

SPECIAL "BAGGY TRIMBLE" STORY!

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BAGGY TRIMBLE'S GREAT SWINDLE!

An Amusing Incident from the Gripping Long Complete School Story Inside.

Baggy Trimble's Great Swindle



A Magnificent New, Long Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's.
By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

CHAPTER I.

Baggy is Recruited!

"WHEW-W-W-W-W-WWW!"
Jack Blake of the Fourth stood on the steps of the School House and emitted that piercing blast, with a forefinger inserted at each corner of his mouth and his cheeks inflated almost to bursting-point.

"Whew-www-ww!"
Fellows in the quadrangle turned to stare at Blake in astonishment. The Fourth Form leader was garbed in the khaki uniform of a cadet, and he looked extremely smart and soldier-like.

"Whew-www-ww!" whistled Blake energetically.
Gerald Knox of the Sixth approached from the Close, and looked in deep astonishment at Blake.

"What in thunder are you making that row for, Blake?" he demanded, stuffing his fingers in his ears, as the cheerful cadet whistled shrilly almost in his face.

"Eh?" asked Blake, looking round rather breathlessly.

"You noisy young sweep!" growled the bullying prefect of the Sixth.
"Take fifty lines for kicking up that confounded din!"

"Oh crumbs!" exclaimed Blake.
"Look here, Knox, I was whistling to the cadets—the other cadets, you know. Haven't you heard that we've formed a cadet corps—a St. Jim's Cadet Corps? We've planned a run in the wood for this afternoon, and—"

"Bosh!" snapped the unpopular prefect, scowling. "You kids ought to have more sense! Cadet corps! What on earth next? Utter piffle!"

And Gerald Knox strode indoors, in a very bad temper.

Blake inserted his fingers in his mouth to whistle again, but he saw Tom Merry & Co. of the Shell in the Close, and went over to them. The Terrible Three were there, with Kangaroo, Clifton Dane, Talbot, and Bernard Glyn. Tom Merry was also clad in officer's uniform, and his three "pips" proclaimed him to be a captain. The others were in the regulation khaki uniform, with breeches and puttees. Manners carried a kettle-drum, whilst Kangaroo had charge of the big drum. Clifton Dane had a bugle.

Tom Merry saluted smartly as Blake came up.

"Ready?" said the Fourth Form lieutenant, a little gruffly. "My company hasn't turned up yet. The lazy beggars can't get into their uniforms, I expect."

"Here comes one of them!" grinned Monty Lowther. "It's Gussy! Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the noble swell of St. Jim's, was the first of the

Fourth Form company to emerge from the School House. Gussy also was in officer's uniform—that of a second-lieutenant. His uniform fitted him very tightly, and D'Arcy looked extremely slim. His famous monocle glimmered in his eye. D'Arcy looked a work of art; a thing of beauty, and a joy for ever.

"Good old Gussy!" chuckled Tom Merry, as the swell of the Fourth came up. "You look jolly nobby, I must say!"

"Gwooooh!" These beastly puttees wound my legs feel jolly uncomfy, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "I've had a fearful struggle to get them on!"

Next minute, three other members of the Fourth Form company approached.

They were Reilly, Kerrum, and Mulvaney minor. Clive Levison, Cardew, Herries, and Digby followed, all dressed in khaki, and looking very spruce and smart. Herries, Reilly, and Sidney Clive had bugles; Mulvaney minor a kettle-drum. The band had not been forgotten!

"All present!" said Blake, glaring at the cadets. "Didn't you hear me whistling? I've got fifty lines from Knox, just because you silly slackers didn't turn up in time!"

"We're waiting for Baggy, now," said Herries. "Whistle for him, Blake. You've got a toot like a steam-engine!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Blake whistled.

"Wh-ww-www-ww!"
"Go it, Blake!"

"Whew-www-www-ww!"

But Baggy Trimble did not appear. Baggy Trimble of the Fourth was not a keen cadet; indeed, he had only been recruited under the stress of violent persuasion from Blake. Anything in the nature of exertion was not in Baggy Trimble's line. In vain did he plead with Blake that his delicate constitution would not bear the strain of route-marches and manoeuvres, and declare that compulsion was not permitted in England, and that Britons never shall be slaves. Blake told Baggy that the duties of a cadet would run down his surplus fat and let the first step towards making a man of him. Blake was not to be argued with, so that Baggy Trimble had become a cadet.

"Whew-ww-www-ww!"

"You'll bust a boiler in a tick, Blake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake gave it up at last, and, gripping his cane firmly in one hand, he rushed indoors, and marched along the Fourth Form passage.

He flung open the door of Study No. 2, and burst in like a whirlwind.

A fat youth was seated at the table, eating jam-tarts. There was a smear of jam on Baggy Trimble's nose. He blinked up in alarm as the lieutenant came in.

"Not down yet!" howled Blake. "Why, you fat slacker! You—you—you— We're waiting! Figgins & Co. are already in the lane!"

"Look here, Blake, I'm not coming!" protested Baggy Trimble, eyeing Blake's cane apprehensively. "I think this idea of a cadet corps is all rot! I'm going to back out!"

"Why, I—I'll back you out!" roared Blake, striding forward and yanking Trimble to his feet. "Come down at once, you lazy, fat toad!"

And Blake brought his cane to play upon the person of Baggy Trimble.

"Whack! Whack! Whack!"
"Yarooooh! Yah! Ow-vow!" he roared. "Leave off! Yarooooh! Can't you see I'm coming as fast as I can! You-woah!"

"Whack! Whack! Baggy Trimble was driven out of his study, urged on by Blake's merciless swipes at him with the cane. Baggy went downstairs at a truly remarkable speed. He scuttled into the quadrangle, Blake still plying the cane vigorously in his rear.

"Yarooop! Shurrup, Blake, you rotter! Yoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The other cadets shouted with laughter, as Baggy rolled up, gasping. Baggy Trimble presented rather a comical aspect in his suit of khaki. It was truly marvellous how he had managed to cram himself into it. His fat figure seemed to be bursting through at every point.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the School House cadets.

Baggy Trimble moaned pathetically, and rubbed those parts of his anatomy which had suffered by contact with Blake's cane.

"Now we're ready!" said Blake, red with wrath. "Summon the band!"

The band sorted themselves out. Manners and Mulvaney minor went first, with the kettle-drums; then Kangaroo, with the big drum hoisted before him. Behind the drummers marched the buglers, Clifton Dane, Herries, Reilly, and Sidney Clive. Then Tom Merry headed the rest of the contingent. Behind, Monty Lowther and Digby pulled along the trek cart, upon which the camp goods were stored.

"Quick—march!" roared Tom Merry, in a tone of voice that might have made many a regulation sergeant-major turn green with envy.

"Bang! Bang! Bang-tiddy-bang-bang, bang!"

The band started up, and the St. Jim's cadets moved forward, in impressive array.

The bugles blared forth, each of the players putting all he knew into his playing. Kangaroo performed wondrous feats of valour upon the big drum, rivalled only by the two kettle-drummers,

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who plied their drumsticks with great vim and vigour.

The effect was rather startling. Bang, bang! Toot-tootle-toot! Boom! Boom!

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Much to the amusement of all beholders, the amateur cadets marched across the quadrangle.

Baggy Trimble lagged, but was kept going by periodical prods in the rear with Jack Blake's cane.

And, with much noise, and otherwise perfect order, the St. Jim's Cadet Corps marched through the gates of St. Jim's, and out into the Rylcombe lane.

CHAPTER 2.

Trimble the Deserter!

FIGGINS & CO., of the New House were waiting by the stile in the Rylcombe lane.

There were eight of them. Figgins, of course, their lanky-legged leader, was a captain, of the same rank as Tom Merry. The idea of forming a cadet corps had really been Tom Merry's, but the New House leader had made some good suggestions, and helped considerably in procuring the necessary uniforms and equipments.

Figgins' khaki breeches and tightly-bound puttees showed off his slim limbs to advantage. He looked really a smart and efficient officer.

George Kerr held the rank of lieutenant, and the canny Scots junior made a fresh, athletic figure in uniform. Fatty Wynn's uniform fitted him scarcely better than Baggy Trimble's; but Fatty was a diletic and keen. The other New House fellows were Reifern, a sergeant; his chums, Lawrence and Owen; and Pratt and Jimson.

The New House fellows stuffed fingers into their ears, and gasped as the "band" approached, with the rest of the School House contingent behind.

"Great pip!" gasped Figgins. "What an unearthly din! Grooogh! For goodness sake, shurrup!"

"Halt!" commanded Tom Merry, and the School House corps halted. The band ceased its labours.

"Stand at—Ease!"

The cadets stood easy. Then a consultation of officers took place.

"Our plans are all cut and dried," said Tom Merry, to Figgins. "You and your company will station yourselves at the wayland side of the brook that runs through the Rylcombe Wood. We fellows will pitch camp this side. Your bizney is to attack our camp, and capture it, if you can—which is jolly unlikely. Meanwhile, we chaps will scout out after you, and take as many prisoners as we can. You've got to try and penetrate our lines and pinch our camp—see?"

"Oh, I see," said Figgins airily. "And we'll do it, I don't worry, Tom Merry. Don't you School House fellows think you're going to knock the New House out of the running. You never have done yet."

"Rats!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Now, Figgy, hop off! We'll give you half an hour!"

"Right!" said Figgins; and then he turned to his company. "Shurrup!"

Form—Two! Deep! Form—Fours! About—Turn! Quick—March!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

The New House company marched away, and took the path through the wood. Soon afterwards, Tom Merry & Co. followed, and selected a sheltered glade in the thickest part of the wood.

They pitched their camp. The tents were erected, and a camp fire lit. This was completed, within half an

hour. Tom Merry assembled his men in line, and issued orders.

"Now, men," said the School House leader, "the wheeze is to scout through the wood, and capture as many of those New House blighters as you can. They must never reach this giddy camp. Two sentries will be left—Lowther and Reilly. Baggy Trimble will be sent ahead to decoy the enemy."

"I won't!" roared Baggy Trimble.

"Yarooop! I mean, I'll go with pleasure!" yelled Trimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Run along, then, Baggy!" said Tom Merry. "Mind, if you get caught by Figgins & Co., things will go hard with you. You must get as far away from this camp as possible. And, furthermore, if you do happen to get captured, and sneak on us, woe betide you!"

"Oh, really!" said the fat youth of the Fourth peevishly.

"Hear what I say?" demanded Tom Merry. "If you tell Figgins & Co. where our camp is, we'll scrag you, and boil you in oil when we get back to St. Jim's!"

"Grooogh!"

"Do you understand?" roared Blake, in Trimble's ear.

"Then out! Ye-es, of course, you beast!"

Baggy Trimble disappeared into the wood.

The cadets waited, and took orders from their officers.

Meanwhile, Baggy Trimble was scrambling through the wood. His one fear was of Figgins & Co. Also, those drastic threats issued by Tom Merry were vivid within his memory.

Trimble was not much of a woodsman. But necessity is the mother of invention. Baggy Trimble meant to avoid the trouble that would accrue to him if he were caught. So Trimble showed a remarkable cunning, that would have surprised his fellow cadets had they seen him.

He made his way through the wood until he reached the woodman's hut, and reached the lane where it turned towards the village.

Baggy Trimble had only just clambered over the barbed-wire fence, much to the disadvantage of his trousers, when he came face to face with a party of schoolboys from Rylcombe Grammar School.

They were Gordon Gay & Co.

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Baggy.

The Grammarians stared when they caught sight of Baggy Trimble, garbed as a cadet. Then they burst out into chuckles.

"Well, I'm blowed! Is that really you, Trimble?" grinned Gordon Gay, stepping forward. "Ha, ha, ha: Doesn't he look a dreen, you fellows?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Frank Monk, the two Woottons, Carboy, Tadpole, and Mont Blong.

Baggy Trimble blinked in alarm at the Grammarians.

"Oh, really, you know?" he said peevishly. "Leggo my arm, Gay, you beast! I—I'm in a hurry! I'm a cadet!"

"Not so fast, sonny!" chuckled Gordon Gay, as Baggy commenced to wriggle.

"Let's get to the bottom of this giddy mystery. You say you belong to a cadet corps, Baggy? What cadet corps?"

"Our school cadet corps, of course!" spluttered Baggy Trimble. "Leggo my arm, Gay, or I'll call Tom Merry and the others—"

"Ha!" chuckled Gordon Gay. "So Tom Merry & Co. are in the wood! They are also cadets, I suppose, Trimble?"

"Yes, of course!" said Baggy. "We are all in the cadet corps! Figgins & Co. as well. They're trying to capture Tom Merry's camp, and—"

"My hat!" ejaculated Gordon Gay, turning to the others. "Then those mouldy St. Jim's asses have had the cheek to start a cadet corps—just my wheeze! And they've got a camp in this wood, and Figgins & Co. are trying to capture it! Ye gods! Where are you off to, Baggy?"

"I—I'm going down to the village!" declared Baggy. "Taking a—a despatch, you know!"

Gordon Gay tersely, "Anyway, that's not our bizney. We'll let Baggy off with a bumping this time, shall we, boys?"

"What-ho!"

"Here, I say! Leggo! Yah! Yaroooop!" wailed Baggy, as violent hands were laid upon him. Gordon Gay & Co. raised the fat cadet on high, and proceeded to bump him well and truly.

Bump, bump, bump!

"Yoooop! Yow! Ow-wow!"

The form of Baggy Trimble smote the hard, unsympathetic ground with a series of loud concussions. He yelled.

At last Gordon Gay & Co. allowed Baggy Trimble to go.

He picked himself up, and scuttled away down the Rylcombe lane as fast as his fat little legs would take him.

Gordon Gay turned with a chuckle to his companions.

"Rather interesting to know of the doings of our dear rivals, Tom Merry & Co.," remarked the Grammarian leader.

"Chaps, we're nothing of special import. To do this afternoon; I vote we go into the wood, and chip into the manoeuvres of those merry cadets. What do you say?"

"Ripping wheeze!" said Frank Monk enthusiastically.

"Tres bien!" remarked Mont Blong, the French junior.

"All serene, then!" chuckled Gordon Gay. "Follow me, my sons!"

And the heroes of Rylcombe Grammar School followed their leader into the wood.

CHAPTER 3.

Baggy in Luck!

PHEW! That was a narrow squeak!"

Thus Baggy Trimble. He was well on his way to Rylcombe. He gasped breathlessly as he ran. The cadets would expect him to keep to the wood, so, out here in the King's high road, he was safe from capture. Baggy had no scruples on being detected. His work of a cadet was too much like hard work, and Baggy was a work-shirker of the first water.

Within ten minutes after leaving Gordon Gay & Co. Baggy Trimble entered the village bushup.

The young lady behind the counter looked rather grimly at Baggy as he came in. In spite of his dusty and rightly-fitting khaki uniform, she recognised the St. Jim's junior.

Baggy was well known at the village bushup. He often came in seeking "rick." Baggy Trimble was so seldom blessed with ready cash that he was not a welcome visitor.

"Gimme some tart—quick!" said Baggy, extracting a shilling from his pocket, and plunking it down on the counter. "I'm jolly hungry, miss, after a great deal of jolly hard exercise! You see, I'm a cadet now!"

Baggy referred proudly to his uniform. The young lady sniffed disparagingly, and, having taken possession of the shilling, handed Baggy a plate with four

two-penny jam-tarts upon it, and a foaming glass of ginger-pop.

Baggy sank into a seat, and eagerly devoured these comestibles.

A man, seated at a table on his right, looked up from his newspaper, and glanced curiously at the St. Jim's junior. He watched Baggy eat, with an amused smile lurched at the corners of his thin lips.

Baggy soon polished off the jam-tarts and the ginger-pop. Then he looked up with a sigh.

"I—I say, miss!" he said.

The young lady treated Baggy to a stony stare.

"Yes, Master Trimble?"

"May I have a few more tarts and some more ginger-pop?" asked Baggy, very affably. "I'm perfectly famished and gasping, and—"

"Have you any money to pay for them, Master Trimble?" asked the young lady of the bunshop, not relaxing her stony look.

"Ahem!" coughed Baggy. "I—I'm afraid I've run short of tin, miss. But, of course, you'll trust me to the extent of a few bob?"

The young lady behind the counter shook her curly head.

"I'm sorry, Master Trimble, that I cannot serve you, unless you have the money to pay for it!" replied the young lady firmly. "You are not a very truthful boy, and I'm sure I don't trust you!"

Baggy subsided into sulkiness.

The man at the other table had all the while been watching Baggy, and listening to his conversation with the waitress. Suddenly he got up from his seat, and went over to Baggy's table.

"Excuse me, Master—er—Trimble!" he said. "May I be of any assistance to you?"

Baggy blinked round at the stranger. "My hat!" he said. "Who—who are you?"

"I am a friend, Master Trimble. I can quite sympathize with your hungry and thirsty state, as it is a very hot afternoon, and I see from your uniform that you have been very active. Would you care to be my guest to some ginger-beer and some—er—pastries?"

Baggy's eyes glistened. Would he? "What-ho!" he said, with alacrity. "It's jolly good of you, sir!"

"Not at all!" smiled the stranger. "Ginger-beer, miss, please, and—Shall I order some of those cream-buns, Master Trimble?"

"Yes, rather, sir!" gasped Baggy, in delight.

The young lady bestowed rather a peculiar look upon Baggy Trimble's benefactor. Perhaps she was wondering whether that gentleman was quite right in his mind. But she did not hesitate to execute his orders when he placed a rustling pound-note on the counter.

Baggy Trimble had all manner of good things placed before him.

"Those are all for you, Master Trimble," said the stranger affably. "Wire in!"

Baggy needed no second bidding. He wired into the provisions at top speed, eager to get rid of as many as possible before this unknown gentleman changed his mind. The fat junior, between bites at his tarts and drinks at his ginger-pop, confided to his benefactor that he belonged to St. Jim's, but that he was not "fed up," because the fellows there did not recognise his real worth, and treated him badly.

The stranger listened sympathetically, and watched Baggy eat with growing wonder. He had never seen a boy eat so quickly, and in such great bulk before.

"That's better!" said Baggy, leaning

back after he had demolished a plate of tarts, four cream-buns, some meringues, three doughnuts, and two large ginger-beers. "That's taken the edge off my appetite, anyway! You see, I've got rather a delicate constitution, and they don't give me enough grub at the school. A beastly shame, I call it!"

"Yes, yes. It must be, Master Trimble," replied the stranger. And then, seeing that the waitress was busy attending another customer who had just entered the shop, he leaned forward, and said confidently to Baggy: "Master Trimble, would you care to earn ten pounds very easily and without any trouble?"

Baggy Trimble pricked up his ears.

"Eh?" he said. "Ten quid?"

"Yes, Master Trimble," proceeded the stranger, in an earnest voice. "I want you to do me a service, and in return I will give you ten pounds."

Baggy Trimble's little round eyes glistened greedily.

"Ten pounds!" he murmured. "Ten whole quid! My word! What do you want me to do, sir?"

"It will be a small service, entailing no risk whatever on your part!" declared the stranger. "As a matter of fact, there will probably be an opportunity for you to make quite a lot of money in your spare time. All I wish you to do for the present is to come with me and ask no questions."

Baggy Trimble considered for a moment.

"Look here," he said. "I suppose there's nothing fishy in this, is there? You're not going to kidnap me, or—"

"My intentions towards you, Master Trimble, are of the best!" the stranger hastened to assure him. "You are just the sort of boy I require for a little job I want doing. I will pay you well, and you will not be inconvenienced in any

way. Your schoolmasters need never know. In fact, I do not wish them to know. Come, Master Trimble, if you obey my instructions you will return to your school within two hours, with five pounds in your pocket, and another five pounds will follow in a day or so. Think what a great deal of tuck you could have for ten pounds!"

That settled it for Baggy. He would go through fire and water for ten pounds' worth of tuck. Visions of glorious feeds rose before his inward eye, and his heart beat quickly.

"I'm on, sir!" he said eagerly. "Rely on me!"

"Ah, that's good, Master Trimble!" The stranger rose from his chair, and then led the way to the door.

The station cab was rumbling past the door, Old Joe, the cabby, sitting, half-asleep, on his box.

"Hi! Cabby!" called Baggy Trimble's new-found friend.

Old Joe drew the cab up to the pavement.

"Get inside, Master Trimble!"

Baggy climbed inside the cab, and his friend followed.

Old Joe whipped up his horse, and the cab rattled along the High Street.

Three schoolboys wearing the St. Jim's school cap had just emerged from the Station Tobacco Stores as Baggy Trimble climbed into the cab.

They gazed at the cab in wonder.

"Great pip!" exclaimed Aubrey Racko of the Schl. "Did you see who that was who entered the cab?"

"Baggy Trimble!" said Percy Mellish of the Fourth.

"I'm certain it was him!" said Scrope.

The three black sheep of St. Jim's watched the cab rattle past with great interest.

"What's on, I wonder?" mused Racko.



Whack! Whack! Blake brought his cane into play upon the person of Baggy Trimble. Baggy went downstairs at a truly remarkable speed. "Yaroop! Shurrup, Blake, you rotter! Yoop!" The other cadets shouted with laughter as Baggy fled, gasping. (See page 3.)

"Baggy was supposed to be with Tom Merry and the rest of the silly chumps. I'd jolly well like to know what his game is!"

Aubre' Racker & Co. passed on, still curious to know what was "in the wind." They would have been still more curious had they been able to see into the interior of the cab as it rattled along Rylecombe High Street. Baggy Trimble's companion was binding a handkerchief over Baggy's eyes, so as to blindfold him.

"There's nothing to fear, Master Trimble," he was saying, as Baggy commenced to tremble. "I am doing this as a precaution. You must not know where you are being taken. It is a close secret. But let me assure you that you are safe enough, and that no harm shall befall you. You will return to St. Jim's by six o'clock."

"Groooogh!" gasped Baggy. "I—I don't f-feel quite safe. B-but I suppose it's all right."

And the cab rattled on its way towards its unknown destination.

CHAPTER 4.

Tit for Tat!

MEANWHILE, the St. Jim's cadets were on the track.

So were Gordon Gay & Co. The Grammarians entered the wood, and proceeding with the stealth of Red Indians, followed the track-marks that Baggy Trimble had left.

Suddenly Gay paused, and gave a warning hiss.

"Sit tight, you chaps!" he whispered. "Here come the asses. Hide among these bramble-bushes—quick!"

The Grammarians were not a moment too soon. Barely had they got into ambush than Figgins & Co. burst through the trees.

"Well, chaps, I reckon we ought to be securing the giddy camp now," said Figgins, halting in the glade. "Kerr and Pratt are deceiving the enemy's advance party towards the hut. There are five of us, and I reckon we ought to be able to manage the camp, for Tom Merry would only leave a couple of sentries or so. This way!"

The New House captain led the way through the bushes.

Gordon Gay and his six companions looked at each other and grinned.

The Grammarian leader placed a finger over his lips, and indicated by various signs his intentions. Monk, the two Woottons, Tadpole, Carboy, and Mont Blong understood.

The unsuspecting New House cadets walked into the trap, blissfully unconscious of the presence of their hidden enemies.

With swift suddenness seven youths arose from ambush and hurled themselves upon the St. Jim's fellows.

Figgins & Co. opened their mouths to yell out; but hands were clapped over them, and their cries stifled.

"Back up, boys!" panted Gordon Gay, who had one hand over Figgins' mouth, and was wrestling with the other. "Don't let 'em give the show away! Down with 'em!"

Figgins & Co. put up a manful resistance, but against such odds they were powerless. Besides, they had been taken at a complete disadvantage.

Within the space of five minutes they were down and out, each with a handkerchief stuffed into his mouth, and a Grammarian seated on his chest.

"Got you, my merry beauties!" chuckled Gordon Gay, surveying his vanquished victims with a sweet smile. "You didn't expect a third party to chip

in, did you? So you are off to raid Tom Merry's camp! Ha, ha, ha! I reckon we'll take a hand in the proceedings, you chaps."

"Rather!"
"Groooogh! Hooogh!" gurgled Figgins behind his rag. He could not give vent to his feelings, which were homicidal, but his looks spoke whole volumes.

The New House fellows writhed and wriggled, but they could not get up.

Gordon Gay & Co. chuckled.
"Take their braces and their belts off, and truss 'em up!" commanded Gordon Gay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
The other Grammarians obeyed willingly. Poor Figgins & Co. were deprived of their braces and their belts, and their hands were bound securely with those articles.

"Good!" said Gordon Gay, when the prisoners were thus rendered helpless. "Now, my lads, we have to reconnoitre, as they say in the Territorials. Carboy and Monk, will you kindly go forward and spy out the land?"

"To hear is to obey, O chief!" said Frank Monk solemnly.

The two Grammarian juniors thus selected went forward, and crept stealthily through the wood. At length they came upon Tom Merry's camp, snugly ensconced within the sheltered glade.

Monty Lowther was patrolling the camp, whilst Reilly was frying rashers of bacon over the camp fire.

Monk and Carboy grinned, and returned swiftly to the others.

"Good egg," chuckled Gordon Gay, when his scouts' news was unfolded. "This will be as easy as rolling off a form to capture that giddy camp. Drag those chaps along. Not a sound more than you can help!"

"No fear!"

The St. Jim's camp was negated, and Figgins & Co. dumped down. The laces were taken out of their boots, and their puttees removed, and with these articles Gordon Gay & Co. bound their hapless victims.

Then, leaving Figgins & Co. among the bushes, they crept forward.

"Shush-sh-sh," whispered Gordon Gay, peering through the trees. "They haven't a giddy suspicion that we are here. When I say 'Go!' rush forward and grab 'em, without a sound. Go!"

The Grammarians went. They dashed into the glade and overwhelmed Monty Lowther and Reilly. Lowther gave a yell, which Gordon Gay and Wootton major quickly stifled. He went down with three Grammarians piled on top of him. Reilly was quickly bound and gagged, too.

The Grammarians carried all before them. It all happened within the space of five minutes. And then the St. Jim's Cadets' camp belonged to Gordon Gay & Co.

"It has all worked like a charm!" chuckled Gay, looking round him cheerfully. "Now, boys, fetch in the other prisoners. I expect Tom Merry & Co. will be returning soon, and we must make ready for attack."

"Hear, hear!"

Figgins & Co. were fetched from where they had been left.

"Not a bad afternoon's work, so far—eh?" grinned Gordon Gay. "Seven prisoners and a camp full of grub and equipment! I see Tom Merry has selected his camp jolly well. There is only this one entrance along the path. Well, I know of a good way of blocking up that path."

"How?"

Gordon Gay indicated his unhappy prisoners.

"We'll dump the lot in the pathway, and tie them up with their puttees!" he chuckled. "They ought to form a ripping rampart—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The heroes of Rylecombe Grammar School chuckled, and proceeded to carry out their leader's scheme. As for poor Figgins & Co. and the two School House juniors, they were utterly helpless. One by one they were carried to the camp entrance and dumped down unceremoniously upon the hard, unsympathetic ground. Piled on top of one another, they were tied together, and thus formed a solid human rampart.

The Grammarians were nothing if not thorough in their preparations.

Branches of trees were pulled off and heaped on top of the human rampart. Turfs were wrenched from the ground, and these also were added to the pile.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gordon Gay & Co. hilariously, surveying the results of their handiwork. Their next move was to pull up a large number of tufts to serve as ammunition when attacked.

"Good biz!" grinned Gordon Gay. "Now, chaps, let 'em all come! We're as safe as houses. There seems to be plenty of provisions here. Let's prepare tea, shall us?"

"Let's!" said the Grammarians, in chorus.

The hapless St. Jim's fellows forming the rampart lay there, seething with rage and chagrin.

Gordon Gay & Co. raided the treck-out for provisions, and set about making some tea.

The preparations were well under way when trampling footsteps sounded in the trees ahead, and the Grammarians were on the alert at once.

"The enemy returns!" chuckled Gordon Gay, wiping a smear of grease from his nose.

He spoke truly. Next minute Tom Merry, Manners, and Blake burst into view, followed by Herries, Digby, Talbot, Clifford Dane, and the rest of the School House cadets.

These youths stood spellbound when they saw their camp in the hands of the Grammarians.

"What—what—" stammered Tom Merry.

"Gug-good lor!" Blake managed to guggle.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Gordon Gay & Co. chuckled and reached for the turfs they had pulled in readiness.

"Good afternoon, dear boys!" Gordon Gay greeted them. "Do we surprise you? Ha, ha, ha! Sorry we can't let you in!"

"You—you—you—"

Tom Merry & Co. were astounded.

They glared wrathfully at their rivals in possession.

"Oh, you awful rotters!" gasped Tom Merry, striding forward. "You—you we got our camp!"

"Guessed right first time, old biscuit!" chuckled Gordon Gay, smiling sweetly at his old rival over the rampart. "To the victors the spoils, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cads!" roared Blake. "D'you think we're going to stand this?"

"No fear!" roared Herries.

"Come on, chaps!" cried Tom Merry, looking desperately round. "We've got to get our camp back. Charge!"

The St. Jim's cadets charged. They stormed the rampart in mass formation. Not until they had violently disturbed those ramparts did they discover that

Figgins & Co. and Monty Lowther and Reilly were underneath!

The Grammarians shouted with laughter, and then began to propel the turfs at their foes.

Whiz! Bang! Thud!

Tom Merry & Co. had to retreat as that fusillade of heavy missiles smashed in their midst. Manners staggered as a turf struck him forcibly in the ear, and Talbot fairly howled when a particularly large and earthy turf thudded on the nape of his neck, and the mould disported itself down his back. Arthur Augustus was made a popular target, and was simply deluged with turfs.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gordon Gay. "Sock it to 'em!"

"Hurrah!"

The air was thick with hurtling turfs. The Grammarians were waging war in grim earnest. Just then Kerruish and Levison arrived, with Kerr and Pratt as prisoners.

They entered energetically into the fray. For a time, the attackers made headway, but those missiles soon began to tell. Tom Merry and Blake and Talbot and D'Arcy came within a few yards of the citadel, but were beaten back.

"Stick it!" panted Blake. "Never say die! We'll do 'em yet! On, Chester, on! Yarooooogh!"

It seemed that Tom Merry & Co. would never regain their camp.

But George Kerr of the New House had devised a scheme. He held aloof from the conflict, and saw that the Grammarians held the advantage. They had everything in their favour. No sooner did Gordon Gay, the two Woottons, and Carboy get rid of their turfs, among the attackers, than Tadpole and Mont Blong dug up others, and kept the supply going.

Kerr turned and fled in the direction of St. Jim's. He reached the old school in five minutes, and dashed into the New House. Up in the privacy of his own study the canny Scot proceeded to make a startling change in his appearance. Kerr was an adept in the art of make-up, and he was the cleverest amateur actor at St. Jim's. Many and varied had been his impersonations in the past. It came as second nature to him to dress up as somebody not himself.

Kerr divested himself of his cadet's uniform, and garbed himself in a sober-looking frock-coat. He had heaps of the necessary "props" in his box. Then he applied grease-paint skillfully to his features. A false wig, eyebrows, and whiskers further altered the look of his visage. With a few finishing deft touches with the grease-paint, and a topper on his head, Kerr's transformation was complete.

He was the living image of Dr. Monk, the headmaster of Rylcombe Grammar School!

Kerr stole downstairs and out of St. Jim's by the back way, so as to evade notice. Taggles saluted him as he passed through the gates.

The St. Jim's impersonator grinned, and, once away from St. Jim's, broke into a run that persons looking at him would have thought quite undignified for a gentleman of so many years.

Kerr dashed into the wood, and did not slow up until he was near the camp.

Sounds of warfare and strife rent the air, indicating that the battle for the cadets' camp was still being waged as merrily as ever.

Kerr, putting on a pompous air, strode through the trees, and burst upon the scene of the affray.

"Boys!" he thundered, in an excellent imitation of Dr. Monk's voice. "Boys!"

Gordon Gay & Co. dropped their missiles as though they had suddenly become red-hot, and gaped before them at the imposing figure in the glade.

Tom Merry & Co., battered, bruised, and dirty, blinked round, too.

The venerable old gentleman before them looked at Gordon Gay & Co. severely.

"Boys," he thundered, "what is the meaning of this disgraceful affair? Gay, and you other boys, what are you doing here?"

"I—I—I—" stammered Gordon Gay. "I was quite taken aback. So were the others. In their excitement, they did not doubt for a moment that that was really Dr. Monk, their Head. Frank Monk quite thought that his pater was confronting them. And the Grammarians trembled.

"This is disgraceful, preposterous!" exclaimed the bogus headmaster, in a voice of fear. "Boys, I am ashamed that you should engage in such unseemly horseplay. To whom does that tent belong?"

"It belongs to—to these St. Jim's fellows, sir," gasped Gordon Gay. "If you please, sir—"

"Bless my soul! Then I presume that you boys have stolen this tent from the St. Jim's lads?"

"Ye-es, sir. It's all in the day's work, sir—I—I mean—"

Gordon Gay was frozen into silence by the look that the disguised Kerr bestowed upon him.

"Boys, I am ashamed of you—nay, disgusted! There is no excuse for you. I do not approve of these violent games—although I doubt that this is a game at all, to judge by the appearance of these unfortunate lads. Release those boys at once, Gay!"

Kerr referred to his hapless Form-fellows who had been dumped down to form a rampart, and who had suffered not a little in the affray for possession of the camp.

Gordon Gay & Co. obediently released Figgins & Co. Those youths stood up, with many groans and grunts.

The bogus Dr. Monk fixed a stern eye upon Gordon Gay & Co.

"You lads deserve the severest punishment!" he said sternly. "Kindly return to the school immediately, and go up to my study. I shall follow in a few minutes. Do not misunderstand me. You are all to return to school at once, and wait for me in my study. Go!"

Gordon Gay & Co. went, looking rather sheepish.

They tramped through the wood, and made their way back towards the Grammar School, feeling that they had not come off top dogs, after all.

Tom Merry & Co., left alone with the fraudulent Dr. Monk, surveyed each other ruefully.

"Excuse me, sir," said Tom Merry, stepping forward. "We—ahem!—do not wish Gordon Gay and the others to get into trouble on our account. It was just an ordinary rag, and—"

"Oh, cheese it, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry almost fell down in amazement as the venerable-looking gentleman before him gave utterance to that expression. The others looked amazed, wondering whether they had heard aright.

"I—I beg your pardon, sir?" said Tom Merry.

"I said cheese it, Tom Merry!" was Dr. Monk's amazing response. "You don't want me to dot you on the boko, do you?"

"Mum-my hat!" gasped Tom Merry in a faint voice.

"Bai Jove!"

The St. Jim's juniors looked at "Dr. Monk" in bewilderment. And then they received a greater shock. The white-headed old gentleman suddenly whipped off his topper, dragging his white hair with it. A mop of curly brown hair was disclosed underneath. Then he removed his false whiskers and eyebrows, and mopped his face with a handkerchief, to remove the grease-paint.

The well-known features of George Kerr of the New House were disclosed.

Tom Merry & Co. blinked.

"Mum-my only sainted Ann Maria!" ejaculated Monty Lowther.

"Kerr!" shrieked Figgins, almost incredulously.

"Gweat Scot!"

Kerr chuckled.

"Not a bad use to get you out of the scrape, was it?" he said cheerfully. "Nobody had a suspicion that anything was not as it seemed, did they? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you spoofer!"

The faces of Tom Merry & Co. lit up with joy when they realised the full beauty of the hoax. They seemed to booger to slap him on the back all at once.

Kerr gasped, and staggered away.

"Groooooogh! Give it a breeze!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "There was nothing in it, really—as easy as rolling off a form. Yow-ow! You've nearly broken my back!"

"Good old Kerr!" said Tom Merry enthusiastically. "You're worth your weight in gold, my son!"

Kerr chuckled, and they all chuckled, then set about getting the camp in order.

"Well, chaps," said Tom Merry cheerfully, when order had been restored in the camp, "I reckon this puts the stopper on scouting operations this afternoon—except for making tea. Let me see, we're all here—except Baggy!"

"Bai Jove! I wondah wheah Bagzay is, 'deah boys?" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Blake frowned.

"The fat rotter has probably deserted!" he growled. "I wonder if it was Baggy who set the Grammarians on our trail? I'll scrag him when we get him back at St. Jim's!"

"Tea's ready, you chaps!" announced Fatty Wynn, who had willingly taken charge of the culinary operations.

"Good egg!"

The St. Jim's Cadets sat round the camp-fire, and enjoyed a liberal tea, with sausages, rashers of bacon, and eggs, well cooked by Fatty Wynn, who was a past-master in that art.

Back at the Grammar School, Gordon Gay & Co. presented themselves at Dr. Monk's study, and waited there until the Head came in. Dr. Monk was amazed to see them—and his amazement grew when they blissfully informed him that he had sent them away from Rylcombe Wood, and told them to await him in the study.

Dr. Monk wondered vaguely whether he had been dreaming, or whether the boys were perpetrating an audacious practical joke. In the end, he compromised by accepting the explanation that they were mistaken, and dismissed them.

Gordon Gay & Co. departed from the Head's presence, looking rather foolish.

"My only hat!" breathed Gordon Gay, clenching his fists hard. "I believe I see through it now! We've been spoofer! Diddled, dished, and done brown! That wasn't the Head at all, but one of those awful St. Jim's wasters, rigged up!"

"Oh, rums!"

"The spoofer rotters!"

Gordon Gay smote the air wildly with his right fist.

"Never mind!" he said. "We'll get our own back on the blighters! We'll put the yokesh on 'em! Down with St. Jim's! Let's dismiss the matter from our minds, and go and have some tea."

And the Grammarians went and had some tea, but they could not dismiss the matter from their minds!

CHAPTER 5.

Baggy's Court-martial!

"I SAY, Gussy, let's have a look at your arm."

Jack Blake of the Fourth made that sudden remarkable request.

He and his chums, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, were standing together beneath the old elms in the quadrangle at St. Jim's later on that evening.

The cadets had returned to the school and divested themselves of their uniforms. Clad once more in Etons, they had set about their evening preparation. Blake & Co. had finished their work, and had come down to see if there were any signs of Baggy Trimble, who seemed to have completely disappeared.

Dusk was beginning to creep over St. Jim's. To while away the time, Blake, who was interested in cricket, was scanning the reports in the evening newspaper.

It was whilst reading the newspaper that he looked up and made that astonishing request of his noble chum.

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle, and regarded Blake in considerable surprise.

"Bai Jove! What did you say, Blake?"

"Let's have a giddy peep at your arm, Gus!" said Blake cheerfully. "The left arm, I mean—just above the elbow."

"Gwest Scott!"

Digby shook his head, and a look of sadness crept over his face.

"Puss over the old Blake!" he murmured softly. "So the worst has come at last! He's gone clean off his onion!"

"As potty as a March hare!" said Herries, tapping his forehead significantly.

"Blake glared.

"Don't rot!" he snapped. "Couldn't you understand that I was merely joking? Of course, you blithering chumps, I know jolly well that Gussy hasn't got any tattoo mark on his arm."

"Tattoo mark!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Weally, Blake, I don't quite understand—"

"What the merry dickens are you gassing about?" demanded Herries of his chief-headed leader. "Has the sun affected you, or—"

"No, you shrieking duffer!" roared Blake in desperation. "Won't you give a chap time to explain? The missing heir has a tattoo mark, in the shape of a shamrock, on his left arm—"

"Missing heir!" gasped Digby. "What missing heir? Who's missing heir? Why in thunder don't you explain, you burbling ass?"

"How can I explain, with you chuckle-headed cuckoos, interrupting?" said Blake wearily. "If you'll only hold your row, I'll tell you. Blessed, if I can understand why you chaps get so impatient. Lord Archibald Noddy, of Noddy Hall, which isn't far from here, is looking for his missing heir—see? I've just read about it in the paper. It appears that the kid was lost when a baby, and hasn't been seen or heard of since. The parents were both drowned in a sea disaster, and the kid's only relation now is Lord Archibald Noddy. Now, of course, you know that Lord Archibald is quite off his chump. He's

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been in a private asylum for years, and has only just been released. Now he is searching for his missing nephew, whom he wishes to make his sole heir. He's offering a hundred quid reward to anybody who can supply information that will lead to the recovery of the kid."

"Oh!"

Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy looked interested.

"So, you see, you duffers, I was only joking when I asked Gussy to show me his left shaft," said Blake. "That tattoo mark is the only clue to the identity of the missing heir. Rather an exciting case—what? I wonder if the kid will ever be found? Let me see, according to the paper, he must now be our own age."

"Yaas, it's vewy intewestin'!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I've heard a great deal about Lord Archibald Noddy of the Bally Bayonet, as a lot of people call him. Noddy Hall is just on the edge of Ryeounbe Wood, between Cotewidge and Wayland. Lord Noddy is supposed to be fighwfully wigh, bai Jove! Wathun nice for the missin' heir, when he is found!"

"Yes, rather."

"Wish we could discover the giddy heir!" said Blake, rubbing his nose.

"We're nearly broke, and that hundred quid would be a welcome addition to our exchequer. Hallo! Here comes Baggy!"

The plump form of Baggy Trimble rolled in at the gates of St. Jim's. He halted, and blinked in alarm as Jack Blake & Co. bore down upon him.

"So here you are at last, you fat spoofer!" said Blake, gripping Trimble's fat ear. "Now give an account of yourself!"

"You-ow! Really, Blake—Yah! Leggo!" gasped Baggy, squirming.

"Where have you been, Baggy?" demanded Blake sternly, and not relaxing his grip on Trimble's ear.

"Yooooop! I—I haven't been anywhere!" yelled Baggy. "Leggomy ear, Blake, you bully! Yah!"

"You superfatid, good-for-nothing worm!" said Blake. "For two pins, I'd wring your ear off! You deserted from the ranks this afternoon, and left us at the mercy of the enemy!"

"Yow! Really, Blake, I—I didn't desert!" wailed Baggy. "I didn't tell Gordon Gay where the camp was, and—"

"Yaroooohh! You'll injure my ear, Blake, you rotter! Leggo!"

Blake's look became grimmer.

"It's no use telling whoppers, Baggy," he said. "Did you set Gordon Gay & Co. on our track?"

"Nunno! I haven't seen Gordon Gay—I—I mean, they chased me, and—and I lost my way in the wood, and have only just found my way back—"

"Why, you fibbing little toad," roared Blake, shaking his fat Formfellow.

"Racke and Melish saw you get into the station cab, with a stranger, about half-past three! Deny that if you can!"

"I—I—I—"

"Yank him indoors!" said Blake grimly. "Tom Merry is going to hold a court-martial on him. Kim on!"

Baggy was propelled unceremoniously across the quadrangle, and bundled upstairs.

Tom Merry & Co. were in the Common-room, when Blake & Co. entered, dragging Baggy Trimble with them.

A roar of satisfaction arose from the members of the cadet corps present.

"Here's Baggy!"

"Now serag the rotten deserter!"

"Shove him on the table!" commanded Tom Merry. "Fellow cadets, the court-martial is now open! Biff him with the poker, Monty, if the prisoner

tries to get off the table. Ha, ha, ha! That's right!"

"Yaroooohh!" howled Baggy, as Monty Lowther gave his head a playful tap with the poker. "Lemme go, you rotters! I won't be court-martialled! I've done nothing!"

"Prisoner, you will kindly reserve your defence until the suitable time arrives to spout!" said Tom Merry.

"Chaps, I'm president of the court-martial; Blake will be accusing counsel. Who'll act for the defence?"

Billy of the Fourth stepped forward, with a mischievous light twinkling in his eyes.

"Faith, an' I'll defend the spalpeen—not that I think he's wurth it, but because I'm warn'-hearted!" said the Irish junior, amidst chuckles.

Baggy Trimble ceased to struggle when he found that every attempt to wriggle off the table meant a hard swipe with the poker by Monty Lowther.

"The court-martial is now open," said Tom Merry, standing on a chair.

"Now, counsel for the prosecution, trot out your case, against this fat freak, who calls himself Baggy Trimble of the Trimble Arms—"

"Really, you rotters!" roared Baggy. "Let me go! This is all rot, and—Yoooop!"

Monty Lowther had once again brought the poker into operation.

Baggy subsided, rubbing his head and moaning.

Jack Blake stood up, and pointed to Baggy.

"Mr. President, and other chaps," he began impressively, "look yonder at that overblown apology for a bladder of lard! Look at the khaki uniform he wears! He has disgraced that coat—and the trousers also! He is a common, hard-hearted, callous deserter! Sent out by his commanding officer to spy and delude, both of which arts he is a past-master in—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sent out to spy and delude the enemy," continued Blake, "this bloated little porpoise deserted from the ranks, and gave information to our sworn foes, the Grammarians!"

"Shame!"

"I didn't!" shrieked Baggy. "Look here, you rotters—"

"You deserted!" thundered Blake. "What were you doing in the village High Street at three-thirty? Why did you enter the station cab, with whom did you enter, where did you go, and why did you go? These are the things we mean to find out!"

"Hear, hear!"

Baggy Trimble blinked apprehensively round him.

"Oh, really, you know!" he said peevishly. "Suppose I did go away in the cab? I went with a pal of mine—a jolly important pal, too. It's none of your business. I was fed-up with being a cadet. It's all rot, and too much fun for my liking. Let me go, or I'll complain to Mr. Railton!"

"You'll be boiled in oil if you do, Baggy!" rapped Tom Merry. "Now, then, prisoner on the table, why did you desert?"

"I wanted to go with my pal!" said Baggy sulkily. "I suppose I'm entitled to go with him, if I—"

"You deliberately evaded military service by defaulting!" said Tom Merry sternly. "Unless you can show just cause, when you went off with your friend, this court will have to pronounce the most horrid punishment!"

"He—he wanted me to go on important business!" roared Baggy. "I'm jolly well not going to tell you what's on! Find out for yourselves, you noisy

idiot—Yow-ow-ow! Steady with that poker, Lowther, you cad!"

"That was for contempt of court, Baggy!" grinned Monty Lowther. "You mustn't call the President an idiot, even though he is one. Keep your thoughts to yourself, Baggy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry glared at Lowther, and then looked at Baggy.

"Prisoner at the bar, do you still persist in giving no reason for deterring?"

"Mind your own bizney!" said Baggy sulky.

"Be jabbers, thin, how can I defend the thief of the world?" said Reilly. "Proceed wid the verdict, your honour. Faith, an' the only thing I'll say in the prisoner's favour is that the spalpeen knew he was no good at all to the cadet corps, an' deserted—though he ought to be scragged for desertin', so he did!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then," said Tom Merry, looking round, "I propose to the court that prisoner shall be bumped hard, and then made to run the gauntlet round the room three times!"

"Good egg!"

"Bai Jove!" It passed unanimously, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Baggy Trimble was thereupon seized in many hands, and whirled off the table.

"Yaroooooooh!" he roared. "Leggo! Ow-ow-ow! I'll yell for Railton! I— Yoooooop!"

Bump! Bump! Bump!

The fat form of Baggy Trimble, propelled by many willing hands, rose and fell upon the hard, unspathefloor with a series of loud concussions. Baggy yelled.

"Yaroooop! Hands off! Oh, you rotters! Yow-ow-ow!"

Bump! Bump! Bump!

Percy Mellish dashed forward suddenly, and picked up something that had fallen from Baggy Trimble's waistcoat pocket during the course of the bumping.

"Great Scott! Look here, you fellows," he shouted. "A five-pound note has fallen from Baggy's pocket!"

The bumpers were so surprised that they let Trimble fall with a heavy jolt to the floor. They stared in great amazement at the crisp, rustling note that Mellish held in his hand.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, taking the note, and regarding it closely. "A—a giddy fiver! Where did you get this from, Baggy?"

"Groomoooh!" moaned the luckless fat youth of the Fourth, rising painfully to his feet. "Gimme that note, you rotter! It's mine!"

The juniors in the Common-room looked incredulously at Trimble.

It seemed impossible to them that this five-pound note should belong to Baggy Trimble. He had never been possessed of such wealth before. Usually, Baggy Trimble was the most impecunious fellow in all St. Jim's. He was always in a stony state, and had become notorious as a cadger and a sponger.

And Baggy claimed this five-pound note as his own!

Tom Merry & Co. refused to believe it.

"Don't tell whoppers, Baggy! Who's it is?"

"Mine, I tell you!" howled Baggy, making a grab at the note. "My pal gave it to me—the one I went with this afternoon, you know! He's jolly rich. I can tell you! Gimme my money, you rotter!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked hard at Baggy.

"Are you sure you haven't burgled this from anybody, Baggy?" demanded the captain of the Lower School. "We know you're a little thief, and don't trust you. Who is your pal—an uncle, or cousin, or something?"

"Nunno!" said Baggy. "He—he's a detective, who is trying to find the missing heir to the Noddy estates, and—I am helping him!"

"Great pip!"

"Bai Jove!"

Baggy Trimble's statement had an electrical effect upon the juniors.

"You—you're helping a detective to find the missing heir!" ejaculated Tom Merry, who had heard the story that afternoon. "My only Sunday topper! You can't expect us to swallow that!"

"No fear!" said Blake. "What detective, in his right senses, would take on Baggy as an assistant?"

"I tell you it's true!" shrieked Baggy desperately. "Look here, you rotters, if you don't give me that note, I'll complain to the Head, and—"

"Better not do that, Baggy!" said Tom Merry. "The Head would come down on you like a hundred of bricks. Blessed if I can understand your yarn a bit. Anyway, here's your note. Buzz off now, Baggy!"

Baggy Trimble grasped the five-pound note in a grubby hand, and scuttled out of the Common-room with alacrity.

He left the juniors there in a state of great wonder and surprise.

Baggy's explanation, somehow, did not seem to hold water, and the sole topic of conversation in the Common-room that evening became Baggy Trimble's sudden acquisition of wealth.

CHAPTER 6.

All on the Warpath!

"WAIN!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark on Saturday afternoon in a tone of deep disgust. Blake, Herries, and Digby, who were standing at the top of the School House steps with their noble chum, looked out dolefully upon the rain-swept quadrangle.

They were all dressed in cadet uniform, and intended spending Saturday out of doors.

"No march or manoeuvres for us!" said Blake lugubriously. "Hallo! Here are the Terrible Three!"

Tom Merry, Manners and Lowther, khaki-clad, emerged from the School House.

"What rotten luck!" said Tom Merry, glumly. "This rather puts the tin-hat on our cadet expedition this afternoon. Who says the Wayland Picturedrome?"

"Wayland Picturedrome!" said the others, as with one voice.

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry.

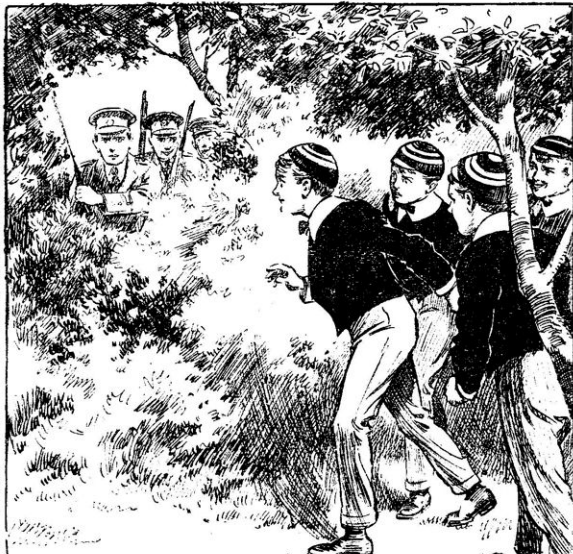
"There's a breakdown on the railway-line, so we'd better get our cycles, and take a run over to Wayland in a party. There's nothing really better to do on a wet afternoon."

"No, wathah not, deal boy!"

The School House juniors fetched their macintoshes and capes. Having donned these protective garments, they sallied forth to the cycle-shed and took out their machines.

"Er-r-r!" Blow the rain!" growled Blake, mounting with the others. "Anyway, it might give over soon."

"Hope so, at any rate!" said Manners.



Suddenly Gay paused, and gave a warning hiss. "Hold tight, you chaps!" he whispered. "Here come some of the asses. Hide among those bramble bushes—quick!" The Grammarians were not a moment too soon. Barely had they got into ambush than Figgins & Co. burst through the trees. (See page 6.)

Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. rode out of the gates of St. Jim's, and along the Rylcombe Lane.

They had passed the cross-roads, when they saw seven other schoolboys in overcoats ahead of them. Tom Merry gave a whistle of surprise.

"Grammarian rotters!"

"What can we do, deah boys? They are sure to stop us!"

Tom Merry & Co. dismounted, and thought awhile.

It was more than probable that Gordon Gay & Co. would fetch them off their bicycles, unless they could devise some means of averting tragedy. "By Jove! I've got it, chaps!" said Tom Merry. "Let's pull up some muddy clods from the ditch bank here, and pelt the beggars as we whizz past. We can catch 'em on the hop, just as they go round the bend."

"Good egg!"

Muddy clods were collected, and, each with four tucked under his arm, the St. Jim's juniors remounted and pedaled cautiously until they saw their rivals turn the bend.

Then they increased their speed, and simply whizzed round the corner.

"Look out!" shrieked Gordon Gay, as the seven cyclists swooped in their midst. "St. Jim's rotters! Pull 'em over! This is where we sing— Yaroooooh!"

Gordon Gay did not really intend to do that weird and wonderful phrase. It burst from his lips as a particularly large and muddy clod struck him with hurricane force upon his nose. Another hit the luckless Grammarian leader in the nape of his neck, and the muddy earth disported itself down his back. Gordon Gay sat down suddenly, on top of Carboy, whom Blake had bowled over, and the pair rolled ungracefully into a large muddy puddle.

Whizz! Thud! Wallop!

The Grammarians were overwhelmed with clods.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry & Co. "Now we've repaid you in your own coin, Gay, you bounder! You didn't mind pelting us with turfs last Wednesday, did you? Ha, ha, ha! Come on, chaps!"

And the heroes of St. Jim's pedaled on swiftly.

Gordon Gay & Co. picked themselves up, with sundry groans and expressions of discomfort. They were all plastered in mud from head to foot, for the lane abounded in muddy ruts and puddles. Gordon Gay in particular was smothered with mud. His hair and his clothes reeked with it. Monk, Carboy, the Woottons, and Tadpole were in a similar parlous state.

Gordon Gay ground his teeth.

"Done again!" he hissed. "Are we to stand it, chaps?"

"Never!" hooted the Grammarians in chorus.

"We shall have to go back for a change!" said Gay. "Then we'll go over to the Wayland Picturedrome—that's where I reckon those fellows are going. Anyway, we are sure to see them in Wayland, and then perhaps can get our own back!"

"Rather!"

The sorry and sore Grammarian juniors limped away, and retraced their bedraggled footsteps to the Grammar School, where they procured a wash and a change.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. were well on their journey to Wayland.

Upon reaching the market town they left their bicycles at the cycle shop in the High Street, and marched into the Picturedrome opposite.

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They were fortunate enough to obtain seats in the back row. The orchestra was playing a particularly loud selection to a thrilling film episode as they went in, so that a party of three St. Jim's fellows, seated in the row just in front, did not notice the entry of Tom Merry & Co.

"Wacke, Cwooke and Mellish!" whispered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Yes; and don't let 'em see us yet!" chuckled Tom Merry in an undertone. "We might be able to have a little harmless fun with them!"

"Ha, ha!" Rather! Aubrey Racker & Co., oblivious to the presence of Tom Merry & Co. behind them, peered forward in the darkness, evidently looking for somebody. Suddenly, Racker gripped Gerald Crooke's arm.

"There's Baggy!" he exclaimed, in a sufficiently loud tone of voice for Tom Merry & Co. behind to overhear. "The little bightler has disguised himself as a bowler hat!"

"Great pip!" ejaculated Crooke. "What's the game, I wonder? There's a swindle on somewhere!"

"Yes, rather!" said Percy Mellish, with a giggle. "How lucky I managed to get hold of that letter he received yesterday, asking him to meet Mr. X at Farmer Haynes' spinney at half-past five this afternoon! Something's in the wind!"

"Baggy Trimble is deeper than we thought!" said Racker audibly. "It's certain that he's up to some trick. He's been pretty flush with money lately, you know, and what I want to know is—where did he get it from? The detective stunt is all bush, of course!"

"But he—he's in disguise!" said Mellish excitedly. "What does that mean, Racker?"

"Shurrup! We'll find that out!" said Racker hurriedly. "We'll sneak out after him when he leaves. Hallo! Here's Tarzan of the Apes!"

The black sheep of St. Jim's were soon engrossed in the all-absorbing adventures of Tarzan of the Apes.

Tom Merry & Co., who had accidentally overheard the preceding conversation, looked meaningly at each other.

They, too, were surprised to see Baggy Trimble in the cinema—and wearing a bowler hat. They would never have recognised him, had Mellish not indicated where the fat youth of the Fourth was sitting.

"What's in the wind, I wonder?" whispered Blake, struck with the same curiosity as were Aubrey Racker & Co. "The little chump is engaged in something fishy, I'll warrant!"

"Shush-sh!" whispered Tom Merry. "Don't let those beggars in front know that we're here. Look! Those back-row seats on the other side are vacant now. Let's go over there."

"Right-ho!"

The heroes of the School House quietly drifted away in the darkness, like the Arabs, and ensconced themselves at the other side of the hall, where Racker & Co. would not see them.

And, ten minutes later, Gordon Gay & Co. entered the Picturedrome. They had come over from the Grammar School in a motor-lorry that had happened to be passing.

The Grammarians saw Tom Merry & Co. at once, although the St. Jim's fellows, who were not engrossed by the picture, did not perceive their rivals either.

Gordon Gay & Co. lay low, and did not reveal their presence. And the cinema performance proceeded, with at least eighteen schoolboys among the audience who were waiting, and watching somebody else.

CHAPTER 7.

Gordon Gay & Co.'s Little Jape!

"MY hat! We're in luck, my sons!"

Thus Gordon Gay, two and a half hours later.

The Grammarians had left the Picturedrome during the showing of the news picture, which they had previously seen. Tom Merry & Co. were still inside, and would not come out until the news picture had been shown.

The seven Grammarian juniors were walking along Wayland High Street, discussing what they should do to Tom Merry & Co. when they emerged from the cinema, when Gordon Gay, in passing the cycle shop, gave vent to those sudden remarks.

"What's the wheeze?" demanded Frank Monk.

Gordon Gay indicated the interior of the cycle-shop.

"See those bikes in there?" he chuckled. "There are seven of 'em, and they belong to our dear friends Tom Merry & Co., when they emerged from higgledy along in time to bag them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What luck!"

Gordon Gay's eyes were gleaming.

"I've got a good wheeze," he said.

"We'll collar these jiggers, and ride back on them to the Rylcombe," Tom Merry & Co., finding their bikes missing, will have to walk back. Then we'll lay an ambush for the beggars in the Rylcombe Lane, and rag them baldheaded for the defeats they have inflicted upon us these last few days. We'll get some rope, truss them up, and leave 'em in old Haynes' barn when we've finished with 'em. That barn is easy to get at from the fields at the back of Rylcombe. Now, you all know where an old terror Farmer Haynes is. When he discovers those St. Jim's fellows in his barn, he won't stop to ask how they got there. He'll give them socks—well and truly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's a ripping wheeze!"

The Grammarians, chuckling with satisfaction at the projected jape on their rivals, entered the cycle-shop. Gordon Gay was engaged in confidential talk with the assistant in charge for about five minutes. Certain coins of the realm changed hands, and when Gordon Gay emerged from the little back workshop, his cheerful visage wore an expansive smile.

"All serene!" he said. "We can take the bikes. I've made out that we've been detailed to call 'em—although, of course, I've told no lies over it. Whoppers are quite unnecessary in a case like this. Lug out the jiggers, my sons, and let us away before those St. Jim's wasters come out of the cinema."

Gay, the two Woottons, Frank Monk, Carboy, Tadpole, and Mont Blong wheeled out the borrowed bicycles into the High Street, and mounted.

"Right away, boys!" said Gordon Gay. "Thank goodness it's not raining now! Mind the wet roads, in case you skid!"

Ting-a-ling-a-ling!

The seven bicycles sped along the High Street, Gordon Gay leading the way.

Seven khaki-clad youths, emerging from the vestibule of the Picturedrome, stopped short in horror when they saw those seven cyclists pedal by, and gave vent to startled ejaculations.

"Mum-my only, sainted Aunt Jane!" gurgled Tom Merry, in a faint voice.

"Look! Grammarian rotters—on our jiggers!"

"Oh cwumbs!"

Gordon Gay & Co., looking back, smiled sweetly upon their fabbergasted rivals.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled the Gram-

marian leader. "We've done you in the eye properly this time, you bouncers! We're off to Rylcombe now. Thanks for lending us your jiggers! They're pretty rotten old crocks, but we'll manage. You'll find your macintosh capes and leggings at the cycle-shop. Toodle-oo, old scouts! Hope you enjoy your walk home. The roads are nice and muddy, and it will probably rain again soon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Come back with our bikes, you horrid rotters!" howled Blake. "We'll mop up the road with you, and—"
 "Go and eat coke!"

Gordon Gay & Co. did not accept Blake's kind invitations to come back for the process of mopping up the road. Chortling with victory, they sped onward along the High Street, and disappeared in the distance, tinkling the bicycle-bells merrily; and Tom Merry & Co., standing on the pavement, were left behind, baffled and furious.

"Well! Carry me home to die, somebody!" moaned Jack Blake. "Tommy, we shall have to trudge back in the wet again—"

"Yaas, bai Jove! And the woads are howwid, deah boys. We shall be all mudday by the time we return!"

"Never mind, boys. It can't be helped. The fortunes of war, you know," said Tom Merry, with heroic fortitude. "Wait till we do have another chance to go for those Grammarian cads. We'll annihilate them! Oh, dash the rotten luck!"

With feelings that were unutterable, Tom Merry & Co. walked off down the High Street, with nothing to look forward to but a long, muddy tramp back to St. Jim's.

A few minutes later a fat youth, wearing a bowler-hat, emerged from the cinema, and behind him came three stealthy St. Jim's juniors.

The fat youth, who was bowler was Baggy Trimble of the Fourth, and his trailers were Aubrey Racke, Gerald Crooke, and Percy Mellish.

Baggy Trimble blinked up at the church clock, blinked round him, and then commenced to walk in the direction that Tom Merry & Co. had taken.

He looked in at the railway-station, and inquired of a tired-looking porter whether the trains were running again yet.
 "Now, sir," replied the porter. "The breakdown gang hain't finished yet. New trains until late to-night."

"Oh hang!" grunted Baggy bad-temperedly. "I—I suppose I've got to walk all the way to old Haynes's spinnery. Beasty rotten, I call it! Br-r-r!"

Thus soliloquising, the fat youth of the School House rolled onward, and from the shelter of a shop doorway at the other side of the road Aubrey Racke & Co. shadowed him.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry & Co. were putting their best feet foremost, and making the best of the walk back to Rylcombe.

Within twenty minutes they were passing through the village. They stopped for a quarter of an hour at the bunshop to have some warm tea and cakes. Then they set out again for St. Jim's.

They had just turned the bend in the lane, when a chorus of loud war-cries arose upon the air. Next minute, Gordon Gay & Co. dashed from ambush among the bushes at the side of the lane, armed with ropes, and hurled themselves upon Tom Merry & Co.

"Oh crumbs! Grammar cads!" roared Tom Merry in alarm. "Look out, chaps! Yaroooooogh!"

"Sock it to 'em, boys!" sang out Gordon Gay, who had tangled some rope round Tom Merry's legs, and pulled him over with a bump. "They've come like

lambs to the giddy slaughter! Pile in, boys!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Tom Merry & Co. put up a splendid resistance, but they had been utterly unprepared for this sudden attack, and, consequently, lost the advantage from the first. Gordon Gay & Co., moreover, had the ropes to assist them, and they used these ropes to great advantage. Within the space of five minutes the St. Jim's juniors were down and out, each with a Grammarian seated astride his chest.

"Got you, my bonny boys!" grinned Gordon Gay. "You didn't expect to see little us so soon, did you? Truss them up, boys! That's the ticket!"
 "Oh, you awful rotters—"
 "Bai Jove! You feahful wuffians, I'll—"

Tom Merry & Co., despite their protests, were securely trussed up, and gagged. Then their rivals dragged them across the field, through the spinnery, to a barn on Farmer Haynes's property.

"Here we are, chaps!" said Gordon Gay, opening the door of the barn. "By Jove! The very thing! Look at that huge pile of straw in the corner! Dump these beggars on top of that!"
 "Good egg!"

Tom Merry & Co. gurgled under their gags, and their eyes rolled in quite a weird and wonderful manner. But they had to submit to the iron will of the Grammarians.

Gordon Gay & Co. dumped the luckless St. Jim's juniors amongst the straw inside the barn, and there they left them.

Chuckling with merriment, the Grammarians slammed the door of the barn and departed, leaving their forlorn rivals, trussed up, gagged, and utterly helpless.

**CHAPTER 8.
 Amazing Results!**

YERRRRUGH!
 "Groooooogh!"
 "Gug, gug, gug!"
 Those were a few of the weird and unintelligible expressions that were

uttered by the seven hapless St. Jim's juniors, among the straw.

Now that the door was shut the interior of the barn was dark and desolate. They could hear the rain pitter-pattering on the roof and on the dirty glass of the one small window the barn possessed.

All manner of unhappy thoughts passed through their brains as they lay there in bondage. When would the farmer look in? And what violence would they have to encounter when he did discover them?

Their train of thought was rudely interrupted by the sounds of footsteps approaching from outside. Tom Merry & Co. with fast-beating hearts, listened, and realised, with inward qualms, that the person outside was coming towards the barn-door.

They looked at each other in deep consternation. Was it the farmer? If it was Farmer Haynes, then they were in for a warm time.

The barn-door suddenly opened, and a curly-headed, handsome boy of about their own age entered. His clothes were old and cadragged, his face lined and worn with care and hardship. Although he looked like a waif and outcast, there was something about his face that seemed to place him in a different category.

He gazed at the bound and gagged juniors in astonishment, and then broke into an outburst of laughter. The strange boy folded his arms and regarded Tom Merry & Co. closely.

"Well, you chaps do look comical, and no mistake!" he said. "By Jove! You're all gagged! No wonder you're making those horrid noises! Half a jiffy! I'll soon release you!"

He withdrew a pocket-knife from his humble jacket, and slashed at their bonds. Tom Merry & Co. gasped with relief when at last the gags were removed from their mouths, and they were able to rise and stretch their cramped limbs.

"Groooooogh! Thanks awfully, old chap!" said Tom Merry gratefully.



Jack Blake gave a sudden cry and dashed forward, gripping Franklin's left arm. "Look here!" he cried excitedly. "Look here, you fellows! The tattoo mark above the elbow!" The juniors looked and saw a small shamrock tattooed on Franklin's arm above the elbow. (See page 12).

"Sorry we gave you such a fright. May we—ahem!—inquire who you are?"

"You may!" grinned the other cheerfully. "Tom Franklin, at your service! Jolly pleased to have run across you soldier fellows. As there any chance of my being able to join up in your regiment? I'm jolly hard up, and almost at my beam ends!"

"Tom Merry laughed.

"We're not soldiers," he said. "We belong to St. Jim's—a school, you know, not far from here—and these are our school cadets uniforms. But look here, Franklin, you seem a decent chap, and we'd like to help you all we can. Wouldn't we, you fellows?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Yaas, we shall be vewy pleased to be of assistance to you, Fwanklin, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy graciously. "Jollay hard lines, bein' on youah beam ends, bai Jove! What's the trouble?"

"Well, I'll tell you fellows, although I don't want you to think I'm pitching you a tale of woe," said Tom Franklin. "You see, I'm only a poor devil of an orphan, brought up by a bootmaker in one of the poorest parts of London, you know. Old Clancy—that's the bootmaker whose ward I am—treated me like a dog, although I have always tried my hardest to please him. He sent me to a Council school, and there—well, I worked pretty hard, and managed to scrape through a scholarship exam. I went to a decent school, and learnt French, Latin, higher mathematics, and other useful things; besides which, I got an allowance of sixty pounds a year. Clancy took all that, and did all he could to keep me down. But I stuck out, and kept my head above water."

"I left my new school when I was fifteen—that's a year ago now—and obtained a good job as a clerk to a City solicitor. All went well until Clancy got jealous of me again. You see, I wasn't his own son, and it riled him to see me get on. Well, last week twenty quid was missing from the boss' safe, and as I was the only one who stayed late at the office that night, and, moreover, I had the key, suspicion came on me. Even more so, when they discovered a five in my pocket and the rest of the money hidden underneath old Clancy's bench at home."

"Of course, it was no use my pleading innocence, although I'll swear before Heaven I did not take the money. I know who did, it was Clancy. He did it to ruin me, and, by gum, I believe he's done so. I dared not go to prison, as they threatened me. Last night I accused Clancy of robbing my boss and throwing the blame on me, and the cad beat me like a dog. He's a big, hefty fellow, and I was like a kitten in his hands. I managed to knock him down at last, though, and grabbed what clothes I could. I bunked. My clobber went to a pawnbroker's this morning for a train fare, and some grub. I reckoned on reaching Southampton and getting a job on a boat somehow. Wayland Station was as far as my ticket would take me. I couldn't afford the through fare to Southampton. Besides, there was a breakdown on the line. So I got out at Wayland this morning, and made up my mind to tramp the rest. I didn't know my way, and found myself round here. The rain came on, so I slipped into this barn for a rest and shelter."

"Tom Merry & Co. had been listening attentively to Tom Franklin's story. The boy told it frankly, and with conviction, and it went straight to the hearts of the St. Jim's juniors.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "You've

certainly had a rotten time of it, Franklin. Jolly hard lines!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "That wothah Clancy ought to be shown up."

"I wish I could show him up, but I'm afraid that's impossible," said Tom Franklin ruefully. "But I'm awfully grateful to you chaps for believing the word of an utter stranger. My story sounds a bit unreal, I know, but I'm innocent of the crime they accused me of. I'm running away, not because I'm guilty, but because I'm not guilty, and think it a crying shame that I should be put into prison and branded for something I didn't do. I made my last appeal to Clancy last night. Then I called him a dog and a coward, and he went for me. Look here at my bruises!"

He pulled up the sleeves of his jacket, and displayed his arms, wealed and bruised. Tom Merry & Co. looked at them with horror.

And then Jack Blake gave a sudden cry and dashed forward, gripping Franklin's left arm.

"Look here!" cried Blake excitedly. "Look here, you fellows! The tattoo mark above the elbow!"

"Bai Jove!"

The schoolboys looked, and saw a small shamrock tattooed on Franklin's arm above the elbow. This unexpected discovery amazed Tom Merry & Co. As for Franklin, he was amazed, also, and bewildered.

"What's the matter?" he demanded. "There's nothing unusual about that tattoo, is there? I've had it ever since I can remember. Clancy said my father put it there before he died. Clancy's an Irishman, and told me my father was Irish, too. Thus the shamrock. But I—I say, why are you fellows so astonished?"

"Astonished?" echoed Tom Merry. "Why, man, who wouldn't be astonished? It'd astonish you in a tick. Do you know what that shamrock tattoo means? It proves you to be the missing heir of Lord Archibald Noddy!"

"Eh?"

"You're the missing heir!" shrieked Tom Merry, in delight. "The fellow Lord Noddy is searching for! Haven't you seen the paper?"

Tom Franklin shook his head.

"No; I've seen no papers since Monday morning," he replied. "Please explain matters to me. You say I'm a missing heir? I'll wake up in a tick. But please explain."

Tom Merry hastened to explain matters to him. He told Tom Franklin how Lord Noddy, who had been a lunatic for many years, having just been discharged from the asylum, was seeking his nephew, whom he hadn't seen since the boy was a tiny infant, and how the only clue to the missing heir's identity was the tattoo mark of a shamrock on the left arm.

Tom Franklin's eyes opened wide with amazement. He drew a deep, deep breath when Tom Merry had finished.

"Then—then I'm the missing heir!" he exclaimed. "I—I am the stolen kid! Why, it seems too marvellous to be true! And yet it seems true to me. I have known no parents, and Clancy never told me anything about them. So it must be true! And Clancy has been concealing it from me for some purpose!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, beaming at Tom Franklin. "We're all vewy glad we have found you, deah boy! And, with plenty of money behind you, youah innocence of the theft from youah employah's office will be easy to prove!"

There was silence for a while in the barn, broken at length by the sound of

other footsteps approaching from outside the barn.

Tom Merry turned swiftly to the others.

"This must be the farmer coming!" he said. "We'd better hide under the straw, and chance our luck. For goodness' sake don't let him discover us, unless we can help it!"

"No, wathah not!"

"They made a hurried scramble to get underneath the straw, Tom Franklin accompanying them. They dived into the straw, and barely had they concealed themselves before the barn-door opened, and two persons entered.

"We can talk in here, Master Trimble, without fear of being disturbed," said a man's voice. "And, of course, it offers us shelter from the rain. I'm sorry I had to keep you waiting, but Lord Archibald was particularly troublesome again this afternoon, and I had difficulty in getting away. The duty of a private secretary to a half-demented baronet is by no means an easy task, let me assure you. And his lordship's worrying more and more every hour over his missing nephew. He has quite set his heart on finding the boy, and heaping all his wealth and bounty upon him. How is your arm, Master Trimble?"

"Oh, it's all right now, sir!" replied Baggy Trimble, who had accompanied the man into the barn. "Really, tattooing seems quite a simple matter. But I—I hope you'll be able to get it off again."

"Don't let that worry you, Master Trimble!" laughed the other. "Removing a tattoo mark is now a simple process. You have managed to keep it all secret?"

"Rather!" said Baggy, with a snigger. "The chaps at St. Jim's haven't a suspicion of what's going on. The nosy rotters wanted to know where I got the money from, and who you were, because some of them spotted me driving away in the cab with you last Wednesday. So I had to tell 'em that you were a detective, and I was helping you. But they haven't got the faintest notion of what our real game is. Oh, I'm deep, I am! He, he, he!"

Tom Merry & Co. and Franklin, lying concealed amongst the straw, listened in amazement. What was the game Baggy Trimble referred to? Why had he had his arm tattooed? Lord Archibald was mentioned, and Baggy's companion was evidently private secretary to Lord Noddy. Putting two and two together, Tom Merry shrewdly guessed at the plot the two unscrupulous schemers were engaged upon. And although the St. Jim's fellows usually objected to eavesdropping, they felt that they were quite justified in listening to all they could. So they lay low, and waited, breathing tensely.

"You have carried out my instructions excellently up till now, Master Trimble," said the other. "Now comes the most critical part of the business. This afternoon you must come with me to Noddy Hall and be introduced to his lordship as his missing nephew. Provided you keep calm and do not say much, everything will be plain-sailing, for Lord Archibald is still very simple, and will believe anything. He would also do anything you asked him to do. Now, of course, you understand that I have ends to work for, as well as years. You must tell his lordship how great a risk I ran in dragging you from the toils of cruel gipsies, and suggest that I shall be given a thousand pounds immediately. Lord Archibald will agree without asking a single awkward question. Then, Master Trimble, we will go away together, and never be

seen or heard of again. I'll see that you don't get into trouble. Besides, you will be disgraced. Are you ready now?"

"Yes, sir," replied Baggy Trimble, who, although priding himself upon his astuteness, was really a most gullible youth. "I'll get another ten quid tonight, sir, won't I?"

"Yes, Master Trimble. Then you can be finished with the affair altogether."

Tom Merry nudged his chums.

"We'll nab these two rotters all of a sudden," he whispered. "They're not looking now, so come on!"

Eight figures rose suddenly from the straw, and, like bolts from the blue, lurled themselves upon Baggy Trimble's companion. The two conspirators were taken completely by surprise, and were overwhelmed in no time.

The man fought desperately, cursing beneath his breath. But he was no match for the sturdy St. Jim's cadets.

Tom Merry & Co. utilised the rope with which Gordon & Co. had bound them, and soon had the man a prisoner. He lay on the floor of the barn, helpless, glaring balefully at the schoolboys.

Baggy Trimble was grasped in many hands and held firmly.

"Oh, I—I say, you fellows!" he stammered, blinking apprehensively at Tom Merry & Co. "Dad—don't touch me! It was all a joke! Lemme go!"

"Caught properly, my beauties!" chuckled Tom Merry. "Shut up that scurvellng Baggy. I think you're more of a fool than a rotter. As for this fellow"—Tom Merry turned to the cowering rascal on the floor—"he'll get his just deserts. A pretty little conspiracy, wasn't it, you rotter? And you wouldn't have minded landing this little fool into an awful scrape, so long as you got away with your thousand quid?"

"You hang, you!" muttered the man thickly. "You've caught me, you young uns. Hang you!"

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled.

"Well, we're jolly glad to have nipped his little game in the bud—what?" said Jack Blake, rubbing his hands.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here, you fellows, I'll explain my wheeze!" yelled Baggy Trimble. "You'll see that I'm deeper than you are. I intended leading this fellow on, and giving him away at the last minute—really, I did!"

Tom Merry gave a scornful laugh.

"Don't try to spoof us up with that garr, you fat toad!" he said. "It won't wash, Baggy. We're going to give you the biggest walloping you've ever had! You deserve worse, but for the honour of St. Jim's—"

"Ha, ha!" mocked the man on the floor. "Then, my lad, for the honour of St. Jim's you'd better let me go; for I promise you faithfully if I'm handed over to the police I'll make things pretty hot for this warty rascal. He was working hand in glove with me, and delighted in the scheme. Look at his arm! He consented to have it tattooed for the purpose."

"Bai Jove!"

Blake dragged up the left sleeve of Baggy's jacket, and on the Fourth-Former's fat arm was displayed a tattoo mark in the form of a shamrock. Tom Merry & Co. drew deep breaths.

"Oh, the little spoofer!" said Tom Merry. "He deserves to get into trouble, but—but I suppose we can't—we dare not—"

wise—well, I guess there'll be a pretty scandal connected with St. Jim's!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked at each other, and then at Tom Franklin, who laughed.

"Let the rascal go," he said. "I'll not let the matter go any further. If I can prove my claim to be Lord Noddy's nephew—"

"What!" shouted the man on the floor, starting up in his bonds.

Tom Franklin smiled, and displayed the tattoo mark on his arm.

"Do you see that?" he chuckled.

"Well, I'm told that it will prove that I am the missing heir Lord Noddy is looking for. And, of course, I mean to go ahead and prove it. As a matter of fact, I think I'd better see his lordship tonight."

The secretary bit his lip. Then he burst into a sardonic laugh.

"Well, I guess I'm clean counted out," he said. "So the real missing heir has turned up at last! Holy smoke! Boys, I reckon you can release me and let me go, and I'll sink away with my tail between my legs. I'm clean beaten!"

"That's the best thing for us to do, chaps," said Tom Merry, looking round.

"Better not have a scandal. And, anyway, here's the real heir. Take those ropes off the rotter. Oh, by the way, you'll have to get that tattoo mark off Trimble's arm, you rotter, before we let you go."

The man laughed.

"Easy!" he said. "You can do it yourself with hot water. It isn't a real tattoo mark, but an indelible ink. The powder for removing it will be found in my waistcoat pocket."

Tom Merry bent down, and found a packet of powder in the man's pocket, directed. Then the rascal was released. He stood up, smiling.

"Thanks!" he said. "Rely on me, you lads, not to give Master Trimble away. I guess rogues and vagabonds can have their codes of honour as well as other people. Well, so-long! I wish you the best of luck, Master—er—Thomas Noddy!"

With that, the specious rogue was gone. "Well, chaps, here cometh a giddy mystery," said Tom Merry, turning to his chums. "Franklin, old chap, I'm glad things have turned out as they have. We must think ourselves jolly lucky we were shoved in this barn this afternoon, and were thus able to get to the bottom of matters. As for this fat toad, don't for goodness' sake regard him as a typical specimen of a St. Jim's fellow. He's not worth calling a St. Jim's fellow, really. As luck will have it, we have to stick him. But you may rely upon this—we'll see that he gets punished for his merry scheming. It's getting late

now, and I think we'd better be going. We'll show you along to Noddy Hall."

"Thanks awfully!" said Tom Franklin gratefully. "I must say it's jolly decent of you fellows to take all this trouble over me. And—er—about that hundred quid reward my uncle was offering. If I manage to establish myself as the real heir—and I am now quite confident that I shall—I'll see that the reward goes in the right direction."

"Bai Jove, that's vippin'!"

Tom Merry & Co. left the barn with their new chum, and showed him the way to Noddy Hall. Outside the magnificent iron and bronze gates Tom Franklin took a warm farewell of them, shaking each by the hand—with, of course, the sole exception of Baggy Trimble—and promised to visit them at St. Jim's at his earliest opportunity.

The rest of the St. Jim's juniors returned to the school.

They met Racke, Crooke, and Mellish in the Rylcombe Lane. In their sleuthing of Baggy Trimble they had tumbled into a muddy ditch, and there Farmer Haynes had caught and punished them.

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled and passed on, leaving Racke & Co. to squelch along behind and give vent to their feelings in a manner that would have shocked Mr. Raiton had he heard them.

Baggy Trimble had a thorough ragging in Study No. 10 that evening. The tattoo mark was removed, and then the trickster of the Fourth paid the penalty of his misdeeds. By the time Tom Merry & Co. allowed him to crawl away Baggy realised more vividly than before that the way of the transgressor is hard.

Tom Franklin had no difficulty in proving his identity. He saw Lord Noddy that evening, and was received with open arms. Tom Merry introduced Franklin to Ferrers Locke, the detective, who sifted his case to the bottom. Clancy, the rascally boatmaker, was unmasked and given his just deserts in prison. And Tom Franklin lived at Noddy Hall with his uncle, whose weakness of mind gradually left him under the invigorating influence of his sturdy young nephew. He and Tom Merry & Co. became the best of chums, and saw quite a lot of each other. They frequently discussed and laughed over Baggy Trimble's Great Swindle.

(Another grand, long story of the chums of St. Jim's next week, entitled "FIGHTING THE FLAMES!" By Martin Clifford. Be sure you do not miss this fine story, as I can vouch for its being the best Mr. Martin Clifford has ever yet written.—EDITOR.)



The trials and triumphs of a youngster, promoted to Midshipman from the Lower Deck, in the Gunroom of a big modern battleship forms the engrossing theme of the great naval yarn;

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CARDEW'S GOOD TURN.

Dear Mr. GEM Editor.—Lord Reckness may have a bad temper, but it is very seldom he shows it. But he was decidedly nettled that day when I met him driving his car near the village.

"What's come to Ralph, Miss Joy?" he snapped out. "Here I arrange for him to accompany me to see our friends at Castle Bracy, and he leaves me this note to say he has another engagement. I can't make it out! Here, what are you doing this afternoon?" Lord Reckness' ill-humour was fading. "Give me the pleasure of your society."

He would not take any refusal, so I went with him, and a very delightful trip it was.

It was coming back that the real adventure occurred, for I was not really equipped for motoring, and my hat threatened to blow off every other minute.

"If you wouldn't mind stopping a moment," I said to Lord Reckness, "I will pop into that little shop and get some pins."

So the car drew up in a dinky little village, which must have been about fifteen miles from St. Jim's, and while I went to see if Mrs. Martin, who kept the only shop in the place, sold pins, Cardew's grandfather lit a cigar, and took a stroll.

They seemed to sell everything in that shop, and, as I edged into it, a fat woman was being served by a young, slim man in an apron. His back was turned to me.

"Tinned salmon, madam?" I heard him say. "Yes, madam. The socks are at the next counter. I'll pop round in a minute."

I turned my head quickly, and looked out of the small window, for—yes, it was so—the gentlemanly shopman was Ralph Reckness Cardew.

Then the fat lady waddled out, and Cardew had time to attend to me.

"Good afternoon," I said. "Nice weather we are having!"

"Miss Joy?" cried Cardew. "What on earth are you doin' here?"

"I've come to buy pins," I said. "Do you keep pins?"

"I'll see," said Cardew. "Just wait a minute, will you?" And he vanished through a door at the back.

I heard talking. Presently he came back with some black-headed pins.

"But what are you keeping a shop for?" I asked.

"Oh, one has to do something!" said Cardew. "Y'never know what one may be comin' to these days, and"—Cardew stopped speaking, his gaze on the

street—"see here," he went on, "I never expected this. There's my respected old grandsire outside. I don't understand how it it. He can't have heard about my little joke. If I started explaining he would shut me up. Don't say a word. I'm off till the coast's clear!"

But Cardew was too late. Lord Reckness stalked into the little shop, and his hand was on his grandson's arm.

"What's all this nonsense mean, Ralph?" he asked sternly. "Must you be always playing the fool to annoy me and bring our name into disrepute?"

Cardew drew back. "What's it all mean?" thundered the old peer angrily.



Not being really equipped for motoring, my hat threatened to blow off every other minute.

"Oh, just nothin'!" replied Cardew. "I'm merely havin' a jolly half-holiday, nothin' more, I assure you. Besides, it's just as well to be prepared, y'know!"

"Take off that absurd apron, and get back to your school, sir!" said Lord Reckness grimly. "Have you anything further to say before I put your conduct in playing this grotesque prank before Dr. Holmes?"

"No, sir, nothin' to say that I can think of at the moment," replied Cardew, slipping off his apron, and making for his bicycle.

"Don't speak to the young monkey. Miss Joy!" said Lord Reckness, as I stepped forward.

Cardew mounted, and rode off. Lord Reckness swung round, a frown on his handsome face.

And then a little glazed, curtained door opened, and out stepped Mrs. Martin—a dear old woman with silver hair. She hobbled into the shop, curtsied to Lord Reckness, and asked where "Master Cardew" was.

"He's my grandson, madam," said the old lord stiffly, "and I have sent him back to St. Jim's."

Mrs. Martin said she hoped there was nothing wrong. She said a lot of things about Master Cardew, who stood by her while she was ill, and saved her being turned out of her home, for she had rung into debt.

"I don't know where I should have been," she said, as she put her handkerchief to her eyes, "if young Master Cardew had not come to my help! He used sometimes to come in here when he was cycling, and he got all the story out of me about the cruel treatment of Mr. Edwards, the agent. If he's your grandson, sir, you must be mighty proud of him!"

Lord Reckness looked at the old lady. "I'm proud, ma'am," he said—"very proud!"

Then he marched straight out of the shop.

"Just like Ralph!" he said to me.

"Just like Ralph!"

"Just!" I murmured; for there was really nothing else to say.

Lord Reckness sat very silent in the car. He was thinking pretty deeply. But I felt I knew exactly what his thoughts were about—Cardew. He was prouder than ever of the boy, and with reason.

"I am going to eat my words," rumbled Lord Reckness, at length. "Pity I ever said 'em! Ralph's always right. He does things. He doesn't care what others say or think. He would come this way, wouldn't he?"

The old lord was getting anxious. I tried to reassure him. So far as I knew, there was no other route back to the school.

"Anyway," I said, "we shall see him at St. Jim's."

There was silence again. My companion turned to me, and asked me if I ever agogaised? I told him often.

"It goes against the grain," said Lord Reckness, "but I was all wrong. Er-r-rumph!"

Miles down the road to St. Jim's there was Cardew in the dusk under a hedge, vigorously pumping up his front tyre.

The car was level before he could mount. "Ralph," said Lord Reckness, his hand on his grandson's shoulder, "I'm proud of you! Wear an apron, wear anything you choose, do what you like—by Jove, you'll always be right! As for that poor old soul, just let me know what you spint!"

THE END.



"Ralph," said Lord Reckness, his hand gripping his grandson's arm, "I'm proud of you."



JOHN SHARPE.

The INVISIBLE HAND



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John Sharpe, the great analytical detective, is engaged by Chief Burnett, of the Secret Service, to track down the band of organised and dangerous criminals operating under the guidance of Iron Hand, a fearless, clever man of dominating personality. Marna Black, one of the band of crooks, is captured, and Burnett induces Anne Crawford, a woman agent of the Secret Service, to assume Marna's identity and get into the confidences of Iron Hand.

She is instructed to keep her real identity a secret even to Sharpe; but she often assists him and sends him information concerning the movements of the gang, and he is puzzled to know just where it comes from.

Iron Hand has a number of hiding-places in different parts of the country, which are referred to as "Nests," the most important of which is Eagle's Nest, situated on a deserted cliff. The leader's chief assistants are Potsdam and Black Flag.

John Sharpe has had many big tussles with the gang, and has foiled many of their deepest schemes. Iron Hand has robbed Colonel Bledson, the Cattle King, of a casket of valuable jewels, and he takes them to his assistant in Chinatown, Wong Li, to take care of.

After a great struggle Sharpe succeeds in getting them back, and he deposits them in a safe in Colonel Bledson's room. But Iron Hand determines to secure them again, and he sends some of his assistants to spy and pick up information concerning them. Sharpe obtains two boxes similar in appearance, and in one he places the jewels. There is a great chase across country, but Colonel Bledson succeeds in taking the box containing the jewels to his ranch. Sharpe arrives later.

(Now read on.)

At the Ranch.

The arrival of Sharpe was a subject of great interest to the three girls.

"That must be the great detective," said one of them. "We really must go over and meet him."

But this was not what Anne desired in the least. She was very reluctant to meet Sharpe, and she held back, for she knew that Sharpe would at once recognise her as one of Iron Hand's gang. She tried to think of a reasonable excuse.

"I'll meet Mr. Sharpe in the morning," she stammered out; "I'm really not equal to it now. I must rest."

The girls were immediately sympathetic towards their new-found friend, and they agreed heartily with her. One of them pointed out the side door to the house.

"You can get up to your room through that entrance," she said. "I'll bring your supper up myself, then you can be quite sure that nobody will bother you till the morning."

Anne thanked her heartily, and hurried off towards the side door. It was a great relief to her to get out of her predicament like this. The two girls hurried off towards Sharpe.

Colonel Bledson was now taking him into the house in order to introduce him to his wife. The girls followed, and after an interesting little chat, Mrs. Bledson ordered supper.

When all was quiet that night Anne Crawford, who had been waiting patiently in her room, got up from her bed, and went over to the window. She looked outside, and saw that it was quite dark. She listened an instant at the hall door, and then took up the lamp and placed it in the window.

The girl next raised the curtain, and then, picking up a magazine, she carefully shaded the lamp from the outside.

Everything was now arranged as she desired, and by removing and replacing the book in front of the lamp, she knew that she could signal a message in Morse code to anyone on the outside.

Concealed in the clump of trees which Anne had visited that afternoon were Iron Hand, Potsdam, and Black Flag, together with other members of the gang. They were all watching and waiting for the signal which they expected.

Suddenly Potsdam pointed off in the direction of the house, and everybody looked towards it with renewed interest. From the window in Anne's bed-room a light was flashing on and off as the girl operated the book in front of the lamp.

The three leaders, who were expert in reading the Morse code, noted the meaning of the signal, and they were very satisfied to receive this information from their trusted servant, Marna Black, as they believed her to be.

The household had not yet gone to bed, for there had been so much to talk about, and first one and then the other had related their experiences until now it was getting well on into the small hours of the morning.

Colonel Bledson rose from his seat, with a loud yawn that startled them all.

"Well, we'd better be getting to bed," he remarked. "There are a dozen men patrolling the house, and the jewels are safe to-night, anyhow."

John Sharpe agreed with him. Even if Iron Hand and his party were somewhere in the vicinity, he did not think that they would dare to approach the house to-night.

Mrs. Bledson and her daughters wished the party good-night, and retired, and the rancher escorted Sharpe from the room in order to show him where he was to sleep.

The detective had had a crowded day, and was quite ready for his night's rest.

After sending her message, Anne removed the lamp from the window and

placed it on the table, then she opened her window wide, and waited events. Suddenly an arrow came through the window, and fell at her feet. At the end of it a note was tied.

The girl hurried over to this, picked it up, and read it. It was written in pencil, and Anne saw the words, "We await instructions in grove near house." Then she held the paper over the lamp, and burnt it. Putting on her cloak, she quietly opened the door of her room, and walked towards the hall. Her heart beat fast as she started upon her mission.

Cactus Bill had been told off to guard this part of the house. The cowboy had received instructions not to take any chances, and, hearing a noise, he started up instantly, and got his revolver ready. Anne saw him, but there was no time for her to go back, and she walked boldly towards the cowboy.

He relaxed when he saw that it was Colonel Bledson's guest. There was a pleasant smile upon his face.

"I must have a breath of air!" she muttered, as she walked past him. "It's dreadfully close in my room!"

Cactus Bill was not a bit suspicious. How could he doubt this innocent-looking girl?

He smiled, and told her that she could step out, at the same time opening the side door for her; then he whistled, and Honeydew appeared on the scene.

Anne repeated her explanations to him, and strolled out into the night, thankful to get out of a difficult situation so easily.

It was one of those heavy, close evenings well known in the land of the West, and she did not feel in the least chilly in the night air.

Surrounding and patrolling the house were a number of cowboys, armed in readiness for any attack. But Anne carefully evaded these, and at once made her way over to the place where had previously been that afternoon with Colonel Bledson's daughters.

Behind the clump of trees, Iron Hand, Potsdam, and Black Flag were waiting. They all started and listened at the sound of footsteps, but when Anne arrived on the scene they relaxed the grip on their weapons.

What news had she brought them? They at once recognised her, and even Potsdam greeted the girl with a smile.

Iron Hand stepped forward and hurriedly consulted with the girl, and Anne took a bow and arrow and a ball of string which they had brought with them. It was a strange weapon, no doubt, but these men always laid their plans skilfully, and it would no doubt prove of great value to them.

Concealing these things under her cloak, Anne turned to go, saying as she went, "At midnight!" Then she de-

parted, and Iron Hand and Potsdam exchanged expressions with evil satisfaction.

Soon the jewels would be in their possession again, thanks to the assistance of their clever accomplice, Marna Black. Once again the hated Sharpe would be beaten!

When Anne returned to the house Honeydew and Cactus Bill were still chatting. They stepped aside to permit her to enter. The girl thanked them, at the same time remarking that she felt a good deal better for the fresh air. She did not have any reason to believe that these men suspected her.

The girl at once made her way up towards the second floor.

Mrs. Bledson, with her hair in curl-papers, was taking a last look at the wonderful jewels; then she put them back in the box, and placed them in the cabinet again.

How delighted she was with them all! She was about to return to her room again, when she decided to see how her new guest was.

Anne's heart almost stopped beating as she heard the approaching footsteps. She had only just returned to her room, and was undressing when she heard the handle of the door rattle. What could she do? For she ought to have been asleep hours ago.

Then there came a knock at the door, and, without hesitation, she quickly jumped into bed as she was.

"Come in!" she called out, still somewhat shaken by the surprise.

The next minute Mrs. Bledson entered, explaining that she wanted to make sure that her guest was quite comfortable and happy before retiring for the night.

Anne smiled her sweetest, and replied that she was, and Mrs. Bledson kissed her, and said good-night; but she was not a little surprised to find the young lady so very much awake after all this long time.

Suppose she had known the real truth about the girl?

Anne waited awhile, and then she went

into the dressing-room, and commenced to pick the lock of the cabinet with a skeleton-key which she had in her possession. After a while she was successful, and, taking out the box of jewels, she locked the cabinet up again, and departed.

Before entering her own room again she paused and listened, in order to make sure that she had not been observed. She did not want her plans to go wrong now. Then she locked the door of her room again, opened the box, and removed the jewels, placing them in one of her own drawers.

Her next action was to fill the box with some small articles from the mantelshelf. This done, Anne once more put the lamp in her window, and placed the magazine in front of it again, but before sending a message she leaned out of the window, and looked down.

It was a good thing she took this precaution, too, for Honeydew and another cowboy had just met in the course of their patrol. They paused a moment, exchanged a few words, looked round the house, and then marched off again.

This was Anne's opportunity. Tying the string to an arrow, she fitted it in the bow, and shot. It was a powerful spring, and before the whole of the string had gone out she tied one end to the bed-post.

Iron Hand and his crew, who were still waiting behind the clump of trees, became interested when the arrow fell to the ground close to them. They at once pulled in the string until it was quite tight.

Anne then tied the string to the box and attached a small metal pulley, so that the box would slide slowly down the string, which was slightly on the slant.

At that moment some faint noise roused the attention of Honeydew. He looked from side to side and had his gun ready.

It did not occur to him to look up, however, and as there was no more noise, the cowboy came to the conclusion that it must have been a false alarm.

Anne was now busily cutting away the top from a cartridge, and when she had completed her job she fixed the cartridge to the point of another arrow. Her idea was that when this landed, the impact would explode the cartridge, and she had a very good reason for this move, too.

When the box finished its journey, Iron Hand seized it with great joy.

His greedy eyes glistened with glee. Potsdam suggested that it should be opened at once, in order to see if the contents were all there, and Iron Hand took out his skeleton-key with the object of opening the lid.

At that moment, however, there was an explosion not far from the place where the group stood, and the gang, hearing the report close to them, leaped up in great alarm. Thoughts of opening the box left them. They mistook the noise for a revolver-shot, and for a moment all their desires were to get away as speedily as possible with the jewels.

With one accord they rushed towards the motor-cars, wondering where the next bullet would go.

Honeydew and others of the patrol had also heard the explosion, and they sprang to their feet at once. Other cowboys hurried to the scene, and drew close in towards the house. Inside the building there was also great excitement. Bledson and Sharpe had also heard the report.

At that moment Honeydew hurried into the house.

"They're heading off down the trail!" he announced in an agitated manner. "It was too dark to see them, but I heard the noise of their motors."

An idea had occurred to Colonel Bledson. He grabbed the telephone near him.

"They have to pass the tollgate on their way," he explained to the others. "I'll get the sheriff to stop them there."

A moment later a representative of the law answered the phone, and Bledson issued his instructions.

Mrs. Bledson was the next to arrive on the scene.

"The dressing-room and cabinet are locked," she informed them, "so the

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jewels are quite safe, thank goodness!"

Colonel Bledson turned to her. "There is no more reason for alarm," he informed his wife. "The gang have made off again, and the ranch is well guarded!"

And with this reassurance Mrs. Bledson went off once more to finish her interrupted rest.

Iron Hand knew that it would not be very long before the ranchers were on their track, and, heedless of danger, he gave the chauffeurs orders to race along at top speed. They had the jewels again, and that was the chief thing as far as he was concerned.

But the sheriff to whom Bledson had telephoned had already got busy, and with four or five deputies had made his way towards the toll-gates.

Soon the sound of the motors came to their ears, and they got their revolvers ready. They levelled them ready to halt the motors when they arrived.

The toll-gates were closed, but this was not a sufficient barrier for a man of so desperate a nature as Iron Hand.

He ordered the cars not to slacken speed, and instead of stopping at the gate they dashed through at terrific pace, causing the sheriff and his assistants to dodge back out of harm. Still the motors sped on, and although the sheriff and his men fired after them, it was quite unavailing.

The wooden gates had been smashed to firewood by the terrific impact of the speeding cars.

The next morning, the first thing Mrs. Bledson wanted to do was to inspect the jewels again. So eager was she to see them that she had had a very restless night.

She unlocked the cabinet, and then, to her great dismay, found that the box

that had been placed there the night before was missing. She was amazed.

"Oh, horrors!" she muttered loudly; and then, screaming loudly, she rushed from the room.

Sharpe and Bledson were already downstairs, and they were astonished when Mrs. Bledson rushed in wildly explaining about the loss of the jewels. The men looked at each other, speechless.

Alarmed by the good lady's screams, Cactus Bill and Honeydew also entered the house.

The detective at once took charge of the situation. He sent for the remainder of the men who had been on patrol during the night, and all gave their word of honour that no one had entered the house. Nor had they seen any suspicious characters about—and, in fact, they did not know that anything was wrong until they had heard the report.

"I can speak for everybody inside the house," Colonel Bledson remarked.

Sharpe glanced round at the colonel's two daughters, who had just come in.

"And is there nobody else in the house?" he inquired.

The Cattle King replied that there was not.

"You forget Miss Roberts, father," suggested the eldest of his two daughters.

There was silence for a moment. Then the colonel suddenly remembered.

"Ah, yes!" he muttered. But he quickly dismissed the slight suspicion which blackened his mind. There was no reason why that poor girl should be dragged into this trouble.

But Sharpe was not so sympathetic. His experience had taught him that you could never be too sure about anyone, and he demanded that the girl be sent for. One of Bledson's daughters left the room to get her.

At this point Honeydew and Cactus Bill eyed one another uneasily. They suddenly remembered the incident of Miss Roberts going out for a breath of fresh air, and it seemed a very peculiar coincidence to them now.

Cactus Bill felt that he was in honour bound to inform them of the affair, and he explained the matter to Sharpe.

Bledson was at once prepared to defend her, explaining to the detective that the girl in question was merely a poor working-girl whom he befriended on the train. And at that moment Anne made her appearance, escorted by Miss Bledson.

It was a dramatic moment. Anne casually stepped over towards Sharpe, who rose from his seat and looked directly at her.

He at once felt that there was something familiar about her, although he could not at once place her altogether. Then his thoughts travelled back.

"You're one of Iron Hand's gang," he said quietly but firmly.

Anne looked around the room. How could she get out of this difficult situation without giving the game away?

Colonel Bledson was somewhat annoyed, and he was about to protest at this treatment of his guest, but she stopped him.

She smiled faintly, and nodded in answer to Sharpe's question. The girl did not like the position in which she found herself.

The detective demanded to know where the box was.

With a smile on her face, Anne replied quietly:

"The box is now in the hands of Iron Hand, who is on his way to San Francisco."

(Get next week's "Gem" to read the continuation of this amazing story!)

EDITORIAL.

My Dear Chums,—

Next week I hope to be able to announce the date upon which the "Gem's" magnificent new serial will commence. This story, which has the appealing title of "What Have You Against Me?" is, without a doubt, one of the most human yarns which have ever been written, and there is not the slightest doubt that every reader of the "Gem" will revel in it. "What Have

You Against me?" will go straight to the heart of every boy and girl in the country, and it will undoubtedly create a big impression. I hope you will all enjoy our story this week dealing with the popular Baggy. It is some time since this character played the chief role, and I think you are certain to enjoy the yarn. Our story next week is entitled: "Fighting the Flames!" and this is an exceptional one in every way as its name

implies. It is bang full of exciting and amusing situations. Don't miss it, whatever you do, and get your friends to read it! There is still no news at St. Jim's regarding Ernest Levison. Where can he be? Surely the mystery of his disappearance will be cleared up shortly! One word more. Don't fail to read the great naval story in next week's issue of the "Boys' Herald"! Get a copy of the paper at once! YOUR EDITOR.

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ANSWERS TO READERS.

"JALINE TOM" (Gravesend).—Here are the answers to your questions: No. 1. Not yet. But the gap isn't nearly so big as it is used to be. No. 2. The chief characters at St. Jim's are Tom Merry, Cardew, and Gussy. No. 3. The titles of the GEM Nos. 217 and 219 are "Tom Merry's Masquerade" and "Tom Merry's Peril." No. 4. No; Mr. Doods is no longer the curate at Huckleberry Heath. No. 5. Your question was quite correct. No. 6. Miss Priscilla Fawcett keeps Tom Merry at St. Jim's. Most readers like Cardew, and the serial is quite popular. You also add that you never see much of Miss Priscilla Fawcett nowadays. Well, as you know, since you have written to me, her portrait has appeared, and a story dealing with her.

WILLIAM WATERS (Clapham).—Yes, the GEM is getting better and better each week. Nearly every reader who writes to me says the GEM is by far the best. Tom Merry is 5ft. 5½ins. tall. Harry Manners' camera is a presentation one. It cost £10. He uses Roll film. Manners firmly agrees with you that photography is one of the most fascinating hobbies going. I will endeavour to hurry his portrait along as soon as possible, and, perhaps, a story dealing with him.

RICHARD REDFERN (Heathfields, Shirley).—I am very glad to hear your favourite is the GEM. Now for your questions: No. 1. The water which supplies St. Jim's comes from the Rylcombe

Pumping Station. It is a large water-works a short distance from the village, and on the banks of the river. No. 2. Dr. Holmes' house is not attached to the school buildings. No. 3. Taggie's lodge is on the left as you enter the main gates at St. Jim's. No. 4. Yes; the boys of St. Jim's each have a washstand by the side of their bed. No. 5. Yes; the school supplies them with soap, towels, and tea-cloths. They have to go to the store-room every Monday morning and change them. Eight months out of the year the school supplies the boys with coal. They have to buy their own matches. No. 6. The fees at St. Jim's per annum are £400. No. 7. The grocer at Rylcombe is Mr. Sands. The confectioner, Mr. Bunn. I don't know the others at present. If Mr. Martin Clifford refers to the shops in his yards, he will mention the names then. No. 8. The maids make the beds.

No. 9. The boys keep their best suits in the dormitory. By the side of each bed is a cubicle, and it contains a locker and room for a large trunk. Boys' sporting attire is usually kept in the studies. No. 10. Dr. Taylor and Dr. Short are the two nearest to the school. Now, Dick, you inquisitive boy, I think you ought to feel pleased with this lot.

FRANK R. (Gladstone Avenue, Ontario)—Some of the rotters at St. Jim's are: Selby, Ratcliff, Knox, Cutts, Gilmore, St. Leger, and Prge. P. Backe, Crooke, Scrope, Clampe, Chowle, Mellish, Trimble, Gore, and Piggott. St. Jim's has about 200 pupils.

"Vic" (Walthamstow).—Lefevre is slightly French, and, as you know, is quite decent. The St. Jim's first-eleven goalie? Sometimes Langton, sometimes Baker. Manners and Lowther both arrived at St. Jim's in No. 11 of the GEM with Tom Merry. They had previously been at Clavering.

RICHARD R. (Heathfield).—I am going to publish plans of the interior of St. Jim's as soon as space allows. You have got my name all wrong. There is no such person connected with these papers. I do not edit the paper you mention, and neither is it one of the Companion Papers.

BILLY BEAR (Repton), is very interested to know whether the Special Cardew Number sold better than the common or garden copies which appear in their own fault that they found it sold in the shops, and I have had many hundreds of letters from readers who were unable to obtain it, and asking me to forward them a copy. It was really their own fault that they found it sold out. Anyone would have known there would be an unprecedented demand for a Special Number. Now, take my advice, and when the Special Levison Number is announced don't forget to order your copy well in advance. In fact, give your newsgiant a standing order for the GEM every week!

CHAT ABOUT ST. JIM'S AND GREYFRIARS.

I am told that Tom Merry & Co. have found a staunch friend in Tom Franklin, the late missing heir of Lord Noddy, who they found in the barn. Poor fellow, by the heels on his body, he must have suffered a great deal in the hands of the rascally Clancy! I wonder how many of my readers have ever experienced any of these new "wheels" of fortune?

Readers are requested to keep a sharp look-out for the grand new serial which is shortly to commence in your favourite paper, the GEM LIBRARY. Your Editor has been to no end of trouble to procure for you this rattling fine story, and my only hope is that his trouble will be justly rewarded by an abundance of new readers. I feel sure that when his new serial is published you will all say that the GEM LIBRARY easily tops the list of boys' school story papers. Don't forget, now is your opportunity of increasing your circle of friends by introducing to them your favourite paper—something that is really worth reading!

I regret to state that I cannot furnish any news at present regarding the missing Ernest Levison. Scouts have been scouring the districts in all parts, but up to the present their search has proved unavailing. None of his clothing can account for his sudden disappearance. Bagley Trimble seems to have been the GEM LIBRARY.—No. 694.

last person to have conversed with him, but as he had no grievances whatsoever with Levison, we can rest assured he was not "chewed" up by the fat porpoise.

"Have you a Bradshaw's Railway Guide?" seems to be everybody's one great cry nowadays. Why is it? Well, let me inform you. The "Boys' Herald" is introducing this week a grand new competition. It consists of eight picture-puzzles of six well-known railway-stations. All you have to do is to solve the six pictures. Should you name these correctly you will be the lucky recipient of a big money prize, or perhaps a magnificent Tuck Hammer filled with delicious tuck. You have all heard of these delicious Tuck Hammers and their contents before, so try now and win one. These prizes are within reach of all.

Bagley Trimble, Nature's own Tuck Hammer, has decided to enter for the above competition, so if this great fat clam has a chance, I'm sure almost everybody has!

In the event of ties, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy has kindly condescended to make a selection of the neatest. Good old Gussy!

According to latest information, Cyril Chowle has made a statement to the effect that he intends refraining from

indulging in the fragrant weed. I heartily congratulate the man who throws over such a practice! Good luck to you, Chowle! I hardily credited a worn ever turning, but facts are facts, aren't they?

The juniors of Greyfriars are ering shame at the scarcity of the coal allowance. Well, their only remedy is, burn Bunter!

Ephraim Taggies emphatically denies that he has ever received the support of anyone. I beg to differ, as I know for an absolute fact that he has received the "support" of Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell having supported him—with both arms!

"Jessie S." (N.W. 5), writes: "I want to know about that Ernest Levison story. Considering what a very interesting character Levison is, I think it's a shame he should be in the background. There have been Vernon-Smith stories for some weeks past in the 'Boys' Herald.' We only hear of poor old Levison in the GEM, and not very often then."

My enthusiastic Levison correspondent will be glad to know that an extra special Levison number of the GEM will be coming along soon.

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padded chair from an old case—
To make suitcases and perambula-
tor hood—To stuff animals—To
dress furs—To stuff and mount
birds—To do wood inlaying—To
cure a smoky chimney—To pre-
pare working drawings—To reno-
vate a grandfather's clock—To
make garden furniture, arbours,
arches, seats, summer-houses,
tables, etc.—To use metal-drilling
tools—To renovate mirrors—To
upholster furniture in leather

cloth—To mend broken china—To
do fretwork—To build a boat—To
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poultry-houses—To do gold-leafing
and silver-plating—To clean and
mend watches and clocks—To dis-
temper ceilings and walls—To
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pictures—All about curtain fit-
tings—To make metal castings—
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paper, fireproof paper, etc.—To
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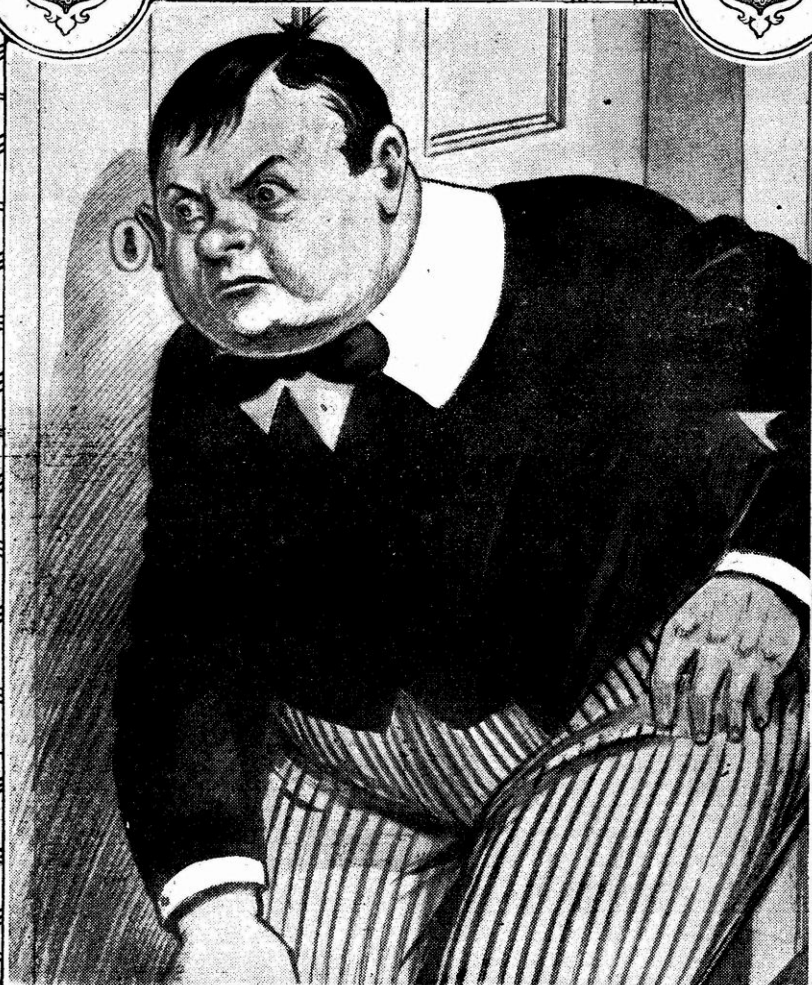
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