

TRIMBLE ON THE TRACK!



TROUBLE IN THE SCHOOLBOYS' CARAVAN!

(A Screamingly Funny Scene in the Splendid Long Complete School-Tale in this Issue.)

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TRIMBLE ON THE TRACK



A Magnificent Long Complete Story

of

TOM MERRY & CO. at St. Jim's,

by

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER I.

A Narrow Escape!

"WHAT the dickens—"
"What's that?"
"Probably a stray pig,
deah boys."

On the top of a steep rise in the road in the Sussex Downs a caravan had halted. Seven caravanners were sitting on it, or round it, resting. Tom Merry & Co., the St. Jim's caravanners, felt that they were entitled to a rest after an uphill march of a mile or so; and the caravan horse was still more convinced upon the point.

Circumstances, the horse, had set the example of taking a rest. The chums of St. Jim's followed his example. It saved argument; and Circumstances generally had the best of an argument.

It was a bright and sunny day, and there was a splendid view of the downs from the halting-place. Jack Blako fetched ginger-pop out of the van for the refreshment of the vanners; and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, ever thoughtful, provided what he called a "dink" for the horse. Seven cheery youths were enjoying the rest and the ginger-pop when a strange sound fell upon their ears.

It came from the deep, thick grass by the roadside. A wide stretch of open grass lay there, and it was very long and thick, and dry as tinder in the blaze of the summer sunshine. Seven pairs of eyes were turned upon it as the strange sound was heard.

There was nothing to be seen there but waving grass. But from the depths of the grass came that sound of grunting, or snoring, or whatever it was, and it startled the St. Jim's juniors.

"Somebody asleep there, I should think!" remarked Blake of the Fourth, staring at the grass.

"Some stray animal, I should say," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Some stray pig, most likely, waddled out of a field."

"More likely a tramp!" suggested Herries.

"Bai Jove! A twamp would not make a woe like that, Howies."

"It's a snore!" said Digby.
"In that case, it is a very remarkable snore. I have nevah heard anybody snore like that, exceptin' Baggie Trimble

at St. Jim's. He used to make a fealful woe in our dorm."

"Not likely to meet Trimble here!" said Tom Merry, with a smile. "Now, if that blessed horse will listen to reason, we'll get on."

"If it is a stray pig, Tom Mewwy, we had better drive it into the field befoah goes on," said the considerable Gussy. "The unfortunate animal might get waddah a motor-car."

"Which would be a waste of bacon!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Wats!"
"There's a bike in the grass," said Manners. "Look there—that's the wheel of a bike!"

"Bai Jove!"
The juniors made out the shape of a bike in the thick grass now. Evidently that deep grunting came from a human being—some cyclist who had rested on top of the hill. Tom Merry & Co. could not help grinning. From the sound, there had been some justification for Gussy's surmise that the snore proceeded from a stray pig.

Manners rose to his feet and stepped into the grass. Manners was a thoughtful youth, and it occurred to him that the sleeper must have slid into an uncomfortable position, with his head downward, to produce so remarkable a snore as that. If that was the case, Manners of the Shell intended kindly to awaken him.

He plunged through the high grass, and came on the sleeper; and then Manners was soon to give a sudden start.

"My hat!" he ejaculated.
"What is it!" called out Blake.

To the amusement of his comrades, Manners of the Shell looked round and put his finger to his lips in sign of silence.

"Bai Jove! What evah is the matiah!"

"Shush!"
"Better look!" remarked Lowther.

And six extremely curious juniors trod softly after Manners through the thick grass to see what had startled him.

They came quite suddenly on the startling scene.

And there was a general ejaculation:
"Trimble!"

Stretched in the grass, with a fat cheek resting on a fat arm, was a youth of podgy figure, whose ample circumference

was unrivalled at St. Jim's, even by that of Fatty Wynn of the New House.

It was Baggie Trimble of the Fourth Form.

Beside him in the grass lay the remains of a meal—evidently an ample meal. Baggie Trimble had stopped to rest and feed on the hill, and he seemed to have fed not wisely, but too well. His fat face was flushed, and his breathing was stertorous; and at intervals there proceeded from him the deep and resonant snore which had first startled the caravanners.

"Trimble, bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Don't wako him up, you fellows, for goodness' sake!"

"Rather not!" murmured Tom Merry.
The same thought occurred to all the caravanners at once.

Before the beginning of the vacation, when the juniors were planning that caravan excursion for the summer holidays, Baggie Trimble had kindly offered to accompany them, and see them through. Baggie was prepared to bestow his fascinating society upon them, and manage everything for them, and, in fact, to take everything into his own fat hands—a generous offer which had been declined without thanks. The society of Baggie Trimble was much more enjoyable at a distance than close at hand.

"Quiet!" whispered Manners. "If the fat boulder sees us, he'll try to hang on. You know Trimble!"

"Yess, watah!"

"What the dickens is he doing here?" murmured Blake. "This is a good many miles from his home. He lives at Letham; and he's not the fellow to take on long bike rides. He's a jolly long way from Trimble Hall!"

There was a soft chuckle among the caravanners. "Trimble Hall" was a palatial residence that existed only in the fertile imagination of Trimble of the Fourth; but the fat and fatuous Baggie never tired of expatiating upon its splendours.

Blissfully oblivious of seven grinning faces looking down on him, Baggie Trimble moored on.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus suddenly.

"Shush!"

"I was goin' to remark—"
"Quiet!"
"Weally, you duffabs—"

"Hush!"

"I was going to remark that Trimble is probably hush lookin' for us!" repeated Arthur Augustus.

"Looking for us!" repeated Tom Merry.

"Yass, wathah! He was resolved to take our refusal of his company as a joke, you know, though I took the trouble to explain to him that it was quite serious. I should not wondah if—"

"For goodness' sake let's escape while there's time!" murmured Lowther.

"Quiet!"

The caravanners, with stealthy tread, trod back to the road. The dreadful possibility that Baggy Trimble was looking for them, intending to join the party, was more than enough to scare them off. Fortunately, Baggy was a heavy sleeper. His deep snore rumbled on as the St. Jim's juniors tiptoed back to the caravan.

Tom Merry took the horse's head. Fortunately, Circumstances was satisfied with the rest he had had. He moved on obediently. The juniors looked round nervously as the caravan rumbled on the road. But their luck was in; Baggy Trimble did not awake.

Down the slope, over the hill, the St. Jim's caravan went rumbling, and as the distance increased, Tom Merry & Co. breathed more freely. If Baggy Trimble was looking for the caravan party, he had missed them; but it had been a narrow shave. And, as soon as they were out of hearing of Baggy, Circumstances was urged on at a faster pace than ever before in his career as a caravan bore.

"Saved!" said Monty Lowther dramatically, as they reached the bottom of the hill.

And, as they were safe now out of hearing of Baggy Trimble, there was a chorus of jubilation from the caravanners.

"Hurrah!"

CHAPTER 2.

Just Like Gussy!

"HERE we are!" said Herries, about half an hour later.

"Right ahead!" said Monty Lowther.

"Better camp here, I think."

"Too dangerous. Baggy Trimble's only two or three miles away."

"Oh, blow Trimble!" said Herries. "I'm hungry. For goodness' sake, let's camp and have some supper! I suppose you don't want to get to the Tweed this afternoon!"

"Well, the Tweed's a far cry from here," said Tom Merry, laughing. "But we ought to get a bit farther. We're on the main road, and if Trimble comes free-wheeling downhill when he wakes up he'll spot us."

"I'd punch his head, if you like," said Herries.

"Weally, Hewies—"

"Well, we don't want to punch the head of the first St. Jim's fellow we meet on the way, even Trimble's," said Tom Merry. "I'd rather lose him without punching him."

"But I'm hungry."

"When Herries is hungry, it's a time for serious measures to be taken," said Monty Lowther. "I notice the stars in their courses keep on—"

"but—"

"on sally ass!" said Herries. "I want any of your Shellfish jokes. I want my supper."

"Think how much worse off you might be!" suggested Manners. "Suppose you were a blockaded Hun—"

"I'm not a blockaded Hun, fathed! What about supper!"

"Well, suppose we say another mile!" suggested Jack Blake. "We want to get a bit farther over the downs—"

"More blessed up than downs here, I think!" grunted Herries. "This looks a good place for camping—"

"The washing-up's got to be done before supper," remarked Dig. "It wasn't done after lunch."

"Bai Jove! Suppose we keep on while Hewies does the washin'-up," suggested Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I will lead the horse."

"And we will halt for camp when Hewies has finished. I considah that a sportin' o'fah."

"Hear, hear!"

George Herries grunted. He did not seem to consider that he was specially entitled to do the washing-up, because he wanted his supper.

But the general opinion was against him. Arthur Augustus went to Circumstance's head, and lead him onward. The Terrible Three strolled along the road. Blake and Dig sat on the van. Herries stared at them, and murmured something under his breath, and clambered into the van, yielding to the opinion of the majority.

There was a clinking and clinking of teacups and saucers, plates, and knives and forks from the little pantry of the caravan, as Herries got on with the washing-up.

He put his head out after a time, and yelled.

"Fathed!"

"Hewies is callin' to you, Tom Merry!" called out Arthur Augustus.

"I'm calling to you, ass!"

"Bai Jove! If you are addressin' me, Hewies—"

"I'm addressing you, you old owl!"

"I refuse to be called an owl, Hewies. I should like that to be clearly understood befoah this conversation goes any furthah!"

"Don't jolt the van!"

"I assuah you, deah boy, that I am not jollin' the van. Joltin' she van would be beyond my powah, old chap! It would be too heavy for me."

"I mean, go steady, ass!"

"I refuse to be called an ass!"

"How can I wash-up while the van is rocking like a dashed Heboat!" roared Herries, in exasperation. "I've just had a wash of hot water up my sleeves!"

"I am sorry, Hewies. I attribute it to the nature of the road. You see, we are on the downs, and the downs are wathah steep. You appeah to blame me, Hewies, but I assuah you that I had no hand in makin' the downs so steep."

"Make that dashed horse go a bit steadier!"

"I will twy, old top!"

Herries grunted, and withdrew his head, and the clattering of the crocks was resumed. Arthur Augustus took hold of Circumstance's head again, and led him as gently as he could. But smooth progress was difficult on a steep road.

Herries did his best in the pantry, but a teacup was heard to fall, and a saucer followed. The crocks were followed by loud snorts from George Herries.

Suddenly, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gripped the bit hard, and swung the horse's head round to the roadside.

It was so sudden a turn that Circumstances staggered, but he came round, and the caravan lurched round and rocked violently.

Crash, crash, crash-ash-ash!

There was disaster in the pantry. The Terrible Three, sauntering along the roadside, jumped out of the way just in time, and D'Arcy and the horse whirled round on them. The half-torn

caravan blocked the road from side to side. Blake and Dig, sitting carelessly on the van, and quite unprepared for that sudden jazz effect on the part of the horse, were nearly pitched off. They clung on and yelled.

"Crash, crash!"

"Whoa, old boss!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"What the thump—" yelled Blake.

"What are you up to, you potty ass!" asked Digby.

"What's all right now!"

"What did you do that for, Gussy, you crass idiot!" roared Tom Merry.

"There's nothing in the road."

"Weally, Tom Merry—"

"Are you potty!" howled Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

George Herries' head came out of the little pantry window. His face was like unto a beetroot.

"Kill him!" he gasped. "Kill him, somebody! Kill him!"

"Weally, Hewies—"

"Everything's smashed up!" shrieked Herries. "The whole thumping lot went. I'm smothered with wash-up water! I got the washing-mop in my eye! Kill him, I tell you!"

"Bai Jove! I—"

"My only hat! He wants slaughtering badly!" exclaimed Blake, scrambling off the van, while Herries jumped out at the end. "Collar him!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"What did you swing the van across the road for, you howling clump!" roared Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

Six furious caravanners surrounded the swell of St. Jim's. So far as they could see, there was no reason whatever for D'Arcy's sudden action. The road ahead of the caravan was quite clear of vehicles. Six fists were shaken at Gussy's noble nose.

"You clump!"

"You frabjous ass!"

"What did you do it for?"

"Were you jazzing, you howling jabbercock!"

"I refuse to be called a howlin' jabbercock!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I only just turned the van off the road in time—"

"There's nothing in the way!" roared Manners.

"I request you not to wear at me, Mannahs. It throws me into a fluttah when a fellow wears at me!"

"You—you—you—"

"Why did you buzz the van round?" shrieked Blake.

"There was a frog in the road, Blake."

"A—a—a what!"

"A frog!"

"A frog!" repeated Blake dazedly.

"Yass, wathah! The poor little beggar was hoppin' across in front of the van, you know, and we vewy neashly wan him down," answered Arthur Augustus innocently. "I dwagged the horse wound just in time."

"You—you—you—" Blake gasped.

"You—you—" stuttered Herries helplessly. "I got the washing-mop in my eye, and the wash-up water down my neck because there was a—a frog hopping across the road! You—you—you—"

Words failed George Herries.

"Weally, Hewies, I trust you would not be bwatal enough to wan ovah a frog to save the wash-up water from goin' down your neck!"

"Oh, you—you—you— I'll-I'll-I'll—" stuttered Herries.

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"You nearly pitched us off the van!" booted Digby.

"That was bettah than quite pitchin' you off deah boy. I do not see what you fellows are gousin' about."

"All the crows are smashed!"

"We can buy some new crows, Hewies. That poor old frog could not have bought any new legs if we had wun ovah him. 'Pway lock in the woad and see if he is gone!"

"See-ah!"

"What if the frog has got cleah, deah boys, so that we can pwoceed."

"Oh, my hat!" stuttered Blake.

Tom Merry burst into a laugh. But Herries had too much wash-up water about him to see the humorous side of the incident. He pushed back his drenched cuffs, and buried himself upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove! What the thump—"

Hoat-toot!

A big green car came whizzing up the road behind the caravan. It slowed down and stopped about a yard off. Horse and caravan quite filled the road from one side to the other, and there was no thoroughfare. A gentleman in military uniform, with a brown face and a white moustache, stood up in the car and roared.

"What, what! Clear the road! Begad! What the thunder! Clear the road! Take that thing out of the way! What, what!"

The interruption came just in time to prevent a costly combat. Herries relinquished his grasp on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and all the caravaners turned towards the military gentleman in the motor-car.

CHAPTER 3.

A Block on the Road.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY set his tie straight—Herries had disarranged it a little—and raised his straw hat gracefully to the white-moustached military gentleman.

"Pway excuse us, sir—" he began.

"Clear the road, begad!"

"We are going to clear the woad, sir, but I was about to explain—"

"You are delaying me!" exclaimed the old gentleman. "Do you understand? Delaying me on important military business! Begad! Do you understand that this is a Government car? Clear the road, you young rascals!"

"Bai Jove! You have no wight, sir, to apply such an expression to us!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus warmly. "I wogard that expression, sir, as vevy opobwious and unjustifiable!"

The chauffeur grinned at his steering-wheel. The car was buzzing at a great rate. The old military gentleman in the car was buzzing nearly as much as the engine. It was evident that the military gentleman was impressed with a full sense of his own importance. Perhaps he had cause to be annoyed, for Arthur Augustus was holding the horse's head, and keeping the caravan across the road while he endeavoured to explain. Arthur Augustus' manners and customs were always leisurely.

"Get a move on, Gussy!" said Blake.

"I feel bound to observe to this extremely iwacible old gentleman, Blake, that he has no wight to chawctewise us as woads!"

"Will you clear the road?" roared the military gentleman, in a state approaching frenzy.

"Certainly, my deah boy. There is no cause for excitement or angh, and I wecommend you to keep your tempah!"

"Begad!" gasped the old gentleman.

"You are delaying General Gummage, THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 599.

young gentlemen!" murmured the chauffeur. "Please clear the van out of the way!"

"Certainly, my deah chap! But General Gummage has no wight—"

"Johnson!" roared the military gentleman.

"Sir!"

"Get down and move that van!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Pway allow me to point out, sir, that your chauffeur has no wight to touch our cawavan!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy warmly. "I am wvally shocked, sir, at this display of tempah in a gentleman of your years!"

"Oh, begad! Impudent young scoundrel! Be quack, Johnson!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Wvally, you know—"

"Let him take the see, if he likes, Gussy!" murmured Monty Lowther. "This is as good as a circus!"

"Oh, vvas, well!"

Arthur Augustus smiled as he relinquished the horse. Circumstances—so named because he was not always amenable to control—disliked strangers. He could be a very obstinate horse when he liked—and he often liked. It was highly improbable that he would move to please the chauffeur, as he was agreeably engaged cropping the grass by the roadside. The caravaners looked on with smiles as Johnson tackled Circumstances.

"See-up! Come on, old hose!"

Circumstances firmly declined either to see-up or to come up. He shook his head violently, and cropped at the grass again.

General Gummage stood up in the car with a purple face, his white moustache bristling with wrath. The chauffeur did his best with the horse. But Circumstances was in one of his wilful moods, and he did not move. As fast as Johnson got his head round, he jerked it away and got it back again. The St. Jim's juniors looked on cheerfully, without offering assistance. The general had chosen to order his chauffeur to the job, and they were willing to let him have his way. Even Herries forgot the wash-up water, and forgot that he was hungry, as he watched the entertainment.

Johnson got the head round at last, and hung on to it. But the rest of Circumstances declined to follow. His four feet were planted in the road like rocks, and he did not move.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Johnson.

"Johnson!" roared the general.

"Yesir!"

"Why don't you move that horse, begad!"

"Buck up, Johnson!" said Monty Lowther encouragingly. "General Dug-Out is in a hurry, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was an explosive snort from the general. He was such a very old and very irascible military gentleman that it was easy to guess that he was a "dug-out"—one of the ancient warriors who were fished out of their lairs at Harrogate and Cheltenham to take up military posts during the war, and who have since evinced so strong a disinclination to retire once more to their old lairs.

But evidently the general did not like being recognized as a dug-out.

"Impudent young rascals!" he stuttered.

"Wvally, Lowther, it is wvathah diwvrespectful to wvfer to the fact that the gentleman is a dug-out!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "It is vvery patwiotic of him to wally wound at the age of ninety—"

The general seemed on the verge of a volcanic eruption.

"Johnson, will you move that horse?" he shrieked.

"I—I—I'm trying, sir!" gasped the unhappy Johnson. "The—the beast is rather obstinate, sir."

"Nonsense! Drag him round!"

"Pway pass your man had better leave the horse to us, sir," suggested Arthur Augustus.

"Hold your tongue, you young rascal!"

"Oh, bai Jove, if you were not old enough to be my great-grandfather, sir, I should certainly step into the car and punch your nose for that remark!"

exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's indignantly.

"B'raps you young gents will 'elp!" gasped Johnson.

"Certainly!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

The juniors took hold of Circumstances, and the caravan horse condescended to move round at last, perhaps recognizing that the odds were against him. The St. Jim's caravan swung round after him slowly.

"Thank you kindly, sir!" said the chauffeur, as he returned to the car.

"Johnson!"

"Yesir!"

"You are a fool, Johnson!"

"Yesir! Thank you, sir!" said the chauffeur. And he climbed into his seat.

The car moved on, almost grazing the caravan. General Gummage fixed a fiery eye on the St. Jim's juniors as he glided on. His important military business had been delayed for a good five minutes. Probably, however, it was not quite so important as the general imagined.

"Bai Jove! What an extremely bad-tempered old gentleman!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "If I were that chauffeur, I think I should punch his head!"

"Military chauffeurs ain't allowed to punch generals' heads," grinned Monty Lowther. "Dear old man, he's looking at us still!"

Monty Lowther kissed his hand to the general as he looked back from the car. The expression on the general's face as he beheld that affectionate salute was extraordinary, and the St. Jim's juniors burst into a chortle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!" came like an echo behind them.

Tom Merry & Co. spun round. It was Baggy Trimble!

CHAPTER 4.

Nice for the Caravaners.

"TWIMBLE!"

"Oh dear!"

Baggy Trimble nodded; and seemed quite pleased by the meeting—the pleasure being all on his side.

"Fancy meeting you fellows!" he said.

"Only fancy!" grunted Blake.

"I've been looking for you chaps," went on Trimble cheerily. "The fact is, I've been looking up and down and round about for you for a long time—days and days. I knew you were caravaning in the downs, you know, and I knew you'd be glad to see me in the wac."

"D-did you?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Isn't it a pleasure, falling in one another like this!" rattled on the evidently determined not to read the expressions on the faces of the vanners. "I got news of your van way back; I knew you were on the road. I think you must have passed me while I was taking a snooze by the roadside."

"Oh!"

"You see, I've been watching you from



"Will you clear the road?" roared the military gentleman, in a state approaching frenzy. "Certainly, my dear boy. There is no cause for excitement or anger!" responded Gussy calmly. (See Chapter 3.)

the top of the hill, and knew you'd come up this road," said Trimble calmly. "You were so jolly slow, though; and I had a nap after lunch. But it's all right."

"All right, is it?" snorted Herries. "Quite. When I woke up I inquired of some cyclist chaps, and they told me a red caravan had passed, so I followed on. Might have missed you, though, if you hadn't stopped here—I was getting a bit fagged, and was thinking of giving it up for to-day."

The caravanners looked expressively at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Gussy's tender concern for the frog had had unfortunate results. Not only had it delayed the important military business of General Gummage—which, perhaps, did not matter very much—but it had landed Baggy Trimble on the caravan party—which mattered very much indeed.

Even Arthur Augustus was dismayed. It was all he could do to preserve the polished politeness for which he was famous. Baggy Trimble was a fellow calculated to put anyone's politeness to the most searching test.

"You came on your bike, I suppose?" said Herries abruptly. "Yes; just got down, old chap." "Got up again!"

"Eh!" "And let's see you ride off!" said Herries deliberately.

"Weally, Hewries—!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Rats!" grunted Herries. "But Baggy's feelings were not hurt. It was not easy to hurt Master Trimble's feelings. He burst into a cheery chortle.

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"What's that!" exclaimed Monty Lowther in astonishment. "Have you got an alarm-clock about you, Trimble?"

"Eh! No!"

"Then what's that row!" asked Lowther, with a mystified look.

"He, he, he! Still the same funny as you are at St. Jim's!" giggled Trimble. "I say, isn't it lucky I didn't miss you again! I've been cycling round this part a week or more, inquiring after you, and stopping at inns, you know. They stuck me for bills, too, I can tell you—bad, luckily, once or twice I got away without paying."

"What!"

"Lucky, wasn't it! I've jolly nearly run out of money, one way and another; and if I hadn't dropped on you this evening I should have had to buzz off home to—Trimble Hall."

"For a fresh supply of tenners?" asked Monty Lowther sarcastically.

"Yes—exactly! I'll tell you what, you fellows—if you're looking for a good camp, you couldn't do better than come along to Trimble Hall and camp in the grounds."

"Fateh!"

"Ahem! Still, it's twenty miles off, so perhaps you couldn't do the distance. Camping out to-night, I suppose?"

"No; we're keeping on to London. Special invitation to Buckingham Palace!" explained Lowther.

"He, ho, he!"

The caravan was in motion again now. Herries had gone inside to deal with the hapless crooks. Trimble walked on with the van, wheeling his bike. Evi-

dently Trimble of the Fourth was one of the caravanning party now. The "marble eye" had no effect whatever on Baggy Trimble. He was determined to mistake it for the glad eye.

The caravanners had fallen very silent. At St. Jim's they would probably have spoken out quite plainly to the Fourth-Former; but they had not seen Baggy for some weeks, and the effect of him had worn off a little, as it were. They did not feel inclined to give him the actual boot; even Herries hesitated at that—and George Herries was not Chesterfieldian at all. But the prospect of having the talkative, greedy, and troublesome Baggy hanging on was a dismaying one. All the caravanners agreed that it wouldn't do; but how to break it to Baggy was the question.

It was Monty Lowther who came to the rescue. He joined Trimble as the fat youth wheeled on his bike.

"You're a pretty good hand at shopping for grub, I believe, Trimble," said the Shell fellow blandly.

Baggy's round eyes glistened. "Just the man!" he answered. "You try me!"

"Suppose you cut ahead on your bike and do the shopping for supper, then?"

"I'm your man!"

"Eh! What's that?" asked Tom Merry, looking round.

Lowther closed one eye at his chums. "Greenwood's only a mile ahead," he said. "If Trimble buzzes on, he can have the grub all ready for us—see? It won't take long on the bike. And Trimble's a ripping rider—ahem!"

"First-rate!" said Trimble.

"Ten shillings wanted!" said Lowther. Baggy's eyes glistened again. Jack Blake looked very expressively at Lowther.

"You see—" he began.
 "My dear chap, we can rely on Trimble," said Monty Lowther.

Herries' voice came from the van window.

"Fatho! If you trust Trimble to get the grub he'll scuff it on the spot!"

"Oh, I say—" began Baggy.

"What rot!" said Lowther. "I'm sure we can rely on Baggy where grub is concerned. Now, then, whack out your hobs! Get us something nice for supper, Trimble—use your own judgment, and—"

"What ho!"

The caravaners contributed the shillings. Baggy's eyes were almost bulging when ten shillings were placed in his fat palm.

"Rely on me!" he gasped. "If there's one thing I can do, it's shopping for grub. I'm your man. Where are you camping?"

"A bit farther along the road. You can't miss us coming back."

"Right you are!"

Baggy Trimble put a fat leg over his bike, and peddled on contentedly. Then the caravaners informed Monty Lowther what they thought of him.

"Ass!"

"Fatho!"

"Chump!"

"You silly jabberwock!" howled Herries, from the window. "He will blow that ten bob on grub, and we sha'n't see any more of him."

"Exactly!" assented Monty Lowther.

"Oh, you see—"

"Isn't it worth ten bob to get clear of Trimble?" demanded Lowther. "He will buy the grub, and he'll scuff every ounce of it—and even Trimble can't show up without it, after having the money. We've got rid of him."

"Oh!" said Herries.

"Understand at last!" said Lowther sarcastically.

"Well, it was worth ten bob," said Tom Merry, laughing. "I didn't want to kick him out; and we couldn't have stood the bouncer long."

"Yaas, watah! I regard it as a very good idea!" said Arthur Augustus.

"That settles it!" remarked Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Here's a good place," said Herries.

"Look here, it's time we camped. I've mentioned before that I'm hungry."

And the caravan stopped. There was a wide stretch of grass beside the road, shaded on the farther side by trees. It was a good spot for camping, and the caravaners decided upon it.

The St. Jim's caravaners were quite accustomed to camping by this time, and they made quick work of it. The Primus stove was soon going merrily, and a sauceman steamed on it, while the kettle sang on the spirit-stove. Many hands made light work; and the supper was soon getting ready. Tom Merry & Co. were not depending on the supplies from Baggy Trimble's shopping expedition for supper—they knew the festive Baggy too well for that. And they agreed that Baggy Trimble had been "shunted" cheaply at the price of ten shillings.

So they sat down to supper in the grass in a contented and cheery mood.

But they did not quite know Baggy Trimble yet.

CHAPTER 52

Trimble Sticks!

THE round, red sun was sinking behind the downs, and shadows were lengthening over the caravan camp. Supper had finished, and the seven juniors, having done full justice to it, were leaning back against the caravan or the trees chatting peaceably. They were talking of St. Jim's, and of the licks they were going to give Figgins & Co. of the New House next term, and discussing the probable doings of their schoolfellows—quite an interesting topic.

"Kidare will be playing cricket," remarked Monty Lowther. "Monteith and Darrel have gone to Ireland with him for the vac, and they'll be playing cricket there. Cutts of the Fifth will be backing horses, likewise Racko of the Shell, and dear old Crooke. Let's hope all their horses will come in eleventh."

"Hear, hear!"

"I wonder what Levison's doing, and Chiv and Cardew?" observed Blake. "I wish we'd happened on them instead of Baggy Trimble."

"Yaas, watah!"

"And Talbot's with his uncle," said Tom Merry. "I'd like old Talbot here. But we shall see Talbot again before the new term."

"Lots of the fellows I'd be glad to see," remarked Manners. "But there's one I'm always happy to miss, and that's that dear man Trimble. And it was well worth ten bob to miss him."

"You can make it quids, and still be right on the wicket!" said Monty Lowther.

"Hallo! Here comes somebody!"

The juniors glanced round in the gathering shadows at the sound of footsteps. The stove was still glowing, with the kettle on for the final cup of cocoa. Stars were coming out in the sky. The red rim of the sun was sinking from sight. In the growing dusk a fat form came into view, and there was a gasp from seven.

"Trimble!"

Baggy Trimble wheeled his bike up, and leashed it against the caravan. The juniors stared at him. They had taken it for granted that Trimble would "blow" the shopping funds on a feed for himself; and after that he could scarcely return to the party. But here he was.

"Well, my hat!" said Monty Lowther, taken quite aback. "The fat villain hasn't scuffed the tuck! Who said the age of miracles was past!"

"Bai Jove! Twimble!"

"Here I am, you fellows!" announced Baggy. "The fat Fourth-Former looked very podgy and shining, and there was a smear of jam on his mouth. 'I say, I've got some rather rotten news for you.'"

"Had a sudden call home, home to Trimble Hall!" asked Lowther.

"Nunno! I got into the town, and bought the tuck—"

"Well, dump it down!" growled Blake.

"I haven't got it."

"You said you'd bought it."

"Yes, I bought it. But as I came back I was set on."

"Set on!" howled Lowther.

"By a gang of hoodlums," said Trimble, blinking at the staring juniors.

"I fought like a lion—"

"Bow-wow!"

"I felled three of them, but the rest got me down," said Trimble. "I'm a pretty good fighting-man, especially when my blood's up. But six fellows

were too much for me. I did my best. I've jolly nearly crippled three or four of them. But they got me down, and they collared the grub."

"They collared the grub!" repeated Tom Merry dazedly.

"Every bit of it," said Trimble sadly.

"Then they bolted. I rushed after them, of course; but they gave me the slip. And—so I've come back with nothing—simply nothing."

"Bai Jove!"

"Tom Merry & Co. simply blinked at Baggy Trimble. The first part of Monty Lowther's little scheme had certainly worked well. Evidently Baggy had "scuffed" the tuck. But, instead of keeping away afterwards, as the juniors naturally expected, he had turned up with this astounding yarn.

The nerve of it took their breath away. They could only stare at the egregious Baggy, as if he fascinated them.

"Too bad, wasn't it!" said Trimble, breaking the silence, which was growing painful. "I—I think I ought to go to the police about it. Only—I'm afraid I couldn't identify the rascals. That's the worst of it. Of course, I shall consider myself liable for the ten-shillings. That's only fair."

"Oh, you—you will!" gasped Lowther.

"Oh, certainly!"

"Hand it over, then."

"I happen to be nearly stony at the present moment; but I shall settle up next term at St. Jim's. That's what I mean. If it happens to slip my memory, I'd be glad if you'd remind me. It's not easy for a wealthy fellow, handling a lot of money as I do, to remember these small sums. You see that!"

"Oh cwikey!"

Jack Blake looked round.

"Shall we slaughter him!" he asked.

"He, he, he!"

"What are you he-he-ing at?" demanded Blake.

"He, he! Your little joke, you know, I say, have you fellows finished supper?"

"Yes!" grunted Tom.

"I see you've left some cake. If you've finished you won't want it, will you? I say, this is rather nice cake."

"Let that cake alone!" said Herries in a deep voice, not unlike in tone to that of his celebrated bulldog, Tower.

"He, he, he!"

Baggy Trimble took Herries' observation as a joke. He had a great capacity for taking jokes. Some people take offence where none was meant. He found it made things easier. He finished the cake.

"I won't bother you fellows for supper," he said. "Next time, I'll be the cooking for you. You get up pretty late in the morning, I suppose!"

"No; early."

"What's the good of getting up early on a vac? We have enough of that at school. Take it easy; that's my motto."

"You can take it as easy as you like," said Blake. "But hadn't you better start for home? You'll be late at Trimble Hall, you know."

"Oh, that's all right! The butler would come down for me if I turned up at six in the morning. But I'm going home."

"Staying at an inn?" asked Manners.

"He, he, he!"

"Look here, Trimble—"

"I'm camping out with you chaps, of course," said Trimble affably. "You didn't think I'd desert you, did you? I'm so jolly glad to see you again! It's quite like old times to see you all. I say, D'Arro—"

"Yaas!"

"That chap Cardew of the Fourth is a distant relation of yours, I believe!"

"Yaas."

"I lent him a quid the day we broke up," said Trimble. "As a rule, a quid more or less makes no difference to me. But I've been spending money, and I'm rather stony just now. I was wondering if you'd settle that quid, and have it back from Cardew next term."

"Gwast Scott!"

"Don't distress yourself, of course," said Baggy generously.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyes as sternly on the glutton of the Fourth.

"I have no intention of distressing myself, Twimble," he said. "I feel bound to remark that I do not believe a word of your statement. Cardew certainly would not borrow money of you, and you had any to lend, which I very much doubt."

"He, he, he!"

"What are you cacklin' at, Twimble?" said He, he! "You're such a humorous chap, Gussy. A fellow can't help being blabby in your society," said Trimble, beaming. "I say, isn't it about time we turned in. Don't put yourselves out for me, of course. I can sleep anywhere. A bunk in the caravan will do for me, I assure you."

"You don't want us to wire for a Grand Hotel, with waiters and boots complete!" asked Monty Lowther.

"—He, he, he!" Trimble chortled, and then yawned. "I'm a bit tired. I'll turn in, if you fellows will excuse me. Which is my bunk?"

"Any bunk you like," so long as you do bunk!" answered Monty Lowther, unable to resist the opening for a little joke.

But Trimble cheerfully misunderstood.

"Right-ho! I'll pick out the one I like best, then, if it's all the same to you fellows. Nighty-nighty!"

Baggy Trimble rolled to the caravan. Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another eloquently. Herries gave an expressive snort, and Tom smiled.

"I—I suppose we can stand him for a day or two!" murmured Tom doubtfully. "I—I don't like to—to—"

"Well, the fat beast's planted on us now. I suppose we can't kick him out at night!" grunted Blake. "But—"

Trimble looked out of the van.

"The bed's not made!" he said.

"Go hon!"

"Which of you fellows makes the beds?"

"We take it in turns, as a rule!"

"Well, I'd like the fellow whose turn it is to get a move on now!" said Trimble. "I'm waiting to go to bed, you see."

"Do you want your bed made for you?" roared Herries.

"Eh? Of course! I'm accustomed to having things done for me," said Trimble warmly. "Make my own bed! I like that! Still, I don't mind roughing it! I'll turn in without making the bed. But I must say that you fellows are rather slackers! I must say that!"

Trimble disappeared into the van again. Perhaps he read danger-signals and kept on three faces.

"—Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I wendly think that bounsh near out a chap's patience, in the caravan!"

"He's not sticking to us!" growled Herries. "I'll punch his head if he starts with us to-morrow!"

"That would be hardly polite to a guest, Herries!"

"Rats! He's not a guest—he's a dashed leech!"

"We are bound to show a certain

amount of hospitality to a St. Jim's chap, Hewies!"

"Br-r-r!"

"Leave him to me," said Lowther, with a glimmer in his eyes. "I know how to manage him!"

"You've done it once," said Blake.

"If that's how you manage it—"

"Look here, Blake—"

"Pway don't begin to argue, deah boys. But I must remark that Lowthah seems wathah an ass—"

"Ten bob, chucked away!" grunted Herries.

"Five bob will do the trick," said Lowther. "We'll send him shopping for brekker in the morning—"

"And he'll blow the tin, and come back with another thumping lie!" snorted Herries.

"And find us gone!" said Monty Lowther, with a grin. "We'll cut brekker, and take the road as soon as the fat founder is out of sight. He'll come back with the tuck inside him, and a thumping yarn to spin—and we shall be miles away! How does that strike you?"

"Ha ha ha!"

"Good egg!"

"Right on the wicket!"

Monty Lowther's brilliant suggestion was passed unanimously. And thus time the caravanners really did not see how they could fail to unloose the grip of the limpet-like Baggy.

CHAPTER 6.

A Strategic Retreat!

"NOW there, slacker!"

"Yaw-aw-aw!"

"Up with you!"

"Grooooh!"

"Turn out!" roared Jack Blake.

Baggy Trimble blinked sleepily from the bunk and rubbed his eyes.

"Wharrer time!" he mumbled.

"Seven!"

"I generally get up at nine in the van—"

—or ten. Call me in a couple of hours!"

And Baggy Trimble turned his head on the pillow and closed his fat eyelids, and immediately sank into balmy slumber again.

He remained sunk in balmy slumber for about the space of one second. Then he suddenly emerged from it as a wet sponge was squeezed down his fat neck.

"Grooooh!"

Trimble started up, gasping.

Bump!

"Yaroooh!" roared Trimble, as his head came in contact with the bunk above.

"Or, yow, wow! I'm brained!"

Yoooop!"

"You're not brained, old bird!" said Blake, with a chuckle. "Brains are necessary for that, you know."

"Yow-woop!"

"Do you want this sponge down your neck again?"

"Yah! Gerraway!"

"Better turn out, then, or you'll get it. No slackers allowed in this giddy caravan!"

"Yah! Rotter! Ow!"

Trimble turned out in a hurry. He had gone to bed in most of his clothes, and it did not take him long to dress. When he rolled discontentedly out of the caravan the Terrible Three were stacking away the tent they had just taken down. Trimble blinked round in search of breakfast; but there was no sign of breakfast.

"Hallo! Had a good night!" asked Tom Merry cheerily.

"Somebody was snoring in the van," growled Trimble. "Herries, I suppose."

"It was you, you snorting grampus!" exclaimed Herries.

"What about brekker?" asked

Trimble, changing the subject. "What the thump is the good of waking me up before brekker's ready?"

Apparently the new caravanner expected the old caravanner to get his breakfast before calling him. Baggy, feeling himself constituted now as a member of the party, was beginning to display his delightful nature.

Tom Merry smiled.

"Many things were to happen before breakfast that sunny morning, of which Baggy Trimble was not yet aware.

"Well, we've got bread here, and some eggs," said Monty Lowther. "But somebody's got to ride into the village for supplies. We didn't know we were going to have a distinguished guest—"

"Look here, I can't be always fetching the grub!" said Trimble. "I'm used to being waited on. I think that may as well be understood from the start."

"Bai Jove!"

"It will be a rather thin breakfast," said Monty Lowther, unmoved. "But if you'd care to fetch something to fatten it a little, Trimble—"

"Well, I don't want to starve," said Trimble. "I'll go! My tyres want pumping up, I think."

"Can't you pump them?" asked Dig.

"Well, I think one of you fellows might do it."

"Why, you—" began Herries.

But he checked himself, and walked away. Monty Lowther pumped up the tyres on Trimble's bike. He would have done more than that to see the fat "bouncer" of St. Jim's safely started on his journey.

"I'd better have a mark before I start," said Trimble. "I'm doing a good deal for you fellows. I don't want to starve!"

"Try this cake," said Lowther blandly.

Trimble tried the cake, and finished it. Then he condescended to prepare to mount his machine. Five shillings were handed over to him, which he received with a greedy gleam in his eyes.

Trimble, at least, was going to have a good breakfast that morning, if one was purchasable for five shillings.

"Now, you'll buck up, won't you?" said Lowther.

Trimble grunted.

"I can't scorch before brekker," he said. "I don't think you ought to expect it. You're selfish!"

"Back in half an hour!" asked

Manners.

"I shall be an hour, at least!"

"Now look here, Trimble—"

Trimble waved his fat hand at them.

"You needn't jaw. I shall be an hour—a good hour. In fact, I may not be back in an hour. I'm certainly not going to hurt myself!"

And with that, the worthy Baggy pushed his machine out into the road, mounted, and pedalled away.

Tom Merry & Co. stood in the road watching him till he was out of sight. He turned a corner at last, and disappeared.

"Now then, sharp's the word!" said Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry & Co. had become very handy caravanners. But never had they worked so rapidly as they did now. Almost in a twinkling the tent was packed in, and the other paraphernalia strung on the van; the horse was harnessed, and the St. Jim's caravan rumbled out on the road.

"Which way?" asked Blake, with a chuckle.

Tom Merry considered.

"We won't keep straight on, as we intended. We'll try back, for the last

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turning we passed yesterday, and take it, it will lead somewhere. It doesn't matter much where it leads so long as it doesn't lead to Baggy Trimble!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The caravan rolled off at a good rate. Circumstances was made to exert himself for once.

Only a few minutes after Baggy Trimble had disappeared in one direction, the St. Jim's caravan disappeared in the other.

Not until a couple of miles had vanished under the wheels did Tom Merry & Co. think of breakfast. And then they had a cold breakfast, still pushing on; and their spirits rose as the sun rose higher. At noon many miles lay between them and their night's camp, and there was no sign of Baggy Trimble behind.

Monty Lowther's second scheme had succeeded better than his first; Baggy Trimble was "left."

And the grinning caravanners wondered what Trimble said when he got back to the deserted camp. It was probably something very emphatic.

CHAPTER 7.

A Friend in Need!

"A ND a dozen gingham-beeah!"

"Yes, sir."

"And a pound of tea!"

"Yes, sir."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was shopping.

It was the following day, and Tom Merry & Co. were many miles on their way, happily relieved of Baggy Trimble of the Fourth. The caravan was passing a little village that lay off the road, and Arthur Augustus had dropped into the village on the bike to shop. He was to ride after the caravan with the shopping on his carrier.

Judging by the cargo Arthur Augustus was accumulating on the counter of the village shop, the carrier of the bike would be pretty well loaded when he got it all aboard. But a fellow could not think of everything at once, of course. At present Gussy was shopping. Questions of transport could be considered later.

The good dame in the village shop was doing good business. There was a shortage of some things, but plenty of others; and where there was plenty Gussy ordered plenty. Butter was not to be had; but the swell of St. Jim's made up the deficiency with a dozen bottles of gingerbeer. There was no sugar, but a bottle of vinegar was added to the store. True, vinegar did not serve the same purpose as sugar; but Gussy was convinced that it would come in useful. He found that there was no cheese to be had; but he laid in a dozen of home-made currant-wine.

The stock on the counter was growing; indeed, it was becoming doubtful whether Arthur Augustus was going to leave as much in the village shop as he took out of it.

He was still busily engaged when there was a step in the shop doorway and another customer came in.

Arthur Augustus did not glance at him. But he jumped when a well-known fat voice spoke:

"Stone-ginger, please!"

"Oh cwikey!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

And the fat voice went on:

"Gussy, by gum! Fancy meeting you!"

Arthur Augustus turned. Baggy Trimble, as large as life, and THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 595.

with a fat grin on his face, nodded to him affably.

"Fancy finding you in here when I dropped in for a ginger!" said Baggy agreeably. "Lucky—what!"

"Oh dear!"

"I'm glad you're pleased, Gussy! I'm pleased, too!"

"Bai Jove!"

"All those things yours?" asked Trimble, eyeing the stack on the counter as he sipped his ginger-beer.

"Yess."

"Where's the caravan?"

"Gone on."

"I see! You're following with the shopping for tea!" said Trimble, with a nod. "I'll help you carry them, old chap!"

Arthur Augustus writhed inwardly. His polished politeness was being put to a severe strain again. The meeting was not nearly so lucky from his point of view as from Baggy Trimble's.

"Thank you very much, Trimble, but I—"

"Not at all old fellow! I'm entirely at your service!"

"But I shall not wequiah your aid."

"Eh!"

"I have a bike with me, and I am goin' to put them on the cawwhiah. So I will not trouble you, Twimble!"

"No trouble at all, old top! Dash it all, St. Jim's fellows ought to stand by one another when they meet out in the wide world! Don't you think so, Gussy?"

"Ya-a-as; but—"

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"I'm going to help, old fellow! You rely on me! I say, I missed you yesterday morning."

"D-d-d-did, you!"

"Yes; there seems to have been a misunderstanding. I got back with the grub for breaker—"

"Did you really?"

"Oh, certainly! And you were gone!"

You had forgotten to tell me which way you were going!" said Trimble, with a shake of the head. "I was afraid I had missed you for good. However, I made some inquiries about a red caravan, and I seem to have got in the right direction, after all."

"How much, please?" asked Arthur Augustus, addressing the boxton dame behind the counter.

The good lady was making abstruse calculations upon a fragment of wrapping-paper with the aid of a stamp of pencil and a pair of spectacles.

"Four pounds one shilling and tenpence-ha'penny, sir."

"Pewpew you would be kind enough to change this fiveah, ma'am!"

"Changing fiveers—what?" asked Trimble. "I say, you fellows are doing yourselves all right! I shall be really glad to join you! I make one condition, though!"

"Weally, Twimble—"

"I shall insist upon standing my share in the exes!" said Trimble firmly. "I couldn't join you in your trip on any other condition!"

"Bai Jove!"

"My share to be settled up at St. Jim's next term, as I happen to be short of tin at the present moment. In fact, you might as well lend me the change of that fiveer, Gussy, till I hear from Trimble Hall!"

Arthur Augustus seemed rather deaf at that moment. The change of the fiveer went into his pocket, not Trimble's. Baggy watched it disappear rather mournfully.

"How about getting the things along, Gussy?"

"I can manage, thank you!"

"Oh, I'll help you, old chap!"

Trimble picked up a bundle and started for the door. His own bike was outside with Gussy's, and there was a carrier on it, upon which Trimble carried the very small amount of belongings that accompanied him in his cycling tour. Judging by certain indications about Trimble's fat ears and wrists and neck, Arthur Augustus could not help suspecting that the fat Fourth-Former had forgotten to put any soap in his bag.

Baggy proceeded to fasten the bundle on his own carrier. Arthur Augustus followed him out with his arms full.

"Bai Jove! You are puttin' that bundle on the w'ong bike, Twimble!" he ejaculated.

"That's all right!"

"But it is not all right, Twimble!"

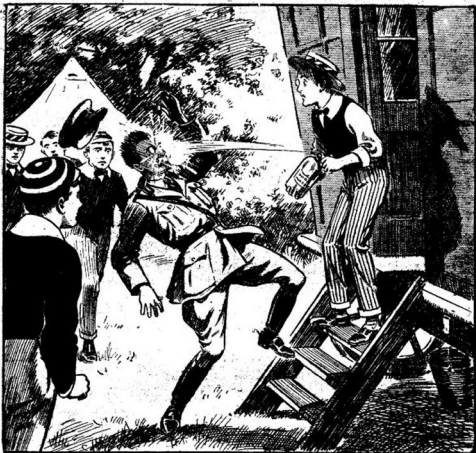
"Yes! I'm going to carry this lot for you!"

"Oh dear!"

Arthur Augustus was rather non-plussed. Apart from considerations of urbanity, he realised that his cargo could not by any possibility be crammed on his own carrier. Trimble's aid was, in fact, required, if the whole consignment was to be taken along after the caravan.

As it was quite evident that nothing short of punching Trimble's fat nose would clear him off, Arthur Augustus submitted to the inevitable.

Baggy cheerily packed his carrier full, and even then Arthur Augustus had quite enough to carry. Trimble surveyed the two loads with a fat grin.



Sizz! Squish! Splash! "Yoooop!" roared General Gummage, starting back. "Gurrgh! Yurrgh!" "Oh crikay!" Arthur Augustus stood spellbound, utterly horrified. (See Chapter 9.)

"Lucky I happened along—what?" he remarked. "You could never have managed without me, Gussy! I'm really a friend in need, ain't I? Are you ready!"

"I am weedy, Twimble!" said Arthur Augustus with deep resignation. "Come on, then!"

The two juniors mounted their bikes and rode back to the highway. Arthur Augustus put on some speed on the high road, and the fat Baggie called after him breathlessly.

"Wait for me, Gussy!"

Then Arthur Augustus smiled.

"I am afraid I am in wathah a huwwy, Twimble," he called back. "Can't you 'up?"

"I'm not in for a race!" snapped Twimble.

"Then I feah that I shall have to go ahead!"

"Look here, Gussy——"

"Huwwy up, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus drose at his pedals, and his bike shot ahead on the high

road. Baggie Trimble laboured after him desperately.

"Gussy!" he yelled. "Hold on, you rotter! You're trying to leave me behind! Yah! Slack down, I tell you! I can't keep up!"

Arthur Augustus whizzed on.

"Will you stop?" shrieked Trimble. "I say, tell me if this is the right road? Are there any turnings? Oh, you rotter!"

Either Arthur Augustus did not hear, or he did not heed. He rode ahead as if he were on the cycle-track, and vanished round a bend in the road. There were, as a matter of fact, three or four turnings to take. Arthur Augustus knew where the caravan was to halt, but Baggie Trimble didn't. And such an opportunity of shaking off the insistent Baggie was not to be missed.

The swell of St. Jim's drove" at his pedals as if for a wager, and the fat Baggie's wrathful voice died away far behind. Arthur Augustus did not slacken, and twenty minutes later he came up to the caravan camp with a whiz.

CHAPTER 8. A Slight Oversight.

ALLO, here's Gussy!"

"Loaded up, by Jove!"

"Just in time, Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus, with a face pink from exertion, jumped off his bike and gasped for breath. Tom Merry & Co. had camped on a common. The caravan was drawn up, the horse was grazing, and the oil-stove was going strong. All was ready for tea when Gussy arrived.

"He's bucked up for once in his life," remarked Monty Lowther. "Imagine Gussy in a hurry! Gussy, where is the merry repose that stamps the caste of Vera de Vere?"

"Weeily, Lowthab——"

"Well, thank goodness he's bucked up for once!" said Tom Merry. "We're all jolly hungry, and we're right out of grub. Only a loaf and a tin of sardines left. This looks like a good supply."

"I have had a nawwow escape, deah boys," grinned Arthur Augustus breathlessly.

"Dropped in with a ferocious old military man again!"

"Worse than that, Tom Merwy. Twimble came into the shop while I was shoppin'!"

"Trimble!" yelled the caravanners.

"Yaas; the boundah is still huntin' us down. And the howwid person started back with me."

"Why didn't you punch him?" asked Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

The caravanners looked anxiously along the lane to the common. There was no sign of the Falstaff of St. Jim's.

"Well, if the fat 'worm started with you; where is he?" asked Blake.

Arthur Augustus chuckled.

"I put on speed, deah boy."

"And Trimble—"

"I left him gaspin' on his bike, poor chap. As he doesn't know the turnin's, I wogard it as highly impwob' that he will follow on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The caravanners roared. Jack Blake smacked his noble chum on the shoulder.

"Good old Gussy! Fancy Gussy having as much horse-sense as that!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Good man!" said Tom Merry laughing. "I suppose we'd better push on after tea, instead of camping here as we intended, if Trimble is hanging round."

"Yes, rather!"

"I say, I'm jolly hungry," remarked Herries. "Let's get the stuff unpacked. Gussy's brought enough, and no mistake!"

Arthur Augustus gave a sudden start.

"Oh cwikey!" he ejaculated.

"What's the matter?"

"I—I—I— Oh cwumbs! That howwid boundah Twimble packed half the stuff on his bike!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in dismay. "I—I—I neverah thought of that!"

"Well, you happy idiot!" said Manners.

"Weally, Manners—"

"Then Trimble's cleared off with half the tuck?" howled Blake.

"Yaas!"

"You—you—you—"

In the hurwy of the moment, Blake, I forgot that the stuff was packed on Twimble's bike. It is wathah unfortunate!"

"Well, perhaps it was worth it—better than having Baggy Trimble here," said Tom Merry. "There seems to be enough here for a whole battalion, anyway. Did you buy up the whole shop?"

"Not at all, deah boy. There were quite a considerable numbah of things left in the shop."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, let's get this lot unpacked," said Herries. "There looks about enough for a week."

The caravanners unfastened the numerous bundles from the bike carrier. Tom Merry opened one, and disclosed a large bottle of vinegar. He stared at it.

"That will come in usefual, Tom Merwy. In fact, we shall wequish it with the cucumbers!"

"What's this?" ejaculated Blake.

"Currant-wine, by Jove!"

"And what's this?"

"Ginger-beer."

"And this?"

"Baking-powder! And lemons! And olive-oil! And a new kettle! And—and tea—and coffee—and soda-water—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Oh, our own!"

"Oatmeal is vewy usefual, Tom Merwy! I believe Scotchmen live entirely on oatmeal, and they are a vewy fine race."

"Anything else?" howled Herries.

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"Gussy, you aas—"

"I—I am afraid that is all, deah boy. The othah things were packed on Twimble's bike."

"Oh cwikey!"

"I laid in a vewy good supply of cakes, and tarts, and biscuits, and bread, and margawine, and outcakes, and—"

"And where are they?" shrieked Herries.

"On Twimble's bike! And there was a lot of sardines, and some tins of salmon, and a weally nice piece of bacon, and a lot of wathah. Weally nice wathahs, but vewy thin—"

"And where—"

"On Twimble's bike, unfortunately."

And a nice little ham—

"On Twimble's bike!"

"Yaas! It is wathah unfortunate!"

Tom Merry & Co. gazed at Arthur Augustus. He had brought them plenty of drinkables, including the vinegar and the olive-oil. But all the eatables, with the exception of the oatmeal, seemed to have been packed on Trimble's bike; and had been left with Trimble by Arthur Augustus's mastery strategy.

Words failed the unfortunate caravanners.

"So—so—so we've got oatmeal for supper!" said Herries at last. "And it wants cooking!"

"Oatmeal is a vewy healthy food," said Arthur Augustus feebly. "I have heard Kerr say that the supewiowity of the Scotch is due to oatmeal!"

"We can wash it down with vinegar!" said Monty Lowther with deep sarcasm.

"Or olive-oil!" growled Manners.

"Oh dear!"

"Oh Gussy!"

"It is wathah unfortunate!" confessed Arthur Augustus. "Howevah, we shall have to be satisfied with oatmeal. It is quite a healthy food, you know, and the Scotch—"

"Blow the Scotch!" roared Herries.

"I want some grub!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Oh, kill him, somebody!" growled Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"If Gussy ever suggests bringin' shopping again, said Nig ferociously. "We'll tie him up under the caravan!"

"Yes, rather!"

"I should uttiahly wefuse to be tied up undah the cawavan, Dig. I weally do not see what you fellahs are growinin' about, when I have brought you plenty of oatmeal, which the Scotch—"

Yawwooh!"

The exasperated caravanners seized Arthur Augustus and bumped him on the ground. It was the only way they could express their feelings.

"Yawwooh!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"You uttiah aases—you howwid wuffians—"

"Now for the oatmeal!" growled Blake.

"You uttiah wottahs!" roared Arthur Augustus wrathfully. "I was goin' to cook the oatmeal for you! Now I wefuse to do so!"

"Then we shall be able to eat it!" remarked Lowther.

Arthur Augustus made no answer to that. Words were inadequate. He dusted his trousers in silent and dignified wrath.

The hungry caravanners, instead of the "high tea" they had been looking forward to, sat down to a light meal—an "oat meal," as Monty Lowther expressed it, with feeble humour. While they discussed the oatmeal they also discussed Arthur Augustus, and their opinion of his intellectual powers, with great earnestness and candour. The opinions they expressed were not flattering. Arthur Augustus replied only with an occasional dignified sniff.

After the oat meal, the caravanners took the road again. It was necessary to lay in supplies somewhere for breakfast—their destined breakfast being on Baggy Trimble's bike—or more likely, by that time, in Baggy Trimble's ample inn.

CHAPTER 9.
Very Refreshing!

"BEGAD!"

"Hallo! I know that sweet voice!" murmured Tom Merry.

It was morning, bright and sunny, and the St. Jim's caravan was halted in a deep and leafy lane. Breakfast supplies had been obtained from a farm, and the caravanners were sitting on the grassy bank beside the lane enjoying themselves. Arthur Augustus was in the van, engaged in making a further supply of coffee.

A tall and angular military gentleman came striding up the lane towards the high road, and he paused as he saw the halted caravan and the cheery group of caravanners. He jammed a monocle into his red-rimmed eye, and looked again, and ejaculated:

"Bogad!"

The juniors all looked round. They had heard that voice before.

"The merry old general!" murmured Dig.

"Dug old Dug Out!" breathed Lowther.

"Shush!"

It was General Gummage, who had chanced on the caravanners once more. His brows beetled over his eyeglass as he looked at them. It was evident that he remembered them, and said he had not forgotten their previous meeting.

Tom Merry rose to his feet, and raised his straw hat very politely. His comrades followed his example. The general gave a grunt, and was about to stride on; but he paused. The lane was dewy and dusty, and the general was athirst. Whether the old hero of Harrogate was on important military business, the juniors did not know; but evidently he had walked a long way in the hot sun. There was dust on the general's clothes, and dust in his dry throat, and the sight of the tea-cups was a cheering one to a thirsty general.

"Good-morning, sir!" ventured Tom Merry, as the general halted.

General Gummage gave a grunting sound, which might possibly have been construed into "Good-morning!"

"Would you care for a cup of tea, sir?" continued Tom Merry, determined to be hospitable.

General Gummage's stiff brown face relaxed a little.

"I should like a glass of water, if you have any at hand!" he admitted.

"Certainly, sir! Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus was already looking out of the caravan, with a coffee-pot in his hand. As he was bare-headed, he could not raise his hat to the general, but he gave a graceful bow—which nearly toppled him off the van.

"Oh cwumbs—I mean, good-mornin', sir!" said Arthur Augustus, generously allowing bygones to be bygones, and full of hospitality towards a thirsty traveller.

"Would you care for a cup of coffee, sir? I ant just goin' to make it, when the dashed—I mean, when the kettle-boils—"

"Thank you, I should like simply glass of water!"

"Certainly, sir—but pewwaps we would care for a glass of lemonade, with a dash of soda!"

"You are very kind," said the general, unbending still more.

"Not at all, sir—vewy pleased, indeed!"

Arthur Augustus trotted out glass and lemonade in a jiffy. The general took the glass, and Arthur Augustus extracted a

soda siphon from the van. He gave his cheeks rather a triumphant look as he did so. This was a part of the supplies he had laid in the day before, and it was coming in useful now, as Gussy had declared that it would.

General Gummage was smiling now. He held up the glass for the soda, with quite a gracious grin cracking the wrinkles on his brown face.

Arthur Augustus handed the siphon very carefully. It was unfortunate that his foot slipped as he was handling it.

It was, in fact, very unfortunate indeed. But for that unfortunate slip of the foot, for which Arthur Augustus really was not to blame, General Gummage would have gone on his way satisfied, and thinking quite kindly of the St. Jim's caravanists. But it was written in the Book of Destiny that Arthur Augustus' foot should slip at that unhappy moment. Anyhow, it slipped.

And the sudden stream of soda-water, instead of streaming into the general's glass, streamed into the general's brown face with startling effect.

Sizz! Squash!
Splash!
"Yoooop!" roared General Gummage, starting back. "Gurrgrgh! Yurrgrgh!"
"Oh wikee!"

Arthur Augustus stood speechless, utterly horrified by the lamentable accident. He was so petrified that it did not occur to him for the moment to change the direction of the nozzle, or to shut off the soda. He stood with the deadly nozzle aimed full at the general, streaming soda-water upon him in floods. "Gussy!" shrieked Tom Merry.

"Oh crumble!"
"Oh awful aa—"
"Yaroooh! You young scoundrel!" roared the general, scrambling away with undignified haste. "Oh gad! You young rascal! Grooooh!"

Tom Merry jumped on the van and grabbed the siphon away from the swell of St. Jim's. If he had not intervened, certainly the general would have had the whole of it, for Gussy was too petrified to move a finger. Tom caught a stream in his neck as he jerked it away.

General Gummage was staggering, puffing and blowing, googing madly at his eyes and nose, and spluttering frantically.

"Grooooh! Yahoohoo! Yooohoo! Gurrgrgh!"

"Oh dear! I—I—I—"
"Oh, Gussy, you aa—"
"Yurrgrgh!" spluttered the general.

"You young scoundrel! Yurrgrgh! Oh! Ah! Yah! Grooooh!"

"I am fearfully aw—"
"Quite an accident, sir—" gasped Tom Merry.

"Gurrgrgh!"
"Oh gad! Oh crumble! I wally—"
"Oh, I say— Wharzer you at?" yelled Arthur Augustus.

The general did not explain what he was at. But he was at it. As soon as he had gouged away enough soda-water to be able to see Arthur Augustus, he made a jump at him. The swell of St. Jim's whirled off the van in a powerful gush.

What happened next was like a dreadful nightmare.

With the iron grasp of the general Arthur Augustus was whirled over, across a bony trunk, and a bony hand rose and fell.

"Spunk, spunk, spunk!"
"Unfortunate Arthur Augustus has been being spanked!"

"Spunk, spunk, spunk!"
"Spunk, spunk, spunk!"
"Yaroooh! Help! Wooooe!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, struggling wildly.

"You fearful wuffian, welaase me! Yaroooh!—Help! Oh wikee!"
"Spunk, spunk!"
"Wooooe!"

Then the general dropped Arthur Augustus into the dust, and strode on, without waiting for his refreshment. Evidently the old gentleman believed that he had been the victim of a practical joke; and he did not listen to a word from the caravaners.

Arthur Augustus sat in the lane and wept.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry.
"Gussy is done it again!" stuttered Blake. "Did it do him hurt you, Gussy?"

"Yawoooooh!"
Tom Merry looked after the tall form of the general, disappearing in the distance, and then looked at Arthur Augustus. Then he chuckled. And the other caravaners chuckled. It was an unfortunate incident; but it had its humorous side, though for the present Arthur Augustus was unable to see it.

The swell of the Fourth staggered up, gasping.

"Where is that wuffian?"
"Gone!" grinned Lowther.

"Oh crumble! I am fearfully hurt!" wailed Arthur Augustus. "Why did you not wash to the wewee, you gwinwin' duffies!"

"My dear old man, if you squirt soda-water at crusty old military gent—"
"It was accident!"

"You shouldn't have such accidents, Gussy! You're liable to be spanked for accidents like that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh, wiah! If that howid old wuffian had not cleashed off I would have given him a fearful thwackin', in spite of my respect for his years! Ow! I have been spanked, actually spanked!"

"You have!" grinned Blake. "Hard, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nobbin' wharther to laugh at, you duffies, in the wuffianly conduct of that unspeakable old perron. I have been treated with gwos disreepet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Ow, ow, ow!"

When the caravan started again, Arthur Augustus walked with the horse. It was some time before he felt any inclination to sit down.

CHAPTER 10.

Not Looking for Work!

JINGLE, jingle! Whirr!
Tom Merry looked back.

A bicycle was coming up behind the caravaners in the bright sunlight under the sun. A well-known fat figure was on the bike.

"There's the Old Man of the Sea again!" growled Blake.

Baggy Trimble jumped off his machine, and joined the juniors who were walking with the horse. His fat face was very cheery.

"Here we are again!" he said affably.

There was a unanimous silence among the caravaners. Really, Baggy Trimble did seem to resemble the Old Man of the Sea, who stuck so tightly to the shoulders of Binbad the Bailor. Certainly he was as hard to get rid of.

"Gussy, I left me behind yesterday!" said Trimble.

"Did he?" murmured Tom Merry.

"Yes. Luckily, I had the grub on my bike, and I've been camping out. It larks me right up to breaker this mornin'."

"Bad Jerry!"

"I've been looking for you," said on Trimble, with undiminished affability.

"I know how disappointed you'd be when Gussy came back without me."

"Oh!"
"Isn't it a pleasure to be together again!" said Baggy brightly.

"Words couldn't describe it!" said Monty Lowther sarcastically.

"I'm so glad you think so, Lowther. You fellows going to halt soon? I'm getting ready for lunch."

"Oh!"
"I'm hungry," said Trimble confidentially.

"Oh!"
Even Baggy Trimble could not be unconscious of a certain "freetee" in the atmosphere. He coughed.

"I want you fellows to be my guests," he said.

"Hi!"
"Come on to Trimble Hall," said Baggy. "You could camp in the grounds, you know. You'd like some canoeing on the lake, too, and a run in some of my pater's cars. Now the war's over, the pater has his four cars again. He had lent them to the Red Cross."

"Which is why they were never seen at St. Jim's?" remarked Lowther.

"Exactly! Caravanning is all very well, but you'd like some huntin' and shootin' and fishin' for a change. You'd meet some rather decent people at the Hall just now, too," went on Trimble recklessly, safe in the knowledge that the caravan was at least twenty miles from the little villa where he dwelt with his tribe.

"The pater's got a house-party on—some big political johnnies and some military men. Foch is staying for a week."

"Fu-fu-Foch!" stuttered Tom Merry.

"Yes! and I expect Haig will be there. You'd like to see Marshal Foch, I'm sure. Quite an interestin' old johnny. I get on with him so end, owing to my speaking French so well, you know. I quite enjoy a talk with him about the Battle of the Marne—I mean the Second."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Do come!" urged Trimble.

"Look here, you silly aa—" burst out Herries.

"Howwie!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

Herries gave a snort, and went into the van. He couldn't stand Baggy Trimble, especially on the splendours of Trimble Hall. Baggy blinked after him.

"What's the matter with Herries!" he asked. "I say, if you fellows come on to Trimble Hall I'd rather you dropped Herries somewhere. I don't know how I could introduce him to Foch or Lloyd George."

"I don't know how you could, either," remarked Blake. "You'd have to make their acquaintance first, wouldn't you?"

Trimble did not seem to hear that remark.

"You fellows couldn't do better than come on to the Hall!" he said. "I'll ask my pater for permission for you to camp in the park. There! You'll like the park. Miles and miles of old beeches and oaks, some of them standing when the Conqueror came. I dare say you know that our family was founded by Do Trimble, who came over with the Conqueror. Now, if you'll come to the Hall, I'll telephone to my pater to—"

"To get the Hall built!" asked Lowther.

"Aha! To get ready for you. Still, if you won't come, you won't! Where are we going to camp? What have you got for lunch?"

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another helplessly. A snort was heard

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from the vap. Baggie Trimble seemed fixed on the caravansers once more.

He walked on with them, wheeling his bike, and chatting cheerily. Baggie seemed to be in great spirits. Blake had a sudden thought.

"The washing-up isn't done yet," he remarked. "As Baggie's with us he can take his turn."

"Yess, washah!"

"Good idea!"

Baggie Trimble did not seem enthusiastic. Anything in the shape of work was distasteful to the fat Baggie.

"I don't care much about washing-up," he observed. "Hardly in my line. A fellow accustomed to so many servants at home—"

"Every fellow in this party does his whack in the work!" said Blake grimly.

"The fact is, Blake, I'd rather not."

"Then the sooner you get on your bike, Trimble—"

"What I mean is, I'll do the washing-up with pleasure, Blake. I'm rather a dab at washing-up!"

"Oh!"

"Leave it to me!" said Trimble, as he clattered into the moving van.

Tom Merry smiled.

Herrie jumped out of the van again. Baggie Trimble had it all to himself. He put his head out of a window.

"I say, Merry, what do you wash-up in?"

"You'll find a pan."

"Is there a washing-soup?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Look for it!"

Trimble grunted, and withdrew his head. But his fat face respiced a minute later.

"I suppose you wash-up in hot water?"

"Yes."

"How do you make it hot?"

"Spiritator."

"Where is that?"

"Find it!"

Grunt! Trimble withdrew his head again, and the caravansers grinned.

Evidently Baggie's little game was to make his work more tedious than it was worth; but he was not catching the caravansers so easily as all that.

He was silent for some time, but sounds were soon heard from the caravan again. And the sounds were the sounds of smashing crockery. Trimble's head was projected from the window.

"I say, I've let the cups and saucers drop! There's rather a smash. Does it matter?"

Tom Merry gasped.

"You fat villain! Get out of that van!" he roared.

"Certainly, old chap! I was only trying to make myself useful. It was quite an accident with the crocks, of course. I say, I think I've put rather too much methylated in the store. It's floating up round the kettle, and the spout's just dropped off. Does it matter?"

Tom Merry bounded into the caravan. Baggie Trimble dodged out, or Tom's good manners would probably have felled him to the extent of planting his boot on Baggie's plump person.

Trimble grumped cheerfully as he wheeled his bike on with the caravan. It was improbable that he would be requested to take his share in the work again—which was what the astute Baggie wanted.

CHAPTER II.

At Last!

"I'VE got it!"

There was a council of war going on, when Monty Lowther announced that he had "got it." Baggie Trimble, after an ample lunch, was taking his ease in the grass near the caravan. He was asleep, as his unmusical snore testified. Tom Merry & Co. were very wide awake. They did not refresh their senses even quite so liberally as Trimble, and did not require to sleep after lunch.

A general grin followed Lowther's remark. The caravansers had but faith in the "stunts" of the humerics of the Shell.

"Rot!" remarked Herrie. "If you're thinking of getting off quietly with the fat bounder's asleep, it won't wash. He'll wake up."

"Jolly certain to," assented Dig, with a nod.

"I'm not thinking of that, dear boy," answered Lowther.

"My idea," said George Herrie, "is this. Let us tell the bounder we don't want him, and kick him out."

"He won't go!"

"He will if we kick hard enough."

"There is such a thing as politeness, Herrie."

"It's a waste on that fat bounder. He's smacked up nearly all the crocks that were left, just as a trick of getting out of any of the work," said Herrie, breathing hard.

"And if he says any more about Trimble Hall I shall land him on the nose. I won't stand his line."

"It's Trimble Hall I'm thinking of," answered Lowther coolly. "Trimble has

invited us, several times, to camp in his pater's grounds there."

"There isn't any Trimble Hall!" roared Herrie. "His father is more likely to keep a pub."

"We can accept his invitation all the same."

"How can we, if there isn't such a place?"

"That's Trimble's look-out. My idea is, that we accept it. We played a joke like that on him once before, at St. Jim's, and he was fairly dished. He can't take fellows home. Well, let's ask him to guide us to Trimble Hall."

"My hat!"

"He lives at Lexham, and that's twenty miles out of our way."

"We shall've need to do the twenty miles. Long before we get near Lexham Trimble will be missing," said Lowther, with conviction. "Think of his people's feelings when a caravan rolled up with seven chaps to camp in their ten-by-eight front garden!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But Jove! That is really a corkak, Louthah! If Trimble tells whoppahs he must take the consequences. But we do not want to cause any trouble to his people," said D'Arcy, with a shake of the head.

"We shan't get anywhere near his people. Trimble will take care of that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Done!" said Tom Merry. "We'll try it on, anyhow."

"Yass, washah!"

And so the plot was plotted. The caravansers put the horse on, and at the jungle of barrows Baggie Trimble awoke and stretched himself in the grass.

"Starting already!" he yawned.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?"

"I'd rather rest a bit longer."

"Rest as long as you like, old chap. We'll get on."

"Oh, all right!" Trimble rolled to his feet. "I'll take a snooze in the caravan, then. Don't jolt the van more than you can help. I hate being waked out of a nap."

"You can't take a nap just now, Trimble," said Blake, with owl-like seriousness. "We want you to point out the way. Which is the shortest road to Lexham from here!"

Trimble started.

"Lexham?" he repeated.

"Yes; we're accepting your invitation, you know," said Monty Lowther blandly.

"Mum-mum-my invitation?"

"Yes; we're going to camp to-night at Trimble Hall."

"Oh crumbs!"

"What did you say, Trimble?"

"N-a-nothing. But, I say, Lexham is about a hundred miles from here!"

"Sussex must have grown since the last time I saw it on the map, then."

"—I mean it's twenty miles."

"Well, your pater won't mind if we arrive rather late, I suppose?"

"The fact is, you fellows, my father has a strong objection to visitors coming late, slammed Trimble. "I—I think perhaps it would be better to head for Berkshire."

"But we're going to Trimble Hall."

"Now I come to think of it," said Trimble, as if struck by a sudden second notion. "The pater's got the dinner in. I'm awfully sorry, but it will be to put off."

"It must be rather ungraciously Marshal Foch, with the decorators at home," said Digby solemnly.

"The fact is, it—it is rather uncomfortable for him," said Trimble; "but—but he's used to roughing it, being a soldier, you know."

"Well, we'll rough it, too, old chap."

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"Besides, camping in the vast park, we sha'n't bother the decorators."

"Not at all," said Tom Merry.
"The park has been ploughed up for corn. I've just remembered that, now," said Trimble. "Why not try Surrey?"

"My dear man, we're going to Trimble Hall. We've never seen the historic building yet, you know. Which way?"

"I—I've forgotten the—the direction—I've been cycling about so much—"

"I've got a map," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh dear!"
"You can have your map, Trimble; we'll find the way out on the map," said Tom Merry.

"Oh!"
Trimble did not seem to want a map now. He wheeled on his bike as the caravan rolled down the road—the route having been found on the county map. Trimble did not speak for the first mile, but the caravanners kept up quite a cheery and busy conversation.

They were discussing how they were going to enjoy themselves at Trimble Hall.

To judge by his dismused looks, BAGGY Trimble was not going to enjoy himself there.

"I—I say, we take that turning," he said suddenly.

"I think not," said Tom Merry, with a glance at the map. "We're right for Lexham, Trimble. That turning would lead us right away from it."

"Look here, you fellows," said Trimble desperately, "my pater has rather a bad temper if he's woke up late at night. I'm sorry to say it, but he mayn't even be polite. And we can't get there early."

"Well, if you really think that, Trimble—"

"I'm sure of it!" gasped Baggy.

"Then we'll camp to-night near the Hall, and go on in the morning to your place."

"Eh!"

"That all right?"

"Oh dear!"

Trimble could not very well say it wasn't all right. But his look was not happy.

The caravanners wound on cheerily. There was an easy road before them, and they piled into and upon the van, and proceeded at quite a brisk trot. Baggy Trimble had to mount his bike to keep up with them. A good many miles had passed under the wheels, when Trimble urged that it was tea-time.

But the caravanners did not stop for tea. Lowther explained that they wanted to do most of the journey that evening. Sandwiches and buns were eaten for tea, without a halt. And the caravanners trotted on. The sun was sinking behind the downs, and it was a very pleasant evening, tempting the caravanners to keep on the road. Monty Lowther consulted the map several times with great attention.

"More like fifteen miles than twenty," he announced. "We shall do it easily this evening if we keep on rather late. Of course, we won't think of disturbing Trimble's pater. That would never do. We'll camp near the walls of the—the—"

"Yas, wathah!"

In the morning Trimble can take us to the Hall, and his pater will let us wheel the old bus into the park. Then we'll have some canoeing on the lake," said Lowther. "It will be a very pleasant change after being on the road so long."

"Very!"

"It was really very thoughtful of you,

Trimble, asking us to your place like this. I suppose we sha'n't be in the way at all? Seven extra guests will hardly be noticed in such a large house-party."

"N-n-unno!" gasped Trimble.

"Only a few miles more," said Manners. "Do you think Marshal Foch will be up when we get in, Trimble?"

"I—I think he—he goes to bed early," mumbled Trimble.

"Does Haig?"

"I—I think so."

"Well, we shall see them in the morning," said Lowther. "It's ripping of Trimble to take us among the nobles like this! Some fellows, with such an exclusive social circle, would keep chaps out of it. Not Trimble."

"Wathah not."

"I—I say, hold on, you chaps!" said Trimble suddenly.

"What for?"

"I—I've just remembered—"

The caravanners suppressed a chorus. They wondered what was coming next; a specially big one, in all probability.

"Well, what have you just remembered, old top?" asked Blake.

"I—I'm sorry, but—but I've just remembered there was an outbreak of influenza at Trimble Hall. I—I'm afraid it won't do for you chaps to go there."

"Lots of people down with it!"

"Ye-es."

"We'll help to nurse them," said Lowther. "What do you fellows say!"

At such a time as this we ought to rally round Trimble—what!"

"Yas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Don't you worry, Trimble. We'll help you through."

"Oh dear!" gasped Trimble.

Another couple of miles were done in silence, on Trimble's part. He was getting quite a hunted look on his fat face now. He cast glances to right and left, as if seeking a way of escape. Once, in desperation, he wheeled ahead on his bike, but Tom Merry called to him.

"Don't get out of sight, Trimble. We want you to point out the Hall to us: Is it close by LEXHAM?"

Trimble slowed down again. LEXHAM was not far off now, and it was decided that the caravanners were to camp close by the walls of the park at Trimble Hall. Baggy was needed to point out that palatial residence. He was growing into a state of hysterics now. Certainly, he was not likely to guide the caravanners to the little villa where the Trimbles dwell. He could imagine his father's face if he did! As for guiding them to the "Hall," that was quite beyond the powers of Baggy or anyone else. That splendid abode had yet to be built.

And the caravanners were keeping on.

"I—I say!" gasped Trimble at last.

"Close on the Hall now, old chap!"

"Yes, gasped Baggy. "I—I'll buzz off, and telephone to the pater that you are coming."

"Isn't it rather late—"

But Baggy did not heed. He drove at his pedal, and vanished round a turning. The caravanners looked at one another. Then there was a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble did not return. Like the hapless gentleman who went hunting the Snark, he had "suddenly, silently vanished away." And there were dry eyes among the St. Jim's caravanners.

CHAPTER 12.

Calling on Aunt Matilda!

"BUCKS!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"What about Bucks?"

yawned Blake, as he finished his third egg.

It was morning, and the caravanners were breakfasting.

"We have done Sussex pretty well, dear boy, and my ideal is to head for Bucks, for two reasons. It may occur to that boundah Trimble that we have been pailin' his leg, and he may look for us again."

"Then the sooner we're on the road the better."

"And the othah reason is that my Aunt Matilda lives near Twing."

"Where's that?"

"Twing is in Buckinghamshire, Blake."

"Never heard of it."

"Weally, Blake, Twing is quite a well-known place—"

"The ass means Tring, perhaps," remarked Tom Merry.

"Yas, Twing," said Arthur Augustus innocently. "Aunt Matilda has a wathah nice little place at Twing, and she will be very glad to see us. We could camp there for a day or two, and I could have a weal bath."

"That settles it," said Lowther. "If it will cause Gussy to wash himself, we will go and see Aunt Matilda. Get a move on!"

"You uttah ass—"

The caravanners got a move on. The dreadful possibility that the truth might dawn upon Baggy Trimble, and that he might rejoice the party, gladdened them anxious to put a good distance between the caravan and Baggy. And for a whole day they pushed on at a good rate.

After that the journey was taken more easily, but the chalky roads of Buckinghamshire were gliding beneath the wheels of the St. Jim's caravan at last.

It was getting towards sunset, on a pleasant afternoon when the caravan rumbled through the old town of Tring. Tom Merry & Co. were a little doubtful as to whether Miss Matilda D'Arcy would be wholly glad to see seven dusty caravanners roll in. But Arthur Augustus assured them that Aunt Matilda was a "burick," and no end hospitable. And they would be able to camp in the paddock, and everything in the garden would be lovely. Arthur Augustus was given his head, and the St. Jim's caravan turned out of the Tring road into the leafy lane that led to Aunt Matilda's mansion.

A handsome house, in well-kept grounds, came into view in the distance.

"That's it, dear boy," said Arthur Augustus. "The hedge along the road has borshah Aunt Matilda's garden. Bai Jove, it looks as if there are visitahs already!"

Several figures could be seen in the garden, across the hedge. There were tea-tables under the trees.

"This is wathah lucky," remarked Arthur Augustus. "We are in time for tea, apparently. Betah stop, dear, dear boys, and walk to the gate."

"Right-ho!"

The caravan halted, and seven caravanners brushed off a little of the Tring road dust, and started along the hedge towards the gate. On the other side of the hedge was a sound of teacups and voices.

"Another cup of tea, general!"

"That's Aunt Matilda!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "How surprised she would be to know we are on the othah side of the hedge—what! This will be a vevy pleasant surprisefor Aunt Matilda."

"I wonder!" murmured Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah— Oh, bai Jove!"

A deep voice came from the other side of the hedge.

"Thank you, I will take another cup of tea!"

The juniors looked at one another. They knew that voice. They had just heard it on that occasion when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had had an accident with a soda siphon.

"Oh, cwikey!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"We're going to meet an old acquaintance!" grinned Lowther. "Oh, my hat!"

The deep voice went on, General Gummage little dreaming upon what was in it. The hedge was thick between.

"Yes, madam, as I was telling you, a party of caravanners—schoolboys. I think—"

"Dear me!" said Aunt Matilda. "My nephew Augustus is caravanning with a

party of his schoolboy friends. Perhaps you have met them, general?"

"Perhaps!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"No, I think not, madam. Certainly, this party was not a party of respectable schoolboys. A set of young hoodlums, madam!"

"Oh cwikey!"

"One of them, under pretence of giving me a glass of lemonade, actually drenched me with soda-water!"

"How dreadful!"

"Begad! I gave the young rascal some punishment, but I hope I shall meet him again," said General Gummage. "I really hope I shall! I would give a great deal to meet that impertinent young rascal again! I shall lay my stick round him without mercy, wherever I meet him!"

"I am sure he deserves it, general!" Arthur Augustus's face was a study. The caravanners looked at Est. There was a deep silence, broken only by the clinking of teacups, beyond the hedge.

"On second thoughts, dear boys," murmured Arthur Augustus—"on reflection—I wish that we—we had not had our tea on Aunt Matilda, if you don't mind!"

"I rather think so—rather!" chuckled Tom Merry.

And the caravanners trod softly back to the caravan. Five minutes later the St. Jim's caravan was rolling on the chalky road to Aylesbury, and Aunt Matilda never knew what a pleasant meeting had nearly taken place in her garden.

THE END.

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS.

A Special New Serial by the Editor of the Companion Papers.

CHAPTER 9 (continued).

A Visitor.

"True, O King!" said my visitor. "Can I afford a copy? Koko answers, 'I don't think! You see, I have to wait till midnight, and then when ordering my usual ration of food I discovered that it was broken in a corner of the 'Fenny Pop' which someone else has fiddled with. I warned that as an extremely extra cash, dear boy!" as Gray would say."

"I'm glad all my readers don't adopt those methods," I said ferretly. "Go ahead!"

"The sporting yarns of Richards, Frank, among the first and foremost rank. The Greyfriars follow next to Kent, and fought a topping tournament. They went to Lonsdale, I ween, and bagged the honours all around. And when they reached the Isle of Wight they were merry times, and the girls! Depression never, never drags you. When reading how they tackled Hampshire—"

"For that last yarn," I said, "you deserve to be rewarded about the Electric House on a globe! I refuse to refer to another word of that alleged poem!"

"But the 'Fenny Pop' deserves a word of praise—"

"Not that sort of praise, thank you!"

"Sir!—"

"Good morning!"

"Sir!"

"This interview is at an end! And so, incidentally, is my patience!"

"But—but aren't you going to pay me for these verses?"

"If you don't quit I shall call a policeman!"

"Stay! I entreat you to listen to just one more effusion! It is a poem addressed to you, Sir—the Editor of the Companion Papers—and it is calculated to melt a heart of stone!"

"I rose threateningly from my chair; led the youth with the bowing locks we already knew.

"Most noble Editor and Friend, Whose fame and virtue have no end, To those I sing my song of woe, For I am on the rocks, you know!"

"I've heard that before!" I said sharply.

"In fact, dear sir, I'm so hard up To long were I had title or exp. My famished body drowses all Within the City, where the clock has heard I heard the schoolboy To patronise a coffee-stall. Dear sir, you have a nice, kind phiz—Let me, like Butler, get to his! Let me go forth, with pockets lined, To get whatever I may find!"

To have a really great tick-in Let me see the line, my Fairy Queen. Well, swilly met, the lust of stone! How canst thou bear the hungry mean?"

"Although you do not appear to be fed by it, I remarked, I might mention that I am! Never, it is possible to eat. Take it, and never darken those doors again!"

My visitor took the note—and, to my infinite relief, he took his departure also.

"Thank goodness!" I murmured, shaking into my chair with a gasp of relief. "Another line of that doggerel, and I should have been stark, staring mad!"

I have not seen the youth with the bowing locks since. He is probably inflicting his dreadful perpetrations upon other unfortunate editors.

Should he ever approach my sanctum again, the office-boy has instructions to punch him with great violence on the nose.

This chapter has, I fear, proved a long one. It would prove much more lengthy if I attempted to do justice to the adventures which have impressed themselves upon my memory.

I hope my readers—particularly those living in London—will not jump to the conclusion that I resent personal interviews. At the same time, it is so well to remember, when calling on the Editor of the Companion Papers, that he is a busy man. Therefore, all interviews should be brief and to the point.

While on this subject, let me remark, as I have remarked before, that I do not care to be rung up on the telephone. Telephone, in it, best, an unnecessary business; and, as a matter of fact, it is not the reader's point of view, that it cannot be communicated to the editor by letter!

Having emphasized this point, I will proceed to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 10. Popular Features.

QUITE apart from the long, complete stories of St. Jim's and Greyfriars, which have appeared in the "Magnet" and "Gem" Libraries respectively, other features have appeared of which mention should be made in these recollections.

Of course, there are the serials. We have had serial stories dealing with almost every subject under the sun.

Commonly enough, the school serial has always been most popular.

Some would imagine that the reader, seeking a diversion from the school stories by Martin Clifford and Frank Richards, would prefer to see an adventure serial at the end of the paper. But the fact remains that

serials like "The Twins from Tasmania" and "Cousin Ethel's School-days" have taken pride of place.

The writers of our serial stories have been many in number.

Henry Drew has contributed many stories that are of great value; and many of my dreams, my serials, my sketches, the exploits of Goo-Waga and Ferrers Lock, William.

Then we have Brian Kingston, who wrote a leading serial, rather, a prize-winning serial called "The Custodian," which was the course in the "Gem" Library. This serial made a big hit.

Beverly is chiefly renowned for his serials of Army life; and the well-known writer for boys, G. G. Grey, contributed "Driven to Death" to the pages of the "Magnet" Library.

R. R. Warren Bell, a writer who needs no introduction to the boy public of Britain, gave us a Greyfriars story some years ago; and Clive R. Fenn—well, by the way, is the son of the late G. Maxville Fenn—will be remembered by his serial in the "Gem" Library, entitled "A Sad for a Thing."

Richard Reddick is evidence with "Goggs, Grammarian," which is having a long innings in the "Magnet" Library. Serials are very much like plays. The longer they run the stronger they prove the popularity.

I was nearly forgetting to mention Frederick Howard, the author of "The School Under Canvas"—a story which was widely read and admired. Later on Mr. Howard gave us the Teddy Baxter series in "Cuckoo." The illustrations in this series are some of their place we now have the adventures of Dick Hoyle & Co. of Belminster.

No more for the serials.

"We now come to the 'Greyfriars Herald' and 'Tom Merry's Weekly,' supplementary copies of which were published some years ago in our Double Numbers.

I will remember the tremendous sensation which the publication of these leaflets—for they were little more at that time—produced all over the world. Indeed, I was bombarded with letters urging me to undertake the publication, in the form of a weekly journal, of the "Greyfriars Herald." This great proposition was put to the vote, and, being in my right mind, I saw that only one individual voted against it.

Accordingly, the "Greyfriars Herald" appeared as a separate halfpenny paper. It came on the market at a time when the war was threatening to swamp a number of many publications; and it weathered the storm successfully for eighteen weeks, at the end of which period its publication was suspended owing to the shortage of paper.

The failures in the "Greyfriars Herald" were many and varied. There was a serial

story by Mark Linley, entitled "The Pride of the Ring," the concluding chapters of which appeared in the "Magnet" Library. This story was afterwards published in revised form as a "Boy's Friend" 68. Library.

Then we had the amazing stories of Herlock Sholmes, detective, by Peter Todd. I have seen my own office staff almost go into convulsions on reading these really funny narratives. I think Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the originator of Sherlock Holmes, would have chuckled hugely had he seen these humorous skits. In fact, he probably did see them!

The "Police Court News at Greyfriars" was another feature which caused widespread amusement. In fact, comedy was the keynote of the "Greyfriars Herald." Whatever its shortcomings, it was certainly never dull!

That indignation was expressed when the "Herald" shut up shop. So persistent was the clamour for its reappearance that extracts were published from time to time in the "Gem" and "Magnet" Libraries. These extracts have always been immensely popular, and the "Herald" is expected later on, when the Editor has finished getting the Personal Recollections of his chest, as one reader rather rudely put it.

Several plays in verse, for amateur actors, have appeared in the "Companion Papers," chiefly in the Double Number. The first of these plays, entitled "The Spectre of No. 1 Study," was so well received that, like Oliver Twist, the readers asked for more—and got it!

And here I will give away a little secret. When the "Companion Papers Annual" appears—for its appearance has now been definitely decided upon—it will contain another of these plays in verse; and amateur actors will be glad to give the play for theatrical achievement in the long evenings of the coming winter.

The adventures of Tom Merry & Co. and Harry Wharton & Co. have been told not only in prose, but in rhyme.

In the summer of 1914 the "Greyfriars Lyrics" appeared, and were speedily followed by the "St. Jim's Jingles."

"Favourite Friends in Fiction" followed; and "Book-worm Personalities," by the same writer, are now appearing in the "Boy's Friend."

Another feature which created a lot of comment was "The Race to the Tuckshop." This was not, as many of my readers seem to think, a story of St. Jim's or Greyfriars. It was in fact a description of a great sporting event. It was a game, after the style of "Snakes and Ladders," and I myself was responsible for its publication.

There have been numerous demands, during the last year or two, for the issue containing this game; but, unfortunately, it is out of print.

We have had a song, of course. It was not meant to be a comic song—though a good many boy-readers who got their sisters to play it over to them wrote and told me they thought it extremely funny! I do not think either G. E. Samways, who wrote the words, or Frank Witty, who composed the music, felt very pleased at this doubtful compliment.

Let me betray another secret. In the "Companion Papers Annual," which we hope to publish this year, there will be a song about the Immortal Gussy. The words and music are the work of famous men—I do not infer for a moment that G. E. Samways and Frank Witty are great famous men. I think the song will be a great success. (Who said, "Yaas, watah!")

Two of the most useful features ever published in the "Companion Papers" were the "Gem" and "Magnet" "Who's Who?" Ever since the early days of my Editorship I have been besieged with queries concerning the characters who figure in our stories.

This is the sort of letter I used to receive:

"Dear Editor.—Please give me an answer to the following questions by return of post:

- (1) How many fellows are there at St. Jim's?
- (2) What are the Christian names of all of them?
- (3) What are their approximate ages?
- (4) Who were their fathers and mothers?
- (5) What are the numbers of all their studies?
- (6) If Grundy exek Nick Jack Blake at boxing, and Tom Merry can lick Grundy, how many different neckties does Gussy wear in a week?"

(Continued on page 16)

The Editor's Chat.

The Companion Papers are:

THE MAGNET. THE BOY'S FRIEND. THE GEM. THE VERY POPULAR. GUSSELS. Every Monday. Every Monday. Every Wed. Every Friday. Every Friday.

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS GLAD TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS.

For Next Wednesday:

"FOES OF THE FIFTH."

By Martin Clifford.

The above is the title of next week's splendid long, complete story, and, needless to say, it deals with the further adventures of Tom Merry & Co. on their caravan tour, the fun is long and furious.

There is an ever-increasing demand for the GEM Library just now, and unless readers place a regular standing order for their copies they are liable to be disappointed by hearing their newswagon's "Sold out!"

Order your copy. It is most safer!

JAMAICA.

We do not hear half as much about Jamaica as we should like. It is said that Mr. Merton, the father of Tommy Merton, in that remarkable old book "Sandford and Merton," had made his fortune in Jamaica.

You remember, too, the story of the West African who was born in the island, and declared he was a British officer, and was proud of the fact! Of course, he meant British subject, but it was an easy mistake to make, anyhow, all things considered. But I received a letter from Jamaica the other day which was far more to the point. The writer told me how keenly the "Penny Popular" and the other Companion Papers were read out there in the sunshine across the water. "We have one own hero-essence's Kerr, others plump Dickson or Gardner. My correspondents waited patiently till the war was over, and the German goose was properly cooked, and now he is glad to say the papers are coming in pretty regularly. So note it be!

A CONTINUAL DEMAND.

My friends always want characters to be more and more remarkable, able to perform wonders. I get hints and hints that So-and-So is not doing enough—inventing enough wonders, or playing a strong enough part. Well, we cannot expect all the individuals who come into the stories to be champions. They are, as a rule, musical prodigies, for instance, like the famous family in the "pome."

"Johnny Morgan played the organ,

His father whacked the drum.

His sister, Sue, the flute she blew.

While his brother went tum-tum."

There are quite a crowd of fellows, you may have noticed it—if you have not noticed it, you have a rare opportunity of doing so—who do nothing in particular; but, of course, so long as they do it very well every good purpose is served. Mr. Frank Richards and Mr. Martin Clifford try to distribute the honours fairly evenly, but just as every dog has his day, so with the dapper tail has a whole week-end, but he was a glorious exception—so with the characters in a story series—please watch this point carefully if you do not mind—there are celebrities who have to be accommodated with a crowd of days, they are so popular. There is Bunter, for example. He takes a large slice of the stage. The majority of my friends say they cannot have too much of a good thing, and as William George is getting on adipose steadily their requirements will be met, as per desire. Of course, there are those who declare they cannot stand Bunter. Then they should do what the Lord Mayor does at a public meeting, and take a chair.

FARTHER THAN MANDALAY.

A message I received last week came from farther afield than the land where flying-foxes play, as where, as we are told, no "buses" are plying for hire. Perhaps it would make no difference, as "buses" are always crowded, and are consequently of very little use unless you

have your batterigram in your pocket.

"Apparently," says my correspondent, "you get knocked some, but any individual who can get in a row at these papers must be dopey. I shall let it go at that. We are not anywhere near the arouse reason yet. Life in Sydney sounds pleasant enough despite the flu—singing, or shooting the breakers, is a national pastime. We have so many beautiful flat beaches and so much sun here that it is hard to resist the sea. Children here are like little tadpoles in the water, for they learn to swim at a very early age. I could swim when I was between nine and ten. The boys often swim out from one headland to another. It is May now, and in eight weeks we shall be in midwinter." It sounds cheery enough, and if it were not for the sharks and the Spanish flu, and a few other little things, I should be packing up and starting for a week in the sunshine out Sydney way.

There is no other heading necessary for a letter which hails from the "Gem." My friend wants to know why there are no coloured covers yet, why no little has been heard of Ferrers Locke, why there is no School Football League, why Cutts is not more villainous—by the way, Cutts' action at Carden's first appearance will carry his score way, surely—why there is no literary story of the exhibition of Tom Merry, why there is not a Chinese junior at St. Jim's, also why we do not hear more of Hoyland. There is a lot more, but enough is as good as a feast, except to Baggy Trimble, and he would hat no use for it unless it was just as an appetiser. Letters of this sort do not turn my hair grey, or make me yearn to glide out of the office where the Companion Papers are edited and his me to some place where the growers are coming in growing and the critic is at rest. For, after all, there is a seasoning of rabid interest in such matters. Of course, I cannot do all these things. I tried to meet the exact wishes of one fellow, there would be a throng of other readers who would want to know what in the name of the tuckshop I was up to, don't you know. So that's that!

NEXT, PLEASE!

This, I know, what the barber says, but the gentle shaver has not the monopoly. Now, there is no reason why goosepore treason should ever be forgot—and I trust it will not be, for the world has had several good lessons in treason of late—but there is reason why I cannot reply to letters when no address is affixed, or when a letter written from the Antipodes thinks this small matter has nothing to do with the case, like the flowers that bloom in the spring, tra-la! But if he thinks that he is sadly in error, for it is rarely possible to give answers in the paper, seeing that "Replies in Brief," as a standing order, will do more. I'll let your favourite delicacy at the restaurant when you happen to be five minutes late. "I wrote to you," says a percentage out in Australia, twelve months ago, and you have not answered. If you send an answer to this letter I shall not read the GEM any more. There you are! That's what the hard-pressed Editor gets to help him to enjoy life and feel glad about things. It is fairly flat—like the "B" in the music-book, and the billiard-table—before the back of the village have been over it and ripped up the cloth. Now, of course, I would go down on my hands and knees to please my irate friend, but he wants Grundy or Trouble to be captain, and he says that whether it is mad and like is potty. Well, I'm sorry, just sorry, but I can't do it. Nothing short of a Bill passed nem. con. by both Houses of Parliament could make Baggy a captain. He would be far too much like the brave Chinese general with sore feet who mortally for it on the hills and far away where he had news that the enemy was on the march. Besides, there is Gussy to be considered!

YOUR EDITOR.

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

(Continued from page 15).

Some will say that the letter is a gross exaggeration. It is not. It is typical of the many letters I received concerning the characters.

Of course, I could not look up the majority of all the letters, as demanded by the conditions of a contract with L. Casser, Questions 8, which is enough to turn any editor's hair grey. But the rest of the information was available, and it was given as concisely as possible to the "Who's Who".

A new generation of readers sprung up, however, who missed the first "Who's Who" as a revised one was published at the end of 1917. Since that time, the storms of questions concerning the characters has abated considerably.

And now for the third secret. The Annual will also contain a "Who's Who" for the benefit of those who have missed the two foregoing ones. It is not my intention to divide a lot of space in the Annual to this feature, and the "Who's Who" will be published in a really condensed form.

Another novel feature is the publication of Plans of St. Jim's and Greyfriars, and of the district surrounding the two schools. These plans have now been revised and brought up to date, and they will appear in the Annual. The Annual will, in fact, contain a fund of information concerning the schools, the characters, and so forth.

I have not exhausted the list of misadventures which have appeared from time to time in the "Gem" and "Magnet". I should not think I have mentioned will suffice to show that the fame of our papers does not rest solely upon the long, complete school stories by Martin Clifford and Frank Richards.

Several fascinating competitions have appeared in the past.

Poplitz, in the "Penny Popular", chaired a big boom, as did the contest in which we awarded prizes for the best weekly-drawn notice copies of the "Magnet" Library.

One of the biggest propositions ever put before youthful competitors was the writing of a long "Magnet" story in the style of Frank Richards. Hundreds of entries were received, and the competition proved a gigantic success. Although some of the stories submitted reached a high standard of merit, we discovered no one who seriously disputed with Frank Richards his supreme place in the realm of boys' literature.

I have made no mention as yet, in this chapter, of the many fine features which have appeared in the "Boys' Friend" and "Chuckle".

To give the history of the "Boys' Friend" in detail would necessitate another serial—and it would be a jolly long serial at that!

The "Boys' Friend" was in existence before most of you were born. It first appeared when Queen Victoria was on the throne. It is the testimony of boys' papers published in five years it has stood the test; and not only the war, which killed and crippled so many publications, could chatter its rock-like foundation.

Hundreds of men have had a share in the production of the "Boys' Friend," and it is

superfluous to add that I am proud to be the Editor of such a journal.

"Chuckle" is one of the youngest of my publications.

Not all of my claims were best pleased when I announced that I was about to control a comic paper. They imagined that "Chuckle" would be modified on the lines of the "frisky" type of comic paper; and they were wrong.

When I first launched "Chuckle," I remarked to one of my sub-editors:

"This is to be something new in comic papers. I am going right off the beaten track. Instead of having hard fiction, and stories which get in doubtful taste, I shall endeavor to bring some new into the paper."

My sub-editor stated:

"But you can't get time into a comic paper!" he protested.

"No, granted, if that I could; and I did."

There is only one thing wrong with "Chuckle," if my readers' letters are any criterion. It isn't big enough. Some of my claims profess to be honored because the well-known story of Dick Doyle & Co. is considerably shorter than the stories dealing with Tom Merry & Co. and Harry Warton & Co. Others urge that Harry Bevel's fascinating serial, "The Middie of the Danishes," should emulate the knock, and go on for ever. Let's hope it will!

But the fame of "Chuckle" chiefly rests in the hands of an artistic gentleman named Tom Williamson.

This genial person records, by means of numerous sketches, the adventures of Pagan and his merry playmates on Pencil Island, and the liberties are written in verse. Another feather in the cap of "Chuckle," for few comic papers can boast such a success.

"Chuckle" is not intended for the young man of eighteen. It is intended for the young man's small brothers and sisters.

No reader of the Companion Papers need be ashamed to include the name of "Chuckle" when he mentions his favorite journal. There is quality and tone in our weekly comic, which is assured of a great future. It has been running for several years now, and like a certain brand of Highland Whisky, it is still going strong.

In concluding this chapter, let me state that I am always glad to receive suggestions for new features in the Companion Papers. The opinions of my readers go far to shape the welfare of the papers. If, therefore, you like a certain feature, tell me so; if you dislike it, do not hesitate to speak out. In this way I shall be able to adjust the scales in such a manner as to please everybody—or nearly everybody. And that, after all, is the main thing.

CHAPTER 11.

Concerning Office-Boys.

W HEN charging our office-boy about once a month—

This is hardly complimentary to the office-boys, perhaps, but the fact remains that I am a hard taskmaster.

The first office-boy of my acquaintance was a shock-headed youth who went by the name of "Bottleful Bill." And he justified his name up to the hilt!

"Bottleful Bill" used to commence the day's work about eleven and knock off at five,

with something like three hours' interval for lunch.

One day I found him fast asleep in my chair, with a copy of "Chuckle" spread over his face to keep the flies away.

"Look here, William," I said emphatically, "this won't do! You evidently regard the Postway House as a home away from home, but let me assure you that this is not a school for slackers. If you can't get on, get

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(To be continued.)

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