

THE BEST SCHOOL STORIES!

The

GEM 1 ¹/₂^D

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LIBRARY

20 Pages.

Every Wednesday.

August 27th, 1921.



BAGGY TRIMBLE IN HOT WATER!

(An incident from the grand long complete story of the Boys of St. Jim's.)

EDITORIAL.

My Dear Chums,—
Each new week brings its new features, and I am writing before you this time something extra special in the way of St. Jim's yarn. There is always something out-and-out fresh to say about St. Jim's. In the course of the chats I have with Mr. Martin Clifford, he and I discover subjects which have never as yet been touched on.

My experiment with a school serial is justifying itself. "What Have You Against Me?" is proving a real hit.

But I was not really going to touch on these matters this week, for space is terribly limited. What I did want to point out was that the "St. Jim's News" is going to win. In a sense, it is a new paper. The supplement is genuinely "newsy," and the novel lines on which it is run have stimulated interest far and wide.

Come to think of it, we have never yet supplied all the real and interesting news of St. Jim's. In the old days of "T. M.'s Weekly," there was not room. But this

time I am making a real attempt to furnish the titbits of intelligence which fellows like to hear. St. Jim's is a grand old college, but its history actually dates much farther back than the fifteenth century when the present buildings were erected. The fifteenth century was the century of Henry the Fifth and Agincourt, and his son, who had such a long reign. Not that the "St. Jim's News" is going to be stuffed with tedious history. It gives topical news, so look out for the very latest. YOUR EDITOR.

ANSWERS TO READERS.

"A LOYAL READER" (St. Martins, Guernsey).—Herries fought his hardest in the great fight with D'Arcy, and he can't do more than that. He was fairly in the nick of it. I do not agree with what you say about girls' stories. One would hardly care to

read of girls punching one another's noses in the George Alfred Grundy fashion, for instance, or tarring each other's faces like Figgins and Blake would do. Kildare is the best boxer in the school. Langton, Darrell the Baker, Kildare, and Lefevre are the best senior cricketers. Tom Merry, Levison, Noble, and Wynn are the best juniors. Mr. Ratcliff is well over fifty-four years of age. Herries and D'Arcy minor have dogs named Puss and Pongo. Many other boys have pets.

ALFRED THOMPSON (Keswick).—My advice for you, old chap, is to place a regular order to the "Gem" and the "Boys'

Herald." By now you will have seen the art portrait of Ernest Levison. For your questions—No. 1: The next Special Number is a pos-up between Tom Merry, Talbot, and D'Arcy. No. 2: I can give no definite promise concerning Jim Dawlish at the present moment. No. 3: Tom Merry is the best boxer. Marie Rivers has dark hair. Her height is 5ft. 6in., and her age sixteen years but not months. Garrow is fairly good at footer, but not nearly energetic enough to be given a position in the team. I should like you to write to me again, my chum. Tell me what you think of the "St. Jim's News," and the current "Gem" stories.

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Trimble the Truthful!



A Grand, Long Story of the
of Baggy Trimble's Resolve to

By Martin

Chums of St. Jim's, telling
Tell Nothing but the Truth.

Clifford.

CHAPTER I.

"Evil Communications—"

"GET it hot, Baggy?"
It was Percy Mellish, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, who asked that question.

His stable companion, Baggy Trimble, had just come into the study, which they shared, with his grubby hands pressed under his armpits.

In Form that afternoon Mr. Lathom had had occasion to put some queries to Baggy. And Baggy had answered them, but not to the satisfaction of his Form-master.

In fact, Mr. Lathom, usually a very mildly spoken little man, had gone so far as to call Baggy "an unmitigated young liar," and had invited the said Baggy to attend him in his study after classes.

If Baggy could have got out of accepting that invitation, he would have done so. But there was no getting out of it.

He had gone trembling. He returned lamenting. Mr. Lathom had laid it on with almost unexampled vigour.

"Don't speak to me, Mellish!" snapped Baggy.
"Eh? Why shouldn't I speak to you? Who are you that you shouldn't be spoken to, I'd like to know? You're not the first fellow who's had a dose of cane, and you won't be the last, not by long chalks!"

"I must ask you not to address me, Mellish!" said Baggy, puffing out his fat cheeks in an attempt to look dignified and impressive. "Perhaps you had better understand, however, why I decline to have anything more to do with you."

Scrope looked in at this moment. It was not often that Scrope favoured the joint study of Trimble and Mellish with a visit. But Mellish had had a remittance that morning, and was in consequence an object of interest to the gambling set, of which Scrope was a member and Mellish a hanger-on.

"Here's a lark, Scrope!" chortled Mellish. "Baggy's going to cut me right off! He won't speak to me, any more."

"Well, I'm dashed if you'll lose much," replied Scrope. "But what's it all about?"

"He was just going to tell me. Get on with it, Baggy! Are you going to sack Scrope from your list of pals, too?"

"On the whole, I think I shall," answered Baggy.
"You can't, you fat worm!" snorted Scrope. "I was never a pal of yours."

"I have associated with you," said Baggy solemnly. "You are one of those who have combined to corrupt my mind."

"My hat! Just hear him!" gasped Scrope. "His mind! Corrupt Baggy's mind! Why, you might as well use black-lead to a nigger as try to do that!"
"You and Mellish—Racke and Crooke—Clampe and Chowle—you are all more or less guilty," went on Baggy. "At my other school I was regarded by everyone as the most truthful fellow there."

"What a gang the others must have been—what a horrid gang!" murmured Scrope.

"It positively pained me even to think of telling a lie. I—"

"Well, you've got over that all right," put in Mellish. "If there's any pain for you in telling 'em now it comes from outside, not from in. Old Lathom's just been giving the fat sweep to you for lying to him this afternoon, Scrope."

"I see," Scrope said. "Fire away, Baggy! You're quite interestin'—for once."

Baggy gave him a glance of cold disdain.
Baggy's mind was made up. Mr. Lathom had made it up

for him. The Form-master had treated Baggy to a long lecture on the enormity of lying.

Perhaps the lecture really had impressed Baggy to some extent. But the vigour with which Mr. Lathom had used the cane had impressed him still more.

"In future," said the podgy fellow, "I shall tell the truth—"

"The whole truth, and nothing but the truth!" glibbed Mellish.

"Yes, that," said Baggy stoutly. "You are a sneaking rotter, Mellish!"

"There's a beginnin' for you!" chortled Scrope. "Go on, Baggy! That may be true, but it's not the whole truth. There's lots more I could say about Mellish, an' I don't know him half as well as you do!"

"Look here, Scrope—"
Mellish spoke angrily. But Baggy shouted him down.

"And you're a gambling rotter, Scrope!" he yelled. "You're not so big a sneak as Mellish, but I'm not at all sure that you're any better than he is. You'd skin anybody. You—"

"That's enough!" roared Scrope.
Someone opened the door, and the faces of Ralph Reckness Cardew and Ernest Levison, staunch chums of the Fourth, appeared.

"What's the dashed row in here?" drawled Cardew. "Nobody gettin' hurt I do hope an' trust?"

"It's Baggy, telling the truth," answered Mellish, winking.

"Then I'm sure it's hurting Baggy," said Levison. "Not that I mind."

"I'm going to tell the truth in future," announced Baggy. "It's bad to make a sudden change in your habits in such hot weather as this," said Cardew, shaking his head.

"Get to it gradually, Baggy. Tell the truth once a term at first—then once a month—after that, once a week."

"He's cutting me off. I'm too ticked for him to associate with," Mellish chortled.

"Well, that sounds like sense on Baggy's part, anyway," Levison said bluntly.

"That's just what I say!" struck in Baggy eagerly. "I'm not really a worse liar than anybody else."

"If Baggy says he's no worse liar than anyone else, he's the biggest liar I ever clapped eyes on, that's all. Why, everyone knows that he never does tell the truth except by accident!" said Levison.

"But if I am it's because of the rotters I've been mixed up with!" howled Baggy. "Look at Mellish! Look—"

"One at a time!" Cardew interrupted him. "I'm lookin' at Mellish. So is Ernest. So is Scrope. How long would you like us to go on, Baggy? A little of Mellish goes a long way, y'know."

"Look here, Cardew, you're not coming into my study to—"

"I'm not. No farther than the door, Mellish. Ernest an' I are rather particular about who we go, aren't we, Ernest?"

"Well, I don't care. I'm going to tell the truth in future, and I don't care who knows it," said Baggy boldly.

"Comin', Mellish?" asked Scrope.

"Where?" returned Mellish.
Scrope jerked a thumb more or less vaguely in the direction of the Shell corridor, where Racke and Crooke, in their study, were expecting the pleasure of his company and Mellish's to a little game of banker.

"Yes, I'll come. It's a bit thick when chaps like Cardew shove themselves into another chap's study just to make personal remarks," replied Mellish. And Mellish departed.

"I shouldn't mind coming in with you chaps," said Baggy thoughtfully. "Of course, if I do come, I shall expect Cardew to be more careful in his conversation. Half the things he says, if they ain't exactly lies—"

"If you come I'll be ever so careful, Baggibus," said Cardew warmly.

"I do wish you wouldn't talk such rot, Cardew! Am I coming, or am I not?" said Baggy plaintively.

"Is he comin' or is he not, Ernest?" inquired Cardew sweetly.

"He's not!" snapped Levison.

Baggy breathed a heavy sigh. It was not always easy to make out precisely what Ralph Rockness Cardew meant. But when Levison major spoke in those tones of decision there was not the least difficulty in gathering his meaning.

"No; it wouldn't do, after all, Baggy," said Cardew wistfully. "You might give us the mumps, y'know. There's no sayin' what the horrible effect of a complete change of habits may be upon you. You may have to go over the road, as Kerruish has just gone."

"Has Kerruish got 'em?" asked Baggy, much interested.

CHAPTER 2.

Baggy Goes into Quarantine.

A FEW days earlier several fellows in the New House had been found to be suffering from mumps.

The disease is an unpleasant one, but not dangerous. When it gets fairly hold of a school it has a way of breaking down the ordinary routine to an extent that no master appreciates; and the St. Jim's authorities were doing all they knew how to prevent its spreading there.

All the earlier cases had been in the New House; and when, a little after their discovery, a fog in the School House complained that his throat was painful he was at once sent across to the New House, the notion evidently being to keep the larger House free from infection, if possible.

Now there were a dozen cases in the sanatorium, of which only two were from the School House, and something like a dozen more fellows had been sent across on suspicion of sickening for the disease.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was one of them. Arthur Augustus prided himself on his public spirit. When his throat began to ache he told Mr. Raitton at once, and was sent across.

When next morning Arthur Augustus had found that his throat no longer ached he wanted to go back. But it was too late. As Kerr told him, his fate was sealed. Mumps or no mumps, he stayed in quarantine till the school was clear of infection.

The New House fellows were not coming across to classes. They were being taken, in a curious jumble of Forms, by a couple of masters in the dining-hall of their own House. And, of course, any School House fellow who joined them shared in this arrangement. The Shell dormitory of the New House had been given up to those who might be sickening; as soon as the symptoms were beyond mistake their victims went to sanny.

It was possibly a bit rough on the New House fellows, who—like Figgins & Co., and many more—felt perfectly well that they should be kept out of the playing-fields and restricted to that part of the quad nearest their own domicile, that they might not go to the tuckshop or outside the gates. But the device was worth the trial to which Dr. Holmes, Mr. Raitton, and Mr. Ratcliff, in council, had determined to give it. Mr. Ratcliff, by the way, was not an enthusiast for the scheme, but he had not found it possible to kick against it.

"Kerruish has them all right," Cardew answered Baggy. "He's hardly the fellow to raise a false alarm, like my noble kinsman of the great House of D'Arcy. I should say that it would be prudent to commit Kerruish to sanny at once; but I understand he's not goin' yet."

"Do you think I look as if I was sickening for mumps, Cardew?" fathered Baggy, imitating Levison.

"Stand where the light's full on your face, Baggibus. So! That's right. I might be able to tell better if you had washed lately. Dirt's quite a disguise, y'know. Well, upon the whole—"

"Look here, Ralph, it's not fair—not even with a sweep like Baggy!" protested Levison. "He's a beastly coward, and it's a well-known fact that you're much likelier to develop a disease if you funk it."

"I wish you'd stop interrupting, Levison!" said Baggy irritably. "I'm talking to Cardew, not to you!"

"Right-ho!" replied Levison. "I wash my hands of it all. Your bleed be upon your own head!"

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And Levison walked off.

For a moment Cardew hesitated. But his waywardness triumphed. Possibly he might have spared Baggy had Levison stayed, but his chum's departure stirred him to mischief.

"Do you really think I've got the mumps, Cardew?" asked Baggy anxiously.

"Well, I'm not a doctor, y'know, Baggibus. It's hardly for me to say. You might have almost anything, from the look of you. It's not a good thing to cut out washin' this hot weather. Closes the pores of the skin, an' all that, y'know."

"But I do wash, Cardew!"

Cardew shook his head sadly.

"I tell you I wash as often as any other chap!"

"Cold tub every mornin'? Pleased to hear it, I'm sure. It's the natural muddiness of your complexion, then. Shows how fellows get misjudged."

"Well, I'm not saying that I have a cold bath every morning," replied Baggy, remembering that he had made up his mind to tell the truth. "Cold baths don't suit my complexion, Ernest. 'Taint nice to feel the beastly ice-cold water tricklin' down your spine, and to sit down in it is awful—awful!"

"I've never noticed the awfulness of it."

"You were brought up to it, I dare say. I wasn't, through us not having a bath-room when—I mean, through my being so delicate as a child."

"Baggibus!"

Cardew held up a warning finger.

"Well, then, it's true, that we hadn't a bath-room. That was before we moved to Trimble Hall."

"Baggibus!"

The podgy fellow sighed. It was hard to give up Trimble Hall, even in the interests of truth.

"Well, we have a bath-room at home now—that's true, anyway," he said hastily. "But it was mumps we were talking about. It begins with a pain in the throat, doesn't it?"

"Sometimes."

"I had one at brekker. I nearly choked."

Cardew nodded. He had witnessed that unseemly exhibition, but had believed it due to the swallowing whole, bones and all, of a particularly large and tough fish, advertised by the label on the tin as a sardine. Someone had passed someone else a pot of jam, and Baggy had tried to get the alleged sardine out of the way in time to levy toll on the jampot as it went back.

"Does it hurt now?"

Baggy put up a dirty hand to his throat.

"A bit, when I think of it."

"Do you ever feel a horrid gnawing inside you?"

"Often!" replied Baggy, with fervour.

"H'm! Sounds bad, I must say. Have you heard about the jellies an' things that Miss Marjoram is sendin' in for the mummy ones, Baggibus?" asked Cardew.

"No. Is she?" returned Baggy eagerly.

"You're a special favourite of hers, aren't you?"

"I've never spoken to her," replied Baggy sadly. "She isn't a bit interested in the fellows in this House. But I've heard the chaps that have gone to tea there say that she gives them no end of scrumptious spreads. They say she lectures them about being good little boys, and respecting their noble housemaster, and all that. But I shouldn't care if there was plenty of grub. As long as I've got something to be getting on with in the grub line anyone may talk themselves silly for all I care; I don't listen to 'em."

Miss Marjoram was a wealthy old lady who had lately taken a furnished house at Rylcombe. She was an aunt or a cousin or something of Mr. Horace Ratcliff, and he had expectations from her.

She wanted to be kind to the boys in his House. Mr. Ratcliff did not approve. He had no belief whatever in kindness to boys. He was certain that it was wasted. He was greedy, too, and he felt very much as though every shilling she spent in entertaining his boys came out of his pocket in the long run.

But he dared not try to check her. She was used to having her own way.

Half the juniors in the New House had already been to tea with Miss Marjoram. None of them wanted to go again. Even the spreads she gave could not atone for the boredom she inflicted.

"Look here, Baggibus, if you feel as though you might be sickenin' for the mumps it's your duty to go over there, y'know. An' you'd get a share in the old girl's special treats for the mumpers, an' very likely before you came back here you'd be asked to tea at Vine House. You never know your luck! Think of us, too."

"I don't see what difference it makes to any of you whether I go or not," said Baggy suspiciously.

"But it does! Really, it does! We—or should be so pleased to think of you wallowin' in the trough of luxury, so to speak. Besides, it would give you no end of a good chance to cut loose from Mellish. Why, who knows, you might stay on there altogether!"

Baggy did not take much notice of all that. His mind was altogether too slow and dull to follow the rapid workings of Cardew's whimsical brain. If Miss Marjoram was sending in dainties for those whom Cardew called the "mumpers"—why, it seemed to Baggy a mistake to lose a chance to enrol himself among the mumpers.

"I—I do feel painful inside, and I'm sure my throat's getting worse," he said. "Do you think I'd better go and speak to Railton about it, Cardew?"

"I should if I were you," answered Cardew, wishing Levison had stayed there to be winked at. For Cardew did not mean that he would have gone to the housemaster if he had felt as Baggy felt.

The podgy Fourth-Former waddled away to seek Mr. Railton, and Cardew strolled off. If Baggy did not like the New House when he got there, and if he did not have mumps after all, well, even then he would be no worse off than a score of good fellows like Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co., who had to put up with the New House and risk mumps.

CHAPTER 3. An Unwelcome Visitor.

"PLEASE, sir—" "What is it, Trimble? Bless my soul these constant interruptions grow almost unbearable!"

Baggy had tapped at the door of Mr. Ratcliff's study, and a sour voice had called to him to come in. After that, it seemed to Baggy unkind of Mr. Ratcliff to scowl at him.

"Please, sir, I've come," said the podgy fellow plaintively. "So I see. But why on earth have you come?" snapped the master of the New House.

"Please, sir, mumps, sir." "Oh, you have mumps! Then you can at once go to the sanatorium. You may tell Nurse Rivers that I sent you."

"But I haven't got them, sir; at least—" "Why did you say you had, then?"

"I didn't sir. I would not tell a lie. I don't know whether I have mumps or not, but I have had a pain in my throat and I feel very empty."

"You feel very empty? Good gracious me, Trimble, what has that to do with it?"

"It's a sympathy—I mean a symptom, sir, isn't it?" whined Baggy.

"Not that I ever heard of. Did Mr. Railton tell you to come over here?"

"Yes, sir; of course, sir. I hope I know better than to—"

"That's enough, Trimble! Did you inform Mr. Railton that you felt empty, and believed that you had mumps because of that feeling?"

Something in Mr. Ratcliff's dry tone gave Baggy a suspicion that, for all Cardew might say, emptiness of the interior apparatus was not a genuine symptom of mumps. It would have been easy to say that he had told Mr. Railton, and it was most unlikely that Mr. Ratcliff was an authority on the subject of mumps.

But Baggy resisted the temptation. His new-found virtue stood this test.

"No, sir. I didn't think of it," he answered. "When I said that I thought I had mumps coming he told me at once to come over here. It wasn't any good saying more after that, was it, sir?"

"Ugh!" grunted Mr. Ratcliff.

This business was developing beyond anything he had expected. It was all very well to turn the New House into a kind of quarantine station; but the housemaster, who had a grasping nature, would very much have liked to see some profit to himself in the transaction, and at present he could see none whatever.

"If there is merely the suspicion of the disease that has sent D'Arcy and others over here, Trimble, you had better wait until the doctor comes along to examine everybody," he said sourly.

"I anticipate that yours will prove a false alarm, as D'Arcy's seems to have been. But I suppose that you and he and the rest will have to stay here until

this trouble is at an end—if it ever reaches an end, with such unscientific methods. If I had my way everyone who did not feel perfectly well should go to the sanatorium at once—at once!"

"Yes, sir," replied Baggy. He did not know quite why he said "Yes, sir," but he did not think Ratcliff needed to glare at him so fiercely.

He waddled out and upstairs to the Fourth Form studies. Baggy was not a frequent visitor to the New House. No one there wanted to see him, as a rule. He hoped this rule would have an exception now. He knew where Figgins & Co. kept, and he had designs upon their hospitality.

No one could say that Figgys, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn were lacking in that virtue. But they drew a line, and Baggy was most distinctly on the wrong side of that line.

He tapped modestly at the door. "Come in!" howled Figgins.

Baggy accepted the invitation speedily. "Hallo, you chaps!" he said.

Figgins looked up from a volume of Sherlock Holmes, Kerr from the working of a mathematical problem he had come across in a magazine, and Fatty Wynn from the making of a big omelette.

And, as with one voice, Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty said: "Outside!"

"Oh, I say, you fellows, you might be decent!" pleaded Baggy.

"We are. At least, we hope we are. We also hope to remain decent. That is why we are rather particular about the company we keep," answered Kerr.

"We can stand some of the chaps in the School House, at a pinch, though on general principles we look upon the School House as a degraded dog-hole," Figgins added.

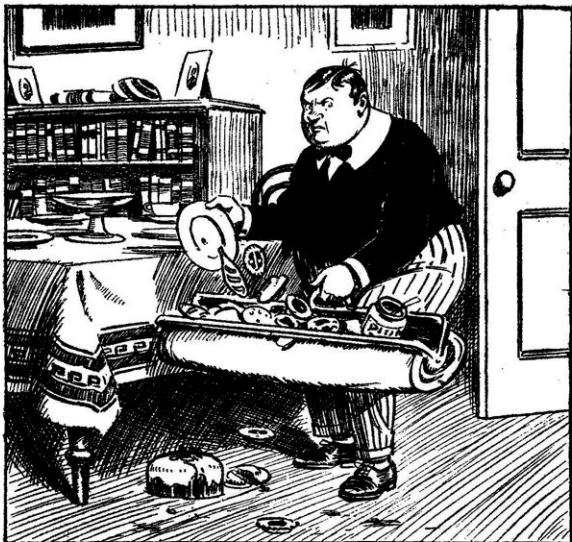
"But—" "We can't stand you at any price, Trimble!" finished Fatty Wynn.

But for the omelette Baggy might have retreated at once. The plain speaking of the trio was enough even for his hippopotamus-like hide.

But his mouth so watered at the thought of that omelette—six eggs and plenty of butter and ham, nicely chopped up into tiny pieces—that his feet fairly stuck in the doorway.

"I say, Wynn, I'll help you with that omelette," he said obligingly. "I'm pretty good at cooking, you know."

"We like our grub clean," replied Fatty. "Let's look at



Baggy let the cake drop. The table of Redfern & Co. had upon it many things more tasty than the cake. He snatched up a cricket bag into it he bundled meat pies and jam tarts, fruit and iced cakes—anything, everything!

your paw! Pah! Fancy anyone with hands like that offering to cook!"

"I'll wash them!" said Baggy eagerly.

"No, should, if I were you," answered Kerr.

"And then I may come back, and—"

"You may—"

"Oh, thanks, Figgys! I know you were a decent chap!"

"No!" roared Figgins. "We won't have you at any price. We've got one silly chump from the School House landed on us. But he is clean, at least."

"I beg to offend you my mineath thanks for the hospitality I have enjoyed in your studdy, Figgys, an' to make it cleath chump from the School House, landed upon you, I most assuredly should not have accepted it!" spoke the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy from behind Trimble.

Gussy was hurt. He hated to be considered intrusive. It was easy to hurt Gussy at any time. Figgins knew that, and hastened to make clear the fact that he had not intended offence.

"Oh, come off it!" he said. "I only called you a silly chump in a general way of speaking, and because it's true, not to be nasty. You were asked to come in with us as a pal, and you're going to stay as a pal, if we have to tie you up to make you go. Push that fat lump out of the way, and bring yourself in!"

"I accept your apology in the spiwit in which it is offered, Figgys, an' I trust that I shall nevah object to bein' called a sillay chump in a friendly mannah. Will you kindly wemove your fat person from the doah, so that I may get past, Twimble?"

"Ain't there room for you to pass?" snarled Baggy.

"Not without touchin' you, an' you weally look so extremly hot an' fat an' unhealthy, that I would much pwefer not to touch you!"

"Cut, Baggy!" said Kerr. "You're too late. We've taken in a clean School House fellow. No dirty ones need appy."

"I say, Gussy, old chap, I've got the mumps!" whined Baggy.

Arthur Augustus had heaps of sympathy for anyone in misfortune. He would have stood by a chum with smallpox or leprosy. But he shrank from Baggy then. For Baggy was not a chum, and, being now convinced that he himself had not mumps, Gussy was very anxious to avoid getting them.

"Then you are a disgusting fellow to come heah, twyin' to infect othah fellows who have not got mumps!" he said hotly. "Figgins an' Kerr an' Wynn an' I have not the disease, an' we do not pwpose to have it if we can avoid it."

"At least, I haven't got it—anyway, I'm not sure that I've got it," mumbled Baggy. "I only—"

"What are you heah for if you haven't got it, you duffah?"

"Come to that, what are you here for, D'Arcy?" demanded Baggy.

"I came ovah as a mattah of public spiwit. My thwoat ached, an' wathah than wisk conveyin' infection to Blake an' Hewwies an' Dig, I—"

"Come over to hand it out to us, eh, Gussy?" said Kerr, grinning.

"No, deah boy—no, weally! It was an ordah that those who believed themselves sickenin' should—"

"That's all serene! Kerr's only pulling your leg!" broke in Figgins. "All the same, I think for once Ratty's right. He's sick about this arrangement. I've a lot of respect for the Head and Railton, but I think they've overstepped the mark this time. Why it's making this a blessed lazar-house! Isn't there the sanny? Why don't you go to the sanny, Trimble?"

"I—I— Well, why should I, any more than D'Arcy? You see, I don't know yet that I've got it. My throat hurt at brekker, but I think that may have been a sardine-bone that got stuck. It doesn't hurt just now. But I'm horribly empty—that's a symptom."

"My hat! If that's a symptom, Fatty had better clear off to sanny at once. He's always empty," said Kerr—"except after a blow-out, and even then he starts getting empty again sooner than any of us."

"But that's gone on for years and years, and Fatty can't have had the mumps all the time," observed Figgins. "I don't know much about the bizney, but I never heard that before."

"Who told you it was a symptom, Baggy?" inquired Gussy.

Baggy hesitated. Then he told the truth. After all, it was not difficult to do so about this. And it was practice.

"Cardew," he answered.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins. "Cardew's kidded Baggy into quarantine!"

"But what's Cardew got against us that he should send this Chinese image over here?" asked Figgins.

"It's a low trick, anyway," Fatty said indignantly.

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"After all, Baggy is a human being, I suppose. Very nearly human, at least. Well, I don't think it's fair to kid anybody at a time like this."

"I quite agree with you, Wynn. I wogard Cardew's conduct as wepwewhensible in the extweme, an' I shall go ovah to the School House at once an' give him my considahed opinion on the subject," said Gussy.

"You can't, old deah—you won't be let," replied Kerr. "You're a prisoner of what Figgys calls the lazar-house now, and going over to lecture Cardew, or anyone else, is dead off."

"It was jolly thick, though," said Fatty.

"Well, I must say I think it was too much of a joke, even for a joker like Cardew," Kerr returned.

"Oh, I don't know!" said Figgins. "It's only Baggy, after all. I don't think Cardew would have done it to anyone who really mattered. Clear out, Baggy!"

Baggy went. Fatty and Arthur Augustus might sympathise. Kerr might see that Cardew had hardly played the game, though he had no particular sympathy with the victim of Cardew's trick. But the heart of George Figgins seemed to be hard with the hardness of the nether millstone where Baggy was concerned.

The poegs, Fourth-Former, in sheer desperation, tried Redfern & Co.

These three had no symptoms. Like Figgins & Co., they were rather inclined to resent the quarantine business, but, like them, they were making the best of it. The scholarship boys were not among the affluent members of St. Jim's society; but Owen had had a remittance that morning, and, in spite of the embargo upon visits to the tuck-shop, an ample meal was being set in their study. There were ways of getting round such prohibitions as that.

Again the mouth of Baggy Trimble watered, and the eyes of Bagley Trimble goggled. The New House seemed a land flowing with milk and honey.

He had not tapped at the door this time. Redfern and Lawrence looked up together, and saw him standing there.

"What's that drefle object, Edgar?" asked Redfern, putting his hands before his eyes in pretended horror.

"It's—oh, crumbs, it's the ghost of Trimble!" wailed Lawrence. "He's died suddenly of mumps or a surfeit of lampreys, or something! But why should he haunt us? That's what I want to know. Baggy living was nothing to us. But why should we have Baggy's ghost inflicted upon us?"

"I ain't dead, you silly ass!" burbled Baggy. "I—"

"Get out, then!" ordered Owen.

"I—look here, I had to come over here. I was told to come. I'm hungry—beastly hungry! Ain't anyone going to ask me to tea?"

"You're certainly beastly," said Redfern. "And you're generally hungry, I know. What I don't know is whether anyone's going to ask you to tea; but I'm perfectly certain we're not. Get!"

"Tea in Hall for the School House exiles," said Lawrence.

"Bread-and-scrape!" snorted Baggy.

"And very little of that, if you don't look sharp!" replied Owen.

"Why don't you go to tea with Miss Marjoram?" asked Redfern.

"I only wish I could!" moaned Baggy.

"My hat! If she'll only— I say, you fellows, do you think she would?"

"What are you talking about, Reddy?" asked Lawrence.

"Tell you presently, when this fat incubus has cleared out. Good-bye, Baggy! Ever so pleased to see—your back!"

It was no go—except in the sense that Fatty had to go. He went as one who mourns without hope.

CHAPTER 4. Knavish Baggy.

WHILE Baggy hung disconsolately about the passage, debating whom he should try next, there came from the next corridor sounds of tumult, and Figgins, Kerr, and D'Arcy rushed past him, evidently to investigate.

Fatty followed at a gentler pace. Fatty Wynn did not regard a row between Clarke and Clampe—the New House juniors knew that Clarke had been seeking Clampe with design to inflict upon him grievous bodily discomfort, not without cause—as nearly as important as tea.

The omelette had just been dished up. It was a triumph of Fatty's culinary skill, and he knew that waiting would not improve it. Perhaps he went chiefly in order to shun temptation. Fatty had a conscience, and he would not have liked his chums to return and find no omelette.

Fatty went, therefore. As it chanced, he did not notice Baggy.

Next moment Redfern and Lawrence rushed past. Baggy was relieved of the necessity of making a difficult decision by the fact that Owen was not with them. He yearned towards the omelette, but he could have carried away some of the provender from the other study in his pockets, whereas an omelette is an awkward thing to be taken anywhere by anyone who has nowhere in particular to take it.

So Baggy slipped into the study of Figgins & Co. He choked and spluttered over the first mouthful. It burned his tongue. But a little thing like that was not enough to daunt the high spirits of Baggy Trimble.

He ate with the voracity of a wolf the omelette that was meant for four—and Fatty Wynn one of the four!

"My word, Fatty can cook! Why, my mother couldn't make a better omelette than this, I'll bet! She wouldn't use six eggs, though. They're extravagant, these chaps. My hat! Don't the little bits of ham make it tasty! I wish it was twice the size!"

From the full heart and the full mouth of Baggy came such mumbings as this, hardly distinguishable, even had there been anyone present to hear them. But had there been so Baggy would have ceased to mumble and begun to howl.

"Go it, Clarke!"

"Stick to him, Clampe!"

"Oh, good punch!"

Leaving Clampe putting up a fight, which no doubt surprised and gratified the New House jurors. It did not even interest this stranger in their midst, though, of course, Baggy was only a stranger in the figurative sense. The New House fellows knew him quite as well as they wanted to know him.

Baggy paid no heed to the sounds which told of conflict. He attended to the business in hand.

Within five minutes the omelette had disappeared. Not a trace of it was left on the dish; the only traces were those of Baggy's dirty fingers, wherewith he had scooped up the last particles.

Tea had been made. Baggy poured out a cup, sugared and milked it with a liberal hand, and drained it at a gulp. It cleared the last fragment of omelette out of his throat, and made him feel that he needed something more to lay upon the foundation he had achieved.

There was a cake—rather a plain-looking cake. Baggy liked cakes rich. But he did not despise this; he gave it harbourage under his jacket. Then he slid out, and glanced into the study of Redfern & Co.

Owen had gone! Owen had not been able to deafen his ears to the cries of conflict. Baggy had another chance!

He let the cake drop. The table of Redfern & Co. had upon it many things more tasty than that cake.

He snatched up a cricket-bag. Into it he bundled meat-pies and jam-tarts, fruit and iced cakes—anything, everything! There was still room for the cake. He picked it up from the floor, and thrust it in.

Then, with fast-beating heart, he stole out, and hurried upstairs to the dormitory floor.

It was the only safe harbourage for him just then, and it offered at least a hope of demolishing the stolen dainties before he was discovered.

That he would be found out in the long run he had no doubt at all. He would tell the truth—would admit that, spurred by hunger, he had taken the food—and then he would defy them to do their worst.

Perhaps they would not get a chance to do their worst. Again Baggy's throat felt uneasy. It may have been the over-hot omelette which he had so recklessly thrust down it. But it was quite as likely mumps, and it would be little short of a triumph if he should be taken suddenly with the disease immediately upon his detection, and have to go to sanny at once, and so escape punishment.

Figgins & Co. came back chortling. They did not like Clampe a little bit, whereas they liked Dick Clarke, and the fact that Clarke had bestowed upon Clampe what Kerr called a number one hiding, pleased them none the less by reason of the fact that Clampe's offence against Clarke might so easily have been against them.

Clampe, having taken tea with Miss Marjoram, had been asked to name two or three of his friends to come on another day, and, prompted by malice,

had named Clarke, Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence. Redfern & Co. did not know that they owed the invitation they had received to Clampe; but the Shell fellow had been incautious enough to tell Clarke, and to crow over him.

There was quite a warm competition to avoid those teas. Any fellow in the New House—unless greed was stronger in him than all other qualities—would have sacrificed his dearest chum to Miss Marjoram rather than visit her himself. The well-meaning but boreome lady was not in the least afraid of mumps, and the succession of invitations continued to be given. Mr. Ratcliff, fearful of offending his wealthy relative, gave special leave to anyone invited by her, though, otherwise, the New House was confined to gates.

"Good egg!" said Figgins. "Clampe deserves all he's got. Dirty trick, I call it! Why, he might have mentioned us!"

"Don't suggest anything so horrid. You fairly make me shudder," Kerr replied. "I say, though, talking of good eggs, where's the noble omelette? It won't be any the better for waiting, I know; but it's still eatable, I suppose. What did you do with it, Fatty, old bird?"

"Didn't do anything—just left it on the table," answered Fatty, who, with Arthur Augustus, was behind his chums.

"Why, there's the dish, but where's—where's the omelette? Oh, my hat, this is too thick for anything!"

"You mug! You juggins! You potty fat idiot! You thumping imbecille!" snorted Figgins. "Do you mean to say that you left it there on the table with Baggy Trimble hanging about?"

"Weally, Figgay, I think that your language—"

"Shut up, Gussy! You can't think!—You haven't anything to think with! Language! Oh, hang it all, there aren't any words strong enough to say what I think about Fatty!"

"What is the matter now, Figgins?" spoke the acid voice of Mr. Ratcliff from the door.

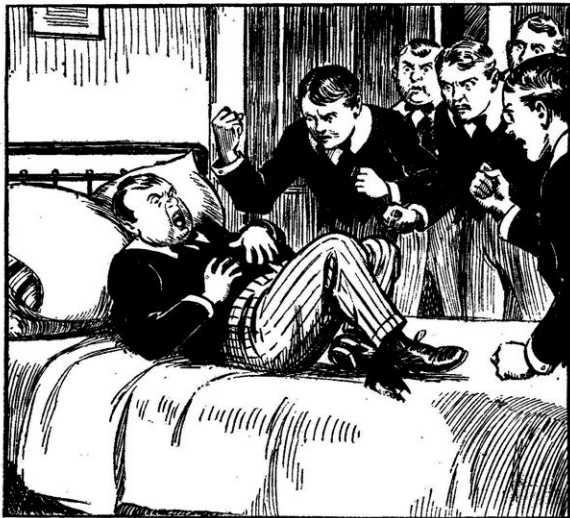
George Figgins was stricken dumb at once. He could not betray even Baggy to the tyrant.

"Were you concerned in the tumult that has brought me upstairs?" snapped the master.

"Three minutes too late!" murmured Kerr in the ear of Gussy.

"No, sir. That is, I wasn't making any noise—well, I dare say I may have shouted a bit—we all did. But I wasn't—I mean, none of us here was responsible for it."

"If I ask you who was, I know that I have nothing better



Baggy threw himself on the bed and groaned. His groans brought his enemies upon him: "Here he is!" cried Figgins. "I thought it was a pig grunting." "You've stolen our grub," said Redfern. "You admit that, I suppose?" "I've taken it, I admit that," wailed Baggy. "I can give you a reason, too. I was simply starving. I had to have food. I took it. That's all about it."

than stubbornness to anticipate from you," said Mr. Ratcliff. "So I shall make my inquiries elsewhere."

"He's beginning to know something, though it's a bit late in the day for him to discover that this study bars sneaking," whispered Kerr.

The Housemaster went, his temper not improved. Mr. Ratcliff's temper never was improved by an encounter with Figgins and Co.

"It was that fat worm of a Baggy," said Kerr. "He's left his dirty finger-marks all over the dish. I don't believe there's a fellow in this House above the Third who could leave marks like that. Why even Gussy keeps his hands clean since he's come over to us!"

"Well, Kerr—"

"Oh, dry up! Don't we all know you go in for manicuring and biting your giddy nails and—"

"I wupediate the accusation that I evah bite my nails, Figgay! I would scorn—"

"Scorn away, and go on scorning! I don't care. What I want is to get hold of that fat, dirty thief who's wolfed our tea! The cake's gone, too. You aren't half a silly chump, I must say, Fatty! Why didn't you stay here and take care of the tommy?"

"We can't do a thing till Ratty's cleared off downstairs," Kerr said. "Hark! He's talking to Clarke now!"

The master's voice came clearly to their ears.

"You cannot possibly accept Miss Marjoram's invitation to tea with a face in that horrible condition, Clarke," Mr. Ratcliff was saying severely. "I shall inform her that, owing to your abominable behaviour, you cannot be allowed to go."

"Very well, sir," answered Dick Clarke, trying hard to disguise his pleasure. "I suppose it really is too bad for a lady to see."

He did not add, though he felt like adding, that Leslie Clampe's was a great deal worse.

Mr. Ratcliff went. Clarke popped in upon the four and danced a war-dance.

"I've got off!" he chanted. "I've got off! Owing to my horrid face I needn't go and be jawed by Granny Marjoram! You're all right, you three. You've all naturally horrid faces. But mine is only horrid pro tem—see! I'm quite grateful to Clampe. I'd never have thought him man enough to do it. I've got one more got off! I say, you long-faced chumps, what's the matter? Have you all got mumps?"

"That beast Baggy's been along and wolfed our tea while you were scrapping with Clampe," answered Fatty dolefully. "It's all very well for you, Clarke, but what about us?"

"Well, I dare say if you ask dear old Ratty prettily he'll let you go and have tea with his grandmother," said Clarke, grinning. "What's Baggy embezzled? And what's Baggy doing in this House, anyway?"

"An omelette with six eggs in it!" groaned Figgins. "My only Sunday topper! You fellows do live, some!

Anything else?"

"Yes, confound the fat robber! He's gone off with a tip-top spread we had, collared my cricket-bag to take it in, too!"

It was a new voice that made this announcement, the voice of Redfern.

Owen and Lawrence were behind their chum, both looking as angry with Baggy and as sorry for themselves as did he.

"Well," said Figgins, "I thought the mumps were bad enough. But there's worse things than mumps. There's fat, thieving School House rotters!"

"Wally, Figgay—"

"Are you a fat, thieving rotter, Gussy? No? Well, then, dry up! If you are going to deny that Baggy's a sweep—"

"I am not, dear boy. I considah that Baggy's conduct woeffacts gwavely upon the House to which I have the honah to belong, an—"

"Cut short the chin music, Gussy! We're going to find the villain!" said Kerr.

CHAPTER 5.

Truthful Baggy.

HERE really seemed no limit to the amount which Baggy could stow away.

He devoured rather than ate. He wolfed, he guzzled. Meat-pies and tarts, cakes and tinned fruits, potted crab and meringues, all went the same way, and were taken quite indiscriminately.

When he had finished devouring the provender that had been intended as a fairly liberal provision for seven hungry juniors he threw himself upon the nearest bed and groaned.

Crumbs sprinkled the floor. Smears of jam and gravy adorned Baggy's unattractive face. Redfern's cricket-bag was none the better for what had happened to it.

Neither was Baggy much the better. He groaned again. He did not feel at all well.

"If only I'd had another drink to wash it down!" he

mumbled. "Half of it seems to have got stuck in my chest."

Perhaps it had, though anatomical experts might deny the possibility. It hardly seemed that all of it could have been packed in Baggy's stomach.

Again he groaned. He wished he had left the omelette alone. He felt peevish with Owen on that score. But for Owen he might have been satisfied without the omelette, and then everything would have been all right.

His fourth groan brought the enemy upon him. "Here he is!" cried Figgins. "I thought it was a pig grunting."

"So it was!" snorted Redfern. "Baggy, you fat beast, what have you done with our tommy?"

"Eaten it! And now I wish I hadn't!" groaned Baggy.

"You'll wish that a good deal harder before we've finished with you!" snapped Figgins.

"I don't think I could," replied Baggy simply. "I feel rotten!"

"You are wotten, wotten through an' through, Twimble!" said Arthur Augustus sternly.

"Trimble! Here, Trimble! You've stolen our grub and these chaps' grub! You admit that, I suppose!" said Redfern.

"I've taken it. I admit that. I have made up my mind to tell the truth, so you fellows needn't try to frighten me into telling lies."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" demanded Figgins, though he felt that the query was a weak one. Baggy's failure to lie, as usual, had rather taken the wind out of his sails.

"Nothing," replied Baggy. "Why should I do anything?"

"You don't even offer an excuse?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"I can give you a reason. I was simply starving. I had to have food. I took it. That's all about it."

"Well, what do you suppose we're going to do?" inquired Lawrence.

"Nothing. You can't do anything, except catch the mumps. I shouldn't wonder if you all get that, unless you leave me alone. I feel jolly ill, I can tell you!"

And that was true, too, allowing for verbal embroidery. Baggy hardly felt jolly, but he really did feel ill.

Figgins seven looked at one another in doubt.

"We'd better slide," said Owen. "I don't want to join the noble army of mumps, I know that."

And they went. On the staircase they met Mr. Ratcliff, who had a nasty little way of prowling about the place unexpectedly.

"Where have you come from?" the master demanded.

"Shell dormitory, sir," replied Figgins.

"What have you been doing there? You should keep out of that apartment, seeing that only those suspected of developing mumps are sleeping there, and that infection is to be avoided if possible. Who is there?"

Figgay hesitated. Kerr said:

"Only Trimble, sir."

"What have you got in that bag, Redfern?" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Nothing, sir."

"Open it!"

Redfern obeyed. If not precisely nothing, the contents of the cricket-bag were hardly classifiable as anything in particular. Baggy had left merely debris.

"You disgusting boys! You have been indulging in an orgy in a room where danger of infection is."

"We haven't been doing anything of the sort, sir!" Figgay's protest was almost shrill. He felt keenly the injustice of that accusation. "Not one of us has had anything to eat since dinner, as far as I know."

"Oh! Then Trimble must be at the bottom of this! You can proceed. I will talk to Trimble."

They passed on downstairs. Mr. Ratcliff passed on upstairs, his whiskers bristling in wrath.

Baggy lay on a bed, breathing loudly.

"Trimble!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Hallo! I mean, yes, sir?"

"What are you doing here?"

"Resting, sir. I don't feel very well."

"You have been overeating yourself, Trimble!"

"Yes, sir. I almost think I have, sir."

"Where did you get the material for bringing yourself into this wretched state?"

"I—I'll tell you the truth, sir. I've made up my mind to tell the truth all the rest of my life, no matter what comes of it. I had something in Figgins' study, and I got some more from Redfern's. I don't consider that I'm really to blame, sir. I think they might have asked me to tea, but they wouldn't. They were rude to me. Then they went off to a fight. I didn't approve of that. I helped myself, as they were so very disobliging and—ablastly."

Mr. Ratcliff gasped. He knew enough of Baggy to be aware that no one ever expected the truth from that junior. But, allowing for colouring, the podgy fellow seemed to be

telling the truth now, and that because of a resolve to do so. There might be sheer desperation in it as well, but the New House-master did not think of that.

Moreover, Mr. Ratcliff disliked extremely the juniors who had been the victims of Baggy's thefts. He balanced the truth-telling against the stealing, and he let his own spitefulness weigh down the scale.

He did not punish Baggy at all. He convinced himself that there was no need for it. The fat fellow had punished himself.

But he said some very cutting things, and Baggy did not forget them.

CHAPTER 6.

Miss Marjoram's Guests.

THE podgy Fourth-Former felt quite well next morning, in spite of the fact that one of the fellows who had slept in the same dormitory had to go off to the sunny, undoubtedly suffering from mumps. That might have been expected to put the wind up Baggy; but, somehow, it failed to do so.

Breakfast disappointed him. He looked in vain for the luxuries which Miss Marjoram was reported to have been sending along for the benefit of the mump-stricken New House. Nobody seemed to know anything about them. A Cardew had been pulling his leg about this also?

But, after breakfast, he discovered that there was some truth in that story, anyway. A fellow in the Shell was quite sure that at the sunny they were revelling in all sorts of delicacies provided by the generous, though wearisome, Miss Marjoram.

Baggy felt a return of some of the symptoms. But he feared that he would not be able to convince Mr. Ratcliff of them.

He hid his level best to dodge both Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co.

But, about a quarter of an hour before dinner, he was collared by Dick Redfern, and run into the study, where Owen and Lawrence greeted him with grins more cheery than friendly, and yet hardly with the hostility Baggy had feared.

"You let go of me, Redfern!" he puffed. "You'll get mumps if you ain't jolly careful! I do believe—"

Then Baggy stopped.

"What do you believe?" demanded Redfern.

"On someone's thoughts, I don't believe," said Baggy slowly. "I'm telling the truth now, Redfern!"

Lawrence snorted.

"That might be the truth or a lie or anything, seeing that we haven't heard what you do or don't believe," he said. "But, as it's you, Baggy, we don't believe, on principle."

"Tell him what we want him for, Dick," said Owen.

Baggy had fancied that he knew for what he was wanted. But it appeared that he was mistaken. He was not sorry to be mistaken, either.

"You said you'd like to go to tea with Ratty's granny, Fatty," said Redfern.

"So I would. But you mustn't call her his granny, Redfern. She can't be that."

"Has everybody got to tell the truth?" asked Lawrence.

"It's better for them," replied Baggy. "I feel much easier in my mind since I've taken to it."

"Well, you can go to-day," Redfern announced. "Are you on?"

Baggy stared at him.

"I haven't been asked," he said dully.

"That's no odds. We have."

"Bub—bub—but—"

"You can be Lawrence, and you can tell her Redfern and Owen aren't very well and can't come. Clarke was to have gone, too, but the lucky bouncer's got off through what I clamped did to his dial. See? You'll be Lawrence, and you'll tell her—"

"I couldn't tell her a lie!" broke in Baggy, with extreme virtue.

"And he jolly well can't be Lawrence!" snapped the owner of that name. "I bar that. I've some respect for my name! It's not going to be taken by a mangy fat pig, I can tell you, Richard!"

"Well, Owen—"

"No jolly fear!" cried Owen. "He'll have to be Redfern or nobody else."

"Oh, well, what's the odds, as long as you're happy? And I'm sure we'll all be a heap happier here than at the Marjoram's," said Redfern recklessly. "You can be me, Baggy!"

"I can't tell her I am, Redfern!"

"Why not, fathead—fat-everything?"

"Because it wouldn't be true!"

"Well, I don't want you to tell any lies! I don't suppose well will be necessary. Ratty will drop her a line about Clarke—lucky bargee! And I shouldn't think she'll ask

you which of us you are. You'll only have to say your little friends—that what she calls the chaps to each other—couldn't come, and then answer to any old name she calls you by. She doesn't mind about names—she calls you 'little fellow,' and beastly things like that, they say!"

Baggy turned the project over in his mind. It attracted him. He could represent three juniors when it came to the question of putting away the grub, he was sure.

It would be a deception, but hardly a lie. If he were asked whether he was Redfern—or Owen, or Lawrence—he could mumble "No," and make it sound as much like "Yes" as possible.

"I'll go," Baggy said. "Of course, I can't tell lies."

"Oh, of course!" gibed Owen.

"But I'll go. I'll put up with being called Redfern! I don't know that I mind that so very much; 'tain't like being called Lawrence."

"Why, you fat worm!" began Lawrence, in wrath.

"Oh, dry up, Edgar!" laughed Redfern. "That's fair enough! Hallo, Gussy! What are you after?"

"I looked in in a fiendly way, Wedfern. That is all."

"Dick Redfern bowed, his hand upon his heart.

"In the friendliest possible mannah, we greet you!" he replied.

"You are mockin' me, Wedfern! I do not considah that at all fiendly!"

"Sorry, old top! I didn't mean to hurt your tender feelings!"

"I do not like to be mocked before an outsidah like Twimble!"

"I'd kick Baggy out to ease your wounded feelings! But I can't! Baggy's me, so to speak, and a fellow can't kick himself properly!"

"You talk in widdles, Wedfern!"

"Then I'll explain pronto, as the cowboys say. We were to go to tea with Miss Marjoram. We three and Clarke were the dame's next victims. Clarke gets off it by beating up Clampe. We get off it by sending Baggy instead. See?"

"I wealdy do not comprehend how Twimble can take the places of three of you."

"Isn't he big enough?" asked Lawrence.

"And fat enough?" added Owen.

"And ugly enough?" chimed in Redfern.

Gussy elevated his monocle, regarding Baggy through it critically.

"He does not weigh quite as much as all three of you, I considah," he said. "More than two, but not as much as three. He is much uglier than any of you, an' not so clean! I wegard you all three as quite respectable specimens of St. Jim's. But I do not like this capah. I do not considah that you are treatin' Miss Marjoram with pwopah wevahence."

"Reverence? Oh!" gasped Redfern. "Why, she is the most awful bore under the sun! She calls a chap her 'dear'—"

"Navahthesless, she is a lady, an' should be treated as such," broke in Arthur Augustus, looking very solemn.

"Well, I won't say you're wrong there," admitted Redfern. "Point is, we don't want to treat her at all, or to have her treat us. Twiggez-vous, mon ami? Latin, Baggy!"

"And, of course, it's up to Baggy to behave himself when he gets chez Marjoram—Greek, Baggy!"

"I believe it's French," said Baggy doubtfully. "You might talk so that I can understand you, Redfern. I'm doing you good turn, and—"

"Look here, Gussy!" said Lawrence, wasting no superfluous politeness on Baggy, but cutting in ruthlessly upon his speech. "Why don't you go with the bloated worm, and make him behave?"

"You can be me," said Owen.

"Or me," Lawrence said. "I'll lend you my name. I wouldn't lend it to that object!"

"I have not been invited, dear boy," replied Gussy. "If Miss Marjoram did me the honah to invite me, I would go with pleasuah!"

"She's asking all the Lower School fellows by turns," argued Lawrence. "You'll only be giving a bit out of your turn, Gussy!"

"I do not wealdy belong to the New House," Gussy said.

"Yes, you do, for the time being!" answered Redfern.

"I don't want D'Arcy to go with me!" burred Baggy.

"He'd only be accusing me of eating like a pig, and not wiping my mouth and all that!"

"Doesn't Baggy know his own little weaknesses?" chortled Owen.

"I'm politah, than you are, Owen—so there! I'm not a blessed scholarship rotter from a Council school!" fumed the podgy junior.

"Say that again!" snorted Owen.

"What's the use?" said Redfern. "What do we care about what Baggy thinks of scholarship boys? And what does D'Arcy care about whether Baggy wants him or not?"

It's the credit of St. Jim's good old Gussy is thinking of. I know him!"

"You are quite wight, Wedfern," said Arthur Augustus, beaming. "I wegard Twimble's opinion as not mattahin' in the vovwy least, an' if you think that it is consistent with my chawwah as a gentleman—"

"We do! Gussy, old gun, you will be like manna in the wilderness to Dame Marjoram—like balm in Gilead—like the cooling springs that the hart panted for! Just think of it! She's seen nothing but a job lot of New House fellows. Now she's to see you. Chivalry, courtesy, politeness personified!"

"Weally, Wedfern, you make me blush! But I feah you are onlay pullin' my leg."

But that was not altogether the case. Dick Redfern might be piling it on a bit; but he meant very considerably more than half of what he said. D'Arcy major really was the likeliest junior at St. Jim's to please an elderly maiden lady. And that was nothing to D'Arcy major's discredit, for, with all his politeness, he had the stuff of manhood in him.

"I'm not. I think you ought to go," Redfern said.

"Then I will go, whatever Twimble may say."

"I don't think I mind so very much, after all," said Baggy.

"You can talk to the old gal while I mop up the tommy, Gussy."

"You are dweadfully coarse, Twimble! But I will see that you behave yourself."

"And he hasn't half got his work cut out, has he?" whispered Owen to Lawrence.

None of the three had any great faith in Baggy's ability to behave himself in such a manner as to win the esteem of Miss Marjoram. They were not sure that they wanted him to, though they certainly did not want him to be rude to her. They had no desire to be asked to tea again.

On the way to Rylcombe that afternoon Arthur Augustus did his best to coach Trimble in company manners. But the mind of Baggy was upon the flesh-pots, and he paid little heed.

A rather severe-looking maid answered the door.

Baggy held out a podgy and not too clean hand. It was not as dirty as usual, because D'Arcy had insisted upon his washing it—also the left. But Baggy's notions of washing were sketchy, to put it charitably.

Gussy's elbow took him in the ribs. But Baggy paid no heed.

"How do you do, Miss Marjoram? Very pleased to see you, I'm sure," he said.

The maid was not a young girl, by long odds; but she was thirty years Miss Marjoram's junior, and she tossed her head as she answered:

"You're taking me for my mistress, sir. I will show you in to Miss Marjoram."

"You foolish wretch, Baggy!" hissed Arthur Augustus.

"Well, how should I know? She didn't wear a cap," grumbled Baggy. "Our skivvy—I mean, our maid-servants—all wear caps. Of course, the men—"

"I undahstood that you had given up tellin' lies, Baggy!"

Trimble checked. While he was on the truth-telling lay the glories of that quite imaginary place, Trimble Hall, must remain untold, he realized sadly.

Miss Marjoram but up a pince-nez to view them as they were shown into the drawing-room, which Baggy surveyed in disappointment. He had hoped to get at once into the room where she was spread, and to start on the object of his visit without futile delay.

Mr. Ratcliff's relative was a tall and rather gaunt lady. The upper part of her face had an air of sternness; but it was redeemed—otherwise, as one might choose to think—by a weak and rather foolish chin. She was a foolish and very opinionated old lady.

She liked the look of Gussy. But when the pince-nez turned upon Baggy the upper half of her face was in the ascendant. Plainly Baggy at first sight did not attract her.

But Miss Marjoram did not believe in allowing first impression to have sway. She would do her best to treat both her visitors alike.

"How do you do, my dear little boys?" she said. "Which of you is Redfern? And why are there not three of you? My nephew has informed me why Master Clarke is absent. What a regrettable trait quarrelsomeness is! I trust that you are not quarrelsome?"

"I never fight, ma'am," said Baggy. "I don't like fighting."

"It's a beautiful day, isn't it, Miss Marjoram?" said Gussy.

"It is indeed a fine day," replied the lady, who seemed fortunately forgetful as to the series she had put. "But come—let us go to the dining-room. Boys are always

hungry. Oh, there isn't much about boys you can tell me, you know!"

"I'm on, ma'am!" returned Baggy boldly.

Arthur Augustus nudged him again.

"What have I said wrong now?" mumbled Baggy.

"You will never say anything wight, Twimble! You had fah bettah keep your mouth closed."

"Rate! How am I ever going to get any grub down me if I do that, fathead?"

CHAPTER 7.

"Tell the Truth and Shame—"

THE one thing that Miss Marjoram did know about boys was that they like good food and plenty of it.

If Baggy's heart—a doubtful organ, at best—had any cockles, the sight of that tea-table must have warmed them. He sat down at once, while Gussy, frowning at him, placed a chair for Miss Marjoram and waited till she was seated.

Baggy pulled towards him a dish of beef patties. Arthur Augustus lifted the tea-covers for his hostess.

Baggy helped himself liberally. Arthur Augustus kicked him under the table.

"Whose shins are you kicking, D'Arcy?" mumbled the heir of Trimble Hall, with his mouth full of patty.

"Are you Arthur D'Arcy?" asked Miss Marjoram, with evident interest.

"That is my name, Miss Marjoram. No doubt you are surprised. But the fact of the mattah is that Wedfern an' the othahs were—ah!—prevented fivom comin', an'—"

"I am very pleased indeed to see you! I know your noble father; I met him and danced with him at a ball many years ago—before you were born."

"Must have been," commented Baggy. "It's a good few years since your legs were young enough for dancing, ain't it, ma'am?"

Fortunately Baggy's utterance was too much impeded by pastry for the lady, who was slightly deaf, to catch that. She had decided that Baggy was a dull and uninteresting boy, with a greedy disposition; and for once she had judged a boy rightly.

"If you kick me again, D'Arcy—"

"Dwy up! Don't uttah anothah word if you cannot be moderately decent!"

That interchange of speech went unnoticed by Miss Marjoram. She was stroking the noble right hand of Arthur Augustus, which made the owner of that member very uncomfortable. But Gussy was a gentleman from the crown of his nicely-brushed hair to the soles of his patent leathers.

He let her go on stroking. After all, she was old enough to be his grandmother, and if she was a bit of a snob she was not the only one.

Having one's hand held was rather an impediment to getting on with one's tea. But Gussy, though he had a healthy appetite, was not greedy, and he found an excuse to withdraw his hand in the necessity of helping his hostess, Trimble showing no sign of even wanting to be useful.

Baggy was eating voraciously. The pastry was rich and flaky, and just to his liking. So well did it suit him that he was moved to be flattering.

"If you made these yourself, ma'am, all I can say is you're a jolly fine cook!" he remarked.

"Eh?" said Miss Marjoram, with hand to ear.

"Twimble expressed approbation of the patties," explained Gussy.

"Oh, yes! I thought he seemed to like them," replied Miss Marjoram, with some acerbity.

Baggy had gone near to clearing up the dish. But now he turned his earnest attention to ham and tongue.

Miss Marjoram was supplied. D'Arcy saw to that. Baggy did himself well. But, with the demands of politeness, and the constant necessity of conveying some notion of manners to his fellow-guest, Arthur Augustus did not get much chance.

"I hope that the chickens I sent were appreciated to-day?" said Miss Marjoram, after a pause.

Baggy looked up.

"Chickens?" he said wonderingly. "Did you say 'chickens, ma'am'?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Marjoram—very much appreciated, I assure you. That is, I have no doubt whatever," answered Gussy, kicking Baggy again.

"Well, Gussy, if you saw any chicken about I didn't, that's all," said Baggy, raising his voice. "If I had I'd have seen that I got some. I jolly well know that! I could eat a chicken or two almost any old time."

Miss Marjoram shuddered. She had begun to wonder how this boy Redfern—somehow she had it fixed in her mind that Baggy was Dick Redfern—had ever managed to get taken into a school like St. Jim's.

She seemed to recall having heard that he was a scholar-

ship boy, and she supposed that explained it. These were the manners of the lower classes, no doubt.

As a matter of fact, Dick Redfern, had he come along, would have behaved himself as nicely as any fellow at St. Jim's, bar Arthur Augustus. About Gussy's niceness of behaviour there was something superlative that others could not hope to reach.

"Then there were no chickens at dinner?" asked the old lady pointedly, addressing Gussy.

"No, Miss Marjoram. I have no doubt they are bein' kept for to-morrow."

"Kept for greedy old Ratty to eat himself!" mumbled Trimble, with his mouth full of tart. "If you kick me again, D'Arcy—"

"I will murdah you if you do not dwy up!" hissed Gussy savagely.

"You are not in my nephew's House, then, Arthur?"

"Onlay pwo tem., I was supposed to be developin' mumps, an'—"

"Kidded yourself, you funk!" muttered Baggy.

Baggy had not exactly kidded himself. Cardew had helped him. So of course his case was very different from that of Arthur Augustus.

"How do you get on with my nephew?" asked Miss Marjoram, which question would certainly have been considered silly foolishness by any junior but Gussy.

"I—ah—"

"You like him, of course? But I am sure you like him."

"Yaas, Miss Marjoram. I like him extwemely. He has—ah—"

Arthur Augustus was trying hard to think of some pleasant characteristic of Mr. Ratcliff's he could mention. It was small wonder that he bogged and stuck.

"That's more than anyone else does—he, he!" said Baggy.

He spoke more plainly this time, his mouth being empty for a brief space. He was cutting himself a slice of cake so enormous that it might become a doubtful question in a moment which was the slice and which the cake.

"Dwy up!"

"I sha'n't dry up, D'Arcy; so there! I tell the truth, I do. You're not supposed to be a liar, I know; but you told a whopper then. You don't like Ratty, because nobody possibly could like Ratty!"

"Weally, Twimble—"

"So this boy is not Redfern, or Owen, or Lawrence?" said Miss Marjoram crossly.

"I wegwet to say that he is an extremely bad egg—that is, a nasty fellow, Miss Marjoram—from my House. I am sowway that I consented to accompany him heah, but I trusted to be able to keep him in check."

"You were not invited here, Trimble!"

"Neither * was D'Arcy!" snarled Baggy.

"That is quite a different matter."

Some men and some boys might have failed to see that; but probably no woman alive would have disagreed with Miss Marjoram. It was quite another matter. Trimble was an unwelcome intruder; D'Arcy, because one could not help welcoming him, ceased to be an intruder. And that was not mere snobbery. If Arthur Augustus had been named Bill Smith, Miss Marjoram would have liked him.

"I don't see it," grunted Baggy.

"You will be good enough to tell me what you and others have against my nephew, Mr. Ratcliff, you rude boy!"

"Weally, Miss Marjoram, I think you had better not ask—"

"Desist, Arthur, I beg you!"

Arthur desisted. He did not really care much what was said about Mr. Horace Ratcliff. He had only tried to prevent the wounding of an old lady's feelings. If she wanted to hear, she must hear.

"He's a beast!" said Baggy. "Oh, you needn't frown, D'Arcy; I'm going to tell the truth. He's as mean as can be—the fellows in his House are always complaining about the rotten grub they get. But their folks have to pay as much as the folks of chaps in the School House. We ain't pampered there. I could eat a lot more. But the food ain't so dusty."

Baggy paused to take a huge mouthful of cake. "Dusty? Do you mean to tell me that Mr. Ratcliff gives the boys in his charge dusty food?"

"That is onlay Twimble's wegwettable slangy mannah of speakin'," put in Gussy.

"Go on! You are an abominably rude and ugly boy, but I wish to hear what charges you have to make against my nephew!" shrieked the old lady.

"He's a cruel beast. He likes whacking chaps," went on Baggy, angry and reckless now. "He's a mean beast, too. He slinks about in slippers that make no noise, and catches fellows out when Railton would be ashamed to. I should say there ain't a single person at St. Jim's that don't think him a regular rotter! Why, even old Selby, who's a gorilla himself, can't bear him!"

"That will do, Trimble! I shall acquaint my nephew with what you say."

Baggy's jaw fell. Anger gave way to fear, in the breast of Baggy.

"I—say, you know, ma'am, that—that ain't playing the game!" he spluttered.

"Should you consider, Arthur, that it is not 'playing the game'?"

"It is a vewy delicate question to answah, Miss Marjoram. But, since you ask me, I weally should say that it was not."

"I value your opinion, Arthur. I am sure it is candid, and I am not blind to your kindness. But answer me this. Can you say that this boy Trimble 'plays the game'?"

I have a dim notion what the phrase means, and I do not believe that he does—ever!"

"Tell her I do, Gussy! You know I do! I may get off the rails a bit once in a way, but—"

"Pway be silent, Baggy! I am thinkin'."

Gussy thought hard. He had lied to save Miss Marjoram's feelings; and he wondered whether he ought not to lie to save Baggy's skin.

But his gorge rose at the idea. Baggy was not so ignorant or so naturally reckless that his behaviour admitted of any excuse. Yet Gussy tried hard to remember any instance of Baggy's playing the game that he might quote.

Perhaps there were such instances. But, for the life of him, he could not have recalled them then.

"Your silence condemns him, Arthur! Trimble, I am going to ring for my maid Hubkins. She will show you



"So there were no chickens at dinner?" asked Miss Marjoram. "No," answered D'Arcy. "I have no doubt they are being kept for to-morrow." "Kept for greedy old Ratty to eat himself," mumbled Trimble, with a mouth full of tart. "If you kick me again, D'Arcy—" "I will murdah you if you do not dwy up!" hissed Gussy savagely.

out. To D'Arcy here I shall give a letter to Mr. Ratcliff, recounting your rudeness and your slanders."

Baggy pushed his chair back noisily. He saw that no plea would avail, and the yellow streak in him was uppermost.

"Right-ho!" he said. "Don't you worry about Hubbard, or whatever her name is! I can let myself out. And, look here, if you want to find out something that will open your eyes, just you ask Ratty what became of those chickens you sent us! Just you ask him that!"

A half-minute later the front door slammed behind Baggy, and an acutely miserable junior was left with a very annoyed elderly lady.

CHAPTER 8.

Baggy's Discovery!

BAGGY'S heart was fairly in his boots before he was half-way back to St. Jim's.

This meant the sack.

Ratty would never forgive him. The Head would hear, and then the lid would be put on it. Some excuse might have been made had Baggy been an invited guest. But he was a mere intruder.

He moved westward and more slowly as he drew near the school. The thought was in his mind that it might perhaps be possible to persuade D'Arcy not to deliver that letter.

But Gussy did not catch him up. He waited twenty minutes at the gates, but still Gussy did not come.

In fact, Arthur Augustus had no letter to deliver. He had managed to persuade Miss Marjoram that it would be far better that he should not carry it. But it was only his explanation that he would get into trouble for coming to tea with her uninvited that saved him from the unpleasant task; and there he won out by the use of subterfuge, for he really did not dread that a tenth part as much as he did bearing what almost amounted to a warrant for the execution of the erring Baggy.

That sweet youth hung round the New House, afraid to go in.

Evening calm pervaded the quad. The fellows were at prep. Baggy had the whole domain to himself.

But open spaces had no allure for Baggy just now; they had little enough at any time. Baggy was a fuggy fellow.

He wandered round to the back of the building, and then there came to his ears the voices of Mr. and Miss Ratcliff.

"It is really absurd of Aunt Sophronisba!" said the lady tartly.

"It would be more absurd of us if we allowed these boys, already overfed, to profit by her extravagant generosity!" replied her brother sourly.

"What can we do?"

"Send the chickens to Wayland, and dispose of them to the poulterers there, of course!"

"But suppose aunt found out? She would be very upset."

"I cannot see any likelihood of her finding out. It is not the money I care about, as you know—"

"What-ho! Not half!" muttered the rude listener.

"But on principle I object to needless luxury. The proceeds—"

"If you are going to talk about a hospital, or anything silly of that kind, Horace, please don't!" snapped Miss Ratcliff. "I consider that it is really our money she is scattering so profusely. We are her only near relatives, and—"

"I quite see your point of view. I consider with you that we are fully justified in taking whatever the poultry fetches. It should be quite a fair sum."

That was all Baggy heard. The open window whence the voices had floated belonged to a small room near the kitchen, which Miss Ratcliff looked upon as her own special sanctum in her official capacity as housemistress.

Baggy listened for more, but having settled the weighty matter of the chickens the economical pair had departed, and soon Baggy slunk away.

Before he went in he visited the porter's lodge, learned that he had missed D'Arcy, and contrived to wheedle a sheet of paper and an envelope out of Taggles. On the sheet of paper he wrote:

"Chickens! A warning from a friend. Ask him, anyway."

The envelope he addressed to Miss Marjoram at Rylcombe.

No whedding could extract a twopenny stamp out of Taggles, and Baggy posted his letter without a stamp at all. Miss Marjoram could afford forgiveness better than he could twopenny, he argued; besides, he had not twopenny, and if he had had it he could not have bought a stamp just then.

He went back to the New House. Of course, he should have been back long before. He had no right to be away from prep. But things were all at sixes and sevens in the

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New House. Without abdicating, Mr. Ratcliff was hardly carrying on. He resented the whole business, and he was letting things slide. The worst of Ratty was that you could never count upon his sticking to a course, however.

No one took any notice when Baggy slunk in. He had no appointed place; wherever he might go he was an intruder.

This did not suit Baggy when once he realised that he had got in with no prospect of a wigging for lateness.

He had not intended to tell these fellows anything at all. They did not deserve that he should. But to tell would make him of more importance; and, anyway, Baggy was a leaky vessel.

So he looked in at Figgins' study. Gussy was there.

"Hallo, you chaps!" he said. "Has that boulder told you how I ticked Ratty off to his granny? He, he, he!"

"You rank outsiders!" cried Arthur Augustus.

"You're a mere ruffian, Baggy!" said Kerr. "A fat ruffian! And that's the very worst kind of all. Anyone who misbehaved himself as you've done would deserve the cat-o'-nine-tails! But there isn't anyone else here who would—not even Racker or Crooke."

"It's all serene, Kerr. Baggy's hooked for the order of the boot," Figgins said.

"Serve him right—jolly well right!" chimed in Fatty Wynn.

"Not likely!" chortled Baggy. "What about the chickens? I know too much for Ratty, you bet!"

And Baggy laid a podgy and unclean finger against a fat and unshapely nose.

"Rats!" snorted Figgly incredulously. "I don't believe a word about those old hens!"

"I weally believe, Figgly, that there is some mesuah of twuth in it."

"What! When Baggy says it?"

"It is not merely Baggy, you see. Miss Marjoram—"

"She's not going about saying her grandson—"

"Nephew!" amended Arthur Augustus.

"Aunt, if you like! There's a big of the old woman about Ratty. But I'm not going to believe him a chicken-thief. I dislike Ratty about as big a heap as I dislike anyone—even Baggy, here, or Racker—but I don't believe that."

"Same here!" said Kerr.

"It's all rot!" chimed in Fatty.

"I twust it is. No doubt we shall have the chickens for dinnah to-morrow," said Gussy mildly. "It will be a relief to my mind, I confess. Not that I caah gweatly about the poultry, but—"

"Right-ho! You believe what you like!" snorted Baggy.

"I know. I meant to tell you, but I'm not going to now. What's the use of a fellow's telling the truth if he isn't believed?"

And Baggy bounced out indignantly.

"Of course he's lying, Gussy?" said Figgins.

"I am not so suah, Figgly."

"Oh, he is! It's Baggy. 'Nuff said!" put in Kerr.

"More than enough!" agreed Fatty.

Perhaps it was a trifle rough on Baggy that he should tell the truth and be called a liar, for when he had lied no one had ever accused him of veracity.

The fellows did not love Ratty; but not even Clampe, nursing a face worse than Dick Clarke's, would believe him as mean as that. Chowie was inclined to hearken. But it was Baggy who told the tale, and that settled it, even for Chowie, who was mean enough to believe anything mean of anybody.

CHAPTER 9.

Cut Off with a Shilling!

BUT Baggy had told the truth, and before the sun set next day the New House was aware of it.

The rather scratchy morning classes were just over when Miss Marjoram arrived at St. Jim's. She came in a hired fly, and in wrath. She had nursed her wrath since the evening before, and she was intent upon making things very hot indeed for Baggy Trimble.

It was lucky for Baggy that Arthur Augustus had talked her out of sending a note by him. It was lucky that she had made up her mind to tell her dear nephew in person how the rude, greedy boy had slandered him. In fact, Baggy had more luck than he deserved. Truthfulness may be a rare virtue, but Baggy's truthfulness was of such very recent development, and showed itself in such unpleasant ways, that he hardly merited a reward for it.

Miss Marjoram got out of the fly, and Hubkins followed. She took Hubkins' arm, and gave Taggles a stony glare in response to his touch of the forehead and bob. Taggles felt that he had wasted something.

Just by the lodge were two crates, and those crates were full of poultry.

The Wayland poulterer, who had assured Mr. Ratcliff

over the telephone that the crates should be called for by half-past ten at latest, had reckoned without his aide, Master Jerusha Simmons. Master Simmons, who drove like Binks, the butcher's assistant at Rylcombe, had met with an accident, and the crates still waited.

Miss Marjoram looked at them very hard indeed. Then she looked at Taggles, and under her scrutiny Taggles felt himself wilting and filling with guilty consciousness, though he did not know for what. Taggles, although he may have suspected something, was not in a conspiracy with Mr. and Miss Ratcliff.

"Whose are these?" demanded the old lady sternly.

"They're for Washbyrne, at Wayland, mum."

"From whom?"

"Mr. Ratcliff, mum, though I dunno as I'm doin' of my proper dooty in givin' of gratis, information."

"Ah! Then that gross boy spoke the truth!"

You might consider Taggles a fool. He was not that. It could not be claimed for him, however, that his perceptions were of the quickest. Yet he guessed in once that "the gross boy" was Bagley Trimble.

And at that moment he perceived Baggy in the distance. "Come 'ere, Master Trimble!" he yelled out. "This lady wants you!"

"Can't!" howled Baggy. "It's out-of-bounds!"

"Come here at once!" shrilled Miss Marjoram.

And Baggy obeyed. With lingering footsteps he came.

When Miss Marjoram seized him by the ear he wondered why she should find it needful to lean on the arm of Hubkins. She seemed to him strong enough for anything.

"Boy, did you write this?"

Before the fearful eyes of Baggy was flourished the anonymous letter.

"No, ma'am! I—I— But I will tell the truth! I did!"

"With my little axe!" murmured Monty Lowther.

A small crowd of School House fellows, gaining numbers every moment, had gathered, among them the Terrible Three, Levison, Cardew and Clive, and Jack Blake & Co. And now the New House juniors passed the forbidden bound and joined the throng.

"Get back, mumpers!" said Blake.

"Oh, rats!" replied Figgins. "We've no more got the mumps than you have! The mumpers are in sanny. What's Baggy been doing now? Will he be hanged this time?"

"Or only put in prison?" asked Kerr.

"Neither. He's going to die of shock!" answered Tom Merry gravely.

Suddenly Miss Marjoram released Baggy. She had sighted Arthur Augustus.

"Arthur," she said, "conduct me to Mr. Ratcliff!"

It was an ordeal for the swell of the Fourth; but he faced it like a man.

"Aseunabedly, Miss Marjoram!" he replied.

And in full view of a hundred juniors he gave the old lady his arm.

Mellish engiggered. Tom Merry took Mellish by the back of the neck.

"My hat!" chortled Racke.

Cardew's fist came down upon his smart new straw and smashed it.

"My noble kinsman is a gentleman," drawled Cardew. "You, Racke, are a dashed rotten outsider!"

Baggy, released, looked round him stupidly. Then he grinned.

"This is where I score!" he said.

But no one could make head or tail of that—yet.

The crowd moved towards the New House. Even the best behaved fellows yielded to the impulse to follow the irate old lady.

Then Mr. Ratcliff did that which he regretted for many a long day thereafter.

He could hardly have averted Miss Marjoram's wrath; but he might have eased his face. By coming to meet her he gave himself away to half St. Jim's. It may have been a bold stroke; but bold strokes are apt to be a mistake when made by cowards, for cowards make them at the wrong time.

"My dear aunt!" he buried.

"Worthless fellow!" stormed Miss Marjoram, shaking her umbrella at him.

"—Oh, really, Aunt Sophronia—"

"Where are the chickens I sent for the boys of your House?"

"They are—er—that is to say—"

Mr. Ratcliff dared not aver that they were then cooking. It was plain that Aunt Sophronia had discovered something; how much he could only guess.

"Come with me!"

Gussy was no end glad to be set free. He anticipated no end of chipping. But he did not get it. There were twenty or more fellows present who would have made it most uncomfortable for anyone who had tried to chip him. Afterwards, no doubt, they would chaff him in friendly wise; but their instinct just now told them that Gussy had deserved well of St. Jim's.

The crates were still there. At sight of them, Mr. Ratcliff's jaw fell.

He was about to be shown up to St. Jim's in all his meanness, and he felt that kind of remorse that follows being found out. It is as nasty for the time being as the other and more honest kind, but has the advantage of being more fleeting.

"Now what have you to say?" shrilled Miss Marjoram, pointing to the defunct poultry.

Mr. Ratcliff had nothing to say. And nothing was just what it was best he should say. His silence did not quell his aunt's wrath, but it did keep her from giving him away.

"Horace Ratcliff," said the angry old lady, "you were down in my will for a considerable share of my fortune. You will not get it! You will get the sum of one shilling—no more and no less! Hubkins, your arm!"

She swept through the gates on the arm of Hubkins, and Ratty stood as one turned into a pillar of salt.

"He, he, he!" chortled Baggy.

She had forgotten all about reporting Baggy!

He told his story, of course. But though it seemed to fit, no one wholly believed it. That Baggy should tell the truth seemed too amazing to be possible.

There was no further case of mumps, and within a few days quarantine was off, and Baggy and Gussy returned to the School House. With the move—or before it—Baggy returned to his old habits, and gave up his resolve to speak the truth at any cost. As for Miss Marjoram, she went. Baggy and Gussy were the last St. Jim's juniors to take tea with her!

THE END.

(There will be another grand long story of Tom Merry & Co. next week. Order your copy EARLY.)

CHAT ABOUT ST. JIM'S AND GREYFRIARS.

The reason for George Herries "barking" in the corridor the other day was only due to his catching Towser blowing his beloved cornet.

Great fun is expected at the school's Annual Sports, which are due early in September. George Wingate has got the job of compiling the list of entries—a none too thankful task, either. Gosling, the school porter, has disturbed the air by entering his name for the Obstacle Race. He may certainly lead in "getting through" the barrels, as it will not be the first time he has performed this feat.

Great interest centres round the Cliff House Girls' Basket Ball match, which is fixed for August. The bouncing Bessie Bunter is unlikely to play, because during the last occasion she was thrown into the basket in mistake for the ball.

We learn with interest that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, having just taken his favourite walking-stick to be rehandled, is to be charged 25s for same, exactly 2s. 6d. more than the purchase price of the stick. Never mind, Gussy, cambric gloves are considerably cheaper now.

The cackling that was heard within the school precincts the other day was not due to the trees having caught fire through the heat of the sun. It was merely a flying sphere receiving a succession of hard knocks from Tom Merry's new willow. What ever would the new junior team do without this fine batman?

What an awful predicament it must have put poor old Field in the other day when some unexpected visitors arrived to see him, and he had nothing to offer

them for their tea. With Fish in the study, too!

It appears that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had found a novel way of warbling his tenor solos in seclusion. The other day I came across him in the local baths, and he was performing the feat of singing under water. Have you ever tried this? Place a bucket over your head, then immerse yourself in water, and you will then find it very simple. This trick should only be performed in the presence of some friends who could be at hand to yank you out in case of accidents.

It is interesting to know that the Rhyll is the only river during the recent heat-wave which has overflowed its banks. We understand that this occurred the other day when Fatty Wynn plunged in.

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The ST. JIM'S NEWS

Edited By TOM MERRY.

EDITORIAL.

By TOM MERRY.

We are now really under way. Letters are pouring in by the dozens, and chief among them is one from Mr. Editor. He sends the good news that the "Gem" containing our first number sold like cakes taken straight from the oven.

In the first place, I want to say a few words to those of my readers who have often thought they would like to write to me, but have not done so because they hadn't the foggiest idea what to write about. It then struck me that if I supplied the ideas it would set your inspired pens to work.

To those who simply can't think of anything to write about, I will give a few questions which I should like answered. No. 1: How long have you been reading the "Gem"? No. 2: Do you like the introduction of the "St. Jim's News"? No. 3: Would you have preferred "Tom Merry's Weekly"? No. 4: What do you think of the "Boys' Herald"? No. 5: What sort of serial do you like best—detective, adventure, sporting, or school life? No. 6: What do you think of Cousin Ethel and Doris Levison contributing to the "St. Jim's News"? No. 7: What is your age, and what induced you to become a reader? No. 8: What are your favourite characters at St. Jim's? Name first three in order, please. No. 9: What do you think of the special numbers, and whom do you think the next one should be about? No. 10: Which, in your opinion, is the best art picture that has appeared on the back of the "Gem"? There now, if you can only answer just a few of these questions, I shall be deeply grateful to you.—Yours,
TOM MERRY.

School House Invade the Enemy's Camp.

JACK BLAKE'S BREEZY ACCOUNT.

THANKS, Tommy lad! Thanks awfully! You couldn't have given me a more welcome task if you'd tried. It seems absolutely ages since we paid our respects to that mouldy old casual ward, known to posterity as the New House. (That's a bit queer, but you know what I mean.)

The School House is Cock House at St. Jim's. It always "has been" and always will be! The New House—ugh!—is a "never-waser," and it never will be if your humble has any say in the matter. In short, the decrepit old barn in which Figgins & Co. burrow is every time an also-ran compared with us. I now expect you to understand perfectly the relationship which exists between the two Houses at St. Jim's.

Hence, thus, put you wise, I will go and gather my bodyguard, to visit the enemy's camp, and slay the great Figgins!

The three chaps from our study, Digger, Gustavus, and big-booted Herries, together with the four from next door, Julian, Reilly, Monkey Kerruis, and Hammond, ought to

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be quite sufficient to deal with a rabble like Figgins & Co.

Then we manoeuvred across to the casual ward. The age of miracles seems to still be in full swing, for we reached Study No. 1 unchallenged. The eight of us prepared to enter.

Study No. 1.—I did not open the door of Study No. 1 in the orthodox way, but took a flying kick at it in the approved Sam Hardy fashion. Crash! Thud! The door opened in the style; I took a step forward—and then, before I knew what had happened, the beastly thing recoiled, and gave me a buff on the nose worse than any Carpenter's right has ever dealt. Ow! Ooooh! I entered again, this time more warily. The place was empty.

Study No. 2.—I assault this door in the same manner as the previous one, only prepared to dodge the reply. Result: a bump on my forehead worse than any a golf-ball can inflict. How was I to know the infernal thing was locked?

Study No. 3.—The birds have flown.

Study No. 4.—After a careful inspection of cupboards, desks, chimneys, and inkpots I arrived at the conclusion that this lair was also unoccupied.

Study No. 5.—Nothing doing again.

Study No. 6.—Similarly situated.

Study No. 7.—Ditto, likewise, etc.

Study No. 8.—What ever can be the matter? Have all the little pigs gone to market, and no little pigs stayed at home?

With my seven chums at my heels, I approached the last study. Funny! There came a curious sound of scuffling, bumping, and whispering, which automatically ceased when I halted outside the door. I tapped twice. A cough, like somebody clearing his throat, is the only reply I can hear. I tapped again, and then entered. In the centre stood Thurzuman, looking innocent at the ceiling. My seven chums filed into the room. "Good-evening!" murmured Thurzuman, with vaslane politeness. "Won't you take a seat?" "Er—no, thanks!" I stammered. "You see, I was sent to interview the occupants of each study, but they all seem to be out—"

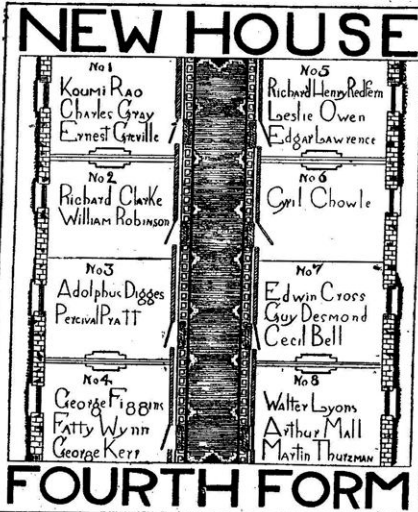
"On the contrary," interrupted Thurzuman smoothly, "they are precisely the opposite!" He rapped on the door twice with his heel, and then a most amazing thing happened.

Our eyes became the size of saucers as we watched—transfired! Armchairs and book case were moved aside; the table and screen were overturned. Too late I grasped the situation. We had been tricked in broad daylight! From behind the articles mentioned, poured Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen, Pratt, Clarke, and Chowie. Thurzuman opened the door wide and booted down the passage. Digger managed to follow, and then Figgins put his back against the door.

At No. 2 Thurzuman stopped, and rapped twice. As he did so, Digby sped past, and managed to get clear of the House. From No. 2 rushed Greyville, Koumi Rao, Mall, Lyons, Gray, Bell Cross, Digges, and

Robinson, who all made for the end study. Inevitable result: Occupants of Study No. 5 and No. 6, School House, trussed up like a lot of chickens. Figgins seemed to have mistaken our bags for dusty carpets, and wallopped them accordingly. Only three casualties were inflicted upon the New House cattle. I made no mention of Figgins' eyes the colour of blueberries, and managed to lunge Fatty Wynn with my book, in true Sam Hardy style. He collapsed in the empty fireplace, and the earthquake bump he made brought him the soot in the chimney down upon his fat head. Kerr stopped my right flat with his mouth. The band began to play! I must draw a veil over the happenings, with the exception of saying soot, glue, tar, and fly-papers were brought into the argument. If Digby hadn't turned up, the reinforcements from the School House, I don't think we should have got the New House alive. He isn't in such a hurry to comply with Tom Merry's request another time.

JACK BLAKE.



FOURTH FORM

A plan of the Fourth Form, New House, which is described in the article above, by Jack Blake.

Big Deal in Hats.

FOURTH-FORMER'S WHOLE-SALE PURCHASE.

By Our Special Correspondent.

WE understand that the Hon. A. A. D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form, has placed a record order for hats with Messrs. Topp and Nott, the famous hatters. In common with many other large London firms, Messrs. Topp & Nott recently announced startling reductions in the price of much of their stock. Silk hats figured prominently in this announcement, and Mr. D'Arcy's attention was naturally attracted (we refrain from saying attracted).

A quotation for a quantity was asked for and supplied, and at the moment of going to press we understand that a trial consignment of one gross of the hats is on its way to St. Jim's. We shall be interested to know where the proud purchaser will find room in Study No. 6 for one hundred and forty-four brand-new top-hats!

In any case, this supply should be sufficient for his requirements until the end of this term. In the event of the hats proving satisfactory, doubtless Mr. D'Arcy will favour Messrs. Topp & Nott with a really large order. We are informed by one of his friends that Tower, the building who owns the hats with enthusiasm. Next to a fellow's trousers, Tower is very partial to hats for chewing-practice.

At the eleventh hour we learn that the trial consignment consists of one dozen hats, not one gross, as originally reported.

A Victim of Fate.

MORE OF COUSIN ETHEL'S INTERESTING HISTORY OF THE "GEM."

(Continued from last week.)

FIGGINS had just been discussing a wheeze for taking Jack Blake & Co. down a few pags when a fag popped his small head round the door and informed George that Miss Monteith required his presence in his study.

Here Figgins had to withstand a spiteful infliction at Monteith's hands. It was not so much for the offence as for failing to catch Jack Blake in the recent paper-chase.

Figgins' great wheeze against Jack Blake was in the sporting-rivalry sense as much as anything. The senior match at St. Jim's had been won by the School House, and should share the same fate. Figgins, on the other hand, was equally determined that it should not. Both Houses were, consequently, putting all they could into training.

Figgins' plot was to capture Jack Blake & Co. as they came sprinting past the New House late one evening. Before he could attempt this he had to go to Monteith and beg a late pass, which would allow him to go out of the House. When he entered the study, Monteith solemnly asked him if he wanted another hiding. Figgins said, rather not. "He only wanted a late pass to go out into the quad and play for sports, as Kildare had allowed Blake & Co. to do. Monteith, of course, had to comply.

Thus it was that about half an hour later we see Jack Blake, Herries, and Digby tied up with rope, and painted and disfigured as the boys. Eventually they were discovered by a Form-master and all taken to the Head. Dr. Holmes commanded Blake to give him the names of his aggressors. Jack, naturally, kept mum.

But the Head easily guessed it to be the work of the New House boys, and directed Mr. Ratcliff to present the matter out. Mr.

Ratcliff, in his turn, made it quite plain to Monteith that if he did not very quickly discover the culprits he would have to request him to tender his resignation as head-prefect.

It took Monteith but two seconds to decide whom the culprits were. He called for a fag, and sent him to bring Figgins & Co. Monteith spent the interval of waiting in selecting his stoutest case.

Figgins entered the senior's study quite unprepared for the sudden attack that was to be made upon him. For before George had a chance to speak, Monteith grasped him savagely and belaboured him with an ash-paft for all he was worth.

So beside himself with passion was the head-prefect that he didn't care where he hit so long as his blows had effect. He knocked Wynn right across the study, and smacked Kerr's head in such a way that made it sing. Then Figgins managed to trip the brutal prefect up. And when Sleath, Monteith's rascally associate, looked in, a momentary scarp was in progress.

"Hallo, Monty! New sort of gymnastics?" he remarked.

THE COWARD'S GAME.

Then, together with Sleath's aid, Monteith managed to drag each of the boys over his study table. While Sleath held the juniors down, Monteith thrashed them unmercifully. Mr. Ratcliff saw Figgins & Co. creep into the room and gasping, aching in every limb—and he expressed great surprise when James Monteith, even adding that his office as head prefect was just as secure as ever.

When the aching juniors reached their study, the head prefect Blake waiting there. Jack had looked in to inform Figgins that he had been wiggled for keeping it dark and not giving Figgins & Co. away. Jack then noticed that somebody had apparently put two and two together, and guessed the rest. Figgins quickly advised him to cut off before Monteith caught him.

Luck was dead against Blake, however, for just as he passed Mr. Ratcliff's study in the Hall, Monteith came out, and the two met face to face.

Hot words ensued, and Monteith, in a blind rage, chased Blake out into the quadrangle. The tall senior soon ran Blake down. Jack, to save himself from the heavy punishment which Monteith always dealt out, was obliged to fall back on that old trick which has often been used in such circumstances. Just as the senior reached him he threw himself on the ground, and the senior blundered heavily over him.

Blake was up and away like a streak of greased lightning. Not so Monteith. When he gained his feet, bruised and sore, he made his way along to Kildare, snarling like a dog. The captain of St. Jim's saw all that happened from his study window, and he told Monteith very plainly that Blake would receive no punishment from him. His brutal way of deliberately awarding punishment for the most trivial provocation was at the bottom of it, and Kildare rightly refused to interfere.

So Monteith took his complaint to higher quarters—to Mr. Kidd, the School House-master. He begged that Kildare got spoken to far more sharply than he deserved.

Monteith went back to the New House with a very smug expression on his face. He had scored, and was feeling very pleased with himself. But Fate was hard upon his track, had Monteith only known it!

WHO WERE THEY?

When the evening shadows began to fall, the head prefect started on a long cycle ride to return until very late. This plan fell in exactly the same way as the avenger who was anxious to lay his hands upon the bullying senior. Little did this fellow realise as he wheeled out his cycle what was going to happen to him when he returned; little did he realise that his bed in the New House was fated never to be occupied that night. In blissful ignorance he mounted his cycle and rode away, watched by two pairs of eyes which could not watch until the light of his head-lamp announced his return—and the time for them to act. Who were the two who so quickly overpowered the senior, and left him to spend the night in agony? This shall disclose next week.—COUSIN ETHEL.

(To be continued in next week's "St. Jim's News.")

News in Brief.

JACK BLAKE is the oldest character now remaining in the Companion Papers. He was brought to St. Jim's as a new boy in 1906. It was over a year before Tom Merry and the rest of his chums left Clavering, and eventually appeared in No. 11 of the "Gem" Library.

Vernon Daubeny of the Shell Form at St. Whitford is the first cousin of Frank as a member of the Fourth Form at Highcliffe. They are both first cousins of Cecil Ponsbury of the same Form.

Frank Courtney was lost in infancy in India. He spent thirteen months of his boyhood with a fisherman at Aythorpe, a village on the Kentish coast, under the name of Arthur Clare.

He came to Highcliffe through winning a scholarship, and was identified by Major Courtney as his son when the major was paying the school a passing visit to see his cousin—Cecil Ponsbury.

Aubrey Racke's name is not Aubrey at all. It is Peter, and was changed to Aubrey when his father made a huge war fortune.

At Clavering, Tom Merry's old school, Mr. Quelch, now master of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, was master of Tom Merry's Form, the Shell.

Racke has a step-sister of eighteen, named Gladys Sylvaine. She lives out in California. Her name is only Racke by law. Her father died and her mother married a second time to Mr. Racke. She has never seen "Aubrey" or his father.

Racke's father is now worth many millions of money. He allows "Young Moneybags" just as much as that young rascal likes to spend. Among the things "Aubrey" now owns are a motor-car, a racing car, motor-boat, yacht, and a bungalow. He uses them fairly often.

Gussy when he first arrived at St. Jim's mistook the School Housemaster for the porter. George Figgins for the page-boy. Gussy began to give the master a curt list of instructions of what he needed, and before that fabbergasted individual could reply, had tossed his coat and hat on to his arm and walked away.

Harry Hammond, the schoolboy Cockney from Bethnal Green Road, mistook Mr. Railton's study for his own allotted apartment. He calmly helped himself to a Larment. He got from the box of the table, ran a cigar from the box of the Larment. When Mr. Railton came in Hammond offered the whole box, and told Mr. Railton to take as many as he liked!

George Durrance was thought to be the son of a German when he first came to St. Jim's. George Alfred Grundy stated immediately Durrance licked him: "That fellow isn't a German any more than I am! No German would ever do me like that!" Grundy's words came true shortly afterwards. Durrance was the son of a British naval commander.

Stop Press!

Next Tuesday afternoon a large meeting will be held in Pepper's Barn. The purpose is for a re-election of the St. Jim's Parliament. There are quite twenty candidates for the post of War Minister, and plenty of excitement is expected. Redfern will make a report, and despatch it straight away to London. With exceptional luck it will appear next week.

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A Magnificent Story of Life at Millford College. By IVOR HAYES.

NEW READERS START HERE.

TOM MACE, whose father is a professional crackman, wins a scholarship for Millford College. His father is rather pleased, for **MR. BILL MACE** has certain unlawful reasons for wanting to see the inside of the school. Mrs. Mace darns up her son's clothes, and Tom sets off for school. In the train he overhears a conversation between a man in a sea-green suit and a muffled ruffian. The ruffian is addressed as **SPIKEY MEADOWS**, and there is some suspicious talk that sets the lad thinking. At last he arrives at the school, only to be jeered at by the other juniors. Just as Lundy & Co. are fooling with Tom's things, a new master appears on the scene. He is **MR. GORDON GALE**—the man in the sea-green suit, whom Tom had seen in the train. Tom sees the headmaster, who is kind to him, and sees also **MR. MULLINS**, the master of the Fourth Form. He finds this man a snob, but, as he is feeling downhearted. He goes to Study B—Lundy and Bradshaw's study—to which he has been allotted, but he is roughly handled. **BOB PEEL** finds him, is friendly, and stands him a feed at the tuckshop. Tom then comes across **SPIKEY MEADOWS**, who tries to persuade him to leave a window open, so that he can enter the school at night, explaining the consequences if he fails to make up his mind within a certain time. Tom returns to the school. Being late, he is questioned by his Form-master, **Mr. Mullins**, who is startled when Tom mentions the name of Meadows. The mysterious **Mr. Mullins**, who evidently knows something of Meadows, dismisses Tom with a slight punishment. Tom reaches the dormitory, to find that his new clothes have been tampered with. His anger is aroused, and he tells upon them. That night Tom is ejected from the dormitory and made to sleep on the landing outside. The following morning **Mr. Gale** requests Tom's presence in his study. There, in spite of the threats made by **Spikey Meadows**, Tom promises **Mr. Gale** never to speak to his mother again. Later Tom's mother comes to the school to see her son, and Lundy takes this opportunity of insulting her. Tom is very angry, and threatens to fight the snob, but his mother asks him to promise not to fight. Lundy heads off this through Garnet. Knowing full well that Tom will not retaliate, Lundy gives him the coward's blow. Later Tom is visited at the school by **Spikey Meadows**, the incident being witnessed by Lundy and **Mr. Gale**. Lundy is rather interested, and meets **Spikey Meadows** himself. He is encouraged to place a bet, and, together with Garnet and Bradshaw, cuts a cricket match, and leaves for the races to see his horse take its chance. Peel and Mace set off to fetch him back.

(Now read on.)
Forced to Play.

PEEL did not think of the races, for to him they were, in a manner of speaking, "off the map." It did not enter his honest, healthy head that any Millford junior might deem the spectacle of horseracing more exciting than cricket.

And Lundy, with his friends Garnet and Bradshaw, was hurrying towards the course. Bradshaw's head was adorned with a shiny—very shiny—topper, and his boots had been ornamented by white spats that fitted to perfection. Across his elegant and aristocratic shoulders were slung a pair of field-glasses.

But now, when two miles had been accomplished, his spats were dusty—nay, dirty; his elegant topper rested on the back of his head, dusty, too; and the field-glasses, of which at first he had been so proud, seemed a dead weight.

"I say, you fellows," he gasped wearily, "slow up, y'know; no beastly hurry—what?"

And Lundy looked back scornfully. But, instead of ordering a rest, as the optimistic Bradshaw had hoped, Simon Lundy gave a warning shout.

"They're after us! Scorch like the very dickens!"

"I say, don't leave a chappy, y'know!"

Bradshaw's pathetic wail fell upon deaf ears, and Lundy and Garnet went racing on, their heads bent low over their machines.

It was too late, far too late; they had been seen. Behind them, Peel and Tom Mace were already putting on speed. It was a race now—a race in which Bradshaw did not count. He saw that, and failed to see any point in trying to do the impossible.

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So he dismounted, and watched Peel and Mace fly by him. It almost made him tired to watch them.

It gratified him to know that they would leave him alone, and he turned his machine round, and pedalled, slowly—oh, so slowly!—back to Millford.

"They're gaining!" growled Lundy. And he bent once more over his pedals.

But that one glance back told him that the game was up; they had no chance of escape.

On came Peel, with Tom just a fraction behind. Garnet scowled back, and saw that further effort would be wasted.

"I'll get Lundy!" shouted Tom. "You stay here with Garnet!"

The ignominy of being caught by his enemy, the scholarship lad, spurred Lundy to fresh effort, and he bent more and more vigorously to the pedals.

But it was hopeless, as far as he was concerned. Tom gamed at every push he gave his pedals.

Now, thought Tom, at last— But he had not reckoned with Lundy's cunning. As he drew near to the cad Lundy Tom turned his wheel over so slightly, and, to avoid a collision, his machine, Lundy moved across his front wheel, and Tom went sprawling into the road, on all fours.

Before the scholarship lad could recover, Lundy had gone speeding on. But Tom was not beaten. He was on his feet in an instant, and chasing Lundy again.

His teeth were set grimly now, and he intended to give the cad no mercy. On he went, his eyes glittering.

It had been but a momentary escape for the cad of the Fourth. A second later, Tom, riding more warily now, had caught him up, and placed a hand on his shoulder. He rode to the side of the road, cornering Lundy.

"Get off, you cad!" hissed Tom.

For a moment Lundy looked like fighting, then, with a careless shrug of the shoulders, he gave in, and dismounted.

"Well," he asked contemptuously, "what now?"

"The cricket match," said Tom. "You're coming back, my son!"

His tone indicated no denial or dispute, so back with him went the leader of the knuts, very angry, and exceedingly sulky.

Garnet was standing by his machine, with Peel's hand on his shoulder.

"What now?" asked Lundy.

"School," said Peel, with expressive brevity. "You're a fine cricket captain, Lundy! Perhaps after this you'll remember matches, or, better still, resign."

"What has it to do with you, anyway?" grunted Lundy.

"I'm captain! It's too hot for cricket!"

"Well, you shouldn't have fixed the match," said Peel. "It was your own fault entirely."

"I'm not going to play cricket!" hooted Lundy, wrenching his arm free.

"Nor I!" said Garnet.

"Bah Jove, no!" muttered Bradshaw, who had arrived by this time, and was wearily dusting his spats.

"Then this is where you start to guess again!" said Peel, with a cheerful grin. "If you won't come"—he shrugged his shoulders—"then you must be led, my cheerful cherubs!"

"Led!" shouted Lundy. "Do you think I'm going to be led back to the school like a Third Form kid?"

Peel nodded.

"Just like a Third Form kid!" he smiled.

"Don't be asses!" said Tom Mace. "You've got to come back! You heard what Peel said. And it's a rotten trick to cut a cricket match!"

"Hang you!" snarled Lundy. "I'm not going to be spoken to like that by you, you scholarship worm!"

"Shush!" said Peel gently. "Don't get ickle tempers up! Are you coming?"

"No!" hooted the red-faced Lundy. Peel made no direct reply, but slipped off his jacket. Tom grinned, and followed suit.

With startling suddenness Bradshaw changed his mind. "All come, y'know! Oh, rather, I wanted to come!" But Lundy made no remark until he saw Peel tucking up his shirt-sleeves. Then Peel's obvious earnestness overcame the leader of the knuts. He worked things out quickly, and decided that, if he must do one of two things, fighting or cricket, he preferred cricket.

So, with a very bad show of temper, he snatched his cycle, and commenced to wheel it submissively towards the school. Garnet and Bradshaw followed him, leaving Peel and Tom to slip on their coats again.

Not a word after that did the knuts speak. They were very sick at heart. They could not forget the vision of the race-course, nor could Lundy forget the excitement he had anticipated when Pride of the Morning should pass the post an easy first, and he should be the proud possessor of three hundred pounds.

"Never mind," said Bradshaw, when they went down the stairs some moments later, arrayed in white flannels, "we shall get a paper, and know that the gee's won. Three hundred quid, y'know!" "Yes, that's so," said Lundy, brightening up. "And we needn't play at all, really. Slack, you know—just slack about."

"That's right!" giggled Bradshaw. With that well-disposed intention, the three knuts made their languid way to the cricket-field, where the rival team waited patiently.

A crowd was gathered round the ropes—not an ordinary crowd, but a crowd that grinned and made incessant jokes. For at Millford there was no greater joke than Fourth Form cricket.

Even the rival team—Drayson's—were grinning. This match was almost a farce to them, for they had never had much to contend with, in either batting or bowling.

The captain made his way to Lundy's side. "Heads!" snapped Lundy, as the other prepared to spin the coin.

"Heads, it is!" said the rival youth. "I suppose you'll go in first?"

The school pitch was almost perfect. This fine day made it more than ever a batsman's wicket, and the lanky captain of Drayson's had not the slightest doubt that Lundy would put his own team in first.

But not Lundy. "You go in," he said. The lanky youth started, then grinned, and motioned to two of his friends standing behind him. "We're in first," he grinned. "Jenkins and Moore, pads on, quick!"

And off went Jenkins and Moore. "You silly fthead!" howled Peel at Lundy, when the lanky youth's long shadow had flitted away. "Why didn't you put us in first, you madman?" "You idiot!" howled Rider. "Fine sort of captain you are!"

Lundy Learns a Lesson!

PLUNDY LAY!" Jenkins of Drayson's took his stance at the wicket, and prepared himself for Lundy's first ball.

In the ordinary course of events, Lundy was considered a fast bowler; he thought it looked more impressive, and he could bowl maiden-overs by just keeping clear of wickets, and by making the batsmen duck their heads.

His first ball was loose, terribly loose, and the batsman, jumping out, drove it past cover. Bradshaw was cover, and, lazy though he was in most things, he was smart enough to get out of the way of the speeding leather.

"Funk!" hissed Rider, at mid-off, and chased the leather. He caught it up, returned it smartly—too smartly, as it transpired, for it went through Lundy's hands like a knife through butter.

The holiday-making leather sped to the boundary, and a four, overthrow, went on the score-sheet. As the batsman had already run one, Drayson's had scored five from one ball.

From behind the stumps—for he was wicket-keeper—Peel watched the next delivery carefully. Moore, the other Drayson fellow, batted now.

Peel had gone behind the stumps, for he knew that Tom was a better bowler than he, and, moreover, there was no one else in the team, save, perhaps, Rider, who could stop the ball. In all, the next over brought them fifteen runs.

Lundy threw the ball to Bradshaw, that youth suddenly realising the fact when the ball hit him.

"Do your best, Bradshaw, my lad!" said Lundy, and winked slightly.

Bradshaw looked at the leather, then ambled towards the nearest stumps. "Other end, fool!" hissed Peel, who was crossing between the wickets.

"Eh? Oh, yes!" Peel's face was very dark, and he glared at Lundy. If this tomfoolery were to go on, Peel decided to take over the captaincy; the match might even now be pulled off if Tom bowled up to form.

He leant forward, and awaited Bradshaw's first delivery. Bradshaw took off his cap, smoothed his hair, hitched up his elegant slacks, arranged his shirt, then took a tripping, fantastic run forward. When he had passed the bowling-crease by some inches, he bowled.

"No ball!" grinned the Fifth-Former who was umpiring. Once again Bradshaw bowled. The batsman had left the first ball strictly alone—he couldn't do anything else, for he could not have touched it save with a scaffold-pole.

Eleven balls Bradshaw bowled before the almost hysterical umpire was entitled to call "over!"—for Bradshaw had bowled five no-balls. At the end of the over Peel collared the ball, ignoring Lundy as if he did not exist, and threw the ball to Tom Mace.

"Carry on, Tom," he said. "Look here—" began Lundy; but Rider was near by, and he stamped on the knut's foot, hard.

Whilst Lundy was still hopping round, and howling, the field arranged itself, or, rather, Tom arranged it to his liking, and prepared to bow.

"Cover, Lundy!" snapped Peel; and, in silence, Lundy obeyed.

"Where shall I go, doncherknow?" asked Bradshaw. "Jericho!" snapped Peel. "Go long-stop; you can do the least harm there, I think!"

The Drayson fellows, thinking they had to contend with some more simple stuff, grinned. But Moore's grin came off quickly—so did his bail, with Tom Mace's first ball!

With eighteen instead of a boasted hundred to his credit, Moore wandered back to the pavilion, and a lanky fellow, full of confidence, took his place. Down came ball number two, and the lanky fellow played it with the respect it merited.

But the next ball got him tied in knots. In playing back to it, he misjudged, and the ball ran off his pads on to the stumps.

"How's that?" cried the overjoyed Peel. "Out!" said the umpire. Then he glanced at his fellow-umpire. Their expressions said as clearly as words could have expressed, "This fellow wants watching!"

And so the Drayson fellows reasoned. When their innings finished at last, with only one hundred-and-three on the board, there were glum faces in the Drayson dressing-room.

"That new fellow's a corker!" grunted their captain. "For goodness' sake, don't play about, chaps! Bowl like the very dickens! One man can pull a side through batting, you know!"

Which was perfectly true. Tom's bowling average was eight for eighteen; for Rider had taken the other two wickets.

Which was overjoyed. "Good old Tom!" he chortled. "This is the stuff! Eight for eighteen! Oh, my hat!"

He turned to Rider. "Well played, too," he said. "We'll lick them yet."

He was already donning his pads, and Lundy, in a far corner, sulky and defiant, watched him, with a scowl. The captaincy had been lifted from Lundy's hands, and he could not say a word. His team would not support him, for the fact of never having won a match rather bored them.

By now quite an enormous crowd had gathered round the ropes. The fact that the Fourth Form team had brought the Drayson innings to a close for a mere 103 had spread rapidly.

And now the crowd wanted to see Millford pile up a score. When Peel and Tom, padded and gloved, went out to the wickets, there was a cheer.

"Millford! Well played, Mace! Millford!" It was joy to Tom to hear his name called. They were cheering him—the scholarship lad whom they had so heartily scorned. Forgotten was Spike Meadows then—forgotten his home, his brutal father. He was thinking of the Fourth Form of Millford.

They went at the wickets now, and Peel was waiting for the lanky fellow's first ball. Down it came, and away—away through the slips, between first and second, cutting across the turf like a mowing-machine.

Out to the boundary it went, as Peel and Tom saw before they had time to cross. It was then that the Drayson fellows awoke to the fact that they might, after all, be defeated.

The second ball went for one, and then Tom, amidst a hush

from the throng round the ropes, faced the bowling, full of confidence.

He stopped the first, and glided the second to leg, with as pretty a stroke as had ever been seen at Millford.

"Pretty, pretty!" shouted Mr. Gale, who had been watching in admiration.

And a cry arose from the ropes:

"Well played, Mace!"
 What music that cry was to Tom Mace, as he crossed between the wickets! Cheered, and because he had helped the school! Nor was he finished yet. He would bat on, and show them what he could do when he tried.

Two they ran, then Moore returned the ball, and the lanky man bowled again. Once more Tom faced him, and with the same absolute confidence as before. It was a three this time, a clean carpe drive that was out of reach of mid-off, and which cover-point hardly saw at all.

So the two went on, much to the Drayson fellows' surprise. Twenty, 30—ay, even 40, went on to the board, with no wicket fallen.

The crowd round the ropes cheered frantically. Peel was doing well, too. When he really got behind the ball it went.

The lanky fellow had gone off, and had replaced himself by a small fellow, who bowled slowly, but painfully surely. So Peel found. The first ball he let out at. But it wasn't where he had hoped it would be, and, with a clatter, his off-stump went to the ground.

Tom almost groaned aloud, for he knew that the end had nearly come—that after Peel there was no one save Rider and Lundy. How could they win, unless he himself, by a superhuman effort, pulled them through?

Tom knew that it was "up to him" now. And he set his teeth grimly. He would not get out. But cricket is a strange game, made up of accidents. Often the cleverest of batsmen will fall, while a mere "rabbit" runs up the total in cheerful style.

In came Rider, and Tom sighed with relief. For Dick Rider was a steady fellow, and, though not to be counted amongst the batsmen of the team, he was a useful partner. "Keep your end up!" whispered Tom, as Rider passed him.

And, really, that was the best possible advice. For if Rider played a steady, defensive game, Tom would be able to pile up the score.

Rider gripped his bat-handle nervously, and the slow break-bowler winked at his lanky captain. A slow bowler always prefers a man whose nerves are on edge to the confident, "don't care a hang" fellows.

Down went the ball, and it was watched in awe by a hundred eyes. Yes—yes—no!

The ball had beaten Rider all ends up; had passed his bat and been within an ace of the stumps. And then—oh, the irony of it!—it had broken off alarmingly right out past long-leg.

Tom motioned Rider to run, for it was a clear bye. Twice they ran, in fact, and Rider faced the bowling again.

This time he hit the ball, caught it fairly and squarely, lifting it high, as schoolboys long to see a ball lifted.

There was an immediate cheer, and then a groan. The batsmen had not crossed. Rider was standing still, gasping with sheer dismay. For the ball he had hit so stoutly was dropping, and right into the hands of the outfield.

Rider was out!
 "Well caught!" came a cry from Drayson's and from the Millford fellows.

It had indeed been a splendid catch. The outfield had had to run quite a long way to reach that ball. But it was in his hands now, and, with a grin, he tossed it back to the wicket-keeper.

But poor Tom groaned still more. The side was going to pieces. It seemed as though they had been demoralised. How he wished that they had not put on that slow bowler!

When the wickets began to fall the "rabbits" would have even less heart than ever. And now the next batsman—

The next batsman was already walking in. It was Simon Lundy. Lundy's face wore a severe look. He was adjusting his batting-gloves, and strode like a professional.

Lundy had not yet decided whether or not to "let the side down." Somehow his self-esteem, his pride, forbade him letting his wicket fall for a duck. Lundy's great ambition was to run out the scholarship lad; and, with that end in view, he would keep up his wicket till such opportunity arose.

Moreover, if he made a fair score they would not accuse him of foul play—perhaps.

So in he went, and from the ropes came a curious mingle of cheers and groans.

Tom eyed the "captain" of the team very closely. For he could judge easily enough whether Lundy was clean bowled, or whether he purposely made a faulty stroke.

Lundy made no mistake, however, and very neatly—so neatly that he was cheered—he drove the next ball between point and cover.

Three they ran, and then Tom had the bowling, and stopped the next two.

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THE ACCIDENT.

Old Lady: "What's the crowd over there, policeman?" Policeman: "Tram run over a cat, mum." Old Lady: "Oh dear! Was the cat on the line?" Policeman: "No, mum. The tram chased it up a tree!"—Miss Elsie Bentley, Green Mount, Barrow, Whalley, near Blackburn.

SO IT SEEMS.

One day during a local cricket match, a batsman hit a ball hard on the seams, which gave way. The fieldman shouted out, "The ball's split." "Sew its seams!" remarked the batsman, with a grin.—A. Hebron, 194, Colston Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

A SMART BOY.

Teacher: "Jones, have you studied your geography?" Jones: "No, sir. I heard you say the map of the world was changing every day, and I thought I'd wait a few years until things got settled."—J. Murphy, 57, Industry Road, Rochdale, Lancs.

NOT HIS QUESTION.

A club of eccentric young men had for one of their rules that on Tuesday evenings any man who asked a question in the club-room which he could not answer himself should pay a fine of ten shillings.

One evening Smith asked the following: "Why doesn't a ground squirrel leave any dirt round the top of his hole when he digs into the ground?" Nobody could find the answer, and Smith was asked for the reason. "It's easy enough," said he; "the squirrel starts from the bottom, and digs up." "All very nice," put in another member of the club, "but how does he get to the bottom?" Smith smiled. "That's your question," he said. "You must answer it yourself!"—W. F. Miller, Main Street, Strabane, Co. Tyrone, Ireland.

WHO'S THE BIGGEST FOOL?

There had been a quarrel. It was plain to all the other passengers in the tram. The woman sat with tightly-pressed lips, her hands gripping her umbrella firmly. The man sat and glowered at the advertisements. Everybody was interested. Suddenly, as the tram came to a halt, the woman's thin voice was heard: "If it wasn't for me you'd be the biggest fool in London!" Then for the first time the man grinned, and the other travellers burst out laughing.—Miss Lily White, 544, High Street, Harborne, Birmingham.

CLEVER.

A motor-driver was filling his petrol-tank when a small boy came along, and

stood gazing at the number, which was "V.N. 299." The driver spoke to the boy at last. "If you can tell me what that number means I will give you sixpence!" he said. The boy stood thinking for a few moments. "I know," he cried at last, "it means 'Very nearly 300'!"—H. Hill, 11, Gas Street, Coventry.

NO HARM AT ALL.

"What are you doing, Jack?" asked the little boy's father, pausing to look at some weird marks Jack was making on a sheet of paper. "Writing a letter to Tom," was the reply. "But you don't know how to write." "Oh, it doesn't matter, father. Tom doesn't know how to read!"—Keki Moos, 108, Parsee Bazaar Street, Fort, Bombay, India.

HIS IDENTITY.

An old darkey was charged with stealing a chicken. He was at the court early, and before the case was called the judge saw him, and asked his name. "My name is Johnsing, please yo' honah!" said the nigger. "Are you the defendant in this case?" asked the judge. "Oh, no, sah. I've got a lawyer to do my defending. I've the gentleman who stole the chicken!"—Albert Bone, 41, Bunniau Place, Basingstoke.



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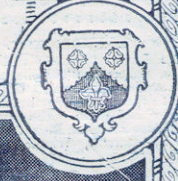


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