOL HOUSE "FILM STARS!"

An amazing incident in the grand long school story of Tom Merry & Co., inside.



A ROUSING LONG STORY OF SCHOOL-LIFE & ADVENTURE—

# Grundy's / Movie



## CHAPTER 1.

### A Present for Grundy!

**"ROTTEN!"**

George Alfred Grundy, of the Shell at St. Jim's, spoke as though he meant it.

Wilkins and Gunn, his study-mates and satellites, looked rather surprised. The warm spring sunshine streamed upon the quad, the old elms by the school wall were bursting into leaf, and dinner-time was not far off. From the point of view of Wilkins and Gunn, life seemed grateful and comforting. But Grundy apparently thought otherwise.

"Rotten!" he repeated, with emphasis.

"What's biting you, old man?" asked Wilkins anxiously.

"Thinking about that remittance you expected from your uncle, that didn't turn up?" asked Gunn sympathetically.

"Well, of course—"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,051.

"Blow the remittance!" snorted Grundy. "Who troubles about a piffling remittance?"

"H'm!"

Wilkins and Gunn smiled slightly. Both of them, as a matter of fact, troubled quite a lot about remittances. Uncharitable fellows had sometimes expressed the opinion that they troubled more about Grundy's remittances than about Grundy himself!

"Some of you chaps haven't got minds above a paltry remittance!" said Grundy witheringly. "Blow money! I was thinking about something more important than that!"

"Oh!"

"What I meant when I said 'Rotten!' was that I'm getting fed-up with the rotten way I'm footling away my time at this school. Savvy?"

Wilkins and Gunn looked puzzled.

"I suppose you mean in class, old man," said Gunn, eyeing his leader rather doubtfully. "Of course, we know you don't exactly shine in the Form-room—"



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

# Camera!



## By MARTIN CLIFFORD

Little does Grundy's uncle dream of the trouble he is starting when he sends a present of a movie-camera to his favourite nephew. For that camera, as if sharing some of the great George Alfred Grundy's characteristics, is responsible for a chain of events that looks like ending in disaster for its owner. All's well that ends well, however, and Grundy's movie-camera turns up trumps in a manner that saves the burly Shell junior from certain expulsion.

"What!" yelled Grundy, in a voice that made it quite clear that Gunn was on the wrong track. "Why, you cheeky idiot, I'll—"

"Sorry!" gasped Gunn hastily. "What are you getting at, then?"

"What the thump do you think I'm getting at?" grunted Grundy. "Sport, of course!"

"Oh!"  
"Here am I, the finest all-round footballer, cricketer, and boxer in the Shell," said Grundy modestly, "spending nearly every Wednesday and Saturday afternoon, mooning around watching others play! It's rotten!"

Wilkins and Gunn understood now. It was Grundy's old, old grievance being ventilated once more!

"But you can always join in a pick-up game," objected Wilkins. "There's no reason why you shouldn't spend every half playing, if you want to."

"What, in a pick-up game?" sneered Grundy. "While Tom Merry and his pals swank about playing for the School Junior Eleven? Thanks!"

Wilkins gave a shrug.

"Well, if you won't do that, old man, I suppose you can't expect the half-holidays to be very exciting," he said.

"Rot!" growled Grundy. "I ought to be in the Junior Eleven, and Tom Merry knows it! One of these days I expect he'll see reason, and give me my place. But in the

meantime it's simply rotten to think of the time I'm wasting!"

"Blessed if I see that you are wasting time," said Gunn. "We're always with you on a half when we're not playing, and I consider we have a tip-top time."

"Same here," agreed Wilkins. "If it's not the Wayland Cinema, we usually go roller-skating, or have a bike-ride and tea out, or something. What are you grumbling at, Grundy?"

"Pictufes and roller-skating!" sniffed Grundy. "If that's not wasting time, what is? I tell you I'm fed-up with the rotten afternoons I'm having! If something exciting doesn't happen soon on a half-holiday I think I shall bust!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"What can a chap do with himself when he's more or less barred from games?" demanded Grundy bitterly. "Go out and just fuddle about like I'm doing—that's all! Kill time—that's what it amounts to!"

Wilkins and Gunn put on appropriately sympathetic expressions, and gave up the argument. To argue with Grundy was like arguing with a brick-wall—they had had some!

Wilkins and Gunn, anyway, had to admit to themselves that there was something in their leader's "grouse." George Alfred Grundy did not meet with a lot of encouragement to show himself on the playing-fields at St. Jim's. He had a style that did not commend itself to the other players. At cricket he usually "spread-eagled" his own wicket and injured a player or two with the ball while fielding; and at football, more often than not, he managed to kick the ball into his own goal, and "lay out" quite a number of the other fellows into the bargain. Consequently, Grundy was not usually received on Little Side with open arms. Quite the reverse, in fact.

As a result, he very often found himself on half-holidays just "mooching" about, killing time. And to a fellow of Grundy's disposition, that state of affairs was, as he expressed it himself, "Rotten!"

"Well, cheer up, old bean!" said Wilkins affectionately, as they sauntered down towards the gates. "There's old Cripps, the carrier, unloading some parcels at Taggles' lodge. Let's go and see if Nunky has sent you a hamper instead of the remittance."

The leader of Study No. 3 grunted, but allowed his faithful followers to link their arms in his and conduct him down to the school gates.

Cripps, the local carrier, was just driving away as they reached Taggles' lodge. Taggles, the crusty old porter of St. Jim's, was engaged in sorting over the batch of parcels that Cripps had left.

"Anything for me, Taggles?" asked Grundy indifferently. "Which there is a parcel for you, Master Grundy," answered Taggles, with civility, which seemed to indicate that he anticipated a tip. "Rather awkward shape; p'r'aps I'd better take it up to your study for you."

"Rot! We can handle it all right; where is it?" asked Grundy.

Taggles, with his visions of a tip suddenly fading away, grunted, and turned away again without answering, leaving the juniors to find the parcel.

There were not many to choose from, and they soon found the one that was addressed to Grundy. The label was addressed in the well-known scrawl of Grundy's fond uncle, and Wilkins and Gunn looked very cheerful as they noticed that fact.

"Good old Nunky!" said Wilkins affectionately. "Why can't we all have uncles like yours, Grundy?"

"Ah, why can't we?" sighed Gunn. "Wonder what's inside! Tuck, for a giddy cert!"



Grundy picked up the awkward-looking parcel and regarded it in a rather puzzled manner.

"Doesn't feel like tuck," he remarked. "There's something solid inside. And look at the label: 'Please handle with great care.'"

Wilkins and Gunn nodded, and looked a little less enthusiastic. They had hoped that the parcel contained tuck, for tuck was a commodity which Grundy would be able to share with them. If Uncle Grundy, however, had taken it into his head to send his nephew books, or something equally unsatisfactory from the point of view of the inner man, the interest of Wilkins and Gunn was not going to be sustained; that was fairly certain.

Grundy turned the parcel over, with growing interest. The prospect of a tuck hamper had not excited Grundy in the smallest degree, for the mind of the great man of the Shell dwelt on higher things than tuck. But the prospect of an interesting and unusual present was a different matter.

Grundy's uncle was very fond of Grundy. It seemed strange to some of the juniors that anybody could be fond of Grundy, but all St. Jim's knew that the celebrated Uncle Grundy was. As Monty Lowther observed, there was no accounting for tastes.

Uncle Grundy sent his nephew frequent remittances of a size that made the mouths of most of the Shell fellows water. Apart from that, he was always sending along hampers and little presents like boxing-gloves, dumb-bells, and so on. Grundy conjectured that the parcel he held in his hands fell into the category of miscellaneous presents. But it obviously did not contain gymnastic "kit," and he carried it off from Taggles' lodge in a state of great curiosity.

"Going to take it up to the study?" asked Wilkins.

Grundy shook his head.

"I think I'll have a squirt at it down here, first. Can't imagine what it can be."

Wilkins and Gunn followed the curious Grundy to the seclusion of a sheltered corner near the porter's lodge, and helped their leader to untie the cord that bound the mysterious parcel.

There was a good deal of wrapping to be removed before the present itself came to light. But Grundy soon shifted it, and drew out the principal article contained within.

Wilkins and Gunn pulled rather wry faces as they saw it. "A blessed camera!" said Wilkins, in disgust. "I really thought your uncle had more sense, Grundy!"

"Half a minute!" said Grundy, examining the present with gleaming eyes. "This isn't an ordinary camera, you chaps! It's a moving-picture camera!"

"What?"

"A moving-picture camera! Fact! Here's the socket for the handle; and there's a book of instructions among that wrapping down there, by gum! A 'movie'-camera, you know! What do you think of that?"

"Great Scott!"

"So it is!"

Wilkins and Gunn displayed more interest in Grundy's present again. They were still a little disappointed to think that the parcel had not contained tuck. Nevertheless, a moving-picture camera was a moving-picture camera.

"Well, that's not so bad, I must say," admitted Gunn.

"No reason why we shouldn't get some fun out of it," said Wilkins. "Here's a letter tied up with the tripod here. See what he says, old man."

Grundy opened the letter and read it aloud to his two chums:

"My dear Nephew,—I expect you will be surprised to receive this present. I want you to make good use of it, and to take pictures of as many of your school events as possible. I am sure that a collection of such films will form a most interesting record of your school life, to which you will be able to refer with pride and pleasure in the years to come.—Your affectionate uncle,  
ROBERT GRUNDY."

"Jolly thoughtful of the old bird!" remarked Gunn approvingly.

"Hear, hear!" chimed in Wilkins cordially. "We can take some pictures to-morrow afternoon if you like, Grundy. There's nothing on in the footer line."

Grundy nodded cheerfully.

"Just what I thought," he said. "It'll be top-hole to have them developed afterwards, and run our own picture-show in No. 3—what?"

"French, in the New House, has a magic-lantern that converts into a cinematograph projector," said Gunn. "We can borrow that."

"What's wrong with buying one?" asked Grundy, in the careless manner of one to whom money is no object. "I'll see to that, don't you worry! Anyway, I think nunky's turned up trumps this time, and no mistake!"

"Oh, rather!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,051.

"No need to worry about how to spend holidays now," said Grundy, with a chuckle. "Blow sport! There's more fun in taking real moving-pictures than in playing soccer or cricket. It might even lead to my becoming a great film producer. You never know!"

"Great Scott!"

"Still, that's looking ahead a bit," admitted Grundy. "For the present, I'm satisfied to know that if the weather holds good I'm going to enjoy myself to-morrow afternoon. And now, we'll shift this outfit up to the study before dinner."

"Rather!"

Wilkins and Gunn very willingly lent a hand with the work of re-packing Grundy's moving-picture camera. After that, the three started back to the School House again. And Grundy's face, which on the outward journey had been clouded and glum, now wore a look of serene contentment.

## CHAPTER 2.

### A Quad Wrangle!

"HI, there, you School House worms!" Grundy & Co. halted abruptly in their passage across the quad as that shout fell on their ears. "New House cads!" growled Grundy, staring round in the direction from which the yell had come. "What the dickens do they want?"

Wilkins and Gunn also turned round, and saw with surprise that Figgins and a crowd of New House juniors were advancing towards them, carrying in their midst a struggling figure in Etons. Grundy tenderly deposited his precious parcel on the grass, then adopted a warlike attitude and faced the newcomers.

"What's the idea, Figgins?" he bawled. "Only gentlemen allowed on this side of the quad, you know!"

"What are you doing here, then?" asked Figgins cheerfully. "We haven't come because we like it, anyway!"

"Far from it!" chuckled Kerr. "Wouldn't be found dead here, in fact!"

"Rats!" snorted Grundy. "Who have you got there, anyway?"

"One of the giddy specimens you call men on your side!" grinned Figgins. "Name of Quack, or Sack, or something, I believe! We found him smoking behind our woodshed, so we're just dumping him back on you! Here he is!"

The New House crowd, at a signal from Figgins, dropped their burden, and there was a howl of pain and rage as the hapless School House junior met the hard, unsympathetic ground.

"Yaroooop! You rotters! Grooogh!"

"Racke!" exclaimed Wilkins and Gunn simultaneously.

"Oh, that's his name, is it?" said Figgins. "Well, just keep him over in this workhouse of yours for the future, will you? We don't want to be contaminated!"

Aubrey Racke, of the Shell, rose painfully to his feet, and shook his fist furiously at the grinning New House fellows. Grundy eyed him balefully.

"Is that right about the smoking, Racke?" he growled.

"What if it is?" hooted Racke. "Nothing to do with them, or you, is it? Oh, dear! Grooogh!"

"Mean to say you admit going over to the New House disgracing your own House by smoking rotten fags?" roared Grundy.

"Yes, I do!" snapped Racke. "We're not all namby-pamby spoon-fed Good Little Erics like you! Hang you, and hang both the blessed Houses!"

Having said that, Aubrey Racke hurriedly turned on his heel, with the intention of getting out of reach of Grundy as quickly as possible.

But Grundy was a little too quick for Racke. His big hand reached out like lightning, and the cad of the Shell felt himself swung back before he had time to take a step.

"By gum!" said Grundy, holding Racke in a grip of iron, and glaring at him with bulging eyes. "So that's what you think about things, is it? By gum!"

"Nice lot of fellows they get in the School House, don't they?" grinned Kerr.

"You hear that?" snorted Grundy, shaking the furious Racke to emphasise his remarks. "Through your rotten smoky ways, those cads can crow over us! By gad, I'll show you!"

He put his hand into Racke's inside pocket and drew out a gold cigarette-case.

"Let down your House, would you?" he growled. "This is what I think of your blessed cigarettes, anyway!"

He emptied the contents of the case in a stream on the grass and stamped on them until they were hardly recognisable as cigarettes. Whatever happened, it was quite certain that Racke would never smoke that little batch.

"You interfering fool!" hissed the cad of the Shell between his teeth. "Give me back my cigarette-case before you bring one of the beaks here, hang you!"



As Racke mounted the stairs, nursing his hands, he turned and gave Grundy a bitter look. "Hang you!" he hissed. "I'll get my own back for this, you interfering fool! I'll see that you suffer—you and Ratcliff! Just wait!"

(See Chapter 4.)



Grundy slipped the case back into Racke's pocket, then released the black sheep of the School House, and pugnaciously squared up to him.

"Now put up your fists!" he said grimly. "I'll teach you to disgrace us!"

Aubrey Racke glared at Grundy almost speechlessly. "You—you— What the thump for?" he spluttered. "I don't want to scrap with you!"

"Don't suppose you do!" retorted Grundy, with a grim chuckle. "That's nothing to do with it! Put up your hands, I tell you!"

The New House juniors gathered round cheerfully at the prospect of a "scrap." Wilkins and Gunn, however, looked rather alarmed.

"Go slow, Grundy!" urged Gunn, with an uneasy glance in the direction of Mr. Railton's study window.

"Leave it till another time, old man," advised Wilkins. "Rot! I'm going to teach this smoky bounder a lesson here and now!" declared Grundy. "Put 'em up, now, Racke, or I'll lay you over my knee and spank you!"

Looking rather white, and biting his lips with anger, Racke reluctantly put up his hands and made a sudden rush at Grundy.

The great man of the Shell grunted as Racke's knuckles crashed on to his nose; a moment later he was wading in to the battle with a right good will.

"Go it, ye cripples!" sang out Figgins.  
 "Never knew they could scrap in the School House before!" remarked Kerr, with a grin.  
 "It isn't a scrap—it's a race!" said French.  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

The scrap certainly was rather a one-sided affair; in a few seconds it had degenerated into a chase round the "ring" with Grundy as the pursuer, and Racke as the pursued. Racke had given up all pretence to fighting.

At that stage, the affair might well have fizzled out. But unfortunately, just as Grundy was preparing to give Racke a final tap on the jaw, a figure in cap and gown came hurrying across the quad, and Wilkins and Gunn, with a groan, recognised Mr. Ratcliff, the ill-tempered Housemaster of the New House.

"Cave!" hissed Gunn.  
 "Chuck it, Grundy! Here's Ratty!"  
 "Oh crumbs!"  
 Grundy hastily dropped his hands, and abandoned the fight, and Racke, gasping painfully from his efforts,



dabbed a streaming nose with his pocket handkerchief and tried to slip away unobserved. Mr. Ratcliff, however, noticed him, and motioned him back.

"Stop, all of you!" he said harshly. "I forbid any boy to leave this spot. Now, what is the meaning of this disgraceful brawl?"

"Oh crikey! It's not a brawl, sir!" gasped Grundy. "Just a little scrap—nothing much really!"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Ratcliff acidly. "Possibly your Housemaster will be a better judge of that than you, Grundy. I believe I observed you engaged in a brutal encounter with Racke. What was the cause of the fight?"

"H'm!" Grundy hesitated. "It was a difference of opinion between me and Racke," he explained, rather weakly.

"A difference of opinion?" repeated Mr. Ratcliff, compressing his thin lips. "Settled by hooliganism, in the manner that seems to be encouraged in the School House! What are you New House boys doing here?"

"Well, I'm afraid it's our fault that the scrap began, sir," said Figgins, eyeing his Housemaster rather glumly. "You see—"

"Stop, Figgins! What is that on the grass? Kindly move your right foot, Grundy!"

Grundy reluctantly obeyed, and Aubrey Racke's white face went whiter still as he saw the crumpled remains of his cigarettes exposed to Mr. Ratcliff's horrified gaze.

"You see, sir—" mumbled Figgins, in a hopeless attempt to attract the master's attention away from them.

"Silence, Figgins! I demand to know the name of the boy to whom those cigarettes belong," rapped out Mr. Ratcliff. "Are they yours, Grundy?"

"No, sir!" growled Grundy, his rugged face reddening at the suggestion.

"Very well, then! Whose are they?" demanded Mr. Ratcliff irritably. "Unless the boy owns up immediately, I will take the matter to the Head!"

Aubrey Racke gulped. An inquiry by the Head would soon eliminate the others from suspicion, and it was just as well, therefore, to avoid getting deeper into the mire by owning up at once.

"They belonged to me, sir!" he said, as the Housemaster's beady eyes rested on him.

"A School House boy, of course!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "Very well, Racke. This matter will be investigated. You New House boys will each take a hundred lines for encouraging these young hooligans. Racke and Grundy, you will follow me to Mr. Railton's study!"

Mr. Ratcliff marched off towards the School House, grimly exultant at the prospect of indulging in a "dig" at Mr. Railton.

Grundy, with a grunt, picked up his discarded parcel, and followed the irascible New House master. Racke brought up in the rear, his eyes glittering with rage. If looks could have killed, the look he fixed on both Mr. Ratcliff and Grundy would have caused them to expire on the spot. Fortunately, looks couldn't.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### Trouble for Two!

A SOUR smile hovered about the thin lips of Mr. Ratcliff as he led the way into Mr. Railton's room. It was a rare event for a smile of any sort to appear on his unamiable face; but the opportunity which had presented itself to him of lodging a complaint with the Housemaster of the School House had that effect.

Mr. Ratcliff was not a very lovable individual. Unlike Mr. Railton of the School House, he did not wink at the harmless manifestations of youthful exuberance occasionally displayed by the boys in his charge. Mr. Ratcliff did not approve of exuberance of spirits in boys; he did not approve of boys, for that matter.

Furthermore, he did not approve of the leniency with which Mr. Railton was inclined to treat such "rags" and "scraps" as came to his notice. "Ratty" abhorred the harmless and necessary House feuds with which the juniors relieved the monotony at St. Jim's. Fighting, he detested; any bout, however friendly and sportsmanlike it might be, was simply an exhibition of brutality and hooliganism to him. He simply could not understand Mr. Railton's tolerant attitude towards these things, and he took every opportunity he could of letting his more amiable colleague know what his own attitude was.

Mr. Railton glanced up inquiringly from his desk as Mr. Ratcliff, with Grundy and Racke at his heels, entered the room.

"Well, Mr. Ratcliff?"

"I have brought these two boys to you, Mr. Railton," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I have just put a stop to a particularly

brutal and degrading fight between them, almost beneath the window of this very room."

There was a suspicion of a sneer in his closing remark, and Mr. Railton frowned.

"Indeed!" he remarked, bestowing a rather sharp glance on his colleague. "It is extraordinary that I should not have heard it, then, Mr. Ratcliff. I have been here for the last half-hour."

Mr. Ratcliff shrugged his shoulders.

"Nevertheless, sir, the fact remains that this disgusting exhibition of hooliganism was actually in progress when I crossed the quad five minutes ago. I immediately put a stop to it, of course, and I considered it my duty to bring the matter to your notice."

"That was very good of you, Mr. Ratcliff," said Mr. Railton, with an inflection in his voice that was not lost on the other. "I will interrogate Grundy and Racke, and administer a suitable punishment."

Mr. Ratcliff rubbed his bony hands together in a manner that was almost cheerful.

"I am afraid I have not told you all yet," he said. "Owing to my intervention in the dispute, I was able to find out that one of these boys has been guilty of a very serious misdemeanour."

"Dear me! May I inquire the nature of the misdemeanour?" asked Mr. Railton, raising his eyebrows.

"I am sure, sir, you will be shocked to hear that Racke had in his possession a number of cigarettes," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I judged that they were in some way associated with the quarrel—that I leave to you to investigate."

Mr. Railton glanced at Racke with a frown of disapproval and annoyance. He was not without his suspicions that Racke was addicted to a surreptitious smoke now and again. But it was rather exasperating to have evidence in support of his suspicions brought to him by a New House master—above all, Mr. Ratcliff.

"It will, I feel sure, come as a shock to you, as it came to me, to know that one of your boys is addicted to the vicious habit of cigarette-smoking," went on Mr. Ratcliff, still smiling rather sourly. "I have no doubt you will consider that the offence merits severe punishment."

"If Racke has been guilty of carrying cigarettes on him undoubtedly he will be punished," said Mr. Railton sharply. "I must thank you for calling my attention to the matter, Mr. Ratcliff. You may safely leave the matter in my hands."

Mr. Ratcliff nodded.

"I should not think of interfering, of course," he said. "Nevertheless, I think it advisable that I should stay and listen to your interrogation of the boys. A number of my own boys were on the scene, and I should like to know whether they were involved in any way. If you have no objection, Mr. Railton—"

"None whatever," said Mr. Railton stiffly. "You may certainly remain if you wish."

He turned to Racke and Grundy and eyed them severely. "Racke—Grundy—you hear what Mr. Ratcliff says! Do you admit the truth of the charges that are brought against you?"

"No, I don't, sir!" answered Grundy emphatically. "For one thing, it wasn't a brutal and degrading fight at all. I was just teaching Racke his manners, that's all. Giving him a tap or two on the 'boko,' if you follow me, sir."

Mr. Railton coughed.

"Apparently, then, the encounter was not of such a serious nature as Mr. Ratcliff took it to be. Is that so?"

"That's it, sir. Quite a piffing little affair, wasn't it, Racke?"

"Oh, quite!" grunted Racke, with rather a sickly smile. "Nevertheless, it was wrong of you to—hem!—teach Racke his manners in the quad," said Mr. Railton mildly. "Such a lesson might well take place in the gymnasium, I should say. And now, Racke, what have you to say about the cigarettes?"

"It was nothing, sir," said Racke sulkily. "I brought back a packet I found at home during the hols. I only carried them about for a lark."

Mr. Railton looked keenly at the uncomfortable black sheep of the Shell.

"Is there any truth in Mr. Ratcliff's suggestion that they were in some way the cause of your quarrel with Grundy?"

"Certainly not, sir. They—they dropped out of my pocket during the scuffle with Grundy."

"Ridiculous!" interjected Mr. Ratcliff harshly. "There was no sign of a packet anywhere. The cigarettes had obviously been tipped out on to the ground and trampled on. The boy is lying, Mr. Railton."

"You may rely on it that I shall find out the truth, Mr. Ratcliff!" retorted the School House master icily. "Tell me, Racke, was Grundy's attitude towards you induced by the fact of your possessing cigarettes? Think before you answer."



Racke's shifty eyes dropped before the penetrating glance of the Housemaster.

"It—it was a misunderstanding," he muttered. "Nothing in it, really. Grundy started ragging me over having the cigarettes in my possession."

"In spite of the fact that they did not drop out of your pocket until after Grundy had attacked you!" sneered Mr. Ratcliff. "An obvious fabrication, as you can see, Mr. Railton!"

Mr. Railton's brow darkened with anger. Mr. Ratcliff was beginning to get on his nerves.

"Really, sir, I assure you there is no need for you to instruct me in elementary logic!" he exclaimed tartly. "Racke, you appear to be endeavouring to deceive me in this matter. I warn you it will be better for you to tell the truth. Now, answer me this—prior to this episode in the quadrangle, had you, by any chance, been smoking?"

"Certainly not, sir!" answered Racke promptly. But his manner was uneasy as he spoke, and there was a strained look on his face which made Mr. Railton eye him in a very dissatisfied way.

"Umph!" said Mr. Railton. "You are prepared to deny then that you are in the habit of smoking cigarettes at all?"

"Well—er—you see, sir—"

"Answer me, boy!" said Mr. Railton icily. "Do you deny that you are in the habit of smoking cigarettes?"

"Yes, sir," replied Racke doggedly.

"Show me your right hand, Racke." Aubrey Racke looked surprised for a moment, then, as he extended his right hand, and glanced down at it, a dismayed expression came over him. For the two first fingers of his right hand were very plainly marked with nicotine stains. It was quite obvious to the onlookers at once that Racke had recently been smoking, not one, but quite a number of cigarettes.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. His eyes dwelt on the incriminating stains for some seconds; and when he raised them again to look up at Racke, the expression on his face had become quite alarming.

"Racke, you—you wicked and deceitful boy, how dare you endeavour to deceive me!" he gasped. "Those stains on your fingers prove conclusively that your statement is false!"

Mr. Railton was angry; and, like the prophet of old, he felt that he did well to be angry. Racke's misdemeanour in itself was bad enough; but the fact that it should be brought to light before the sneering gaze of the Housemaster of the New House made it considerably worse.

"Perhaps I had better go now, Mr. Railton," said Mr. Ratcliff. "Apparently the boys of my House were not concerned in this matter. Don't thank me, sir. I am very happy to have been of assistance to you!"

With an unpleasant smirk, Mr. Ratcliff took his departure. Mr. Railton, for his part, took a cane in his hand, and turned to Racke and Grundy.

"Grundy, your fault does not seem to have been very serious," he said. "Your leave for to-morrow afternoon will be stopped; that is all. You may go."

Grundy's face fell. "Oh crumbs! But I can't stay in to-morrow afternoon, sir!"

"Indeed!" remarked Mr. Railton icily. "May I inquire the reason, Grundy?"

"My uncle's just sent me this 'movie' camera, sir," explained Grundy, proudly displaying his parcel. "It looks like being fine to-morrow, and I can't possibly miss the first chance I shall have of using it."

"I do not wish to discuss the matter!" snapped the Housemaster. "You are detained for to-morrow afternoon. Now go!"

"But, sir—"

Mr. Railton's eyes glinted. Anybody but Grundy would have recognised that he was in no mood to be trifled with. "Hold out your hand!" he exclaimed angrily.

Grundy held out his hand—and after that, the other one.

"You may go!"

Grundy went. And Mr. Railton, his usually good-natured expression now the reverse of placid, turned his attention to the trembling Aubrey Racke.

#### CHAPTER 4. Unfortunate!

"GROOOGH! Ow! The beast! The rotter! Oh dear!"

Such were the remarks that emanated from the thin lips of Aubrey Racke as he made his way towards the Shell quarters some five minutes later.

Apparently the black sheep of the Shell was not enjoying life. His hands were tucked up under his arms, and he writhed as though he was suffering considerable discomfort.

His appearance, as he progressed along the passage, was reminiscent of the gentleman whose agonies are illustrated in newspaper advertisements, to the accompaniment of the phrase, "Every picture tells a story."

"Get it hot?" Racke looked up, with glittering eyes as that query fell on his ears. It came in the gruff tones of George Alfred Grundy.

George Alfred Grundy was waiting at the foot of the stairs leading up to the Shell passage. His rugged face was not without sympathy as he looked on the white-faced Racke.

If Racke noticed the sympathy, however, he did not respond to it.

"Yes, you fool!" he ground out between his set teeth. "And it's all your doing and old Ratty's! I'd like to flay you alive—both of you!"

"Why, you cheeky cad—" gasped Grundy, his sympathy changing quickly to truculence; then he stopped. He could see that Racke had been "through the mill" in the Housemaster's study, and even Grundy was sufficiently reasonable to make allowances in such circumstances.

"Get out of my way, hang you!" snarled Racke, pushing past Grundy to get to the stairs.

"Oh, all right!" growled Grundy. "Keep your wool on!"

He stepped back to allow the other to pass. Racke, still nursing his injured palms, gave him a bitter look as he mounted the stairs.

"Hang you!" he hissed again. "I'll get my own back for this, you interfering fool! I'll see that you suffer—you and Ratcliff! Just wait!"

Grundy's big fists clenched angrily for a moment. Then he unclenched them again and gave a shrug.

"Stow it!" he grunted. "I felt a bit sorry for you just now, but I'm blessed if a worm who says things like that deserves any sympathy! Hop it while you're safe!"

Racke went up the stairs and disappeared into Study No. 7. And Grundy, after a pause, followed, and went along to No. 3, where Wilkins and Gunn were waiting to inspect Uncle Grundy's present and to hear the result of the interview in Mr. Railton's room.

The dinner-bell, coming soon after, made Grundy's visit to his study rather a brief one, and he had little time in which to examine his present in detail.

At the end of afternoon lessons that day, however, he was able to devote an hour to it, studying the mechanism and poring over the book of instructions with the utmost enthusiasm. And over the tea-table he was able to pronounce his verdict:

"It's the rippingest present uncle could have given me!"

And Wilkins and Gunn, fortified by the excellent tea which their leader had provided, were able to join in:

"Hear, hear!"

After prep Grundy & Co. went down to the Common-room and displayed the great gift to an interested and somewhat envious crowd.

"Jolly fine!" said Manners, as he ran his expert eye over the camera. Manners was a keen amateur photographer, and he possessed a moving-picture camera of the same type as Grundy's. As a result of the treatment it had received at the hands of the enthusiastic juniors, however, it was now undergoing necessary repairs at the maker, in London.

"I suppose you're not thinking of having films taken of yourself, Grundy?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Why not?" asked Grundy innocently.

"Do you think the camera will stand it?" responded Lowther gravely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy frowned, and tried to think of a suitably cutting remark with which to crush the humorous Lowther. Fortunately for Lowther, the door of the Common-room opened at that moment, and interest in the subject of Grundy's camera temporarily ceased as Figgins & Co., of the New House, entered.

"Pax!" grinned Figgins, as he observed the School House fellows reach out for books and cushions to hurl at the newcomers. "We're not out ragging this evening. It's just a social visit, you know!"

"Pax it is, then," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Trot in, and make yourselves at home! Why are we honoured, Figgy?"

"Oh, it's nothing much," answered Figgins, taking an armchair and stretching out his long legs in front of the fire. "We just came over to see your prize idiot— Oh, sorry, Grundy! Didn't notice you were here!"

"Does that mean I'm the prize idiot?" roared Grundy. "Because if it does, I'll—"

"No; come to think of it, you never won a prize. Just plain idiot, I mean," said Figgins calmly. "Anyway, I didn't come here to pass compliments. How did you get on after you left us this morning?"



The realisation that Figgins, in spite of his lack of respect to the great man of the Shell, had come specially to inquire after the great man's well-being, mollified Grundy a little.

"You mean with Raitton?" he growled. "Oh, so-so! Of course, you could see yourself that Racke was for it. He got it where the chicken got the chopper. Serves him right—silly ass!"

Figgins nodded.

"Can't say I feel grief-stricken myself," he said. "Of course, we're sorry that we were indirectly the cause of it. If only you hadn't butted in—"

"If only your measly Housemaster hadn't butted in, you mean!" snorted Grundy. "If I had a Housemaster like that I'd chain him up!"

"Wish we could," said Kerr regretfully. "But you haven't told us what happened to you, Grundy."

"What's it all about, anyway?" asked Tom Merry, who, like most of the School House juniors, was rather mystified.

Figgins explained, and the juniors grinned at his description of the incident in the quad.

"Poor old Grundy!" said Tom Merry. "Can't help landing in trouble. Wherever he goes! Well, what was the sentence, Grundy?"

Grundy pulled a wry face.

"A rotten one!" he answered gloomily. "Detained to-morrow afternoon!"

"The first chance he'd have had of using the giddy 'movie-camera!' explained Gunn. "Rough luck, isn't it?"

The juniors agreed that it was rough luck.

"Never mind, Grundy," said Manners consolingly. "I'll tell you what I'll do. There's nothing special on in footer. I'll help you out of the fix."

Grundy stared.

"Blessed if I can see how you can help. What are you getting at?"

"You specially wanted to-morrow afternoon off so that you could take some pictures. That's so, isn't it?" asked Manners.

Grundy nodded.

"And, obviously, you can't take moving-pictures and remain in detention at the same time," went on Manners thoughtfully.

"Of course not!"

"Right-ho, then. All you've got to do is to lend me the giddy camera, and I'll take the pictures for you while you stay in," said Manners magnanimously. "That's fair enough, isn't it?"

There was a roar from the juniors.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Apparently Grundy was not impressed by Manners' generous offer. For several seconds he glared at the amateur photographer of the Shell with a glare that the fabled basilisk might have envied. Then, with a snort of disgust, he turned on his heel, and went back to the table where his famous camera reposed. In this case silence did not give consent. Manners' offer was not accepted!

Before they departed Figgins & Co. inspected Uncle Grundy's present, and, in common with the School House juniors, expressed boundless admiration for it.

Kerr, in particular, seemed to take a very great interest in it, and got Grundy to explain every detail that he knew about the operation of the machine. Once or twice he nudged Figgins, and the leader of the New House juniors wondered what was going on in the mind of his canny Scotch chum. He even wondered whether Kerr might possibly be evolving some new wheeze associated with the camera, for scoring over the School House. Figgins was soon to learn all about it.

After Figgins & Co. had left, Grundy, with Wilkins and Gunn in attendance, took the camera back to Study No. 3. Grundy's two satellites did their humble best to cheer up their unlucky leader, but all their efforts were of no avail.

The fates had indeed been unkind to the great man of the Shell. No sooner had he bewailed the barrenness of his half-holidays, than he had been provided with a magic means of enjoying them. And no sooner had the means been given him than the approaching half-holiday had been knocked on the head.

Grundy was disconsolate. Like Rachel of old, he mourned for that which was lost, and would not be comforted.

## CHAPTER 5.

### The New House Plot!

"WELL?"

That interrogative monosyllable came from George Figgins, as he and Kerr and Fatty Wynn came out of the entrance to the School House, and descended the steps leading into the quad.

Figgins looked inquiringly at Kerr as he spoke.

George Francis Kerr, the Scots member of the New House trio known as Figgins & Co., grinned.

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"You guessed I had something up my sleeve, then?" he remarked.

"Couldn't help it," replied Figgins. "Considering you were digging your blessed elbow into me every time that ass Grundy started jawing about his cinematograph camera, the fact was brought home to me quite convincingly."

"All serene!" said Kerr cheerfully. "Well, as a matter of fact, a wheeze did occur to me while we were in the Common-room."

"A wheeze for doing the School House wasters in the eye?" asked Figgins anxiously.

Kerr nodded.

"Good egg!" said Figgins, with enthusiasm. "Trot it out, and let your Uncle Figgins pass his opinion on it!"

"Is it a wheeze for raiding their grub to-morrow afternoon?" asked Fatty Wynn, his eyes gleaming. "If so, I'm on! I suppose you chaps heard Tom Merry and his crowd mention their picnic on the island to-morrow?"

"We did," answered Kerr. "Or, at least, I did. It was partly that that gave me the inspiration."

"Good!" grunted Wynn cheerfully. "Go ahead, then!"

"You know that once, in a House rag, Tom Merry & Co. secured a kind of trophy out of us, by forcing us to sign a statement to the effect that School House was cock House?" asked Kerr.

Figgins and Wynn nodded.

"I remember it well!" snorted the New House leader. "They were going to paint our faces unless we signed. What about it?"

"Well, it struck me just now that, with a movie-camera, we could get hold of a much better trophy than a blessed sheet of paper," said Kerr.

Figgins and Wynn stared at their chum.

"Don't quite follow!" growled Figgins. "You mean, take pictures or something or other?"

"Exactly," agreed Kerr, with a smile. "Take pictures of Tom Merry & Co."

Figgins and Wynn still looked rather puzzled.

"Blessed if I can see that we should get much of a trophy out of that," remarked Figgins. "Can't say I'm keen on seeing their chivvies on the screen."

"Same here!" concurred Fatty Wynn. "Why not raid their grub when they go down to the island for a picnic to-morrow, instead?"

Kerr smiled patiently.

"Who said we weren't going to, ass?" he asked. "Raid their grub by all means. I'm in favour."

"Oh, you are? Then why worry about Grundy's movie-camera?" demanded Figgins.

"Just apply your wooden heads to what I'm going to say, and you'll savvy," replied the Scot cheerfully. "First, let's consider things as they are. Tom Merry & Co., and Blake & Co., have planned a little excursion from the boathouse down to the island to-morrow. Get that well into your nuts!"

Figgins and Wynn nodded.

"Now, dear old Grundy has just come into possession of a movie-camera, in full working order, as we've just seen," went on Kerr. "That's point number two. So far, so good!"

"Right-ho! Cut the cackle, and get to the hosses!" said Figgins impatiently.

"I'm going to. My idea is this—Grundy's movie-camera gives us the chance of a lifetime to score over the School House to-morrow. If we rally the clans on our own side, we can, in the first place ambush them down the river, before they get to the island, and take them prisoners."

"That's easily done, certainly," said Figgins thoughtfully. "We can have a couple of boats out, and lie in wait for them at each side of the river."

"Just so," nodded Kerr. "Well, having captured them, we could, if we were lucky, get them to sign a statement that New House is cock House, just as they served us once before. But Grundy's camera gives us the opportunity of getting something better than that."

Figgins and Wynn looked at one another with smiles of dawning understanding.

"Oh crumbs!" chuckled Figgins. "I'm beginning to get an inkling of your wheeze now. You mean—"

"I mean that if we collar Grundy's camera for the afternoon, we can take a film showing our little selves crowing over the recumbent forms of the giddy foe!" said Kerr.

"Great pip!"

"We can take pictures of all sorts of little incidents, such as Gussy being stood on his head, and Tom Merry being fed with chunks of turf," said Kerr enthusiastically.

Figgins and Wynn looked at one another again; then they roared.

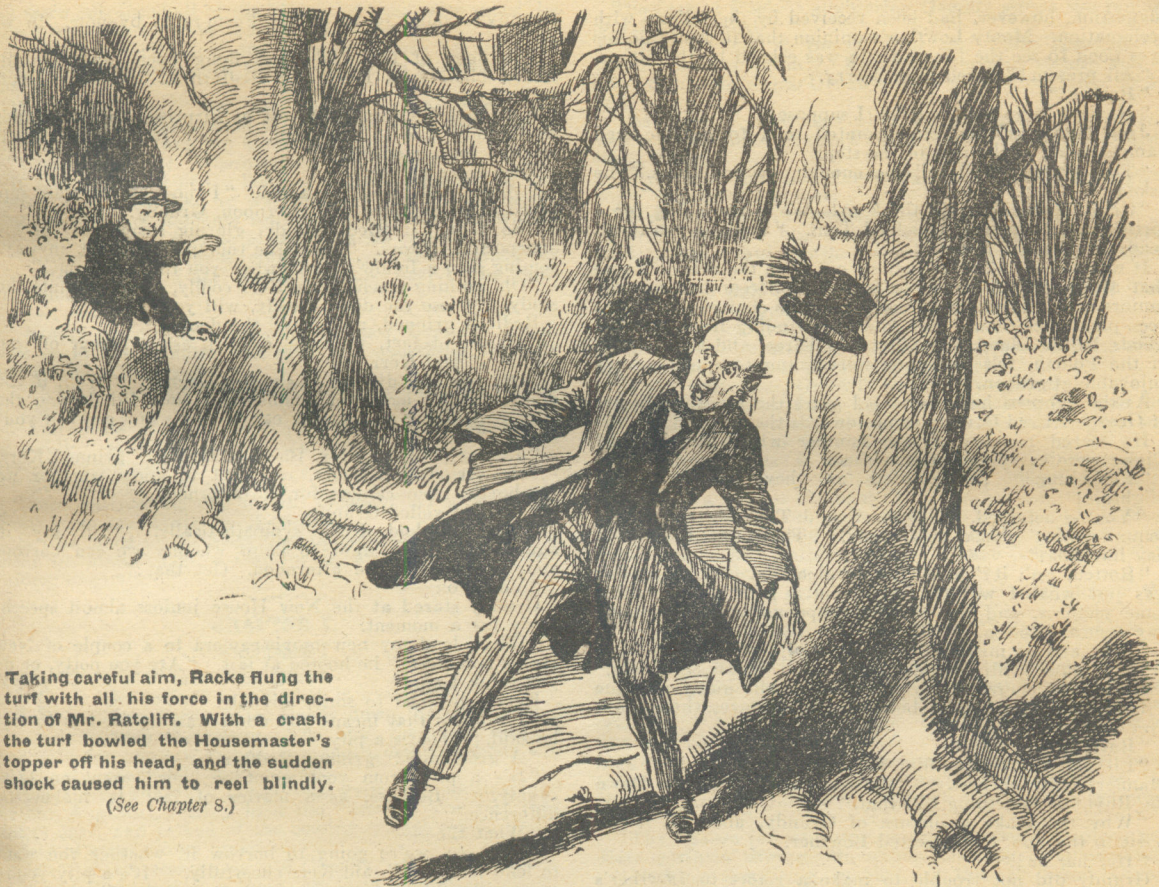
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, that's my wheeze, anyway," finished Kerr modestly.

"What do you think of it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"





Taking careful aim, Racker flung the turf with all his force in the direction of Mr. Ratcliff. With a crash, the turf bowled the Housemaster's topper off his head, and the sudden shock caused him to reel blindly.

(See Chapter 8.)

Apparently Figgins and Wynn thought it funny. At any rate, they continued to roar for quite a time.

"My giddy aunt!" gasped Figgins at last. "That's a wheeze, and no mistake! If we can bring it off, it will be the biggest score we've ever made."

"We can have the film developed, and show it on a screen afterwards," said Fatty Wynn. "French has a projector of sorts, you know."

"So he has!" chuckled Figgins. "We can make a regular joy-night of it when we exhibit it."

"We can even invite the School House bounders over!" said Kerr, with a grin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Seriously, though," said Figgins, "it's a brainy idea, and I don't see why it shouldn't work. It ought to be a fairly easy matter to raid the giddy camera. Grundy's detained, as we know, and he's not allowing anyone else to use it. It's bound to be left in his study."

"Two of our men could be detailed off to get it, after the rest have gone down to the river," said Kerr. "The coast would be clear then, and it wouldn't matter if they didn't turn up until after the scrap was over, so long as they were in time for the films to be taken."

"But what about the cost of developing?" asked Fatty Wynn, rather dubiously. "Pretty expensive job, I should imagine."

"Have a whip-round through the House," suggested Kerr. "The results ought to justify the expenditure, anyway."

"Hear, hear!"

"So that's why you were nudging me, while Grundy was explaining how to operate his blessed present!" grinned Figgins, as they mounted the steps of the New House. "No wonder!"

Before bed-time that night most of the New House juniors were aware of the projected "rag," and there was considerable hilarity and excitement over Kerr's latest notion for scoring over the rival House.

The fellows could see that a film such as Kerr contemplated taking would make a permanent and very striking addition to such few souvenirs of superiority in House rivalry as they already possessed. Consequently, Kerr's "wheeze" was greeted on all sides with the utmost enthusiasm.

Redfern & Co. very willingly agreed to range themselves under the leadership of Figgins for the river "hold-up," as soon as they heard of it. Jimson and French offered their

services soon after, and for the remainder of the evening Figgins was fairly besieged by eager volunteers for the morrow's fray. Figgins, however, ruthlessly restricted the numbers of his pirate band.

"Won't do for a big crowd of us to go," he said judiciously. "School House will smell a rat if they see a blessed army of us marching down to the river."

With which opinion Kerr entirely agreed.

A sort of committee-meeting was held in the Junior Common-room just before bed-time, at which details were discussed. It was decided that the task of raiding the School House for Grundy's movie-camera should be performed by Kerr and Redfern, immediately after the unsuspecting School House picnickers had left the House. The remainder of the New House ragers were to proceed in twos and threes to a spot half-way between the boathouse and the island, where Figgins and Fatty Wynn were to be waiting with a couple of boats. Figgins chose the spot because of the thick woods which were on both banks of the Rhyl just there. These, he shrewdly thought, would effectively screen their activities from Tom Merry & Co., or any other School House boating party who might chance to pass.

By the time the juniors went up to their dormitories everything had been carefully arranged. And Figgins & Co. retired, with the feeling that the following day was going to witness a victory over their old rivals that would be crushing and complete.

## CHAPTER 6.

### A Raid on Study No. 3!

"RIPPING!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry, with Manners and Lowther and Jack Blake, with his merry men—Herries, Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—had just met on the steps of the School House, prior to walking down to the River Rhyl.

The weather was, as Tom Merry had expressed it, "ripping!" A warm sun shone out of a cloudless sky, and the appearance of the School House juniors in flannels made it seem more like a day in June than in early spring.

It was unusually early in the year, in fact, for the juniors to be thinking of picnics at all. Only a longish spell of dry, mild weather had put it into Tom Merry's mind. The



suggestion, however, had been received by the fellows with acclamation. Monty Lowther's opinion that it would do his eyes good to see the island again was echoed by the others.

"All present?" asked Tom Merry.

"Rather!"

"Haven't forgotten the grub, I suppose?"

Jack Blake grinned, and pointed to a formidable-sized hamper lying at the foot of the steps.

"That's pretty well full—be enough, do you think?" he asked.

"Great Scott, I should think so! We're not going for a fortnight, you know!" chuckled Tom. "Well, if you're all ready, we'll make a start."

It was a cheerful party that set out from the School House that afternoon. A strenuous season of Soccer had put the juniors in the mood for a change; and no change could have been pleasanter than a pull down the winding Rhyl, past the woods, to the island. The Terrible Three, and their chums of the Fourth, felt that they were going to spend a very enjoyable afternoon.

As they approached the school gates the mournful figure of George Alfred Grundy came towards them.

He stared moodily at the hamper which Herries and Digby were carrying between them.

"Picnicking!" he growled as they met. "Lucky blighters!"

"You're detained, of course," said Tom Merry, with a commiserating glance at Grundy. "That's too bad, on a day like this!"

"Rotten, isn't it?" said Grundy gloomily. "A sunny day was just what I wanted for having a good go at taking some pictures, and this is what happens when the sunny day comes. Rotten, I call it!"

"It is, and no mistake!"

"My offer still stands good, you know, Grundy," remarked Manners. "If you'll lend me the giddy machine I'll guarantee to take a better lot of pictures than you'll ever take in your life!"

"Rats!"

"I'll make a tip-top film for you, I will, really," said Manners quite earnestly. "We can call it 'A Trip Down the Rhyl,' or something like that."

"Why not make a picture of Grundy, and call it 'A Visit to the Zoo'?" suggested Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy did not trouble to make a retort to Lowther's humorous remark. The juniors could see that he was too depressed to take much notice of anything that was said.

"Well, you chaps had better buzz off!" he growled. "Suppose I'd better get up to the blessed Form-room soon, or Railton'll be on my track. Have a good time."

"Thanks! Keep your pecker up, old scout!" said Tom Merry, with a nod.

"Yaas, wathah! Don't despair, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus encouragingly as they moved off.

Grundy watched them go down to the gates, with envy in his rugged face. Then, with a grunt, he turned reluctantly back towards the School House.

Before going to the Shell Form-room, where he was due to spend the afternoon, Grundy went up to the Shell passage, with the intention of calling in at the study.

Grundy was aware that Mr. Railton would in all probability give him something to occupy his time with during the afternoon. But Grundy anticipated that his own ideas of suitable literature for a fellow in detention might not coincide with the ideas of Mr. Railton, and he intended to provide against that contingency. It was exceedingly probable that Mr. Railton would consider Virgil excellent reading for Wednesday afternoon in the Shell Form-room. Grundy's own inclination was for the "Holiday Annual," and it was with the intention of fetching his copy of that book that he went up to Study No. 3.

The School House seemed deserted when he entered. Nearly all the fellows were already out of doors, making the most of the unusually fine weather. Grundy felt more depressed than ever as he made his way through the silent passages and up the staircase towards the Shell passage.

He entered Study No. 3, and took out the "Holiday Annual" from the study bookcase. Uncle Grundy's celebrated moving-picture camera was lying on the table, and Grundy's eyes rested on it with affection. If only he could have been out with it that glorious afternoon!

Just as Grundy was about to leave the study he heard the sounds of footsteps coming down the passage, and wondered, for a moment, who it could be, for he felt sure that practically all the Shell fellows had gone out of the House.

Grundy was not long left in doubt as to the identity of the newcomers. To his surprise the footsteps ceased outside Study No. 3, and he heard somebody saying:

"All serene, do you think?"

"Yes, I think so. The blessed House is empty, and

Grundy's bound to be in his Form-room by now. In we go!"

The door of the study was flung open, and Grundy stared blankly as Kerr and Redfern of the New House walked in.

Kerr and Redfern were just as surprised to see Grundy as Grundy was to see them. Their faces looked quite startled for a moment.

Then Kerr grinned.

"What, still here?" he asked. "I thought you were supposed to be detained this afternoon, Grundy."

"So I am," replied Grundy, glaring suspiciously at his unexpected visitors. "What the thump's the game, anyway, coming into a fellow's study when you think he's out?"

"Oh, nothing much!" said Kerr coolly, advancing into the study. "Close the door, Reddy, will you?"

Redfern grinned, and closed the door.

"Matter of fact, we came over to ask a favour of you, Grundy," said Kerr.

"Oh, you did, did you?" growled Grundy. "Well, if you don't buzz off again in double-quick time I'll do you the favour of giving you a thick ear, if that's any good to you! Hop it!"

"Just as polite as ever, isn't he, Reddy?" grinned Kerr. "Now, seriously, Grundy, we want to know whether we can borrow your camera for the afternoon."

"What?" yelled Grundy.

"Deaf?" asked Kerr sympathetically. "I'll say it again, then. We want to know whether we can borrow your camera for the afternoon. Get that?"

"You—you—"

Grundy stared at the New House juniors almost speechlessly for a moment.

"What, lend my new movie-camera to a couple of New House bounders?" he hooted at last. "Are you potty, or do you think I am?"

Kerr continued to smile serenely.

"I suppose that means you don't want to lend it to us," he said. "That's a pity."

"A great pity!" grinned Redfern.

"It's a pity from your point of view," went on Kerr calmly. "Because, as a matter of fact, it makes no difference."

"What the—"

"You see, we're going to borrow it, whether you want to lend it or not," said Kerr cheerfully. "It's a pity you're so unwilling, but, of course, it doesn't matter."

"Not a bit!" chuckled Redfern.

"Why, you cheeky asses, I'll—I'll pulverise you!" roared Grundy, furiously. "If you're looking for trouble you've come to the right place, by George! I'll show you!"

With that Grundy flung himself recklessly at Kerr and Redfern.

The two New House juniors were rather taken by surprise, and they both emitted howls of anguish as Grundy's hefty fists came into painful contact with their respective noses.

"Yarooogh!" yelled Kerr.

"Whoop!" howled Redfern. "Oh, by dose!"

"Plenty more where they come from!" roared Grundy cheerfully, as he danced round them, brandishing his fists. "Here's one for you, Kerr!"

He landed out again. This time, however, Kerr ducked, and it was Grundy's turn to howl as the Scots junior gave him a tap that made him see stars.

"Quick, Reddy!" gasped Kerr. "Grab the camera and tripod, and make a bolt for it. I'll keep Grundy amused while you get away, and I'll join you down at the gates."

Redfern nodded, and whisked Grundy's precious movie-camera off the table. Grundy made a wild leap to get there first, but Kerr stood between him and the table, and Grundy found that to get past Kerr was not an easy matter. While he struggled and fought with the Scottish junior Redfern seized the folded tripod from a corner of the study. Within a few seconds Reddy was speeding along the passage and down the stairs towards the quad.

Grundy fairly howled with fury as he saw the camera disappear. He made frantic efforts to get through the door after Redfern, but Kerr insisted on getting in his way, and the great man of the Shell found that, willy-nilly, he had to engage the Scot in battle before he could begin to chase Redfern.

Kerr sparred up to his opponent and kept him fully occupied for several minutes. Then, coming to the conclusion that Redfern had had time to make his exit from the House, he suddenly turned tail and fled.

Grundy sprang after him, but unfortunately, in so doing, he tripped up over a chair which had been overturned in the struggle, and by the time he rose again Kerr had had a good start.

With a growl like the growl of an angry bear, Grundy tore along the Shell passage on the track of the retreating raiders. Taking the stairs three at a time, he soon reached



the main entrance-hall of the House. At the same speed, he would undoubtedly have reached the School gates in record time. But unfortunately for Grundy, before he could do that, something happened to put an end to the chase altogether.

The "something" was Mr. Railton. No sooner had Grundy reached the bottom of the stairs, than the voice of the Housemaster rang out across the hall:

"Grundy! Stop! Wherever are you going?"

In the excitement of the last few minutes Grundy had forgotten altogether that he was detained for the afternoon. But now the fact suddenly returned to Grundy's mind with painful clearness. And he almost groaned aloud.

"Surely you have not forgotten that you are detained for the afternoon?" said Mr. Railton, coming over to the panting Shell junior.

"I—I—"

"Kindly go to your Form-room at once, Grundy. I will look in in five minutes and give you something to study during the afternoon."

"Th-thank you, sir!" gasped Grundy, looking the reverse of thankful.

"And please in future brush your clothes before appearing in public," said Mr. Railton sharply. "You are in a disgraceful condition, Grundy!"

"Yes, sir!" groaned Grundy.

There was nothing else for it. Grundy had to go to the Form-room and begin his detention.

But he made up his mind that immediately the coast was clear he would make a bolt for it, and run the camera-raiders to earth.

CHAPTER 7.

Ambushed!

"RIPPING!" said Jack Blake.

The juniors agreed that it was ripping.

They were gliding easily down the silvery Rhyl towards the island. The boat they had selected was built for comfort, rather than speed, but as nobody was in a hurry, everybody was satisfied.

Tom Merry and Jack Blake were doing the sculling, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy held the "lines." The rest took things easy, and talked of the coming cricket season and a variety of other school topics.

"It's a shame about poor old Grundy," said Tom Merry, as he and Blake rested on their oars for a minute.

"Fwightfully wotten, deah boy!" agreed Arthur Augustus from his seat in the stern. "I must say I feel quite sowwy for the poor chap bein' detained under such unfortunate cires."

"Don't suppose he would have been in the usual way," grunted Jack Blake. "Railton would have given him a hundred lines if he'd been the one to spot the scrap first. It was Grundy's bad luck that Ratcliff happened to come up, that's all."

"Crooke was telling me this morning that Racke feels like poisoning Ratty," chuckled Herries. "From what I've heard of it, I don't wonder, either. Ratty properly piled on the agony in Railton's study."

Tom Merry frowned.

"Racke would be well-advised to keep quiet for a while," he said. "If he's idiot enough to carry rotten fags about with him, he can't expect much sympathy when he gets found out."

"Hear, hear!"

"And if he starts playing tricks with Ratty, he'll deserve all he gets," added Tom. "Ratty is always glad of an excuse to have a cut at a School House chap, as we know."

The juniors nodded. Mr. Ratcliff's rivalry with Mr. Railton, and his ill-natured habit of lodging with Mr. Railton as many complaints against School House boys as he could, were well known at St. Jim's.

"Anyway, Ratty's not the only one Racke's got his knife in," said Herries. "Apparently Grundy has fallen foul of him, too."

"What's he going to do with Grundy—slaughter him?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The idea of Racke slaughtering Grundy struck the juniors as rather comical.

"Still, it's not so funny, after all," said Tom Merry, turning serious again. "Racke's a cunning rotter, and if he's got his knife into Grundy, there's no telling what tricks he'll be up to!"

"Bai Jove! Pewwaps when we get back I had bettah wemonstwater with Wacke!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy thoughtfully.

"Offer him your best fancy waistcoat if he'll be a good boy!" suggested Lowther.

"I vegard that suggestion as asinine, Lowthah!"

"Well, threaten him with a little of your best fatherly advice, then," said Lowther gravely. "He'll crumple up at once!"

"Ready to pull for the island now, Blake?" asked Tom Merry, taking a grip of his oars again.

"Right-ho! Off we go!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus suddenly, starting into the woods at the side of the river.

"Mind your lines, Gussy!" warned Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus fixed his celebrated monocle into his eye, with an expression of surprise on his noble face, and continued to gaze at the river bank.

"Bai Jove! That is wathah extraordinaawy!" he said.

"Mind your lines, you ass!" hooted Blake. "You're steering straight for the bank!"

"I twust you are not insinuat' that I am unable to steer pwopahly, Blake!" said D'Arcy, with dignity, still, however, neglecting to put matters right. "I have just seen—"

"Oh, brain the idiot, somebody!"

Herries, with a grin, reached forward and turned the rudder in the right direction again.

"What's the matter with the dummy?" demanded Blake, as they moved back to midstream.

"Weally, Blake, if that oppwobwious expwession is meant for me, I shall insist on givin' you a feahful thwashin' as soon as we weach the island!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "As a mattah of fact, I have just seen somethin' that surpriswe me vewy much."

"If Herries hadn't butted in, you might have seen something more surprisng still—namely, the bottom of the river!" grinned Lowther. "What's the matter, anyway, Gus?"

"The weason for my surpriswe was my seein' Wedfern and Kerr spwintin' through the woods, deah boy," replied Gussy.

"Nothing surprisng in that, is there?" asked Digby.

(Continued on next page.)

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"Pway do not intewwupt, Dig, and pewwaps you will then be able to understand," said the swell of the Fourth, in tones of reproof. "I agree that the appearance of Wedfern and Kerr in itself is not a mattah for comment. The surpwin' feature is that Weddy cawwied Gwunday's movin'-picture camewa with him!"

"Wha-a-at?"

There was an incredulous yell from the juniors.

"Can't take that in, Gussy," said Tom Merry, with a shake of his head.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"You must be seeing things, Gus!" declared Jack Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Better humour him, perhaps," said Monty Lowther, with owl-like gravity. "Asylum attendants have to humour patients suffering from delusions, so I've heard!"

"Bai Jove, Lowthah, if you are suggestin' for one moment that I am suffewin' fwom delusions, I shall have no alternative but to give you a feahful thwashin'!" said Arthur Augustus, glaring indignantly through his monocle at the humorist of the Shell. "I tell you Wedfern was cawwyin' Gwunday's camewa with him! That was the weason for my surpwise."

The swell of the Fourth spoke convincingly, and the juniors looked at one another with rather more doubt in their faces.

"Really mean it, Gus?" asked Manners.

"Of course I mean it, deah boy!"

"How do you know it was Grundy's camera, and not somebody else's?" asked Jack Blake.

"Because it looked pweicely like Gwunday's camewa," answered Arthur Augustus simply.

"Well, if that's true, it's jolly rummy!" said Manners thoughtfully. "You heard Grundy refuse to lend me the blessed thing, both last night and to-day. Why should he lend it to Kerr and Redfern?"

Tom Merry started.

"By Jove, you chaps! Come to think of it, if that's what Gussy saw, it looks rather fishy."

"How do you mean?" asked Blake.

"Why, we know jolly well that if Grundy wouldn't lend the camera to Manners, he wouldn't lend it to Kerr or Redfern. So if they've got it, they've been raiding Grundy's study."

"H'm! Something in that!" agreed Blake. "But why worry, anyway?"

"Hold on; I haven't finished," said Tom Merry, resting on his oars, and puckering his brow in thought. "Did you notice what a deep interest Kerr was taking in Grundy's camera, when he was in our Common-room?"

"Bai Jove! That's twue!"

"And Kerr's not a very keen photographer, either," said Manners.

"But he's a very keen japer!" said Tom Merry. "And it strikes me, my infants, that if Kerr has raided the giddy camera, he hasn't done it simply for the pleasure of taking pictures of the woods and the river."

The School House fellows listened with growing interest.

"You mean——" said Jack Blake.

"I mean, in the first place, that New House chaps scuttling through the woods near us, possibly indicates trouble for us before we finish our picnic. Secondly, the presence of Grundy's camera suggests some new stunt that I haven't quite got the hang of yet."

"Oh!"

"Well, there's seven of us, and we can all put up a scrap," said Herries. "If there's a House scrap in the offing, I think we ought to put up a good show."

"Hear, hear!"

"Scrap or no scrap, it's time we were at the island," said Blake. "Put your back into it, Tommy!"

Tom Merry bent his back to the work, and the boat began to attain a fair turn of speed through the water. And then——

"What the dickens——" cried Monty Lowther suddenly, as he stared ahead.

"Bai Jove!"

"New House cads!"

"Two boats, full of 'em!"

"Great pip!"

With a suddenness that was very disconcerting, two boats, crammed with cheerful New House juniors, had appeared apparently from nowhere, and were bearing down on the School House boat.

Tom Merry and Jack Blake ceased rowing, and looked over their backs in dismay.

"Oh crikey!"

"As I thought!" said Tom. "We ought to have been on our guard!"

"We're outnumbered altogether this time!" remarked Manners.

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"Only chance is to keep rowing hard and ram the bounders if they get in the way!" said Tom. "Get down to it, Blake!"

But Tom Merry's decision came rather late. Already the attackers were upon them, and as the School House oarsmen lifted their oars, the oars of the New House boats crashed into them and prevented them making even one good pull.

"Now for it!" yelled Figgins.

The plans of the New House juniors were evidently all cut and dried. At Figgins' signal, Lawrence and Owen stood up in one boat, and French and Fatty Wynn in the other, and each of them carried a long boathook, which they swung over and hooked on to the School House boat. Others were sitting down with their hands on the oars, waiting, evidently, for the signal to pull for the shore.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! They're goin' to pull us to the bank!"

Just as D'Arcy said that, Figgins gave the required signal, and there was a yell of alarm from the School House fellows, as their boat was suddenly jerked towards the side of the river.

"Steady, you idiots!"

"Oh crumbs! It'll tip over!"

The boat certainly did rock dangerously for a few minutes. And it rocked still more as the School House party began to show fight, and struggled to free their boat.

"Don't let 'em get away with it!" yelled Blake, standing up, and brandishing his oar fiercely. "Fight every inch of the way!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"School House for ever! Hurrah!"

Crash! Bang! Crash!

The progress of the three boats towards the bank ceased, as the School House juniors began to make a fight of it. Figgins & Co. found that they had all their work cut out to defend themselves against their suddenly aggressive rivals, without troubling about the task of towing them into captivity.

"Give 'em socks!" yelled Tom Merry, wielding an oar manfully. "Send the bounders to the bottom!"

"What-ho!"

"Pile in, New House!" howled Figgins, reaching out and grasping the gunwale of Tom Merry's boat in a valiant attempt to draw it nearer the bank. "Yarooop!"

Figgins' concluding yelp was caused by one of the boat-hooks, which Herries had thoughtfully seized and brought down with great vigour on the New House leader's knuckles.

"Keep your paws off our boat, Figgy!" yelled Herries, with a cheerful grin. "Now, here's one for you, Fatty!"

"Whoooooop!"

The affair had by this time developed into a battle royal. From the bank, it looked a glorious mix-up of fists, oars, and boathooks, on a foundation of wildly-rocking boats. But there was a semblance of order in the apparent chaos, and stoutly as the School House fellows were defending themselves, they were fighting a losing battle.

Nearer and nearer to the river-bank did the New House pirates succeed in drawing the other boat, until the time came when some of the fellows were able to jump ashore. After that the battle was all over, bar shouting. From the bank, the three boats were hauled in, and as Tom Merry & Co. leaped ashore, one by one, they were overpowered, and taken prisoners.

"Phew! That was hot, while it lasted!" grinned Figgins, mopping his heated brow. "Mind how you handle their hamper, Lawrence! We don't want our feed spoiled!"

"Groogh! You rotters!" gasped Jack Blake, struggling in the grasp of Jimson and Owen. "What's the idea?"

"You'll see in a minute!" said Figgins cheerfully. "Kerr and Redfern turned up yet?"

"Here they are!"

Kerr and Redfern advanced out of the wood as Figgins spoke, and the New House juniors greeted them with a cheer.

"Got the camera?"

"Rather!"

"Good egg!"

Tom Merry & Co., now completely in the hands of the Philistines, eyed the camera somewhat apprehensively. Grundy's celebrated present looked innocent enough, in the hands of Redfern, but they realised full well that the presence of such an article on the occasion of a House "rag" could not be without import. The School House fellows remembered Tom Merry's pronouncement on the subject, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had seen Redfern and Kerr from the boat. They wondered just exactly how the camera came into the business.

Their doubts were soon settled when Figgins explained what he proposed to do. The leader of the New House described with great gusto how he intended to take pictures of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy being stood on his elegant head,



and of Tom Merry having chunks of turf pushed into his mouth, and of Blake being thrown into the river, and many other things besides.

The prisoners looked at Figgins with horrified eyes as they listened to that dreadful recital.

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Tom Merry, as Figgins cheerfully concluded his remarks. "Figgins, you'll never dare! We—we'll slaughter you afterwards!"

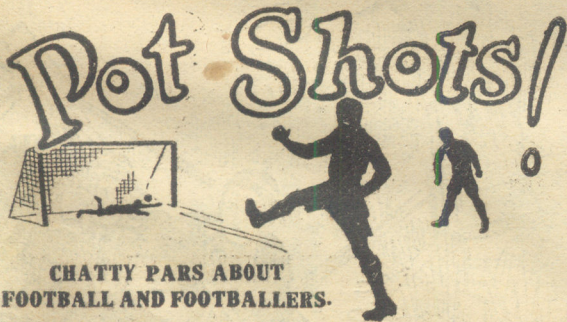
"You're welcome to try!" grinned Figgins. "Now, how about making a start, Kerr?"

"What-ho!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked on, with utter dismay, as Kerr and Figgins began to fix up Grundy's moving-picture camera on the tripod. Bitterly did they regret not having been more cautious in their picnicking plans. But it was too late now.

"Oh dear!" groaned Jack Blake, still helpless in the grip of Jimson and Owen. "Only wait till we're back at St. Jim's, that's all!"

"Figgay, if you dare to muck up my clobber, or twy to



**FOR** the greater part of the present season the Blackburn Rovers attack has contained four men who have all been centre-forwards at one time or another. They have naturally proved a go-ahead lot.

The impression is often given that English clubs are made up almost entirely of Scottish footballers. On a recent Saturday I took a census of First Division players. Out of the 242, 164 were English born, sixty Scottish, twelve Welsh, and four Irish, the other two having been born abroad. So English players are still in the majority.

Nearly a million applications were made for tickets for this season's Cup Final. And the capacity of Wembley is less than one hundred thousand. Yet when the ground was built people said it would never be filled.

Of the last eight clubs in the Cup this season Arsenal was the only one which reached the same stage last season. They know how to keep the powder dry.

Arthur Rigby, the International forward of Blackburn Rovers, started his football career with Crewe Alexandra as a goalkeeper. Some switch!

stand me on my head, I shall administrah a feahful thwash-in!" said Arthur Augustus, his classic face a study in wrath and indignation.

But Figgins' only answer, as he helped Kerr to stand the camera in position, took the form of that most unsatisfactory syllable:

"Rats!"

### CHAPTER 8. In the Woods!

**G**RUNDY was fairly raging when he had to go back to the Shell Form-room, instead of continuing his chase after Kerr and Redfern. The very idea of the two New House fellows having the audacity to raid his—George Alfred Grundy's—study left the great man of the Shell breathless. And the thought that their sacrilegious hands were at that moment on his Uncle Robert's latest and greatest present made Grundy feel almost homicidal. His rugged face was red with rage and chagrin as he sat down at his desk.

In a few minutes Mr. Railton came in with a book for Grundy's edification during the afternoon. It was not, as Grundy had anticipated, a work of the celebrated Virgil; if anything, it was worse than that, for it was devoted to the intricacies of Latin grammar.

Mr. Railton had thoughtfully chosen for Grundy's particular study a chapter dealing with a mysterious thing called the ablative absolute.

"If you will only get this into your head, Grundy," remarked Mr. Railton, as he handed over the book, "your afternoon will have been well spent indeed!"

Grundy took the book without enthusiasm. He had no idea what the ablative absolute meant, and he had no intention whatever of finding out. Grundy's own opinion was that an afternoon spent in recovering his camera and "bashing" Kerr and Redfern would be very much more profitable than the kind of afternoon Mr. Railton had mapped out for him.

Within a few minutes of the Housemaster's departure from the Form-room Grundy was on his feet again, looking out of the window into the sunny quad.

He felt considerably relieved as he saw Mr. Railton, wearing a hat and carrying a walking-stick, striding across the quad in the direction of the gates. Evidently he was

Henry Race, a newcomer to the Liverpool side a few weeks ago, had never seen a first-class match before he played in his first one. Yet he opened with a goal. He is expected to turn out a winner.

In the first International Soccer game between England and Ireland England scored thirteen goals, and the total receipts were £13. It would have made our heads ache if the goals had gone up like the attendances.

A Walsall player named Louis Bedford has had a unique experience. Twice he has been transferred from the club and now he is back again. He evidently believes that first love is the best love.

Since the War no fewer than thirty-eight players who have represented Scotland have later been transferred to English clubs. It looks as though the English managers believe that the best is good enough for them.

In the year 1314 King Edward II. forbade football being played "owing to the evil which might arise from many people hustling together." What would he have thought of a modern Cup-tie?

The successor of Edward II.—Edward III.—enacted a law against football and other foolish games, but made special provisions to encourage archery.

West Ham's outside-left, James Ruffell, doesn't believe in confining his energies to one sport. He plays golf and cricket, and is a keen angler. Mostly, though, he enjoys fishing for openings to score goals.

In this season's Cup competition Stoke beat Bolton Wanderers and Manchester City in successive rounds. Mr. Tom Mather, the secretary of Stoke, was once secretary of Bolton Wanderers, and assistant secretary of Manchester City. Wasn't he pleased with those two results?

going out, and it was highly improbable that he intended calling back at the Form-room for an hour or two at least.

"Thank goodness for that!" muttered Grundy.

With the Housemaster out of the way, the great man of the Shell did not waste any more time in the Form-room. Treating Mr. Railton's book on the ablative absolute and other mysteries with scant respect, Grundy flung it into the farthest corner of the room. After that he marched out.

His progress through the House was uninterrupted this time. Evidently the masters and the prefects—like the rest of the House—had been attracted out by the sunshine.

When he reached the quad, however, Grundy realised that a certain amount of caution was necessary. To run into a master or a prefect who was aware of his detention would be fatal. Grundy, accordingly, had a good look round to assure himself that the coast was clear before he ventured down the steps.

Luck seemed to favour him. Within a few minutes he had reached the school gates without being spotted.

Then his luck changed.

As he drew level with Taggles' lodge, a sharp, unnamable voice that was well known to Grundy fell on his ears.

"Mind, Taggles, I shall expect you to report to me if you see anything of Grundy this afternoon! You understand that?"

It was the voice of Mr. Ratcliff.



Immediately Grundy recognised the acid tones of the Housemaster of the New House he ducked and made a dive for the shelter of the nearest rhododendron-bush. The last person he wished to meet just then was Mr. Ratcliff.

But Mr. Ratcliff, in spite of his spectacles, had a remarkably keen eye for wrongdoers, as Grundy had regretfully observed before. And it did not fail on this occasion.

As Grundy dived he heard a gasp from the direction of the lodge. The gasp was followed by the sound of hurried footsteps on the gravel path.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Grundy.

"Grundy!"

Mr. Ratcliff fairly barked out the name as he swept round the path. The Housemaster's little eyes were gleaming behind his spectacles in a manner that seemed to indicate he was pleased, rather than otherwise, at catching the School House junior out of bounds. The shadow of a smile crossed his forbidding face as he advanced towards Grundy.

"Oh crikey!"

Grundy stood up again as Mr. Ratcliff came round the corner. For a moment he did not know what to do, but obviously it was too late now to attempt to hide.

"Ha!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff, eyeing the dismayed Shell junior with considerable satisfaction. "How fortunate that I should have kept an eye out for you after I learned that Mr. Railton was neglecting to do so!"

Grundy glared at the complacent New House master.

"Pity you haven't got anything better to do!" he growled, unable to conceal his feelings for the moment.

Mr. Ratcliff jumped.

"Boy! D-did I hear you aright?"

"I expect so," grunted Grundy indifferently.

Mr. Ratcliff blinked at Grundy as though he could hardly believe his ears. For a moment he was dumbfounded.

Then he recovered himself and bestowed on Grundy a look full of fury and malice.

"Grundy, you insolent and reckless young hooligan!" he said in a voice that trembled with rage. "I order you to return to your Form-room at once!"

Grundy hesitated. Disobedience to the orders of a master was a serious matter, and even Grundy hesitated before taking such a step.

But Grundy was simply longing to get on the track of Kerr and Redfern, and the thought of returning to the Form-room was galling in the extreme. Apart from that, the fat was already in the fire with Mr. Ratcliff; Grundy's impulsive sneer at the New House master could not be withdrawn now, and trouble was, therefore, inevitable.

Grundy thought of the old motto, "In for a penny, in for a pound." And he decided to take the risk.

A moment later, therefore, Mr. Ratcliff's astonishment and indignation was utterly completed, when Grundy, without a word of warning, suddenly turned to the gates and bolted.

"Grundy!"

Mr. Ratcliff almost shrieked the word, as he made a leap after Grundy.

"Grundy, I will have you flogged and expelled for this! Come back at once!"

Grundy, however, continued to run. If he heard, then, like the celebrated gladiator, he heeded not.

Mr. Ratcliff fairly choked with rage. The expression on his face as he watched Grundy disappearing down the lane was terrific. Mr. Ratcliff had reached a period in his life when a hundred yards' run would have laid him up in the school sanatorium, and to think of chasing Grundy was therefore out of the question. Apart from that, he had his dignity to consider. It would hardly have done for a responsible St. Jim's master to be seen sprinting after an erring schoolboy.

But Mr. Ratcliff did not feel inclined to abandon Grundy at this stage of the proceedings. He could guess that the detained Shell junior had not wandered out without a motive. The chances were, thought Mr. Ratcliff, that he was aiming at joining a party of St. Jim's fellows in the woods, or on the river.

"He shall be made to suffer!" muttered Mr. Ratcliff.

And with that, the Housemaster of the New House marched out of the gates and down the Rylcombe Lane.

Some little way down the lane was a stile leading into a chain of fields terminating in some woods, and finally the River Rhyll. It was a short cut rather favoured by St. Jim's fellows, and Mr. Ratcliff debated, as he walked along, whether he should go that way or stick to the road.

That problem was soon solved for him by two juniors who were sitting on the rail of the stile.

The juniors were Aubrey Racke and Gerald Croke. The two black sheep of the Shell had just lit cigarettes at the time of Mr. Ratcliff's appearance, but they hastily threw them away as they saw who was coming.

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They "capped" Mr. Ratcliff as he came up, and Mr. Ratcliff nodded shortly.

"Have you two boys seen Grundy?" asked Mr. Ratcliff, eyeing Racke and Croke as though he thought they might be concealing his quarry under their Eton jackets.

"Yes, sir; he's just been over this stile," replied Croke. "He asked us if we'd seen Kerr and Redfern as he passed."

"And have you?"

"Yes, sir; they passed this way, too. Going down to the river, I should think."

"Excellent!" said Mr. Ratcliff, with satisfaction.



"Pile in, New House!" howled Figgins, reaching out and grasping galled Herries. But the New House boats did not keep off. They w  
(See p. 7.)

He climbed over the stile, Racke and Croke making way for him to do so, and tramped off across the field.

Racke and Croke watched his retreating figure.

"Trouble for Grundy by the look of it!" remarked Croke. "We'd better go somewhere else for a puff, Racke. Not safe here."

"I'm going after Ratty," replied Racke, still watching, with an unpleasant glitter in his eyes, the figure of Mr. Ratcliff hurrying across the field. "Might see some fun. You never know!"

"What rot! I thought we were going to finish up the afternoon with a game of billiards down at Rylcombe!" said Croke.

"Another time. I'm going this way now. Coming?"

"Rats!"

Aubrey Racke shrugged his shoulders, and, with a wave of his hand, got over the stile and sauntered after Mr. Ratcliff. Croke, with a grunt, turned on his heel and tramped off towards Rylcombe.

Racke continued to saunter after Mr. Ratcliff till the latter had reached the woods. Then the cad of the Shell



broke into a trot, in order to shorten the distance between him and the New House master.

Racke's motives in joining in the chase were a little obscure, even to himself. He bore a very decided grudge against both Mr. Ratcliff and Grundy, but he could hardly hope that their presence in the woods was going to help him to score over them in any way.

Probably Racke, who possessed a somewhat mean and spiteful nature, was actuated more than anything else by the desire to witness the discomfiture of Grundy at the hands of Mr. Ratcliff. True, that discomfiture would be accompanied by a corresponding amount of satisfaction on



the prow of Tom Merry's boat. "Keep your paw off our boat!"

the part of Mr. Ratcliff. But Ratty's turn might come another day. It would be comforting, anyway, to see Grundy put through the hoop.

Racke sprinted down the footpath in the wake of the hurrying St. Jim's master. The woods were not extensive at this spot, and very soon he reached a glade from which the River Rhyl could already be seen shimmering in the sunshine.

From a distance came sounds of laughter and cheering. Those sounds, as a matter of fact, proceeded from the victorious Figgins & Co. after their battle with the School House juniors. But Racke did not heed them. He was more interested in Mr. Ratcliff just then.

For just as he reached the glade Racke saw that the master had caught sight of Grundy. Above the sounds in the distance rang the command in Mr. Ratcliff's harsh voice:

"Grundy, stop—at once, I say! You shall suffer for this, you young hooligan! Come back!"

But for the second time that afternoon Grundy was deaf to the voice of the charmer. After a quick glance over his

shoulder, he bolted across the glade and dived into the thickest part of the woods.

Mr. Ratcliff, forgetting his dignity, dived after him. But Mr. Ratcliff's eyesight was not keen enough to follow Grundy far, and he was soon blinking around in complete bewilderment.

It was at that moment that Aubrey Racke succumbed to a peculiar temptation.

Racke was not of the stuff of which heroes are made, and in the ordinary way the thought of knocking a master's hat off his head would not have entered his mind.

On this occasion the impulse seized Racke to do that dreadful deed.

Certainly, the circumstances were such that very little courage was needed. A stray turf, left over from turf-cutting operations, was lying close at hand, and Mr. Ratcliff was obviously too tired from his recent exertions to take up another chase.

The New House master was wearing the somewhat shabby "topper" in which he usually took his constitutionals. It looked a little out of place in the woods on that bright spring day, which possibly explained how the idea originated in Racke's brain. And it made an easy target.

With a grin on his lean face, Racke picked up the turf.

After taking careful aim, he flung it with all the force of his right arm in the direction of Mr. Ratcliff.

Then without looking back, he fled, chuckling aloud at the thought of the fury of Mr. Ratcliff as his topper was bowled off in such an undignified manner.

To Mr. Ratcliff, however, the sudden loss of his topper was not the only misfortune he suffered. In the shock and bewilderment of the moment, he could not tell what was happening. He knew that his hat went, and that he reeled. After that, he felt a sudden blow at the side of his head that made his senses swim.

Then came darkness.

## CHAPTER 9.

### Circumstantial Evidence!

"WHAT the dickens—"  
Kildare of the Sixth broke off, and stared.  
Darrell, who was with him, also looked surprised.

The two prefects had been sauntering up through the woods from the river, discussing the problem of the approaching cricket season, when Grundy came on the scene.

On Grundy's appearance, cricket took a back seat for the time being. Even that burning topic fled from the minds of the seniors as they observed Grundy's antics.

The great man of the Shell was plunging through the bushes and undergrowth like a wild elephant. His cap was missing, his hair was tousled, and his clothes were dirty. As he ran, he kept on flinging glances back, in a manner that suggested that he was being pursued.

"Grundy!" said Darrell.

"What the thump is the matter with him?" asked Kildare. "Never knew him to run away from anyone before!"

"Nor I," remarked Darrell. "Let's stop the young idiot, anyway, and find out what's wrong."

Kildare nodded, and the two Sixth-Formers, without more ado, proceeded to stop the young idiot.

The process of stopping the young idiot was a simple one. From Grundy's point of view it was a painful one, too. It consisted of a hefty charge at the Shell fellow on the part of Darrell, and a firm grab at the scruff of his neck on the part of Kildare. The combined effect of these two acts was to stop Grundy with a suddenness that for a moment sent him spinning round like a top.

"Ow!" gasped Grundy, looking dizzily at his unexpected captors.

"That's just about how I feel!" said Darrell rather ruefully. "You've got some weight behind you, kid! Now, what's it all about?"

"Yes, what's the little game, Grundy?" asked Kildare.

"Ow! Nothing much!" grunted Grundy. "Look here! There's no need for you chaps to interfere. Old Ratty's chasing me, and if you're good School House men, you'll let me go. You know what Ratty's like yourselves, don't you?"

"Perhaps we do," said Kildare, with a faint smile. "Still, that's neither here nor there, Grundy. If you're leading Mr. Ratcliff a chase through the woods, you're asking for trouble, you know."

"So I should think!" grinned Darrell. "Where is he, Grundy?"

"Not far behind. Look here! You lemme go!" said Grundy, beginning to struggle.



"Not just yet, my pippin! Strikes me we'd better look into this, eh, Kildare?"

Kildare nodded.

"Better take the young ass in charge, for his own safety. You'll get bunked if you start playing games with masters, you know, Grundy!"

"Rot! Lemme go!" roared Grundy, struggling furiously. "Later on, perhaps! Yank him along, Darrell. We'll see if Ratty's about."

Grundy's struggles were of not much avail against the two powerful seniors. Strong and burly as he was himself, the Shell fellow found that Kildare and Darrell could manage him quite easily. And Grundy very soon gave up his efforts, and reluctantly allowed himself to be conducted back to the footpath leading away from the river.

The trio walked along the footpath, through the woods for a distance of about twenty-five yards. Then they came to a glade—the glade where Mr. Ratcliff had spotted Grundy only a few minutes before. And as they advanced towards it they saw Mr. Ratcliff.

The Housemaster of the New House was lying motionless in a slight hollow in the ground, near the middle of the clearing. His face was deadly white, and a slight trickle of blood was running from a wound on his temple.

The three St. Jim's fellows recoiled in horror, as their eyes fell on that unexpected scene.

"Good heavens!" muttered Kildare. "What ever can have happened?"

"Goodness knows!" replied Darrell, quite pale himself at the shock of their discovery. "Let's do something quickly, anyway!"

Kildare and Darrell hurried over to the inert figure of the New House master. Grundy, absolutely flabbergasted by this unlooked-for turn in the events of the afternoon, followed, like one in a dream.

Kildare went down on one knee beside Mr. Ratcliff, and, raising the latter by the shoulders, loosened his collar and tie.

"Nothing very serious," was his pronouncement, after a swift examination of the injured master. "A bump on the back of the napper and this cut on the temple—that's all, I think. He's in a faint."

Kildare and Darrell set to work to bring Mr. Ratcliff back to consciousness, Grundy also giving such assistance as his rather clumsy hands were capable of. Very soon their efforts were rewarded, and Mr. Ratcliff began to show signs of life again. And within five minutes he was sitting up, blinking at them in a dazed fashion, and groaning a little.

"Better now, sir?" asked Kildare solicitously.

The Housemaster nodded feebly.

"Do you think you'll be able to walk soon, if we help you along, or shall I send Grundy for an ambulance?"

At the mention of Grundy's name Mr. Ratcliff gave a start. He peered round until his eyes fell upon the Shell junior, and as they did so the weakness seemed to fade away from his face. In its place came a look of quite extraordinary venom and bitterness.

"Grundy!" he said, between set lips. "So you are here still! Help me up, Kildare!"

Assisted by the two prefects, Mr. Ratcliff rose dizzily to his feet, and glared at Grundy with a glare that increased in intensity as his strength began to return.

His expression was so fierce, in fact, that Grundy felt quite startled. He had been prepared for squalls, after his misadventures with Mr. Ratcliff that afternoon. But he had not imagined that Mr. Ratcliff's rage would manifest itself on his face to such a degree as this.

The two Sixth-Formers noticed it, too, and regarded Mr. Ratcliff rather uneasily. For a moment they both wondered whether the New House master's accident had left him temporarily a little "touched."

Then Mr. Ratcliff came out with his bombshell—a bombshell which simply staggered his three listeners, but certainly explained his enraged glare at Grundy.

"I presume," he said, still resting a little on the arms of Kildare and Darrell, "that the presence of Grundy here indicates that he has invented a plausible story to clear himself over this monstrous attack on me?"

"What the thump—" began Grundy.

"Grundy has told us nothing, sir," said Kildare, rather at a loss to understand what Mr. Ratcliff was getting at. "We found him sprinting through the woods."

"Running away from the scene of his criminal misdeed, I suppose? That is understandable," remarked Mr. Ratcliff.

"Criminal misdeed?" echoed Kildare, in amazement. "Surely, sir, you're not suggesting—"

"Not only do I suggest, I deliberately state, that the condition in which you just found me was brought about by a wilful and wicked assault on me!" said Mr. Ratcliff, his voice rising as he went on. "And I have not a shadow of doubt in my mind that the assault was committed by Grundy!"

"Liar!"

The word came from Grundy's lips like a shot from a gun. Grundy simply couldn't help himself. His ruddy face a shade redder than usual, and his eyes blazing, he looked the embodiment of defiance as he hurled the contemptuous word at the venomous Housemaster.

"S-sh!" said Kildare, frowning. "Quiet, Grundy! Mustn't talk to a master like that!"

"I don't care!" retorted Grundy doggedly. "I know jolly well I didn't touch him, and if he says I did, then there's only one word that describes him, whether he's a master or not!"

"Shut up, you young ass!"

"Let the ill-mannered hooligan vent his spleen if he so wishes!" said Mr. Ratcliff harshly. "He will soon change his tune when he is before Dr. Holmes."

"Mean to say all this is really serious?" asked Grundy, astonishment almost as great as his anger. "But, dash it all, I haven't the foggiest idea what's happened! The last time I saw you, sir, was when you started chasing me a few minutes ago."

"So that is to be your defence!" commented Mr. Ratcliff. "A plausible one! But, unfortunately, the circumstances are such that your story will hardly meet with belief."

Kildare and Darrell looked from Grundy to Mr. Ratcliff with startled eyes. They hardly knew what to make of the affair yet.

"Then you are seriously charging Grundy with attacking you and striking you unconscious—is that so, sir?" asked Kildare, with the idea of getting things absolutely clear.

"Exactly!" snapped the New House master. "I am certain of it—certain, without the shadow of a doubt!"

"Did you actually see him then?" asked Darrell.

"No. Nevertheless, I am perfectly clear on the matter. The evidence as you will see, is conclusive."

And then Mr. Ratcliff explained briefly how he had set out after Grundy from the school gates that afternoon. He described his journey over the stile and through the woods, till he reached the point where he told them of Grundy's coming into view again.

"Well, sir, what happened then?" asked Kildare, as Mr. Ratcliff paused for breath.

"Immediately I saw Grundy," continued Mr. Ratcliff, "I ordered him to halt and return with me to the school. Grundy, however, refused to do so, and I was forced to run after him into the bushes where he had taken refuge."

"But I didn't stay there!" protested Grundy. "I bunked off and ran straight into the arms of Kildare and Darrell."

"Steady, kid!" warned Kildare. "It wasn't more than thirty yards away from this spot where we met you. The whole job—nabbing you and returning here—couldn't have taken more than about three minutes. Are you going to say that Mr. Ratcliff's accident took place in that short time?"

"Ridiculous!" interrupted the victim of the accident himself. "I will tell you exactly what happened, and you will see for yourself, Kildare, how ridiculous Grundy's defence is."

Kildare turned to Mr. Ratcliff again and listened.

"After scrambling about in the bushes for a minute or two, I still had not found Grundy. I realised, however, that he could not be far away. I was searching in a haphazard manner, but I can only conclude that I had got dangerously close to his hiding-place. For, all of a sudden, I felt a blow that knocked my hat off. I staggered, and, after that, came a blow at the side of my head, and I conclude, one on my temple, too. But by that time I was unconscious."

"And you think I'd do all that?" hooted Grundy. "Oh, my hat!"

"Can it!" said Kildare brusquely. "This looks a bit too serious to be treated lightly, Grundy."

"Are you and Darrell doubting my word, then?" asked Grundy, in dismay.

"Blessed if I know yet. You were a bit excited when we met you, and it certainly seems strange, on the face of it."

Grundy's jaw dropped. It was a blow to hear that Kildare should entertain any doubt as to the truth of his statements. It made him realise that unless he acted very carefully he would soon find himself in a very difficult position.

"But—but you can't convict a chap on such flimsy evidence as this!" said Grundy. "Anything might have happened after I bunked. Mr. Ratcliff might have knocked his head against a tree."

"He wasn't lying anywhere near a tree," pointed out Darrell. "The nearest tree was some yards away."

"That's true!" nodded Kildare.

"The suggestion is nonsensical!" said Mr. Ratcliff decisively. "The blow that knocked my hat off came undoubtedly from a very active source, and I cannot doubt that the others were of a similar nature. We may rule out the possibility that it was a mere accident. That being



accepted, it follows that I have been deliberately assaulted, and I cannot see that I can be expected to believe that it was committed by any other person than Grundy, here."

"But with what motive?" asked Kildare.

"Partly revenge, and partly as a means of escaping me," answered Mr. Ratcliff promptly. "Grundy bore me a grudge, I believe, as I was responsible for his detention this afternoon. And, for some reason, he was very anxious indeed to remain free this afternoon. To retain his freedom he was, apparently, prepared to go to desperate lengths, and that is how I explain his vicious attack on me."

Kildare and Darrell looked at each other and then at Grundy. They couldn't altogether take it in yet. But, certainly, such evidence as there was seemed to point to Grundy's being the culprit.

George Alfred Grundy, for his part, stared first at Mr. Ratcliff, then at Kildare, then at Darrell.

From fierce resentment and astonishment at Mr. Ratcliff's accusation his mood had changed to one of growing dismay and anxiety.

Grundy had expected trouble to follow his escapade that afternoon. But trouble so serious as this he certainly had not anticipated.

Presently, all four set out for St. Jim's again. Kildare and Darrell helped Mr. Ratcliff along, and Grundy brought up the rear. And the heart of the great man of the Shell, as he pondered over the situation, became as heavy as lead.

CHAPTER 10.

A Surprise for St. Jim's!

"READY?"

"Rather!"

"Shoot, then!"

George Francis Kerr "shot," or, in other words, began to turn the handle of Grundy's moving-picture camera.

Figgins & Co., of the New House, were having an exhilarating time. Tom Merry & Co. and the chums of Study No. 6, on the other hand, were having just the reverse.

Already some remarkable pictures had been taken—pictures which Figgins & Co. were hoping would at least equal the efforts of the best producers of Transatlantic "slapstick" comedies.

As an introduction, they had filmed a scene in which they—the victorious New House juniors—had walked over their unfortunate School House rivals. After that, they had taken one or two little episodes such as Tom Merry and Jack Blake, tied together, bearing a placard on which was inscribed the words: "New House is Cock House," and Gussy being stood on his head by Figgins and Fatty Wynn.

Needless to say, the School House contingent were by no means delighted with all this pleasant entertainment. They objected, in fact—rather forcibly at times; but Figgins & Co. had them well secured, and they were unable to do more than object.

The most fearsome threats were hurled at the New House brigade by their prisoners. All sorts of dreadful punishments were promised them for the future. But, apparently, the New House did not trouble much about the future. They continued to chortle as they prepared their pictures, and the School House picnickers continued to squirm.

The crowning indignity was now being achieved. Tom Merry, skipper of the Shell and leader of many a successful "rag" against the New House, was being photographed in the act of receiving from Figgins and Redfern chunks of turf into his unwilling mouth.

In order to facilitate the work of the two great men of the New House, Fatty Wynn and Owen were holding Tom's mouth open. The rest of the New House, keeping a careful eye on their captives, were standing outside the range of the camera, thoroughly enjoying the proceedings and loudly encouraging the performers.

"Go it, Figgy!"

"He looks in need of a meal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Meanwhile, Tom Merry, speaking in a language the like of which had certainly never been heard in the quiet river-side woods, was loudly exclaiming:

"Groooogh! Gerrraaash! Ooooooch! Ouch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep it up, kids!" encouraged Kerr, in a voice choked with laughter. "This is going to bring down the house when it's shown!"

"Ow, you rotters!" spluttered Tom Merry. "I'll—oooooch! Gug-gug-gug! Groooogh!"

The New House fellows were yelling with laughter. They saw the funny side of it. The School House brigade, meanwhile, looked on with burning faces. They felt that their humiliation was now complete.

"That's enough!" called out Kerr at last, releasing his hold on the handle. "Thanks for looking so pleasant, Tommy!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groooogh!" was Tom Merry's only retort.

"Now, what about the grand finale?" asked Kerr, preparing to move the camera to another spot.

"The whatter?"

"The grand finale, you know. As they say in the movie advertisements, 'the thrilling, smashing, crashing, heart-pulsating climax!'"

"Oh crumbs!"

"By which I mean," explained Kerr, "a picture of Blake being thrown to the sharks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good idea!"

"Look here——" yelled Blake, in alarm.

"Collar him!"

"You fearful rotters, I'll——"

"Yank him over! Where do you want him, Kerr?"

Despite his loud protests, Jack Blake was duly yanked over, and Kerr set his—or, rather, Grundy's—camera in position and made ready to film his grand finale.

(Continued on next page.)

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Once again Figgins superintended the arrangements, and in due course yelled out:

"Shoot!"

The deadly handle commenced to turn, Blake's captors, bearing him on high, marched on the scene, performed sundry gyrations, then, at a word from Figgins, swung him once, twice, thrice, and then into the river.

Splash!

The unhappy leader of Study No. 6 descended into the river, sending up a column of water as he went in.

Kerr, with a grin, continued to record the film.

That concluded the great New House rag. As soon as they had seen Jack Blake emerge safely from the water, looking more like a drowned rat than the leader of a celebrated study, the New House contingent, triumphantly taking Grundy's camera and Jack Blake's hamper with them, got into their boats and rowed away in the direction of the boathouse. As they went round the bend of the river they could just see Blake releasing his comrades from their bonds.

"Think they'll come after us?" asked Redfern.

"Somehow, I fancy they won't!" answered Figgins, with a grin.

And Figgins was right. School House had had quite enough of ragging for one afternoon!

When they reached the boathouse the New House brigade landed again, and had a somewhat hurried picnic on the contents of Jack Blake's hamper.

Figgins was anxious to get to Wayland with the negative spool, and but for Fatty Wynn's almost tearful appeals, would have been inclined to abandon the idea of a picnic altogether. As it transpired, however, the New House party was so large that the contents of the tuck-hamper, extensive as it was, did not last them long. The ragers were therefore able to proceed to Rylcombe with very little delay.

For safety's sake, in view of the possibility of early School House reprisals, Figgins had decided that they had better stick together for the rest of the afternoon. There was, however, no need for everybody to go to Wayland, and it was accordingly arranged that Figgins and Kerr should take the undeveloped spool to the photographic agency at Wayland, and that the rest should meet them again at Rylcombe, and accompany them back to the school.

The arrangement was duly adhered to. Figgins and Kerr caught a train over to Wayland, and went to the principal photographic agency, where they learned, to their delight, that they might expect the finished film by the end of the week.

Then they returned to Rylcombe and met the others, and the entire New House crowd, in a very jubilant mood, returned to St. Jim's again.

News of the rag had evidently spread, for half St. Jim's seemed to have turned out to meet them at the gates.

The New House section, who were predominant, greeted them with a cheer.

"Good old Figgy!"

"New House for ever!"

"Who's cock House now?"

"New House!"

"Hurrah!"

"We saw Tom Merry and his crowd come in long ago with their tails between their legs!" grinned Jimson.

"How did things go off?"

"Top hole!"

"Oh, rather!"

The crowd split up, and many were the laughs as various members of the victorious party related their adventures. "Hallo! Here they come!" exclaimed Kerr, suddenly breaking off his description of the afternoon's events to a little group of New House juniors.

There was a general movement in the direction to which Kerr was looking, and an ironical cheer went up as the juniors saw that Tom Merry & Co. and the chums of Study No. 6 were approaching.

"How did you like it, Tommy?"

"What did it feel like, Gus?"

"Who's cock House now, eh?"

Tom Merry grinned rather ruefully.

"Pax, you fellows! It's your score this time, but we'll make up for it soon, don't worry!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But we haven't come along to talk about that," said Tom, looking more serious again. "While we've been scrapping, strange things have been happening, it seems."

"Why, what's wrong?" asked Figgins, rather impressed by the sober countenances of the School House juniors.

"It's old Grundy, in the wars, as usual," replied the skipper of the Shell. "This time it's no joke, though."

The New House fellows, and the few School House men who were present, gathered round with interest.

"Grundy?" said Kerr thoughtfully. "Nothing to do

with us, I hope? Of course, you guessed we bagged his camera this afternoon?"

"I know. That's what led to it, apparently. Grundy chased you, and old Ratty started chasing Grundy."

"Oh crumbs!"

"But that's not the worst," said Tom. "Kildare and Darrell were just strolling up from the river, when they ran into Grundy. I suppose he looked suspicious, or something; anyway, they collared him, and a few yards away they found Ratty on the ground, knocked clean out."

"Oh, great pip!"

"Ratty came round and swore Grundy had bashed him. And now Grundy is up in Nobody's Study waiting to be sent for by the Head."

"Phew!"

"And that's that!" concluded Tom Merry grimly. "What do you think of it?"

Figgins & Co. looked a little more subdued.

"H'm! Sounds like a nasty bizney!" commented Figgins.

"A rotten end to a jolly good rag!" remarked Kerr. "I'm awfully sorry to hear it, for one!"

"Same here!"

"And here!"

There was quite a chorus of approval of that sentiment. Grundy, in spite of his erratic and overbearing ways, was, if not exactly popular, at all events, esteemed, by the majority of the fellows. On the other hand, Mr. Ratcliff was universally disliked, and in the absence of further information the juniors were inclined to sympathise with Grundy.

"But I can't understand Grundy doing such an idiotic thing!" said Figgins, frowning. "We know he's several sorts of an ass, but not quite that sort, surely."

"That's the point," said Tom Merry. "Grundy says he didn't do it."

"Oh!"

"Ratty says he had his hat knocked off and got a blow from some weapon. He says he knows it was Grundy, because he'd got him cornered just about where it happened. But Grundy says he'd already escaped, so somebody else must have done it."

"But who the thump could be potty enough to go for a master?" asked Redfern.

"That's the question. I can't imagine anyone at St. Jim's being such a rotter, anyway. Besides, the whole bizney couldn't have taken more than a minute or so."

There was a silence. The jubilation had died out of the faces of the New House juniors now. They looked rather uncomfortable, in fact.

"Well, it's rotten to think that all this should have come out of Reddy and I raiding old Grundy's camera," said Kerr at last. "It sounds as if there's a strong case against him, too, but—well, I'm blessed if I can believe it!"

"Neither can I."

"We must see if we can do something," said Kerr. "If it happened in the woods there must have been somebody or other about at the time. It might even have happened close to where we were."

"Quite likely—especially as Grundy was after his camera."

"Anyway, I can't see that we can do much at present," said Figgins. "We'll jaw it over to-morrow. Time we got in to prep now."

"Right-ho!"

"All sewene, deah boy!"

The rival groups separated and proceeded to their respective Houses. And the advent of prep put a stop to much further talk then. But, later on, when prep was finished and the juniors assembled again before bed-time, there was only one topic of conversation in the junior Common-rooms of both the Houses at St. Jim's. That topic was George Alfred Grundy and his alleged attack on Mr. Ratcliff in the woods.

## CHAPTER 11.

### Racke's Dilemma!

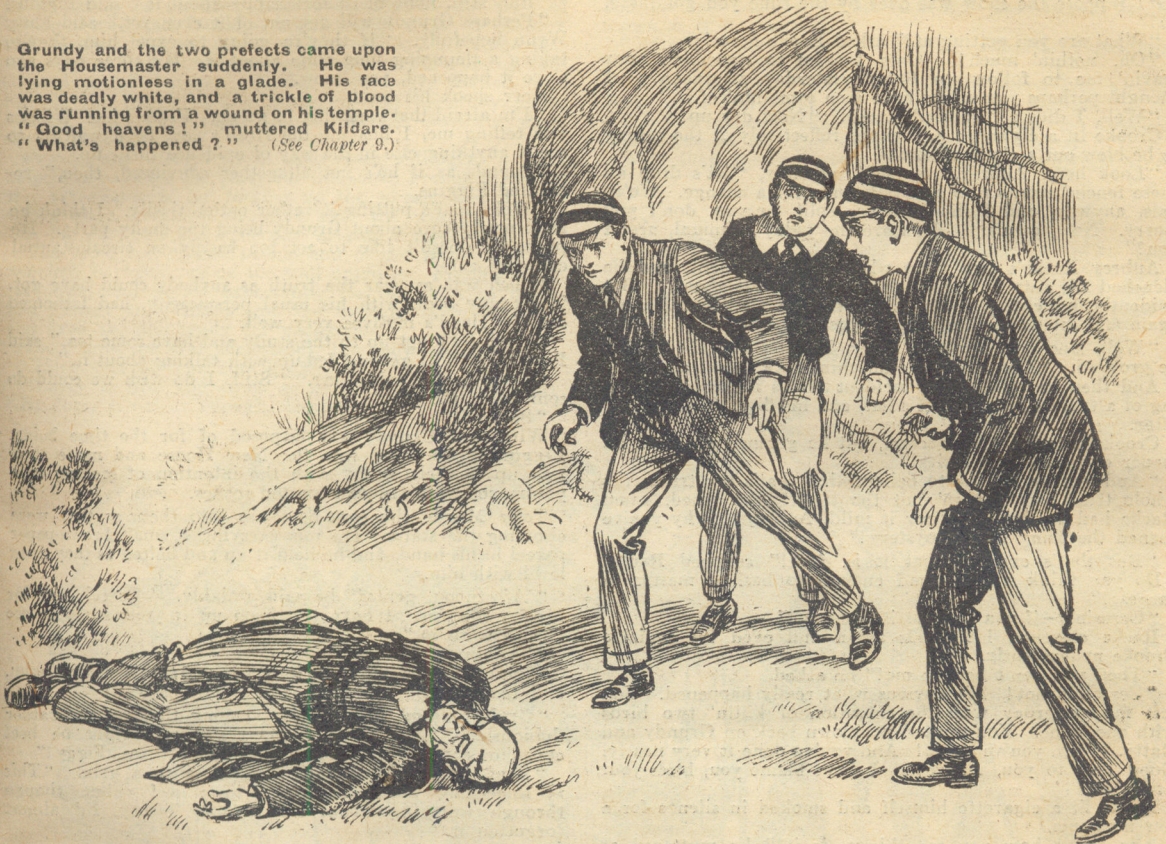
ON the following day Grundy did not occupy his usual place in the Shell Form-room. Instead of that he was located temporarily in that unfriendly apartment officially known as the punishment-room, and popularly known as Nobody's Study.

It seemed that George Alfred Grundy was "for it." Disobedience to the orders of a master, alone, was serious enough; but a brutal assault on a master, such as Grundy was alleged to have made on Mr. Ratcliff, was infinitely more serious. And St. Jim's confidently anticipated that Grundy was booked for the "sack."

At dinner-time a rumour was current that that sentence had actually been pronounced by the Head. The rumour came, in the first place, from the fatuous lips of Baggy



Grundy and the two prefects came upon the Housemaster suddenly. He was lying motionless in a glade. His face was deadly white, and a trickle of blood was running from a wound on his temple. "Good heavens!" muttered Kildare. "What's happened?" (See Chapter 9.)



Trimble, who had mysterious methods of his own for acquiring confidential information. And it found a good many believers.

But when the day came to a close, and it was known that Grundy was still in Nobody's Study, St. Jim's began to have doubts. If Grundy had been expelled the authorities didn't seem in a hurry to get rid of him, anyway.

As a matter of fact, Dr. Holmes was in rather a quandary. If the evidence had been absolutely conclusive, he would have had no hesitation in sending Grundy away from the school immediately. But it was not. It was strong enough to make him feel practically certain of Grundy's guilt; but there was just the faintest element of doubt arising out of the fact that Mr. Ratcliff had not actually seen Grundy strike the blow. It was that doubt that induced Dr. Holmes to postpone his decision, in the hope that some final and conclusive piece of evidence would be forthcoming on the morrow.

Grundy himself had little doubt, however, that the verdict would be expulsion. And it was a very down-hearted George Alfred that sat down on the uncomfortable chair in the punishment-room after his interview in the Head's study, and tried to think things out.

To say that Grundy was surprised by the turn of events would be putting it mildly. He was absolutely staggered, Grundy had very little respect for authority, and on more than one occasion he had been known to "cheek" prefects and masters. But under no circumstances would he have dreamed of assaulting a master. And the very idea that he should be accused of doing so struck him as grotesque.

Nevertheless, such was the case. And unfortunately for Grundy, the facts were all against him. The interval which had elapsed between the time when Mr. Ratcliff saw him in the glade, and the time of the discovery of Mr. Ratcliff lying unconscious was but a few minutes. Grundy realised that, and realised that whatever had happened to Mr. Ratcliff must have happened very quickly. How to find out what actually had taken place struck Grundy as a problem. Which undoubtedly it was.

Meanwhile, Aubrey Racke of the Shell was giving consideration to the same problem, from a somewhat different angle.

Racke had felt as much surprise as anybody else when he heard the news. Indeed, for a time, he had not associated his own encounter with Mr. Ratcliff with Grundy's affair.

When he got to hear details, however, he suddenly realised that the assault of which Mr. Ratcliff had been the victim must have occurred at precisely the same time as he

had thrown the turf. And that sudden realisation brought alarm to the heart of Aubrey Racke.

The story of the affair reached the Shell in full detail through the medium of Tom Merry, who got it from Darrell. And when Racke heard Tom Merry relate how Mr. Ratcliff's hat had been knocked off before the blow had been struck he knew that that part of it, at least, had been his own handiwork.

As to the blow which had knocked out the New House master, Racke tried to imagine that it had come from another source, but he couldn't convince even himself. Obviously, it must have occurred immediately after, and Racke knew very well that nobody else had been near enough to be responsible for it. He could only conclude that a stone, picked up with the turf, had become detached from it, and struck Mr. Ratcliff almost simultaneously.

In the evening of the day after the accident Gerald Croke, who shared Study No. 7 with Racke, came into the study with a sneering grin on his face.

Racke was pacing the study at the time, and he looked up rather irritably at the interruption.

"Havin' a jolly time on your own, what?" grinned Croke, closing the door and crossing over to the armchair.

"Not bad," answered Racke, with a suspicious look at his study-mate. "What are you grinnin' like a Cheshire cat about, anyway?"

"Oh, nothin' much! I say, Racke, you've kept pretty mum over this Grundy bizney. Aren't you tickled to death he's going to be bunked?"

"Grundy? Oh, rather!" replied Racke, without, however, succeeding in sounding very enthusiastic.

Croke regarded his leader keenly through his shifty eyes. "Pretty queer affair, don't you think?" he said.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, his bashin' old Ratty. I can't take it in, you know. Too steep altogether!"

"Why should it be too steep?" asked Racke, with a glare. Croke chuckled.

"For the simple reason that Grundy would never do it," he answered coolly. "You and I know Grundy, if the rest don't. In spite of all his wild and woolly ways, Grundy's pi—a regular Good Little Eric!"

"Rot!" grunted Racke. "Grundy's a bruiser, and he'd been wild over Ratty's little ways. That's my theory. He did it right enough!"

Croke shrugged his shoulders and continued to grin.



"I suppose the show was over by the time you got there, eh?"

"What are you getting at?" asked Racke fiercely.

"Oh, nothin' much! Only I seem to remember your leavin' me to follow up Ratty yesterday afternoon. I thought perhaps you might have seen somethin' of it."

"Well, I didn't!" snarled Racke. "Now dry up!"

Crooke lit a cigarette and gazed reflectively at the ceiling as he blew out a cloud of smoke.

"Look here, Aubrey," he said suddenly, "let's drop all these fencin' stunts now and talk sense for a change. We're pals, anyway, and I should never split on you, don't you worry. Now, own up! You are the giddy criminal, aren't you?"

Aubrey Racke's face went white for a moment, and he clenched his fists as though he meant to use them. But evidently he changed his mind, for he unclenched them again and sat down in a chair opposite Crooke.

"Well, since you want to know, I'll tell you the truth," he growled. "I haven't done anythin' very fierce, anyway."

And then he related the incident of his impulsive throwing of a turf at Mr. Ratcliff's hat, and his flight immediately after.

Crooke listened with interest, but he grinned again as his leader concluded the recital.

"And you expect me to believe that that's the truth, the whole truth, an' nothin' but the truth?" he asked, when Racke had finished. "Draw it mild, Aubrey! Why you've turned the thing into a mystery!"

"But that's exactly what it is, fool!" snapped Racke. "Do you think I'd be mad enough to bash a master in earnest?"

"Certainly—if you thought it was safe!"

Racke clenched his hands again and eyed the amiable Crooke malevolently.

"Then you don't believe me?" he asked.

"Certainly not! It's obvious what really happened. You left me yesterday with the intention of killin' two birds with one stone. You wanted your own back on Grundy and Ratty. Well, you've got it! And you've done it very neatly. Good luck to you, Aubrey! I don't blame you, bless your little heart!"

Racke lit a cigarette himself and smoked in silence for a few moments.

"So that's how you see things, is it?" he muttered at last. "Well, if you won't believe me, it's a pretty sure thing that the Head wouldn't if I was dragged into it. It's true that I've succeeded in more than working off old scores with that idiot Grundy, and Ratty, too. But I didn't set out to do it, Crooke—honour bright I didn't!"

"Rot!" said Crooke cheerfully.

"Well, I didn't, anyway. But, by gad, you've shown me plainly enough that I wouldn't stand a dog's chance if I did fall under suspicion. Nobody would believe that I simply intended to knock off Ratty's hat."

"Not likely!" grinned Crooke.

"Then that settles it. I'd seriously thought of tellin' the Head what I know—"

"Wha-a-at?" yelled Crooke incredulously.

"Fact!" nodded Racke. "I know I'm not very particular, but I've felt it's carryin' the thing a bit too far to let a chap get the sack when I could save him. If I could manage it without lettin' myself in the cart I would. But I can see now it can't be done, so I'm goin' to keep mum."

Such was Racke's decision over the affair of Mr. Ratcliff. It was a decision that was undoubtedly in the best interests of Aubrey Racke. But it seemed, with equal certainty, to seal the doom of George Alfred Grundy.

## CHAPTER 12.

### Figgins' Picture Show!

"IT'S rotten!"

George Francis Kerr was the speaker.

Figgins and Fatty Wynn nodded agreement.

They were sauntering away from the nets, where they had been at practice. And, for the fiftieth time since the previous Wednesday afternoon, Grundy was the subject of their conversation.

"It's absolutely rotten!" agreed Figgins. "The worst of it is I feel that we're partly to blame for the scrape that Grundy's got into."

"So we are," said Fatty Wynn dolefully. "If only old Kerr hadn't thought out that brainy stunt for pinching Grundy's camera—"

"Grundy would have stayed in detention, and there would have been no trouble," finished Figgins. "Exactly!"

Kerr smiled faintly.

"You were both keen enough on the idea when I suggested it, anyway," he retorted. "I don't think we've got a lot to reproach ourselves over really. But still—"

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"But, still, none of us feel happy about it," said Figgins. "Perhaps Grundy will get out of it even yet," said Fatty Wynn hopefully. "If they're going to expel him, they're taking a thumping long time about it. It's three days ago since it happened, you know."

Kerr shook his head.

"I'm afraid that's nothing to go on. From what Wilkins was telling me, I imagine the Head's just been waiting to see if anything else in the way of evidence turns up."

"Sounds as if he's not altogether convinced, then," remarked Figgins.

"Well, that's putting it rather optimistically. I think he feels pretty sure about Grundy being the guilty party. He probably doesn't like to act too hastily on circumstantial evidence only."

Which was as near the truth as anybody could have got. The canny Scot, with his usual perspicacity, had fathomed out the Head's motives very well.

"Well, let's get up to the study and have some tea," said Figgins. "I'm getting fed-up with talking about it."

"Same here," said Kerr. "Still, I do wish we could do something, though!"

"So do I."

With that Grundy was disposed of for the time being. Figgins & Co. went into the New House and made their way up to their study, with the intention of seeking temporary solace in tea and toasted scones.

Toby Marsh, the page-boy, ran into them as they were climbing the stairs. He was carrying a small brown-paper parcel in his hand, and he held it up and halted as they drew level with him.

"'Afternoon, gents!" he said amiably. "Parcel here for Master Figgins. I have just been up to your study to see if you were in."

"Thanks, Toby!"

Figgins slipped sixpence into Toby Marsh's willing palm, and took the parcel.

"Grub?" asked Fatty Wynn, eyeing the package rather dubiously. "Not big enough, I s'pose. Might be beef cubes, or something, though. Open it and see, Figgy!"

"Beef cubes, rats!" said Figgins, with a grin. "This is something more important than beef cubes, though through worrying about this Grundy bizney, I'd almost forgotten it."

"What is it—the developed film?" asked Kerr.

"Right, first time! These photographic people are prompt, and no mistake!"

"They have a daily delivery service, I think," explained Kerr. "Let's trot up and see how our film's turned out, anyway."

The Three New House chums quickly reached Study No. 4 in the Fourth passage. They were all eager to see how the film had turned out. Practical motion-photography was a novelty which none of them had previously experienced, and it was quite thrilling to think that a film which they themselves had devised and photographed, should be in their possession.

"Blessed if I don't feel quite excited!" remarked Fatty Wynn, with a chuckle, as Figgins, in the privacy of the study, began to open the package.

Figgins nodded.

"I do, myself, in a way. Unfortunately, even if it's turned out all right, the Grundy affair mucks it up completely from the point of view of scoring over the School House."

"It's a regular damp squib, in fact," said Kerr, with a wry grin. "Still, I want to see what sort of a job I made of it."

Figgins unpacked the film, and triumphantly held it up in the light of the day.

"Here you are, my infants!" he said. "The finished article!"

"All ready for exhibition!" grinned Kerr. "Let's have a look at some of the pictures, Figgy!"

The three juniors crowded round the study table and examined the narrow strip of film which contained the record of their riverside "rag" of the previous Wednesday.

"Can't judge very well," remarked Fatty Wynn, applying his eye to one of the innumerable little square pictures. "Everything's so tiny."

"From what I can see of them, they're clear enough, though," said Kerr.

"Just what I was thinking," agreed Figgins. "We'll run along and borrow French's projector after tea, and have a little picture-show in the study."

"What about a screen?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"The tea-cloth will do," said Kerr. "Can't show a very big-sized picture, anyway. The study's not big enough."

And so it came about that after tea, for the first time in its history, Study No. 4 in the New House was turned into a cinema.

As a cinema, that celebrated apartment had distinct



disadvantages. For one thing, the walls contained an accumulation of pictures, and oddments in the way of boxing-gloves and fencing-sticks, which made it quite a task to clear a space for a screen. Then the accommodation was so limited that an audience of half a dozen constituted a full house. Figgins accordingly invited only French, the owner of the projector, and his study mate, Jimson, and swore them both to secrecy until the show should be over.

French and Jimson came along very willingly. They helped to arrange the study for the show, French directing the arrangements for rigging up the screen, and Jimson fixing up a couple of overcoats over the window to shut out the daylight, and generally making himself useful.

The table was pushed to one end of the study, and the tea-cloth stretched out on the wall opposite. Figgins & Co. sat down, and waited expectantly for the show to begin, and French and Jimson got the carbide lamp working, and fixed the film ready for projection.

Then, amid general excitement, the show began.

"Here we are!" chuckled Figgins.

"Large as life, and twice as natural!" remarked Kerr.

"By Jove, it's clear enough, though!"

The laughter had suddenly died away on Kerr's lips, and he had jumped to his feet and was staring at the screen as if mesmerised.

"What's the matter?" asked Figgins anxiously.

"Anything wrong, Kerr?"

"No. Carry on!" said Kerr, sitting down just as suddenly as he had stood up. "Tell you in a minute!"

The last incident—that in which Blake took the principal part—flickered on, and caused renewed laughter.

With that, the film came to an end, and Figgins turned



In the grasp of the New House juniors, Tom Merry was helpless. His mouth was forced open, and chunks of turf were jammed in and rubbed over his face. And all the time the clicking of the camera proceeded, as Kerr carefully "shot" the scene. (See Chapter 10.)

"Clear as daylight!"

Figgins & Co. were delighted.

They watched with enthusiasm the scene where the New House triumphantly trod on the struggling figures of their prostrate rivals, and loudly applauded the picture of Tom Merry and Jack Blake unwillingly announcing to the world that New House was cock House.

"Great!" was Figgins' comment. "If only the blessed Grundy sequel hadn't cropped up to spoil it, this would be the biggest score we've ever made!"

"Oh, rather!"

The mysterious proceedings in Study No. 4 had by this time attracted attention outside, and the remainder of the show was carried on to the unmusical accompaniment of a continual banging on the door, which Figgins had thoughtfully locked, and repeated inquiries from the passage as to what was going on inside.

"Let 'em bang!" said Figgins, philosophically. "Oh crikey! Here's Gussy now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The audience and the operator fairly roared at the scene where the noble Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was inverted. There was no doubt whatever about the success of the School House swell as a film comedian.

The laughter was louder still as Tom Merry made his appearance. The grimaces of the leader of the Shell as he was fed with handfuls of turf drew shrieks of merriment from the New House juniors.

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Figgins, almost doubled up with mirth. "This is a corker, and no mistake!"

"Good as a tonic!" chuckled Fatty Wynn, his stout frame shaking with laughter. "Hallo! What's up, Kerr?"

on the light, and blinked round cheerfully at the grinning juniors.

"Well, what do you think of it?" he asked.

There was no need to ask the question. Without a doubt, the juniors considered it a masterpiece.

"And now, what about your little spasm?" asked Figgins, turning to Kerr. "What made you jump up like a jack-in-the-box when the Tom Merry scene was showing?"

Kerr looked round at the curious faces of his friends, before replying. When he did reply, his voice had a ring of cheerfulness in which Figgins and Fatty Wynn, who knew him like a book, detected also suppressed excitement.

"I'll tell you why I jumped up," he said. "I saw something in that film which apparently none of you saw."

"And what the dickens was that?"

"I saw the true explanation of Ratty's accident in the woods!"

### CHAPTER 13.

#### What the Film Revealed!

"**W**HA-A-AT?"

Kerr's listeners stared at him in utter amazement.

"You—you saw what?" stuttered Figgins, unable to believe his ears for the moment.

"I saw the true explanation of Ratty's accident in the woods!" repeated Kerr, quite clearly and coolly.

"But, my dear chap—"

"What the thump—"



It was quite plain that the New House juniors were at a loss to understand what Kerr was getting at. They simply blinked at him.

"Well, if this is some deep leg-pull, I'm blessed if I get the hang of it!" said Figgins. "Let's get it absolutely clear so that there's no misunderstanding about it. You say that, by looking at our film, you saw what happened to Ratcliff—is that it?"

"It's not exactly as I put it, but, anyway, that's it," answered Kerr.

"Give it up, then!" said Figgins. "You saw more than I saw, that's all I can say! Anybody else see it?"

The juniors shook their heads. Kerr's experience had not been shared by any of them.

"It was in the Tom Merry scene that you hopped up, wasn't it?" remarked Fatty Wynn. "Blessed if I noticed any difference between that and the other scenes."

"Nor I!"

"Same here!"

Apparently there was unanimity on that point.

"Well, there was a difference," said Kerr quietly. "We'll run the film through again in a minute, and then you'll see for yourselves!"

"If it explains what happened to Ratty," remarked Figgins, "then it must be a difference. Getting down to it, Kerr, just what did you see?"

Kerr's eyes gleamed.

"I saw the whole incident," he replied. "The entire blessed thing from beginning to end!"

"What, on our film?"

The Scots junior nodded very cheerfully.

"It's the strangest, weirdest, luckiest fluke that ever happened! You remember we've said before that the spot where Ratty was bowled over must have been quite near the scene of our rag? Evidently it was. We must have been standing within fifty yards of him at the time."

"And Ratty has come out in the picture?" asked Fatty Wynn incredulously.

"Exactly! Not particularly distinctly, it's true; but, for all that, he's recognisable."

"And you can see what happened to him?"

"Absolutely!" answered Kerr. "It beats the band to think that things should turn out like this. But it's true all right. You can see it's Ratty, without a shadow of doubt."

"Then he must have seen us!" said Figgins, in surprise.

"That doesn't follow. As a matter of fact, he comes out side-faced in the film, and he's looking in quite a different direction from ours. The chances are that he didn't notice us at all."

"But how is it that he comes out, anyway?" asked French, puzzled. "I should have thought the woods would have prevented his coming out in the picture at such a distance."

"So they would have, anywhere else," agreed Kerr. "But just as things have worked out, he was standing in a clearing which is approached by several footpaths from different parts of the river. And our picture was taken at such an angle that we get a clear view up one of them. Consequently, the whole thing has come out quite distinctly."

"Great Scott!"

The juniors looked at one another. Their doubts were rapidly giving way to excitement, under the influence of Kerr's explanations.

Figgins drew a deep breath.

"Well, if this is true——" he began.

"We shall soon know whether Grundy really biffed our Housemaster, or not!" finished Jimson. "Could you see that much, Kerr?"

Kerr nodded.

"So will the rest of you, now I've told you what to expect," he said. "If you'd been watching the background before, instead of studying Tom Merry's face, you'd have seen just what I've seen."

"And did Grundy do it?" asked Figgins and Fatty Wynn together.

To which question Kerr replied:

"Wait and see! I want to find out whether it looks the same to you as it did to me."

"Then let's run the giddy thing through again," said Figgins promptly. "Get busy, French!"

So French again got busy. And the audience this time displayed an enthusiasm that far surpassed their by no means unenthusiastic interest on the occasion of the first projection.

For the second time the juniors witnessed the strange and delightful spectacle of School House being trampled underfoot, and of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy being forced to occupy an uncomfortable and inelegant position, where his head and feet changed places. This time, however, the entertainment did not move them to laughter. Instead of laughing, they waited expectantly and excitedly for the scene which Kerr had told them revealed the truth about Mr. Ratcliff's adventure in the woods.

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In due course it flickered on. And the juniors leaned forward, and studied it intently.

As Kerr had said, the picture had been taken facing a footpath that led to a clearing. In the foreground, Tom Merry again grimaced. But the watchers had no eyes for the captain of the Shell this time. All their attention was taken up with the incident which had unwittingly been filmed in the background.

While Tom Merry was having tuff put into his mouth, a swift and dramatic little act was being performed in the clearing.

As the scene opened, a jerky figure could be seen moving about in the corner of the picture where the clearing stood. At the distance it was a diminutive figure, but the face was clear enough to be recognised, and there could be no mistaking the short, sharp movements, and angry gestures that were familiar to every New House fellow.

There was an involuntary cry from the spectators.

"Ratty!"

"The old gent himself!" grinned Kerr. "Now watch him carefully, you chaps!"

Kerr's instructions were hardly necessary. The juniors were watching with engrossed interest.

What they saw drew expressions of amazement from each one of them.

The action was swift—so swift, that they could hardly realise what was happening before the thing was over. But the photography, fortunately, was clear and distinct enough to reveal the facts, swiftly as they were enacted.

As Mr. Ratcliff, looking, in the distance, rather like a worried terrier, jerked about in the clearing, another figure suddenly appeared behind him.

It was a figure almost as familiar to the watchers as that of Mr. Ratcliff. Even on the screen, there could be no mistaking the slouching gait, and the set, snoring expression that were known so well, and disliked so heartily, by most of the fellows at St. Jim's.

It was Aubrey Racke of the Shell.

The juniors watched with bated breath. They saw Racke stoop, and pick up something which was indistinguishable at the distance. They saw him take aim, throw, and then turn and run.

Finally, they saw exactly what happened to Mr. Ratcliff.

When his hat was knocked off, the Housemaster of the New House staggered, evidently sent reeling by the suddenness of the blow. Vainly trying to regain his balance, he reeled against the trunk of a tree that stood near by, and the juniors could see his head crash against it, and his whole body crumple up from the shock of the impact. Then, quite evidently knocked unconscious, he pitched forward on his forehead, and rolled down a slope away from the tree, until he was lost to sight.

That was all. But it was quite enough.

French stopped projecting the film. There was no interest in the remainder of it. The juniors were all on their feet, excitedly discussing what they had seen.

Figgins put on the light again, and turned a beaming face to them.

"Well, if that doesn't take the giddy biscuit!" he remarked emphatically.

"You all saw all right, then?" asked Kerr.

"Rather!"

"Don't know how we could have missed it the first time!"

"Why, the blessed thing's as plain as a pikestaff!" said Jimson. "Grundy had nothing to do with it. It was Racke!"

"Partly Racke, I should prefer to say," remarked Figgins. "It seems to me that the tree-trunk is more to blame than Racke. I should imagine that Racke only meant to knock Ratty's hat off; that's all he actually did, anyway. The knock-out blow that Ratty gives Grundy credit for, came from the tree when Ratty stumbled against it."

"That's it!"

"Still, that's a detail," said Kerr. "The main thing, so far as we're concerned, is that the film we've got here contains definite proof that old Grundy is innocent. Considering that we were the cause of the trouble in the first place, I've thought all along that it would be nice if we could get Grundy out of the fix. And now, by the biggest stroke of luck ever, we're going to do it!"

"Hear, hear!"

The New House juniors were very pleased and excited at the prospect of saving Grundy from the plight into which their rag had unfortunately landed him.

"As a first step," said Figgins, "I suggest that we trot over and see Tom Merry about it."

Within five minutes, therefore, Figgins & Co., accompanied by Jimson and French, were crossing over towards the School House. And French carried with him the all-important film that was going to save George Alfred Grundy from the sack.



## CHAPTER 14.

## Tom Merry Takes a Hand!

"I'M afraid there's no hope left."

That pessimistic remark came from Wilkins of the Shell.

He and Gunn, Grundy's study-mates and satellites, had just looked in at Study No. 10, where Tom Merry and Lowther and Manners were finishing a rather late tea. Since their leader's detention in the punishment-room Wilkins and Gunn had kept Tom, as leader of the Shell, acquainted with such news of Grundy as they picked up during their surreptitious visits to Nobody's Study. The Terrible Three, although they had not got on particularly well with Grundy in the past, felt pretty sure of his innocence, and they would have been very pleased to hear that his career at St. Jim's was not going to end in the manner which seemed indicated by all the news bulletins so far.

On this occasion the outlook for Grundy seemed as black as ever. Mr. Ratcliff had just been seen entering the Head's study, and Baggy Trimble, whose shoelace had come undone as he was passing that dreaded apartment, had heard him express the hope that Dr. Holmes was by this time convinced that the only punishment fit for Grundy was expulsion.

Hence Wilkins' pessimistic remark.

"It'm! Doesn't sound too good certainly!" was Tom Merry's comment, after Wilkins had related what he had heard from Trimble.

"Looks as if the time when Grundy gets it in the neck is just about due, in fact," remarked Monty Lowther.

"I'm afraid so."

"It's a blessed mystery to me!" said Tom Merry, knitting his brows. "I feel jolly certain old Grundy didn't do it; and in that case, somebody else did. Yet every shred of evidence is against Grundy."

"That's true!"

"Somebody must know the truth, anyway," remarked Gunn. "If only we had the faintest idea who it really was?"

"Ah, if only!" said Wilkins. "But we haven't; and, from what I can see of it, we're not going to have."

But, strangely enough, just as he said that there was a tap on the study door, and Figgins, followed by several other New House fellows, entered.

"Hallo, you School House idiots!" was Figgins' cheerful greeting. "Still jawing over the Grundy bizney?"

"We were, as a matter of fact," admitted Tom. "Come in and make yourselves comfy—plenty of room on the floor! Tread gently, fatty! The floorboards have their limits, you know!"

"Rats!"

Figgins & Co. and Jimson and French crowded into the study and made themselves as comfortable as the decidedly limited accommodation permitted.

"Well, what's the deputation about?" asked Tom Merry.

"Nothing less than the subject you've just been jawing about," answered Figgins. "In other words, dear old Grundy!"

And then Figgins told the astonished School House juniors what had happened.

Tom Merry & Co. and Wilkins and Gunn were at first incredulous.

"Mean to say you expect us to believe that yarn?" asked Wilkins, when Figgins had finished.

"Bit too steep, Figgy!" remarked Monty Lowther, with a shake of his head.

"Steep or not, it's true!" said Figgins. "I don't mind telling you I couldn't believe it myself when Kerr first told us about it."

"Nor any of us," added Jimson. "But we jolly soon changed our tune when we ran the film through again."

The School House juniors could not help being impressed by the evident sincerity of their visitors. They looked at each other dubiously.

"Is it possible?" asked Gunn.

"Well, it's about the most improbable thing I ever heard," said Manners, with a laugh. "But it's certainly possible."

Tom Merry pursed his lips thoughtfully.

"By Jove!" he said suddenly. "Thinking it over, chaps, the most likely fellow of all is Racke. Don't you remember our talk in the boat the other afternoon?"

"I remember," said Manners, his eyes gleaming. "Herries told us about Racke swearing he'd have his revenge on both Ratty and Grundy, or something equally idiotic."

"Great Scott!"

"Well, that just about completes the case against friend Racke, then," remarked French. "If that was Racke's idea, he succeeded beautifully."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Of course!"

"He bashed Ratty and got Grundy to take the blame!" breathed Wilkins. "Oh, my sainted aunt! What a scheme!"

"And what a rotter!"

The juniors were startled by the news, and filled with disgust, too.

"Well, I knew Racke was several sorts of a cad," said Tom Merry, drawing a deep breath; "but I must say I didn't think that even he would go to such lengths as this! Why, it's criminal!"

"Absolutely!"

"Perhaps he didn't intend it all," said Kerr. "The film proves, anyway, that all he did was to chuck something at Ratty's hat, then bolt."

Tom Merry nodded and rose to his feet.

"You may be right, I hope you are. I'm going to strike while the iron's hot, anyway, and run along and see Racke at once."

"Good egg!"

"We'll stay here till you come back, then," said Figgins.

Tom Merry quitted the study, his face grim and set, and, leaving the rest discussing the affair, went down the passage in search of Aubrey Racke.

The cad of the Shell was alone in Study No. 7 when Tom walked in.

He looked up from his armchair and nodded rather un-casily as he saw who his visitor was. Racke's conscience was still troubling him over the Grundy affair, and, although he had no reason to think that Tom Merry suspected him, he could not help somehow being reminded of it when he observed the stern expression on the face of the captain of the Shell.

"Why the honour?" he asked, with an attempt at jocularity which contrasted rather strangely with his white, troubled face.

Tom Merry closed the door and faced his host.

"I'll come to the point straightaway, Racke," he said, eyeing the nervous black sheep of the Shell grimly. "When are you going to own up that it was you, and not Grundy, who attacked Ratcliff last Wednesday?"

Racke jumped to his feet, white to the lips.

"You— What do you mean?" he stammered. "Surely you're not accusin' me?"

"I'm accusing you of throwing something at Ratcliff in the woods, and of keeping quiet while you know full well that Grundy is going to be expelled for it. Is that clear enough?"

Apparently it was clear enough. Racke's face was drawn and haggard as he tried to think out an answer to the unexpected charge.

"You're wrong—wrong all along the line!" he muttered hoarsely at last. "I was nowhere near the woods at the time. I've got an alibi—Crooke was with me all the afternoon. We went to Rylcombe."

Tom Merry shrugged his shoulders.

"Unfortunately for you, Racke, something rather more reliable than Crooke's word exists, which proves quite conclusively that you are the one who went for Ratty."

"Has some lyin' rotter been sayin'—?" began Racke furiously.

"No lying rotter has been saying anything!" answered Tom Merry brusquely. "The evidence is stronger than word of mouth."

"What on earth are you talkin' about?" asked Racke, mystified, as well as scared, by Tom Merry's remarks.

"I'll tell you," said Tom.

And then he explained how the film had shown Racke throwing a missile at Mr. Ratcliff.

Racke listened with just as much surprise as the School House juniors before him had felt when they first heard the yarn. But Racke felt more than surprise. He felt, also, an icy fear as Tom ruthlessly told him how clearly the camera had revealed everything.

"I don't believe you!" he panted, when he had heard all.

But one look at his trembling lips and scared eyes was sufficient to convince Tom Merry that Racke did believe. And Racke himself very soon saw that the pretence was hardly worth keeping up, for he suddenly flung himself back into his chair and, bursting into a bitter laugh, exclaimed:

"All right, then; have it your own way! I did it!"

"So you admit it?"

Racke lit a cigarette with shaky fingers and shrugged his shoulders expressively.

"It looks as if I shall have to."

Tom Merry hesitated.

"Look here, Racke, you probably know my opinion of you already. It's not a high one. But I don't like to think that anybody in the Shell is capable of such a dirty trick as this appears to be, and I'd like to know whether you've got any explanation or not."

Racke looked up at the leader of the Shell with haggard eyes.

"I've got an explanation all right," he muttered. "Whether you, or anybody else, is likely to believe me, is another matter."



"What is it, anyway?" asked Tom quietly. "You know, of course, what appearances point to?"

"I know all right," said Racke bitterly. "It looks as if I've downed Ratty, knowin' all the time that Grundy would get the blame. But it's not so."

"I'm jolly glad to hear it," said Tom Merry, with a rather dubious look at the cad of the Shell. "But the thing needs a good deal of explaining away, you know, Racke."

Racke nodded.

"I suppose it does. But I give you my word that it was no planned affair, so far as I'm concerned."

"Then why in the name of all that's wonderful are you allowing Grundy to stand the racket?" demanded Tom Merry sharply.

"For the simple reason that they won't take my word any more than his," retorted Racke passionately. "I don't want to be expelled!"

"But, dash it all, you did it!"

"I didn't do all that Grundy is accused of. All I did was to chuck a turf at Ratty's hat. I tell you—"

"Hush!" warned Tom; as the study door suddenly swung open.

They both turned round, to see another junior entering the room. The newcomer was none other than Kerr of the New House.

Kerr closed the door behind him and sat down coolly on the edge of the table.

"I heard your last remark, Racke," he said. "I came along because I had an idea something like this was happening."

"What do you mean?" asked Racke sullenly.

"You mentioned that all you did was to chuck a turf at Ratty's hat. Well, I'll tell you something that Tom Merry doesn't know, because he hasn't seen the film yet."

"What's that?"

"The film makes it perfectly clear that you did nothing more than aim something at Ratty's topper, as you've just said. That being so, you're pretty safe in telling the beaks all about it. They've got to accept the evidence of the film. Of course, you'll have to face the consequences—but they won't sack you for it."

"But how on earth did Ratty come to be injured on the head?" asked Racke, a rather more hopeful look in his eyes.

"Simply by staggering against a tree and bashing his head against the trunk. Of course, he doesn't know that himself. He thinks that Grundy did it. But we know better."

Racke threw away the remainder of his cigarette and rose to his feet again.

"Well, if all this is true, it looks as if it might not be so bad, after all," he remarked. "I don't mind tellin' you, I wasn't keen on gettin' bunked myself, just to save Grundy."

"That's pretty obvious!" said Tom Merry dryly.

"Still, whether you chaps believe me or not, I haven't felt exactly pleased about the thought of keepin' mum, when a few words from me would have made it all right for Grundy. I know you Good Little Erics imagine I'm the complete bad egg, but I can tell you I've felt pretty sick about this business."

"Glad to hear it!" said Tom Merry gruffly. "What are you going to do now, anyway? Ratty is in the Head's study, if you're ready to go along."

Racke did not look very happy at the prospect. Nevertheless, he nodded.

"Anythin' for a quiet life!" he said, with a wry grin. "I'll go along to the confessional right away!"

"Good!" said Tom Merry and Kerr together, with very great relief.

The crisis seemed to be ending at last.

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## CHAPTER 15.

### A Wrong Righted!

**G**EORGE ALFRED GRUNDY stood in the Head's study.

Before him, Dr. Holmes and Mr. Ratcliff and Mr. Railton were seated at the Head's desk, conferring in low tones.

Grundy's face was grim as he looked at them. For a quarter of an hour he had had to endure their cross-examination. And to the somewhat slow-witted Grundy it had been a very trying ordeal. True, he had answered all their questions without fear or hesitation. But he realised that honesty and fearlessness were not all that were required. A little real evidence in his favour would have been much more to the point, and such evidence, unfortunately, he could not produce.

Dr. Holmes looked up at Grundy at last. The Head's face was deeply troubled. Even at this stage his eyes dwelt on Grundy in a way that seemed to suggest that he still had lingering doubts.

But the evidence was overwhelming. He could see that for himself. And Mr. Ratcliff, bitter and vengeful, had harped on the completeness of the case against Grundy and the enormity of his offence in such a way that Dr. Holmes was hardly left with an alternative in his course of action.

"Grundy!"

"Yes, sir!"

"I am very reluctant to take the step which I intend to take."

Grundy's heart sank.

"I have listened very carefully to your answers to our questions, and I have tried to pick out one single fact which would point to your possible innocence. The only fact I can find is your complete denial of the charges. And that, in the face of the evidence which Mr. Ratcliff and Kildare and Darrell have given, is, unhappily, not enough."

"Oh, sir!" groaned Grundy.

"Your Housemaster has informed me that your moral character has hitherto been beyond reproach. In the case of a less serious misdemeanour, his statements would have induced me to modify your punishment."

Grundy looked gratefully at Mr. Railton.

"Unfortunately, however, your offence this time is too serious for the exercise of leniency. I have, therefore, decided that—"

Tap!

The Head stopped and frowned with annoyance, as that sharp tap sounded on the study door.

"Come in!" he called, drumming on his desk with vexation.

The door opened, revealing Aubrey Racke of the Shell.

"I'm sorry, sir!" gasped Racke nervously. "I didn't want to interrupt, but I thought it best. It's about Grundy."

"Oh!"

The Head and his two assistants looked surprised, while Grundy turned round, even more surprised at the mention of his name.

"I assume that you are referring to the attack on Mr. Ratcliff," said the Head.

"I am, sir," muttered Racke. "That's what I've come about. Grundy had nothing to do with it!"

"What?"

The three masters jumped at that unexpected statement. "I've been too scared to come along before, sir, because I thought you would misunderstand things and think I had gone for Ratty—Mr. Ratcliff, I mean—in the same way as you thought Grundy had. As a matter of fact, neither of us did."

"Please calm yourself, Racke, and endeavour to make your remarks more coherent. Are we to understand that you are connected in some way with this unfortunate affair?"

"Yes, sir," confessed Racke.

And then he told them how he had flung the turf at Mr. Ratcliff's "topper" on that memorable afternoon in the woods.

Racke could speak coherently enough when it suited his purpose. It suited his purpose to do so on this occasion, and he told his tale well. The motive he gave for committing the dreadful offence was, perhaps, hardly the correct one. But it sounded feasible enough, and it gave his misdemeanour a much less dreadful appearance than it would otherwise have had.

Briefly, Racke told them that the throwing of the turf was a thoughtless schoolboy "lark," and nothing more. And he succeeded in making it sound very convincing.

Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton listened very attentively, and not unsympathetically. They were evidently impressed.

Not so Mr. Ratcliff, however. The New House master shuffled his feet, and drummed on the desk, and coughed, and glared, in a manner that seemed to indicate that he was not at all impressed—quite the reverse, in fact.



"So that's all, sir," concluded Racke, at last. "As I say, I would have been along before, but I've been afraid that you would not understand. But I can't see a chap expelled for a thing he didn't do."

"Ridiculous!"

That was Mr. Ratcliff's opinion, spoken in a voice of concentrated venom, as Racke concluded.

"Mr. Ratcliff!" reproved the Head, frowning.

"I repeat, sir, the tale is ridiculous!" said Mr. Ratcliff. "I am prepared to admit that Racke may be the guilty party, instead of Grundy, but as to his merely knocking my hat off, the suggestion is preposterous. I know full well, sir, that on the occasion in question I was brutally assaulted. I bear the marks still. Does Racke expect me to believe that I was bruised and knocked unconscious by the simple act of his knocking my hat off?"

"No, sir," said Racke, in the quiet tone which he had used through his story. "You were knocked unconscious by stumbling against the trunk of a tree."

"Nonsense! That suggestion has been made before by Grundy, but Kildare and Darrell will tell you that they picked me up at a spot some distance removed from any tree."

"That was because you rolled down a slope after you had fallen down, sir."

"Utterly absurd!"

"Really, Racke, you are asking us to accept some exceedingly remote hypotheses!" said the Head, with a frown.

"But it's not guesswork, sir," said Racke; "it's the truth!"

And then he thought out his trump card, so to speak. He told them of the film, taken with Grundy's movie-camera, and how it revealed the complete truth.

Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton listened wonderingly. Mr. Ratcliff sneered, in evident disbelief.

As to Grundy, his eyes danced, and he could hardly contain his exultation as he realised what had happened.

Grundy felt no doubts about the truth of the yarn. He could judge that it was genuine enough. To him, in fact, looking at things from the point of view of a junior instead of a master, it was the only possible explanation of Racke's surprising confession.

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" he ejaculated, beaming all over his rugged face, as Racke finished explaining matters.

"Preposterous!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff contemptuously.

Dr. Holmes looked at the irascible New House master rather severely.

"Really, Mr. Ratcliff, you are a little quick to pass judgment on Racke's story before we have tested the truth of it. Extraordinary as the story may sound, I am inclined to accept it."

"So am I," remarked Mr. Railton warmly. "The test is very easily made. I propose, sir, that we arrange for the film to be exhibited in this room without delay."

"An excellent suggestion! I will send for Figgins."

Within a quarter of an hour that decision an event of unique character was taking place in the Head's study—nothing less than a cinema performance.

Figgins and French superintended the arrangements, and the audience consisted of the Head, Mr. Railton, Mr. Ratcliff, Aubrey Racke, and George Alfred Grundy.

The three masters watched the film in a state of considerable astonishment. Mr. Ratcliff, who, unfortunately, possessed no sense of humour, merely grunted at the remarkable pictorial record of New House superiority. But Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton coughed and choked, as though they had great difficulty in suppressing their laughter.

They watched with the closest attention that part of the film which contained the all-important record of Mr. Ratcliff's misadventure. Grundy fairly chortled aloud from his corner. The picture was perfectly clear. There could be no doubt about the "beaks" accepting the evidence now.

"Remarkable!" ejaculated the Head.

"Astonishing!" said Mr. Railton.

"Huh!" grunted Mr. Ratcliff.

The picture ended, and Mr. Railton turned on the lights again.

"I imagine Mr. Ratcliff can have little doubt now that he was mistaken," he remarked as he did so. "Quite obviously, the blows which he received were the result of stumbling against the tree and falling to the ground."

"That is certainly the case," said Dr. Holmes, with very great relief. "I am glad beyond all measure that Grundy's name has been cleared."

Mr. Ratcliff nodded sourly.

"I am convinced," he said. "I am afraid I have acted unjustly, Grundy. You will, of course, realise, nevertheless, that it was in good faith. However, I am sorry!"

The New House master almost choked with the effort of the apology.

Grundy beamed cheerfully.

"That's all right, sir! All's well that ends well! But doesn't it show what a wonder of a camera it is!"

Aubrey Racke was caned, and given a somewhat hefty imposition, for his part in the affair. The general opinion was that he had got off lightly, an opinion in which he hardly concurred. However, for once in a way Racke took his punishment philosophically, and bore no particular malice.

As a matter of fact, the affair had taught Racke a lesson. He had been made to realise what an unfortunate thing it was sometimes to be a "dog with a bad name." If it had been Tom Merry or any of his friends who had thrown the turf, nobody would have suspected them of the vicious "frame-up" of which the cad of the Shell had been suspected.

As it happened, on this occasion Racke had been comparatively guiltless. Nevertheless, if his connection with the affair had been revealed in any other way than by the film, Racke realised that the whole school would have been quite ready to believe him guilty of a despicable plot.

That realisation made Racke rather thoughtful for some days after. It was unlikely that it would make any lasting impression on him, but it certainly quietened him down for a little while.

A couple of days after Grundy's release the great man of the Shell made a triumphant appearance in the quad, and for the first time since his receipt of the movie-camera began to take some pictures.

His first shot was a group of School House fellows, including Tom Merry & Co. and Jack Blake & Co., and the members of those two famous parties faced the camera with much more cheerfulness than they had done on the previous occasion on the bank of the river.

"Remember the last time?" grinned Jack Blake, as Grundy finished turning the handle.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Pity the New House have got the negative of that blessed film," remarked Tom Merry. "The Head gave the film itself back to Grundy, but Figgins has still got the negative, worse luck!"

Just as Tom said that a crowd of New House juniors, headed by Figgins, came on the scene. They were looking rather worried.

"Pax!" called out Figgins. "Look here, you chaps, did you raid our study last night?"

Tom Merry & Co. and the chums of No. 6 shook their heads.

"Why? Anything missing?" asked Jack Blake.

"Yes. Our negative!" grunted Figgins. "Someone broke in during the night and pinched it! The only record we've got!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"So much the better!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Who's the giddy hero? Own up!"

George Alfred Grundy barged his way into the centre of the group, grinning cheerfully.

"I can tell you who did it!" he announced.

"Who?"

Grundy glared round at the anxious faces, with a condescending air.

"Me!" he replied proudly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Grundy!"

"Good man!"

"Hurrah!"

The faces of Figgins & Co. fell.

"Mean to say you've got it now?" asked Figgins.

"Rather!" grinned Grundy. "Locked up somewhere where you'll never get it, Figgys! Score over School House with my camera, would you? I'd watch it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Grundy!"

"Who's cock House now?"

"School House!"

"Hurrah!"

So Figgins & Co.'s valiant efforts to secure a pictorial illustration of the fact that New House was cock House failed after all!

THE END.

*(There will be another grand long story of Tom Merry and Co. in next week's GEM. See the full particulars of this splendid treat on page 27.)*

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,051.



NO WONDER HE'S SO UNPOPULAR! A circus in the neighbourhood—and all juniors in the Modern House at Rookwood forbidden to attend it. Not surprising that the Modern House fellows feel like boiling Mr. Manders in oil, is it?

# FOR THE HONOUR OF ROOKWOOD!

A New Story of Schoolboy Fun and Frolic, featuring Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

## WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

James Montgomery Babbington, a new boy and a champion diver, arrives at Rookwood smothered in coal-dust as a result of his encounter with Pankley & Co., the chums of Bagshot, the rival school. Babbington's leg is simply made to be pulled, for on his very first evening at the school he is kidded by Leggett to polish off the Housemaster's tea. A few days later, Clarence Cuffy and his cousin Babbington are spending a peaceful afternoon in their study, when Higgs, in his bullying manner, enters with the express purpose of making them both go down on their bended knees and apologise for being at Rookwood. A basket containing some snakes belonging to Babbington is knocked over in the ensuing scrimmage, and in his abject fear of the wriggling reptiles—for Babbington is the only one who knows how to control the snakes—Higgs is forced to do the apologising himself.

(Now read on.)



## The Ban!

"I SAY, you fellows, have you heard?"

It was Tubby Muffin who burst into the junior Common-room just as that apartment was at its fullest in the hour between tea and preparation.

The fat Fourth-Former was evidently full of news which he was bursting to impart to the world at large.

"Have you heard, you fellows?" he repeated excitedly. "I'm just back from Coombe—been down for old Bulkeley, you know, and I saw the notices being put up about it!"

"About what, ass?" inquired Lovell pleasantly.

"About the circus, you know."

"Circus!"

"What's that?"

"What circus?"

There was a general movement of interest and the juniors crowded round Tubby Muffin. That youth's eyes gleamed with satisfaction. He had attracted some attention at last with his news!

"Yes; the—the circus!" he gasped. "Burgess' World-Famous Circus, you know! There's a chap sticking bills up everywhere in the village. It will be camped just outside Coombe by to-morrow, and there is a show in the afternoon."

"Good!"

"Three cheers!"

"Topping!"

The news seemed to afford the juniors in the room great satisfaction. Circuses were rare in that rural part of Hampshire, and the Rookwooders looked forward to visiting Burgess' World-Famous Circus with a great deal of interest.

"Have they got wild animals there, I wonder?" said Raby.

"Heaps!" said Tubby.

"Any elephants?" asked Lovell, with interest.

"Dozens!" said Tubby, drawing recklessly upon his imagination. "I say, you chaps, are you going to the circus?"

"We is—we are!" said Jimmy Silver amiably.

"I expect most of the school will turn up to-morrow afternoon!" said Tommy Dodd.

"What about me?" demanded Tubby.

"Well, what about you?" asked Jimmy tolerantly.

"Well, I'm going, ain't I?" demanded Tubby again. "I told you about it, you know! Who's going to lend me a bob?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I s'pose you don't think I'm going to be left behind!" snorted Tubby indignantly.

"We don't think about it at all," said Lovell cheerily.

"It is of no importance to us, you see."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you I am going!" shrieked Tubby. "One of you beasts must lend me a bob!"

"Now then, don't all speak at once!" said Mornington humorously. "Which of you beasts is ready to oblige?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver produced a shilling from his pocket and flicked it good-naturedly to the fat junior. It landed on Tubby's little fat nose and Tubby gave a squeak.

"Ow! You ass! Look out!"

"Sorry, Tubby! Chuck it back then if you don't want it!"

"No fear!" said Tubby promptly, grabbing at the shilling and thrusting it into his trouser pocket. "Thanks, Jimmy, old bean! See you at the circus to-morrow!"

And Tubby Muffin scuttled off with his booty.

The news about the coming of Burgess' World-Famous Circus to the neighbourhood was soon all over Rookwood, and it was discussed just as eagerly on the Modern Side as on the Classical Side.

Tommy Dodd & Co., the leaders of the juniors in the Modern House, were specially interested.

"Jolly fine!" said Tommy Dodd enthusiastically.

"Haven't been to a circus for goodness knows how long! I believe Burgess' is a jolly good show, too!"

"Faith, and we'll be there!" said Tommy Doyle.

"What ho!" chipped in Tommy Cook, the third member of the famous trio.

Just then the door of the three Tommies' study opened and the rather unpleasant features of Carthew of the Sixth were projected into the room.

"I shall want you to get rye tea in the study to-morrow afternoon, Dodd," said Carthew, with a sneering smile. "My fag's gone sick. See that you are there at three sharp, do you hear?"

"Nothing doing, Carthew," said Tommy Dodd promptly.

"There's a circus at Coombe to-morrow afternoon and we are going to it. Sorry and all that, but you must get someone else to fag for you I'm afraid."



Carthew's sneering smile grew a little broader. "You can wash out the circus, you cheeky young rotter," he said. "I have just heard from Mr. Manders that no Modern juniors will be allowed to go."

"What!" roared Tommy Dodd. "Not allowed to go to the circus!"

"'Tis mad the man is entirely!" said Tommy Doyle. "I suppose you can understand plain English!" said Carthew unpleasantly. "Mr. Manders has put the circus out of bounds for Modern juniors. He says there's been too much rowdyism in the House lately, so you are all gated for the afternoon. There's no circus for you, so mind you come along to my study at three sharp."

"Rats!" said Tommy Dodd defiantly. Carthew gave him a black scowl. "If you don't come there will be trouble—and lots of it, Dodd!" he snapped. "Anyone who tries to break bounds to go to the circus will be flogged, and so I warn you."

And Carthew slammed the door, and departed scowling. "We're going to the circus," said Tommy Dodd, between his set teeth. "Manders isn't going to keep me in with his silly rulings and unjust gatings. We'll all go just the same."

"Hear, hear!" said Tommy Doyle. Great was the indignation when the news of the House-master's ban on the circus circulated.

Even Clarence Cuffy, who shared a study with his recently arrived cousin, James Montgomery Babbington, was more than a little disappointed.

"Dear me, James," he said, "it is really very vexing. I was quite looking forward to visiting the circus in Coombe to-morrow afternoon."

"So was I, dear Clarence," said Babbington. "I suppose we—"

"You suppose what?" asked Clarence, looking at his cousin curiously.

"I suppose we could not go?" said Babbington.

Clarence Cuffy's mild eyes opened wide with astonishment. "But, my dear James," he expostulated, "have you not heard that Mr. Manders, our respected Housemaster, has forbidden any of the juniors in his House to attend the circus?"

"Yes, I know," said Babbington, "but—"

"Surely, my dear James," said Clarence reprovingly—"surely you are not contemplating running counter to our respected Housemaster's wishes! That would be a very reprehensible course, my dear James, and I feel bound to point it out to you."

James Montgomery Babbington gave a grunt. It might have meant that he appreciated the kindness of his Cousin Clarence in pointing that out to him—or it might not!

**French Leave!**

THE next afternoon, which was Saturday, saw a throng of Rookwooders, senior and junior, trudging along the road to Coombe and into the circus.

Great was the sympathy shown by the rest of the school for the unfortunates of Mr. Manders' House, who were banned from the circus. The general opinion was that it was "just like Manders!"

Mr. Manders was bad-tempered and a good deal of a tyrant.

Heartily did the chums of the Classical Fourth congratulate themselves as they strolled circusward on that fine afternoon, that they were not under the authority of Mr. Manders.

"It's pretty hard luck on Tommy Dodd & Co.," said Jimmy Silver, as they turned into the field where the circus band was already rending the air with an amazing volume of sound.

"Jolly hard luck!" agreed Lovell. "Why—what—?"

"Great Scott! Tommy!" gasped Newcome. Three cheerful faces grinned on them from the crowd. They belonged to none other than Tommy Dodd, Tommy Doyle, and Tommy Cook!

"My hat! So you've bolted, have you, Tommy?" said Jimmy Silver. "Manders will scrag you for this!"

"Let him!" said Tommy Dodd recklessly. "We're not missing the circus for all the Manders that ever mandered!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Any more of you Modern kids made a dash for it?" said Lovell.

"I don't think so," said Tommy Dodd, with a grin. "Manders and Carthew are keeping a pretty sharp look-out for truants. We got away out of the boot room window."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess we're the only ones who have done the trick," said Tommy Cook, as the chums joined forces with their Classical allies, and pushed through the crowd.

But therein Tommy Cook was wrong. "Hallo, seems to be a shindy of some sort going on here!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

A voice, raised in loud and angry expostulation, drew the chums away from the circus-tent to where a canvas stall was placed near a couple of caravan.

A tall, fat man, with a very red face and a top hat stuck on the back of his head, was giving somebody a piece of his mind.

It was Joe Burgess, the circus proprietor himself, and just behind him, standing in a flimsy canvas stall, with a chain round one of its legs, stood Rancee, the big circus elephant.

"You are a lazy skunk, Ali!" shouted Mr. Burgess. "Always skulking and mumbling! That there elephant ought to have been fed an hour ago!"

A mutter of words in a foreign tongue came to the juniors' ears, and they saw that the object of Joe Burgess' wrath was a little, wizened Hindu, evidently the elephant's attendant.

"None of your backchat now!" roared the angry Mr. Burgess. "A-muttering and a-mumbling at me in your heathen tongue! Get along now, and get the old girl's gear ready for her turn in the big tent! Jump to it!"

Still muttering, the little Hindu took himself off, and Joe Burgess mopped his crimson brow with a large silk handkerchief.

"Bust me if it all ain't enough to make a man wild, running a circus in these 'ere days!" he remarked loudly.

**CARDEW DOES THE TRICK!**

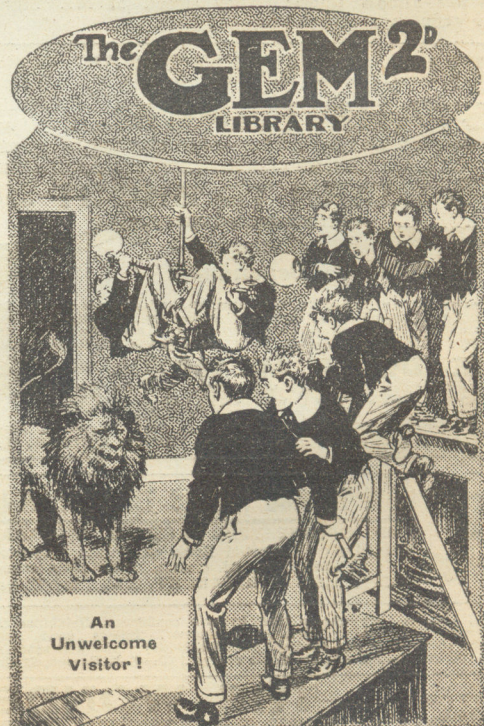
Gordon Gay & Co., of the Grammar School, have been having things all their own way in their encounters with Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's. But the luck is destined to change—the change being brought about by Ralph Reckness Cardew, the elegant Fourth Former, who is looked upon by his Form fellows as being a chap too tired to live! Amazing, isn't it, boys? But you'll find heaps of things still more amazing in next week's grand long complete school story of St. Jim's. Look out, then, for:

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"Now then, you boys, no teasing of that there elephant while Ali is gone!"

"We are not going to tease him, Mr. Burgess!" said Jimmy Silver indignantly.

"Don't call that elephant a him, it's a her," said Mr. Burgess. "What's that you've got in them bags?"

"Buns," said Jimmy Silver tersely.

"Buns! You will make old Rancee your friend for life if you give her buns. She fair loves 'em!"

And the circus proprietor strolled off, and entered one of the neighbouring caravans.

"Let's have some of those buns, Jimmy," said Tommy Dodd eagerly. "What a topping bulliphant she is!"

Under the generous treatment of the Rookwooders, Rancee was docility itself, but she had a queer temper, as Joe Burgess well knew.

**A Shock for Mr. Manders!**

**M**OST of the crowd in the circus field had by now packed themselves into the big tent, for the performance was just about to begin.

"Better be getting a move on, hadn't we?" said Jimmy Silver at last. "Are you coming, Tommy?"

"But Tommy Dodd could not tear himself away from Rancee."

"You chaps buzz off," he said. "I'm staying with the elephant a bit longer. There's still some buns left. We'll see you later."

"Right ho!" said Jimmy Silver. And the chums of the end study strolled over to the tent, while Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle remained with their leader.

As Jimmy Silver & Co. were paying their entrance money into the big tent, a lean figure, wrapped in an overcoat, hurried into the field and stood looking round him with sharp, questioning eyes. In a moment he had spotted the figures of the three Tommies standing by the big elephant's stall.

Mr. Manders—for it was he—had keen eyes, and he uttered an exclamation of satisfaction. He had discovered the absence of Tommy Dodd & Co., and had, in fact, come to the circus specially to search for them. There must have been more than a hundred Rookwood boys in the circus at the time, and it was satisfactory to Mr. Manders that he was able to spot the culprits immediately he set foot in the field.

He hurried across to the elephant's stall, and the first intimation the hapless Tommy Dodd & Co. had of his presence was the sound of his harsh, grating voice behind them:

"Boys! What are you doing here?"

A simultaneous gasp came from the three Tommies, and they spun round on their heels. The dismay on their faces was almost idiotic. They stared at Mr. Manders' severe countenance with dropping jaws.

"Bowled out!" murmured Tommy Dodd, under his breath.

"Boy, what did you say?" grated Mr. Manders. "What have you to say for yourself?"

Tommy Dodd was silent.

"You have come here deliberately in face of my strict orders to the contrary!" went on Mr. Manders, with glinting eyes. "You, Dodd, and you, Cook, and you, Doyle, shall all be soundly flogged for this!"

Tommy Dodd, who had a bun in his hand, half turned to Rancee and allowed the big elephant to whip the bun from his fingers with her trunk. Mr. Manders' harsh words did not have the effect of making Tommy Dodd feel ashamed of himself. On the contrary, they made him feel more rebellious than ever.

"We haven't been to the circus yet, sir," he ventured.

"Boy, don't be impertinent!" shouted Mr. Manders, stepping forward and grabbing Tommy Dodd by the shoulder. "Come back with me at once!"

Tommy Dodd shook off the angry Housemaster's grasp, and in a trice had popped under the bar and was standing in the elephant's stall.

Rancee's trunk slid sympathetically into his hand.

Mr. Manders fixed Tommy with a furious glare. "Come out of there at once! Come out this instant!"

he raved. "Come out, or I will give you a thrashing here and now!"

Tommy Dodd eyed Mr. Manders and his brandished umbrella coolly.

"Not good enough!" he said.

And Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle with difficulty repressed a snigger.

Mr. Manders could hardly believe his ears.

"Boy!" he shrieked. "Impertinent young wretch! You shall not defy me in this manner!"

Almost beside himself, Mr. Manders stretched over the bar and made a grab at Tommy with his left hand, while he grasped his rolled umbrella with his right. There was a businesslike look in Mr. Manders' eye, and Tommy Dodd noticed it. He skipped nimbly back, with the result that Mr. Manders sprawled on his hands and knees into the elephant's stall.

The next moment Mr. Manders of Rookwood School received the shock of his life.

With a little squeal that seemed to indicate annoyance, Rancee, the elephant, coiled her trunk round the Housemaster's waist, and in a second the horrified Mr. Manders found himself borne aloft by the elephant's trunk some twelve feet from the ground!

*(Wouldn't like to be in Mr. Manders' shoes, would you? No fear! Wonder what'll happen to him? Next week's fine instalment will tell you, chums. Don't miss it!)*

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