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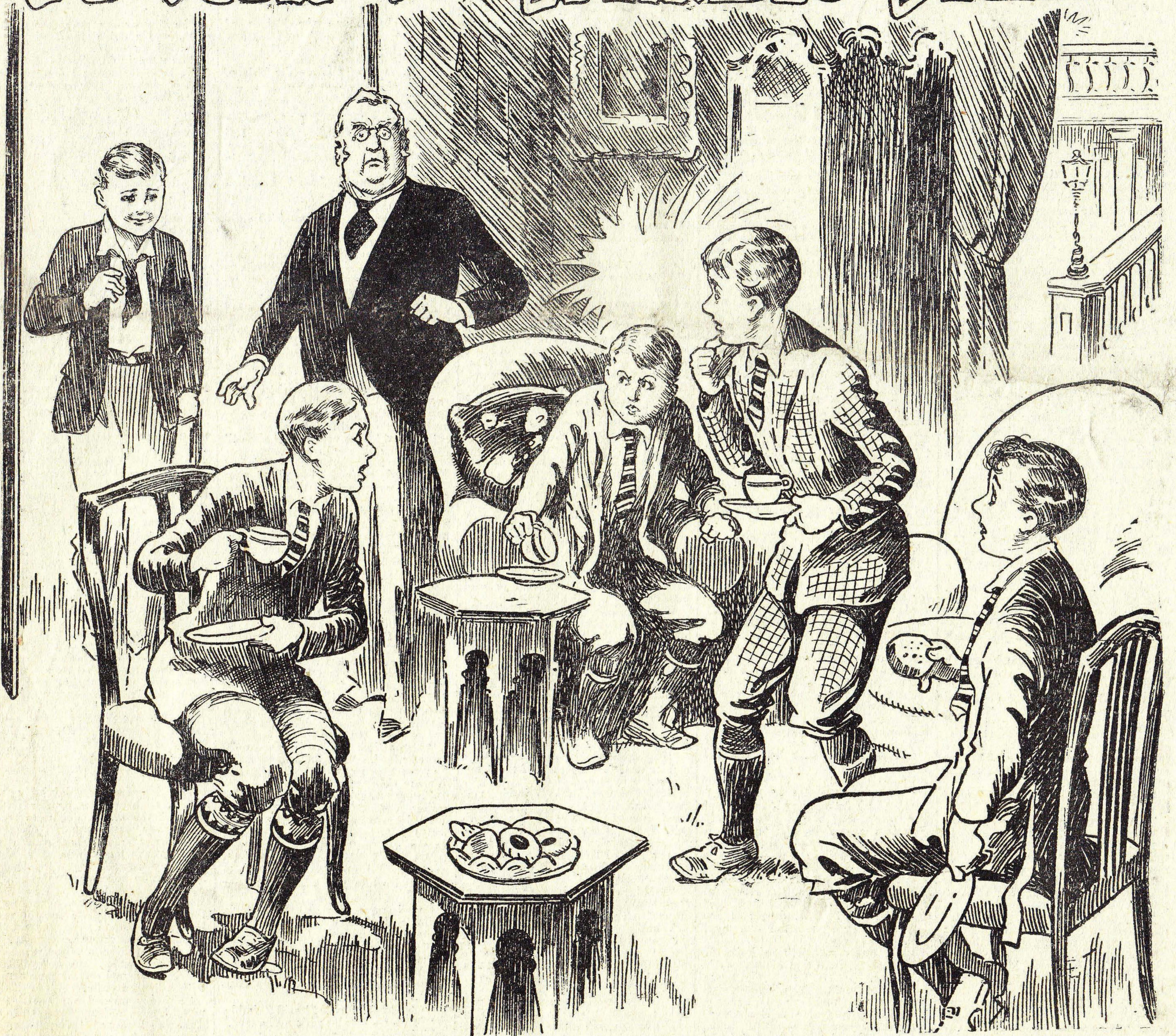
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THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending September 10th, 1921.

A Visit To Trimble Hall!



"Here is my son, boys!" said the old gentleman. The Fistical Four turned round expecting to see Baggy Trimble. Instead their gaze fell upon a complete stranger!

GET YOUR COPY OF THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL" NOW—ON SALE EVERYWHERE!



A Visit To Trimble Hall!

A SPLENDID LONG
COMPLETE STORY
OF THE
CHUMS OF ROOKWOOD SCHOOL.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

The 1st Chapter.

Trimble's Treat!

"Seven-and-six!"
"I'm sorry!"
"I'm waiting!"
"Oh dear!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. simply couldn't help hearing.

The little old-fashioned inn lay a few miles from Lexham, in the county of Sussex. The chums of Rookwood had ridden through Lexham, looking out for a comfortable spot to rest and have tea. And the shady old garden, with its big beeches and clambering wistaria, had attracted them. And they had wheeled in their machines, and now they were enjoying unlimited tea and cake in one of the little arbourous set with little rickety tables.

And from the other side of the wistaria the voices came suddenly—one voice that of the old, grey-whiskered waiter, the other a fat and unctuous voice that Jimmy Silver & Co. were sure they had heard before somewhere.

Evidently some other wayfarer was having—or had had—his tea in the inn garden, and, equally evidently, he was not able to square the account with the waiter.

Arthur Edward Lovell chuckled softly. Jimmy Silver was smiling, and Raby and Newcome looked entertained. They had recognised the fat voice now.

"You remember when we played St. Jim's at cricket last?" murmured Lovell. "That chap was there—chap named Trimble!"

"Baggy Trimble," said Jimmy, with a nod.

"I'd remember that voice anywhere—sounds as if it was oiled!" said Lovell. "Fancy a St. Jim's chap bilking a waiter!"

Jimmy Silver ran his hand through his pockets. Seven-and-six was not a very large sum. Jimmy was very friendly with Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's, and though certainly Baggy Trimble was a very different kind of fellow, Jimmy was thinking of coming to the rescue. The waiter's tone showed that severe trouble was arriving for Master Trimble if the little bill was not paid.

"Don't be an ass, Jimmy!" murmured Lovell. "The fellow's a bilk."
"There he goes again!" grinned Raby.

"If you've a telephone here, waiter, I'll phone home for some money!" said the fat voice, with a great deal of dignity. "Trimble Hall is only the other side of Lexham."

"Oh, come off!" said the waiter disrespectfully. "Are you going to pay, or shall I call a policeman?"
"Oh dear!"

Jimmy Silver rose to his feet, and put his head through the wistaria. Baggy Trimble was sitting at a little table, on which were the remnants of a feast, with a decidedly-dismayed look on his podgy face. His round eyes blinked to and fro, as if seeking an avenue of escape; but the portly form of the waiter cut off all escape. Trimble started at the sight of the Rookwood junior. The dismayed expression left his fat face at once.

"Hallo, Silver, old bean!" he exclaimed. "How jolly lucky to meet you here! I say! Can you lend me seven-and-six?"
"Certainly!"

"Thanks, awfully!" said Trimble. "Horrid to be in a fix like this, ain't it? You see, I left my purse indoors. It was the pater's fault, really! Just before I came out he tipped me a 'tonner,' and, taking out my purse to stow it away, I left it lying on the grand piano! Awkward, wasn't it?"

"Very!" said Jimmy Silver. He laid three half-crowns on the table, and the waiter picked them up. The waiter gave Trimble an expressive look as he departed. His look indicated that his opinion of Master Trimble was one that could scarcely be done justice to in words. But he said no more, and went—much to Baggy Trimble's relief.

Jimmy nodded to Trimble, and rejoined his chums. A fat figure pushed through the wistaria after him. Trimble bestowed a genial smile all round upon the Fistical Four of Rookwood.

"Having your tea here?" he asked.

"Yes."
"I'll have mine with you," said Trimble cheerily. "I just had a snack, you know—but I'm ready for tea. That looks a good cake. Jolly glad to meet you chaps!" he continued, with his mouth full, blinking genially at the Rookwooders. "What are you doing in this part of the world?"

"Cycling tour in the vac," said Jimmy Silver.

"Good stunt!" said Trimble. "I prefer my little two-seater myself; but biking's not bad. If I'd known you were coming this way, I'd have asked you to put up at Trimble Hall for a few days. My pater would be glad to see you—he welcomes any friends of mine in the holidays."

It was the first time Jimmy Silver & Co. had heard that they were friends of Baggy Trimble.

Lovell eyed the fat Fourth-Former rather keenly.

Trimble Hall, a butler and chauffeur, a tanner and a grand piano, did not seem to agree, somehow, with bilking a waiter for seven-and-six, to Arthur Edward's mind.

"Trimble Hall near here?" asked Lovell.

Baggy nodded.
"About a mile out of Lexham," he said. "I dare say you passed it, if you came that way. Splendid old Georgian mansion! Of course, it dates from the time of the Tudors; but it was rebuilt by Sir Trimble de Trimble in the reign of George the First. The garden's at the bottom of the river—I mean, the river's at the bottom of the garden. Hallo! Pass the cake! Jolly decent of you fellows to stand me tea like this! Thanks, awfully!"

"Oh, don't mench!" said Lovell, with a slight inflection of sarcasm in his voice.

"Well, the fact is, it's lucky you dropped in here!" said Trimble. "That silly owl of a waiter doesn't know me, you know—rather funny for the heir of Trimble Hall to be dunned for seven-and-six—what? He, he, he! The pater will chortle when I tell him—so will Sir George."

"Sir George?"

"My uncle, you know. He's staying at the Hall now, for the fishing. I really wish you fellows could come along and stay for a bit," said Trimble. "Fishin', and shootin', and boatin', and golfin'—we've our own

golf-links, you know—my grandfather had it specially laid out at a cost of twenty-five thousand pounds! You fellows golf? Thanks! Four lumps of sugar, please! Have you fellows fixed where you're staying to-night?"
"Not yet."

"Then come along to the Hall with me," said Trimble, beaming. "Say 'Yes'—now, I really won't take 'No' for an answer! You must come!"

And then Trimble devoted himself to the cake, while the chums of Rookwood blinked at him.

The 2nd Chapter. Visitors at Trimble Hall!

Jimmy Silver & Co. regarded Baggy Trimble with interest. They had seen the fat fellow several times when on visits to St. Jim's. They had formed some idea of his character, especially from the way the other St. Jim's fellows acted towards him. But now they were perplexed. Trimble gave them the impression of being a boastful ass, whose "swank" was too palpable to take in an infant. And yet they were perplexed. If Trimble talked like this at St. Jim's, it was one thing—the school was at a safe distance. But to talk like this within a few miles of his home was amazing, unless there really were grounds for his boasts.

If Trimble Hall was anything like Baggy's description of it, certainly the Rookwooders would have been very pleased to put up there for a few days—even with Baggy Trimble thrown in, as it were. And Trimble's invitation seemed hearty and genuine enough.

But the Fistical Four couldn't help feeling that the fat Fourth-Former was simply "gassing," and that the glories of Trimble Hall existed only in his fat imagination.

Trimble finished the cake and the tea and looked round, like Alexander of old, for new worlds to conquer.

"You can get jolly good jam-tarts here!" he said. "They've got meringues, too. You fellows like some?"

"My dear chaps, our funds don't run to such luxuries!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Hard cheese!" said Trimble sympathetically. "I understand—very hard cheese! Rolling in money myself, I forget sometimes that other fellows aren't so well fixed. I'll tell you what! I'll stand the tarts and meringues. No; don't say 'No'! I insist! Waiter!"

"Hold on!" ejaculated Raby. "How are you going to stand them if you've not no tin?"

Trimble started.
"By Jove! I'd forgotten about leaving my purse indoors. But that's all right! One of you lend me a quid!"

"Oh!"

"You're coming home with me, aren't you? It's only a couple of miles or so from here. Stay for the night—anyhow, stay to dinner. I'll square as soon as we get home. That all right, Silver?"

Jimmy Silver hesitated.

Whether Baggy Trimble was rolling in money or not, Jimmy certainly wasn't. And he had to be very careful with his pound-notes. But the waiter was already coming, and Trimble rattled off a generous order. The waiter gave him a grim look,

and glanced at Jimmy Silver for confirmation. He evidently did not intend to trust the heir of Trimble Hall.

Jimmy nodded assent. After all, if Trimble's home was near, it would not take the chums far out of their way to walk home with him and collect that loan—whether his home was the magnificent one he described or not. The tarts and meringues arrived, and all the juniors did them justice—especially Baggy Trimble. Baggy rattled on merrily as he devoured meringues and tarts at a great rate.

"One of you fellows give me a lift behind, and we'll be at the Hall in twenty minutes. Say you'll stay for the night. The pater will be disappointed if you don't; he's the soul of hospitality. I can lend you some things, if you like."

"Well—" said Jimmy Silver slowly.

"My dear chap, I won't take no for an answer," said Baggy Trimble. "Just say the word. You'll meet some rather decent people at dinner. I'm sorry the Duke of York has left. He left yesterday—"

"The—the Duke of York—"

"Yes, he left yesterday, unfortunately. I'd have liked you to meet him."

"But I suppose the Prince of Wales is still there?" said Arthur Edward Lovell sardonically.

Trimble blinked at him.

"No. I hardly know the Prince. I've never asked him down yet," he answered.

"Oh!"
"But there's some fairly decent people, mostly titled. You'll feel you're fairly in the social swim, you know," said Trimble calmly. "Do come!"

Arthur Edward Lovell breathed deep.

"We'll come!" he said.

"I say—" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"We'll come!" repeated Lovell, and his look said plainly enough that he fully expected Master Trimble to "hedge" as soon as his generous invitation was definitely accepted.

But Trimble did not hedge. He beamed.

"So glad!" he murmured. "You'll enjoy yourselves, I know."

"Exactly where is Trimble Hall?" asked Lovell, almost staggered by Trimble's reply.

"About a mile out of Lexham. Red roofs, you know, and fountains and things in the grounds. Great park, and a terrace with statues."

"My hat! We passed that show!" exclaimed Raby, with interest.

Newcome nodded. The Fistical Four had noticed the place that Trimble described as they rode by Lexham. It was a most imposing country mansion, and if that was Trimble's home, undoubtedly he was a youth much to be envied.

"Two stone lions over the gateway!" said Newcome.

"That's it," said Trimble, with a nod. "I see you know the place. Why, people come hundreds of miles just to see it. The picture gallery's open to the public twice a week. No charge. I'd like to take you round it. The pictures are worth over a hundred thousand. I assure you we'll give you a good time."

"Well, my hat!" said Jimmy.

Trimble glanced over the table. The last tart had vanished, and Master Baggy was looking very shiny and sticky. He rose to his feet.

"About time we got a move on," he remarked. "Let me know exactly how much you pay the waiter, Silver. It's my debt, you know."

Jimmy Silver settled the bill—rather a considerable one. Baggy Trimble made a note of the amount.

"If I forget, remind me as soon as we get in," he said. "These trifles are liable to slip a fellow's memory. I'll wait for you fellows in the road while you wheel out your bikes."

Lovell gave him a sharp look. Trimble had almost convinced the chums of Rookwood. But this looked to the suspicious Arthur Edward like an attempt to dodge.

"You chaps wheel out the bikes," he said. "I'll keep Trimble company."

"Oh, don't trouble!" said Trimble. "Tain't a trouble; it's a pleasure," said Lovell affably.

And he walked out with Trimble, whose fat wale was a little less genial for a moment or two.

Jimmy, Raby, and Newcome followed with their bicycles. If Baggy's spirits had been dashed, he had quite recovered by the time the Co. rejoined him. He beamed on them.

"Which of you is going to give me a lift?" he asked.

The Rookwooders looked doubtful. It was rather uphill to Lexham, and Baggy Trimble's weight was a very serious consideration.

"Let's walk," said Lovell.
"I'll tell you what," said Trimble. "I'll hire a bike in the village here. You fellows go on, and I'll overtake you."

Lovell closed one eye at his chums. "We'll come with you, Trimble," he said.

"On second thoughts, we'll walk," said Trimble. "If you fellows don't mind pushing your bikes—"

"Not a bit."

"Come on, then!"

They walked, the Fistical Four wheeling their machines. Baggy Trimble chatted away cheerily as they went, and the Fistical Four exchanged several puzzled glances.

The red roofs and chimney-pots of the great mansion came in sight over the trees, and still Trimble rolled cheerily on his way. The Rookwooders could not help feeling their doubts dissipating now. They were, indeed, feeling rather shamefaced at having doubted Trimble so much. The big bronze gates, with the stone lions over the gateway, came in sight.

"That's our show!" said Trimble.

"Jolly looking place!" said Lovell.

"Yes, isn't it?"

The big bronze gates stood wide open, and a drive lined with lime-trees led up to the house. In the distance the juniors had a glimpse of a big Rolls-Royce car halted near the foot of the wide stone steps that led up to the great door of the mansion.

"Better leave your bikes at the lodge," said Trimble, "then follow me up to the house, dear boys."

"Right-ho!"

Baggy Trimble turned it at the gates, and rolled away up the drive. Lovell looked almost guiltily at his chums.

"Blessed if it isn't all genuine!" he muttered. "Well, it's a chap's own fault if he's set down as a liar. He sounded like one."

"Here's the lodge," said Jimmy.

The Rookwooders wheeled their bikes towards the handsome lodge, out of which a lodgekeeper stepped as they came up. Baggy Trimble had vanished up the drive, shut off from view by the thick trees. And it did not occur to Jimmy Silver & Co. that as soon as he was screened from view, Master Trimble turned off the drive, cut through the trees, and scudded away for the nearest wall, over which he clambered, and dropped into the road again. There the fat youth stopped for a moment to regain his breath, and to emit a fat chuckle. And then he scudded away as fast as his fat little legs would carry him. Master Trimble owed Jimmy Silver the sum of thirty shillings, and it was likely to be a very long time before "Uncle James," of Rookwood, collected that amount from the elusive Baggy.

The 3rd Chapter.

Something Wrong Somewhere.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were saluted respectfully by the lodgekeeper. He took charge of the bikes, wheeling them into an outhouse behind the lodge. Arthur Edward Lovell glanced down at his rather dusty clothes. The Rookwooders had done twenty-five miles that day on hot and dusty roads, and they were showing signs of it.

"Better ask the chap for a brush," Lovell murmured. "After all, it's a pretty stunning place we're going into, as it turns out."

"Good egg!" assented Jimmy Silver.

The lodgekeeper obligingly produced a brush, and the juniors brushed themselves down carefully. Then they started up the drive the way Baggy Trimble had gone. The fat St. Jim's junior was not in sight, but they naturally supposed that he had already reached the house, and gone in. They passed the big Rolls-Royce, with a liveried chauffeur in the driving-seat. The great door of the mansion stood open, and a rather handsome, portly old gentleman came out as the juniors mounted the steps. He wore gold-rimmed eyeglasses, which he turned on the new arrivals with a benign smile.

"Trimble pere, I suppose?" whispered Lovell, rather astonished to find Trimble's father such a handsome and aristocratic-looking old gentleman.

"Ah, so you have arrived!" exclaimed the old gentleman genially. "I am very glad to see you, my boys."

"You're very kind, sir," said Jimmy. "Your son told you—"

"Yes, yes, naturally. Pray come in! You must be a little tired after your journey." The old gentleman shook hands all round with the juniors

in the most genial way. "My son is not here at present, but he will be in very shortly. I suppose your bags will be coming later. You would like to be shown to your rooms now, and I will order tea for you—"

"Thank you, sir; we've had tea!" "Come, come! I have been a school-boy myself," said the genial old gentleman. "You must be hungry after your journey. Jenkins!"

A stately butler came hovering up. "Jenkins, show the young gentlemen to their rooms, please! I shall expect you in a quarter of an hour to tea, my boys. Jenkins will show you the way."

The old gentleman waved the juniors towards the big, broad staircase.

Jimmy Silver & Co. followed the butler.

That stately personage ushered them on their way with a most stately manner.

Four handsome rooms were evidently prepared for visitors, and the juniors were shown into them.

Then the butler retired, and left them to their own devices.

In a curious state of surprise Jimmy Silver & Co. removed the signs of travel, and made themselves as presentable as possible. As a matter of fact, their "clobber" had rather suffered from two or three weeks of cycling and camping out. They had not expected to turn up in a magnificent mansion like this, and they could not help feeling that they were not quite dressed for the part. But that could not be helped.

They gathered in Jimmy Silver's room before going down, and they looked at one another.

"Well," said Lovell, with a deep breath, "this beats the merry band!"

"It does—it do!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"This is a terrific place; never seen anything quite up to it, except D'Arcy's place," said Raby. "Fancy that fat fellow Trimble—"

"His pater looks a jolly decent old sort, too!" said Newcome, in wonder. "Not exactly what one would have expected from Baggy."

"Hardly!" "Blest if I'd have believed it if I hadn't seen it!" said Lovell, rubbing his nose hard. "He—he—wasn't swanking at all; it—it was all true!" It wants some getting used to."

"Jolly odd that he should disappear like his, though," said Newcome. "He might have been on the spot to introduce us to his father."

"Well, he must have told him; the old gent expected us," said Jimmy Silver. "Seems an awfully nice and hospitable old boy. Trimble hasn't told him we've no baggage. I dare say he was in a hurry about something. Well, let's go down. I can do with a cup of tea."

"Come on, then!" The Rookwooders descended the stairs. The butler loomed up and led them on their way, with stately tread.

They were shown into a handsome drawing-room, with tall windows overlooking a terrace and a wide stretch of park.

The old gentleman was there, and he rose graciously to greet them. Tea and little cakes were brought in, and the little cakes were so nice that the juniors rather regretted they had done so well at the inn. Still there was no sign of Baggy Trimble.

"You had a pleasant journey down, I hope?" the old gentleman asked.

"Topping, sir!" answered Jimmy Silver.

"I am sorry you seem to have had to walk from the station, but I was not aware of the time of your train so—"

"We haven't come by train," said Jimmy, a little perplexed by that remark. "We've been cycling, sir."

"Oh, I see! Then your baggage will—"

"We haven't any. Baggy said he would lend us things—"

"Baggy?" repeated the old gentleman. "What extraordinary names schoolboys find for one another, to be sure! So my boy is called Baggy! Ha, ha! He has never told me that."

"Oh! I—I believe he's generally spoken of as Baggy," said Jimmy, rather taken aback. "The—the fact is, I don't know his Christian name at all—only Baggy."

"How very odd, when you are such friends of his!" exclaimed the old gentleman. "His name is Harry, of course!"

"Fellows get all sorts of names at school," said Lovell. "There's a chap at Greyfriars who's called the Owl. Chap at our school, too, who's never called anything but Tubby."

The old gentleman laughed. "I suppose my son did not know you were cycling," he remarked.

"Yes; we told him." "Then he was very remiss in not mentioning it to me!" said the old gentleman. "He should have been here when you arrived. You must excuse him. Harry is a little thoughtless sometimes. But I expect him every moment now. Ah, I think that is his step!"

There was a footstep on the terrace outside the open French windows.

The old gentleman glanced round, and Jimmy Silver & Co. followed his glance.

A lad of about fifteen, with a cheery, sunny face, came swinging along, and stopped at the French window.

Jimmy Silver & Co. blinked at him. They had never seen that youth before, and certainly he was as unlike Baggy Trimble as chalk was unlike cheese.

"Harry, you young scamp!" called out the old gentleman. "You did not know your schoolfellows had arrived, I suppose."

"By Jove! Have they turned up early, dad?" called back the cheery-looking youth.

"They are here!" said the old gentleman, with a touch of severity in his tone.

Jimmy Silver set down his teacup with a clink on the saucer.

He felt a cold feeling all over him. Something was wrong, somewhere; he realised that.

Arthur Edward Lovell gave a sort

you! Who are you, and what does this mean?"

The 4th Chapter. An Inglorious Exit!

Jimmy Silver rose weakly to his feet. His knees felt as if they would give way under him. Uncle James of Rookwood was generally quite cool and calm, undisturbed by anything that happened, prepared for any emergency. But Uncle James of Rookwood felt down and out now. He was almost overcome with horror at the position he found himself in. His face fairly flamed under the stern look of the old gentleman and the quizzical look of Harry.

"There—there—there's some mistake!" stammered Jimmy.

"I am waiting for you to explain it," said the old gentleman grimly. "I received you as my son's schoolfellows. It appears that you are nothing of the kind. Who and what are you?"

"Pullin' my governor's leg, by Jove!" said Harry.

"We—we thought—" gasped Lovell.

"We—we thought—" stuttered Jimmy. "Baggy told us— Oh dear! Arc—are—are you Mr. Trimble?"

"Isn't—isn't this Trimble Hall?" gasped Jimmy desperately.

"Trimble Hall? I have never heard of such a place!"

"Oh dear!"

that day, and that the old gentleman had taken Jimmy Silver & Co. for the expected visitors.

The mistake was a quite natural one, in the circumstances; indeed, it was really unavoidable. Certainly the old gentleman could not have guessed that four complete strangers had arrived, in the belief that he was the father of Baggy Trimble, of whom he had never even heard!

All this passed through the minds of Jimmy Silver & Co., as they stood, with burning faces, utterly overwhelmed with confusion.

Harry Fosbrooke was grinning, evidently greatly amused. But the old gentleman was frowning with great sternness.

"You have come here under false pretences," said the old gentleman grimly. "With what object, pray?"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jimmy, wondering what dark suspicion was forming in the old gentleman's mind. "You—you see—"

"It was Trimble!" howled Lovell.

"Trimble! Who is Trimble?"

"That—that fat villain!" stuttered Raby. "He—he told us that this was Trimble Hall, his father's place. We took you for Mr. Trimble—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Harry Fosbrooke.

"Harry, this is not a laughing matter—"

The schoolboy chuckled.

"Who is this Trimble, if such a

on, you chaps, for goodness' sake let's get out!"

"That is certainly the best thing you can do!" said Mr. Fosbrooke drily.

Lovell gave a snort. "You can count the umbrellas before we go, if you've any doubts, sir!" he snapped.

"It's all right, dad," said young Fosbrooke. "I know that fellow Trimble a bit. He's an awful spoofer and liar! These chaps were taken in. Don't worry, you fellows, it's all right!"

Jimmy gave the High Coombe fellow a grateful glance. The old gentleman, apparently only half-convinced still, rang the bell for the butler to show the juniors out. How they got out of the room the juniors hardly knew. They dared not meet even the butler's eyes as they were shown out of the house and down the steps.

They breathed more freely in the open air. If that magnificent mansion had been a prison, the Rookwooders could not have been more glad to get on the outside of it.

They did not like to run, but certainly they walked very fast, as they went down the drive; and, without looking round, they were aware that two faces—one frowning and one grinning—watched their departure from the windows on the terrace.

They reclaimed their bicycles, and wheeled them out, thankful to be on the outer side of the big bronze gates.

Jimmy Silver mopped his brow.

"What an afternoon!" he

breathed.

"That villain Trimble—"

"That scoundrel Trimble—"

"Oh, that Hun Trimble!" gasped Lovell. "I—I—I'd give a term's pocket-money to see him now!"

"Let's get off!" mumbled Raby. "There's the lodgekeeper staring after us, as if he thinks we might be burglars! Come on!"

And the Fistical Four mounted, and pedalled away, glad to be gone, but yearning with a deep, deep yearning to meet Baggy Trimble just for a few minutes!

The 5th Chapter. Justice!

"Oh, what luck!" "What gorgeous luck!" "Hurrah!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. had put up for the night at the little inn where they had met Baggy Trimble. After breakfast in the morning, instead of turning out a-wheel, as usual, they had taken a stroll, in the faint hope of falling in with the fat Fourth-Former of St. Jim's.

Hitherto, in their dealing with Baggy Trimble, luck had not been on the side of Jimmy Silver & Co.—far from it! But luck had evidently changed.

For, as they sauntered along Lexham Lane in the sunny morning, they sighted a podgy figure seated on a stile, devouring jam-tarts from a paper bag! And it was Baggy Trimble!

"What lovely luck!" breathed Lovell. "Never been so glad to see a chap in my life! Come on!"

The Fistical Four broke into a run. They were quite close to Trimble before the fat junior glanced up from the engrossing task of devouring tarts.

"Oh!" stuttered Trimble as he saw them.

His fat jaw dropped. He gave one wild glance round and realised that there was no escape. Then he summoned up a feeble sickly smile.

"Hallo you fellows!" he breathed. "I—I didn't know you were—were still in this quarter!"

"We are, though!" grinned Lovell. "Awfully—awfully glad to see you!" stammered Trimble. "I—I say, how—how did you get on yesterday? I—I—I made rather a—a—a mistake—"

"Anything more to say before we slay you?" asked Lovell.

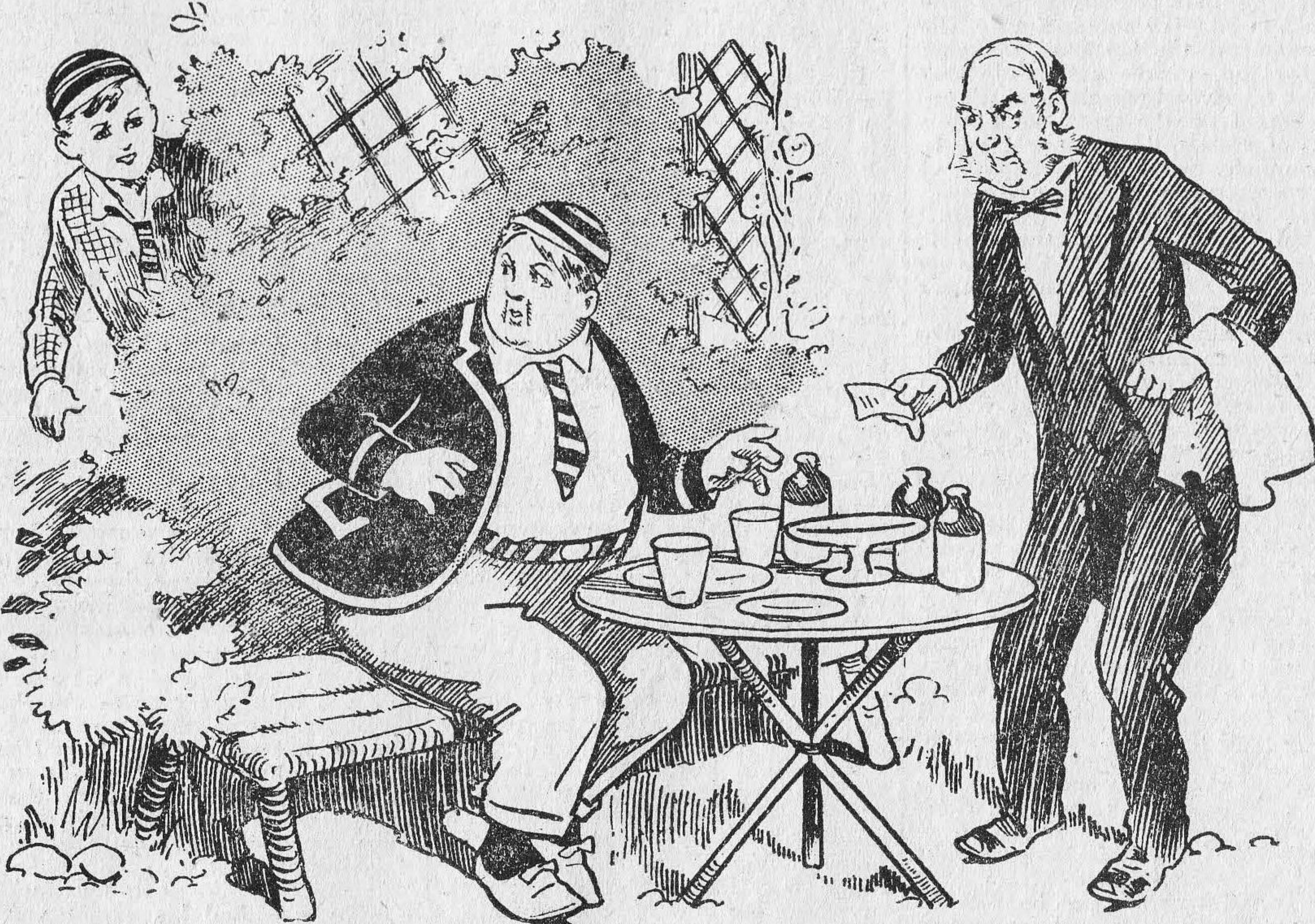
"I—I say— Yaroooooh!" roared Trimble.

Four pairs of hands jerked Baggy Trimble off the stile. The Fistical Four of Rookwood had suffered at the hands of the fat spoofer. And now it was Baggy's turn to suffer!

Scientifically and thoroughly they ragged him, and after five minutes—which seemed like five years to the heir of Trimble Hall—Baggy sat in the grass, blinking, gasping, and spluttering, and wondering whether the solar system had suddenly burst. He felt as if it had.

THE END.

"The Rookwood Rescuers" is the title of the long complete Rookwood School tale appearing in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND. Don't forget that Jimmy Silver & Co. also appear each week in the "Popular." Out on Friday.



JIMMY SILVER TO THE RESCUE! Just as matters were becoming serious the Rookwood Junior Captain put his head through the opening in the partition. Baggy Trimble looked up and gave a sigh of relief as he recognised Jimmy. "Oh, I say," he said. "This is luck—can you lend me seven and six?" "Certainly," replied Jimmy Silver. Baggy's thoughts of prison walls vanished instantly.

of gasp. Raby and Newcome sat quite still, their eyes fixed, as if fascinated upon the cheery schoolboy lounging in at the French window.

Harry came cheerily in and glanced at the juniors. His glance expressed astonishment.

So did the old gentleman's as he caught his son's expression.

"Didn't you say the chaps had come, dad?" asked the boy in surprise and wonder.

"Yes; they are here—"

"Here?"

"My dear Harry, what do you mean? These boys—"

"Eh? I've never seen those chaps before!" said Harry. "Is this a joke, dad?"

"Wha-a-at!"

"What's the game?" asked Harry blankly.

"Are—are—are these boys not the friends you were expecting, Harry?" exclaimed the old gentleman, rising to his feet.

"Of course not! Never seen 'em before!" said the schoolboy. "They're not from High Coombe at all, that I know of."

"Bless my soul! Then what—what—"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Lovell.

"Oh dear!" murmured Raby.

The old gentleman turned a stern look upon the abashed Rookwooders, whose faces were crimson now.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed. "I demand an explanation at once. You came here as my son's friends—the visitors from his school that he was expecting to-day—and now he tells me that he does not know

"My name," said the old gentleman sternly, "is Fosbrooke. Why you should suppose it was Trimble I cannot imagine."

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Raby.

"That fat villain," gasped Lovell.

"Pulling our legs all the time! Oh Christopher Columbus!"

Jimmy Silver wiped his perspiring brow.

Never had he felt so complete an ass as he did at that moment. The dreadful truth dawned slowly upon his brain.

Baggy Trimble was, after all, the spoofer and braggart the Rookwooders had supposed him to be. That was clear.

He had bolstered up his swank by giving a description of this mansion, and had carried it so far as to lead the Rookwood juniors there, no doubt hoping all the time to find a chance of dodging away before they arrived and found him out.

It was Lovell's suspicious watchfulness that had prevented that; and Baggy, in desperation, had led his victims fairly into the place. No wonder they had lost sight of Baggy while they were putting up their bikes at the lodge. They could guess now that Baggy hadn't come on to the house, as they had supposed, but that he had scooted away immediately he was out of their sight, and escaped.

And the fat villain had left them to come on to the house—there to find out the facts, when he was at a safe distance.

It was sheer ill-luck that Mr. Fosbrooke's son had been expecting a visit from a party of his schoolfellows

person exists?" said Mr. Fosbrooke.

"I have never heard the name."

"Oh, I've heard of him, dad!" said Harry Fosbrooke. "A fat boulder. He belongs to St. Jim's. He's tried to fasten on to me several times in the holidays. He lives somewhere in Lexham, in one of those new streets of villas."

"Oh!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"And this extraordinary boy deceived you to such an extent?" said Mr. Fosbrooke, eyeing the Rookwood juniors very doubtfully and suspiciously.

"Of course he did!" exclaimed Lovell hotly. "Do you think we'd have wedged in otherwise? I suppose you don't imagine we came here to steal the umbrellas out of the hall, do you?"

"Shurrup, Lovell!" murmured Newcome.

"Let's get out, for goodness' sake!" breathed Raby. "I shall punch that young chap's head soon if he goes on chortling!"

"We're awfully sorry, Mr. Fosbrooke!" said Jimmy Silver haltingly. "We were taken in by a lying fat rascal! We're awfully sorry! We really couldn't help it! He brought us here, and we supposed it was Trimble Hall, just as he said and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Harry Fosbrooke. "Trimble Hall is good—distinctly good!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Fosbrooke.

"We're going," said Jimmy. "We can only say we're sorry, sir! Come