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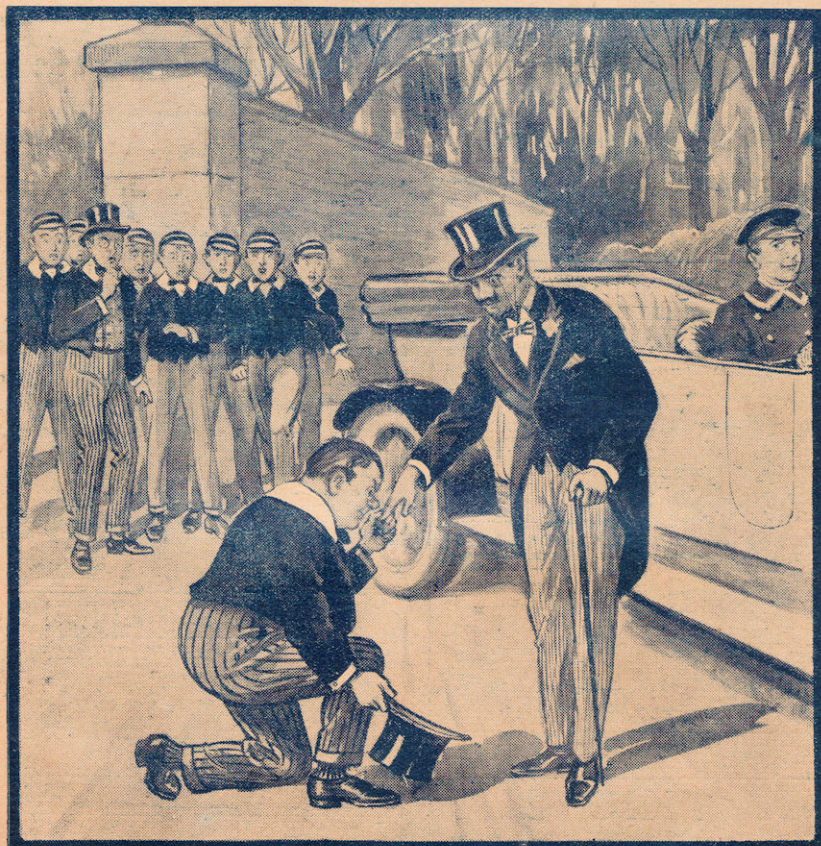
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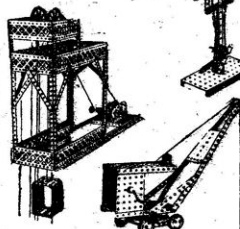
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Trimble's Pal—The Prince.

A Grand Long Complete Story of Baggy Trimble and the Famous Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

A Generous Offer Declined.

"FIVE-BOB seats?" asked Baggy Trimble.

"Yaas."

"You're all going?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! I'll come!"

Baggy Trimble, the fat and florid ornament of the St. Jim's Fourth, made that remark in quite effusive tones, as he stood in the doorway of Study No. 6.

Apparently Trimble expected his statement to spread joy through that celebrated study.

But if there was joy, it was well-concealed. There was no sign of it in the faces of Blake, Herries, Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Indeed, Herries remarked, in far from cordial tones:

"Rats!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was putting the finishing touch—rather, one of many finishing touches—to his superb necktie, standing before the glass in Study No. 6. Blake & Co. were watching him do it, reminding him every now and then that time was flying, and that life was short.

Blake & Co. were dressed rather nicely that afternoon. Their best silk toppers stood ready on the study table. Study No. 6 were going to the theatre. There was a special matinee performance at the Wayland Theatre Royal. It was a performance of "Hamlet," and Arthur Augustus had remarked that it was really the thing to encourage Shakespeare in the theatres.

As Arthur Augustus was prepared to "stand" the seats, plus a taxi to carry the party over to Wayland, Blake & Co. concurred heartily in supporting and encouraging Shakespeare. On the same terms they would have supported and encouraged almost anybody.

In the circumstances they felt bound to give Gussy plenty of time with his tie. They did not urge him to haste more than once a minute.

Then Trimble rolled in.

"I'll come!" repeated Trimble. "I believe it's a rather good show. Tom Merry has been asking me to go along with him. But I told him I'd rather stick to my pals in my own Form."

Blake glanced round.

"Hav' you any pals in your own Form?" he asked, in tones of surprise.

"Ahem! When are you fellows starting?"

"When Gussy's tied his tie," said Blake. "Any time with the next two or three hours."

"Weally, Blake."

"Is that taxi outside waiting for you?"

"Yes."

"Who's going to stand me a ticket?"

There was no reply from Study No. 6. If looks went for anything, however, it was clear that there was nobody in the study who was going to stand Baggy Trimble a ticket.

"Don't all speak at once," said Trimble.

Nobody spoke at all.

Trimble coughed.

"The fact is, you fellows," he said, in a confidential sort of way, "I happen to be rather short of money this afternoon. Like a generous ass, you know, I lent my last pound note to Levison of the Fourth—"

"Liar!" cooed Herries.

"Ahem! Lowther owes me fifteen bob," said Trimble.

"Do you fellows think I should be justified in dunning him for it—in the circumstances?"

"Give us a rest!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned round from the looking-glass. His tie was finished, and it was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. He jammed his famous eyeglass into his eye, and turned it upon Trimble with a look of great severity.

"Trimble, you are uttain' fabviciations," said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard you as a wotten Ananias, Twimble. I should be vevy much obliged if you would take your departure."

"Certainly," said Trimble. "I'm ready to start when you are Gussy, old man."

"Weally, Twimble—"

"Nobody here is going to stand you a seat!" roared Herries.

"The fact is, Herries—"

"Hook it!"

"I do not want anybody to stand me a seat, as it happens," said Trimble, with dignity. "I should have been willing to come with you fellows; but, so far as a seat goes, I can get one in a friend's box."

"Fathead!"

"Lord Westwood will be there," said Trimble loftily. "He will be glad to see me, I know. I am only asking you fellows for a lift in the taxi."

Blake & Co. stared at Trimble. Lord Westwood was a big local magnate, and they had noticed, in the local paper, that his lordship was going to honour the matinee with his presence. They suspected that Baggy Trimble had gained his information from the same source.

"Weally, Twimble—" began D'Arcy.

"You'll see me there in his lordship's box," said Trimble calmly. "I'm sorry I can't ask you to share it. Hardly the thing to inflict my noble friend with a mob of rowdy schoolboys—what?"

"Bai Jove!"

"But I might get you a word with his lordship, if you're keen on it," pursued Trimble. "He's an old friend of my pater's, you know, and he'd do practically anything for me. He stayed with us at Trimble Hall, you know, when I was home last vac—"

"Cut it out!"

"We had rather a distinguished party," said Trimble.

"There was Lord Westwood, and the Duke—"

"Oh!"

"And the Duke—"

"Eh?"

"And Prince Teddy of Rania—"

"Not the King of Bazuka and the Emperor of China?" asked Jack with deep sarcasm.

"The King couldn't come," answered Trimble calmly.

"His Majesty had half-promised—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"But the pressure of public affairs, you know," said Trimble, shaking his head. "King Ludo is a very hard-worked man, and he doesn't have the time to see his old friends so often as he could wish."

"Weally, Twimble—" said Arthur Augustus, quite faintly.

Baggy Trimble was quite celebrated for a fertile fancy that would have made the fortune of a war correspondent or a Cabinet Minister. It was admitted that he could beat Baron Munchausen and Ananias and George Washington at their own game. But this was really rather rich, even for Baggy Trimble.

"I'll tell you what, you fellows," continued Trimble, "I'll take you home with me next vac. I can't promise that Charlie Chaplin will be there—"

"You—you c-c-can't promise—" stuttered Blake.

"No; it depends largely, you know, on his public engagements. But I can answer for my friend the prince—"

"Your friend the prince?"

"Ted, you know."

"Tut-tut-Ted!" gasped Blake.

"I always call him Ted when we're together," said Trimble calmly. "I know you'd like to meet him. Awfully decent chap—no side at all. Is it a go?"

Study No. 6 gazed at Baggy Trimble. Apparently the fat and fatuous Baggy was offering them this, as an inducement to see him through at the theatre that afternoon. Certainly, they would have been pleased to meet that popular young gentleman, the Prince of Rania. But they really did not believe that Baggy Trimble could effect the necessary introduction.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus at last. "I was always awah that Trimble was a feawful fabwicatiah, but I was not awah that he was such a weawly feawful fabwicatiah as this! I wegard it as bein' up to us, deah boys, to bump him!"

"Hear, hear!"

Blake & Co. did not always agree with their noble chum, but on this occasion their argument was spontaneous and unanimous.

They rushed on Trimble, and collared him before he could dodge out into the Fourth-form passage. Baggy was a good weight, but he was swept right off the floor in the grasp of four pairs of hands.

"Yarooooooh!"

Bump!

Trimble sat down—hard!

Then Blake & Co. picked up their toppers and strolled away down the passage. Baggy Trimble sat on the floor,

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gasping, struggling for his second wind, what time Study No. 6 embarked in the waiting taxi and started for the Theatre Royal at Wayland.

CHAPTER 2.

Taken at His Word.

"TOMMY, old top!"

"Scat!"

"That was not a very polite reply to such an affectionate greeting as 'Tommy, old top.'" But Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell, was not pleased by affectionate greetings from Baggy Trimble of the Fourth.

The father of Baggy Trimble was the better Tom Merry liked him.

The Terrible Three of the Shell—Tom and Manners and Lowther—were holding a discussion in the quad when Trimble rolled up. It was a half-holiday, and the important question before the meeting was, what was to be done with Tom.

Tom Merry favoured football. Manners thought that the sun was quite good enough for a walk with a camera. Monty Lowther plumped for the theatre—being a youth with strong leanings towards the stage.

"I say, Tom, old fellow—" pursued Trimble, not at all rebuffed by the Shell fellow's laconic reply.

"Scat, you fat bouncer!"

"What about the theatre this afternoon?" asked Trimble, showing no signs whatever of "scating," as requested.

"There's a matinee, you know—" as requested.

"Just talking about that," said Monty Lowther, "and we can get on, dear boy, without the assistance of your fat chin. Carry it away!"

"It's 'Hamlet,'" went on Trimble. "The chap who takes the Prince of Denmark's part is said to be very good—"

young fellow named Stuckey. The paper has a lot to say about him. I'm going. I thought you fellows might like to come."

"Offering seats all round?" asked Manners sarcastically.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Trimble. "You fellows stand a taxi over to Wayland, and I'll stand the seats."

"Go hoh!"

"The fact is, my pater's old friend, Lord Westwood, will be there, and we can wedge into his box—"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see what you fellows are cackling at—"

"Look in a glass, old porpoise!" said Monty Lowther.

"We're cackling at a fat whopper-methank."

"If you don't believe me, Lowther—"

"Believe you? My hat!"

"Put it to the test, then!" said Baggy Trimble boldly.

"I'm going into Lord Westwood's box at the theatre. If you see me there, I suppose you'll believe me then?"

"Good!" said Lowther, with a chuckle. "We'll go; and if we see Trimble in Lord Westwood's box, we'll own up that he isn't the biggest liar since the late lamented George Washington. And if we don't see him in it, we'll rag him bald-headed. Agree to that, Trimble?"

"Certainly!"

"What?" ejaculated Lowther.

"Done!" said Trimble. "I can't say fairer than that."

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry. "Mind, we mean business, Trimble! If you're spoofing as usual you'll get a real ragging!"

"Done, I tell you!"

The Terrible Three regarded him curiously. They knew all about Trimble's fall, and the noble and indeed princely guests who rambled about that palatial establishment—according to Trimble. They knew it all, and did not believe a word of it. Nobody at St. Jim's did, though fellows wondered sometimes whether Trimble placed any faith in his amazing yarns himself.

"Done—eh?" said Monty Lowther at last. "You're going to get us seats in Lord Westwood's box at the Theatre Royal?"

"Well, I'll do my best," said Trimble. "Of course, my old friend may have other friends with him, and the box may be full—"

"Hedging already!" grinned Manners.

"Not at all!" protested Trimble. "I'll do my best for you; and, anyhow, I shall be in his lordship's box."

"Bow-wow!"

"You agreed!" said Trimble. "Don't go back on your word, you know. You're going to stand the taxi, and I'm going to get a seat in his lordship's box, and I'll make room for you fellows if I can."

"Agreed, on condition that we give you the ragging of your life if we don't see you in his lordship's box!" said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Done to that!" said Trimble recklessly.

"Ever seen Lord Westwood?" asked Manners, with a grin.

"One of my pater's oldest friends," said Trimble calmly.

"They were at school together. They grew up together—in fact, they're no end chummy!"

"They grew in beauty side by side," suggested Monty Lowther. "How odd, when they don't know one another!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They do!" roared Trimble. "When my pater goes into the House of Lords, Lord Westwood is going to be his—what-d'ye-call it—sponsor, or something. Any day now the old title in the Trimble family may be revived. And I can tell you, you fellows will cackle on the other side of your chins when my pater takes his seat in the House of Peers as Lord Trimble de Trimble—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Terrible Three.

"You can cackle!" said Trimble disdainfully. "But I can tell you it's practically arranged. The Prince of Rania said it was as good as done—"

"Who said?"

"Last time he was staying at Trimble Hall!" said Baggy.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Now, are you ready to start?" asked Baggy.

"Fan me, somebody!" murmured Monty Lowther. "What did the Kaiser say about it, Trimble, when he was staying at Trimble Hall?"

"What did the Crown Prince say?" asked Manners, with great interest.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're wasting time," said Trimble. "The matinee begins at three, and I don't want to butt in on his lordship after 'Hamlet's' started. Who's going to ring for a taxi?"

Tom Merry glanced at his chums.

"Will it run to a taxi?" he queried.

"If some other chaps are going we can wack it out," said Manners. "I heard Levison say something about it—"

"We don't want a dashed crowd in our taxi!" objected Trimble. "I'm accustomed to have plenty of room in a car."

"Could you telephone home for the Rolls-Royce?" asked Monty Lowther. "The one the Prince of Rania borrowed of your pater?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison and Cardew and Clive came out of the School House. As they were arrayed in their finest coats and their topplers, it looked as if they were bound for the Theatre Royal that afternoon. Tom Merry hailed them.

"Bound for the theatre, you fellows?"

"That's it!" said Levison.

"Like to whack out a taxi with us?"

"Certainly!"

"Good egg! We'll ring one, then—"

"That's done!" said Levison, with a smile. "Cardew rang one for us. We'll give you a lift. My minor's coming. It will be rather a crowd, if you don't mind that."

"Only Trimble minds," said Monty Lowther. "And if Trimble doesn't like it he can roll out."

"Taking Trimble along!" asked Clive rather curiously.

"No; he's taking us. He's going to get us seats in the box of his old friend Lord Westwood."

"My only hat!"

"I'll manage it for you fellows, too, if I can!" said Trimble generously.

"If," murmured Cardew.

"Well, come on!" said Levison, laughing. "If Baggy can wedge us into his lordship's box we sha'n't mind chucking away our half-crown tickets."

The Terrible Three rushed in for their coats and hats, and the party proceeded to the gates. Frank Levison minor was already there, in his best topper, talking to the chauffeur of the waiting taxi. The chauffeur raised his eyebrows as he saw the crowd of boys he was to take on board.

"All you gents going?" asked the chauffeur.

"Yes."

"This 'ere," said the driver politely, "is a taxi-keb."

"Looks like it," agreed Lowther. "It's seen service, but it still looks like a taxi-cab. What did you think we supposed it was?"

"Oh, I thought you might have mistook it for a sardine-tin, sir," said the driver, with sarcasm. And he started his engine.

The juniors stacked themselves inside the taxi, Frank going outside with the driver. It was uncommonly like the packing of sardines by the time seven juniors were inside—especially as the fat and fatuous Baggy required as much room as any two fellows. However, the theatre party were in cheery spirits as the taxi buzzed away.

Baggy Trimble was rather thoughtful as the journey proceeded.

He had obtained a lift to Wayland—that was something. He would be landed at the theatre. But Baggy was in his usual state of impecuniosity, and it was not in his power to pay for admission. In the circumstances, he could scarcely "touch" one of his companions for the price of admission, as he had been given the lift on the express condition that he was seen in Lord Westwood's box. How he was to get into the theatre, therefore, was rather a pressing problem to Baggy, especially as he was quite sure that the Terrible Three were in earnest over the ragging!

It was not the first time that Trimble's "swank" had landed him into trouble. Once a party of humorous juniors had accepted one of his pressing invitations to a glorious time at Trimble Hall, and Baggy had suffered great anguish of mind in his frantic attempts to "stall them off," and keep them away from the suburban villa which was the reality behind all Baggy's magnificent descriptions.

Now he seemed to be landed again! Once more he had been taken in his word—and his word was about as valuable as Russian banknotes.

The Terrible Three grinned as they saw the worried look that spread over Trimble's fat face, and intensified as they drew nearer to Wayland.

They could see that he was trying to think out his problem of how he was to save his face, as it were, and avoid being shown up as the hopeless braggart he was.

The taxi stopped.

Frank Levison looked in at the window.

"Here we are," said the cheerful fag. "Turn out, you slackers."

Tom Merry & Co. turned out. The chauffeur was paid, the rather high figure being honourably and justly "whacked out." Six juniors and a fag moved into the theatre vestibule; Baggy Trimble lingered behind. Monty Lowther glanced round for him.

"Hurry up, Baggy!"

"You fellows go in," said Trimble. "You've got your seats! I—I want to speak to his lordship when he arrives!"

"The play's just going to begin."

"That's all right; don't wait for me!"

"Remember what's going to happen to you if we don't see you in his lordship's box!" chuckled Lowther. Baggy Trimble backed away without replying. In a merry mood the juniors went in, leaving Baggy Trimble standing rather dismally in the vestibule.

CHAPTER 3.

Baggy Has a rain-wave.

"BAI Jove! It's Twimble!"

Four Fourth-Formers of St. Jim's strolled along. Blake & Co. had stopped for ginger-beer before going into the auditorium; and now, as they came along, they sighted Trimble.

The fat junior turned an eager eye on them.

"I say, Gussy, old top—"

"Come along, you fellows," said Jack Blake, who had the four tickets in his hand. "If you drop behind, you won't get in."

"Gussy, lend me five bob—"

Herries caught Arthur Augustus by the arm and hurried him in. Much as he was disgusted at the fatuous "swank" of Baggy, Arthur Augustus' soft heart was touched at seeing him lingering, like a podgy Peri at the gate of Paradise.

"Hold on, Hewwies," said Arthur Augustus. "I'd wathah not leave Twimble out—"

"Blow Trimble!"

"I'll stand him a bob for the gallery—"

"No you won't!" said Herries grimly.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Let him go into the Royal box!" grinned Digby.

And Arthur Augustus was hustled on by his chums, and Trimble's hope died away once more.



The chauffeur raised his eyebrows as he saw the crowd of boys he was to take on board. "All you young gents going?" he asked, running his eye over the juniors. "Yes." "This 'ere," said the driver, "is a taxi-keb, not a sardine-tin!"

Baggy Trimble stood disconsolate. He blinked round in search of other fellows from St. Jim's, and he sighted two or three. Kangaroo of the Shell arrived with Dane and Glyn. But they seemed quite deaf as they passed Trimble.

Then he spotted Figgins & Co. of the New House. But Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were also afflicted with deafness.

"Rotters!" groaned Trimble. All were in now; the first act of "Hamlet" was beginning, and the Ghost was already doing his unearthly stunts on the stage. Baggy Trimble wrinkled his fat brows in thought.

He had trusted to sticking somebody, somehow or anyhow, for the ticket, and he had failed. All he had gained was a taxi drive to Wayland—which was not of much use if he could not get into the theatre. He had trusted to his wits, and they had failed him—as they often did. Baggy Trimble was really the kind of character who would live by his wits; but he did not possess the kind of wits that could be lived by!

A commissionaire came along and looked inquiringly at Baggy Trimble. Then a brilliant idea came into Baggy's fat mind.

He beckoned loftily to the man. "Has Lord Westwood arrived?" he asked. "Yes, sir, he was in his box early." "Good! Show me to him, will you?" "Eh?"

"I'm from St. Jim's," explained Baggy. "I have a message from the Head for Lord Westwood—his—his son's been taken ill—"

The commissionaire eyed the fat junior. "At the school?" he asked. "Yes."

The man hesitated. He could see that Baggy was a St. Jim's fellow, and he had seen him in talk with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, whom he knew by sight, and knew to be the son of a lord. And Baggy's manner was quite

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assured. After all, if Lord Westwood had a son at St. Jim's who had been taken suddenly ill, it was natural enough for the Head to send him a message.

"Follow me, sir!" said the man at last. "Hurry up," said Trimble. "It's rather a serious case!" "This way, sir!"

Baggy Trimble followed the commissionaire, his fat heart beating. Was he going to succeed, after all, by sheer bluff? He was aware that the Terrible Three would be looking quite as much at Lord Westwood's box as at the stage. They would give Baggy his chance! If they saw him there, that was enough.

A gentleman in evening dress, of a managerial appearance, stopped them at a door, and Baggy's heart sank. But the commissionaire muttered a few words and passed on with Trimble. Once more the fat junior breathed freely.

In the corridor on which the doors of the boxes opened the commissionaire paused, and tapped, and opened a door. "This is his lordship's box," he said.

"Thanks!" said Baggy distantly.

In the box, a rather stiff-looking old gentleman sat alone, his eyes on the stage, where the first act of "Hamlet" was in progress. He turned his head as Baggy stepped in. Baggy knew him by sight—he had seen Lord Westwood driving in his car more than once.

"What is it—what—what?" asked his lordship, rather irritably.

"This lad has a message for you, my lord," said the commissionaire. "He says it is serious, about your son—"

"Come in, boy," said Lord Westwood.

"Certainly, sir," said Trimble; and he came in briskly. The commissionaire closed the door after him.

The old lord blinked at Trimble.

"A message about my son?" he asked. "That is very odd. Have you come from London?"

"Nunno! From—from St. Jim's!" stammered Baggy. "The school?" asked his lordship, puzzled.

"Ye-ees, sir."

"I do not see—"

Again Baggy had a brain-wave.

"Are you—are you Mr. Jackson, sir?" he gasped.

"Absurd! I am Lord Westwood!"

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"Oh! I—I've been shown into the wrong box, then, sir," said Baggy. "I—I've a message to—to—to Mr. John—"

"What?"

"I—I mean Mr. Jackson, sir, about his son—at the school—but there's no hurry. I'm interrupting you, sir."

"You are!" said his lordship crossly.

He turned to the stage again.

Baggy Trimble drew a deep breath. He was in Lord Westwood's box—there was no doubt about that. As his lordship fixed his attention on the stage, and became oblivious of Baggy's existence, the fat junior edged nearer and nearer to the front of the box. Lord Westwood, in all probability, supposed that he had left the box to look for "Mr. Jackson." Instead of which, Baggy, keeping carefully behind his lordship, came to the front of the box, and looked out boldly over the auditorium. Lord Westwood had the chair that was nearest the stage. There were several other chairs along the front of the box, and Baggy sank silently into one of them. He rested his elbows on the plush before him, and gazed over the audience.

There was a gasp from three juniors in the stalls below.

"Look!" whispered Monty Lowther.

"Baggy," breathed Tom Merry, "in Lord Westwood's box!"

"My only hat!" murmured Manners. "Can he have been telling the truth?"

"Baggy—and the truth!" said Lowther. "A contradiction in terms, dear boy."

"But there he is!" said Tom.

"Sh!" came several voices round about. Hamlet, on the stage, was talking, and the audience wanted to hear Hamlet, not Tom Merry & Co. So the Terrible Three gave up the problem, and devoted their attention to the play.

There were a dozen other St. Jim's fellows who spotted Baggy Trimble in his lordship's box, with great wonder.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy fixed his eyeglass on Baggy, really not quite able to believe the evidence of that celebrated monocle.

"Bai Jove! It's Twimble!" he murmured.

"Or his ghost!" grinned Blake.

"It's weally Twimble! This is vewy remarkable, deah boys. Twimble seems to have told the truth!"

And Arthur Augustus puzzled so much over that really remarkable occurrence that he was scarcely aware of the glibly proceedings that were going on on the ramparts of Elinore.

CHAPTER 4.

Trimble's Triumph.

BAGGY TRIMBLE smiled genially. He even ventured to wave a fat hand to his school-fellows below.

Lord Westwood seemed rather keen on Shakespeare, for he did not turn his head, and remained quite unaware, for some time, of the addition to his box.

Baggy sat tight.

As soon as the noble lord discovered that he was there, Baggy knew that he would have to go; but his luck was in at present. Meanwhile, he was seeing the play; and, what was more, in his eyes, he was swanking in the presence of the juniors, who had decided to believe his statements.

"Perhaps they'll believe me now!" Trimble said to himself. "Tom Merry said that seeing was believing."

And Trimble barely suppressed a fat chuckle.

The play went on, and Trimble, feeling more and more secure, as Lord Westwood did not turn his head, ventured to give some attention to the stage. Mr. Stuckey, as Hamlet, was going strong. The actor was a young man, who evidently fancied himself in the part, and he was giving the Prince of Denmark an emphatic show. The touring company that had brought Shakespeare to Wayland was not a first-class company, and the acting was of the stage stagey, so to speak; but it went down very well with the unsophisticated Wayland audience. Baggy heard Lord Westwood grunt several times, as if his lordship was not wholly enjoying himself. As a matter of fact, his lordship had only turned up for the performance as a sort of social duty, and did not intend to remain for more than one act. But during that act he kindly kept up an appearance of interest in the proceedings. He did not turn his head from the stage, and so it came to pass that Baggy Trimble sat on unperceived. It was really wonderful luck for Baggy. But it was not to last!

The curtain dropped after the act, and Lord Westwood rose once to his feet. Then his eyes fell upon Baggy Trimble, and he put up an eyeglass and stared at him, evidently astounded to find that he was not alone in the box.

"What—what?" he ejaculated.

Baggy jumped up.

"Who—What—what are you doing here?" ejaculated his lordship. "Who are you?"

"I—I—" stammered Baggy.

"Are you the boy that came with the message?" said his lordship, remembering. "What do you mean by remaining in my box?"

"I—I—"

"You are an impudent youngascal, sir!"

"I—I—" stuttered Baggy.

"Go away at once!"

Baggy Trimble was only too glad to go. He had hardly hoped to get out so cheaply as that.

He scuttled out of the box.

He would not have been surprised if his lordship's boot had helped him out. Often and often Baggy Trimble had been helped out with a boot, after "wedging" into quarters where he had no business. Fortunately his lordship was too dignified a person to introduce his boot into the affair.

Baggy scudded along the corridor, and dropped into an elegant lounge as soon as he was at a safe distance.

He lounged out into the vestibule, and thence into the street.

There he emitted a fat chuckle.

He had done the trick—he had "swanked" to his heart's content, and he had escaped the ragging promised him by the Terrible Three. And he had seen at least one act of the play for nothing—nothing but a few "whoppers," which were a trifle light as air to Baggy Trimble.

So Baggy was feeling extremely satisfied with himself. He loafed about the theatre-entrance, and saw Lord Westwood drive away in his car. A walk home of several miles did not take Baggy's fancy, and he decided to wait for Tom Merry & Co. to come out. If the juniors had a taxi home, Baggy meant to have a place in the taxi; and if they took the train to Rylcombe he intended that somebody should stand his fare in the train. It was rather a long wait, and Baggy spent most of the time in rambling from one confectioner's window to another, and eyeing the dainties within with hungry eyes.

He came back towards the theatre at last, by a side street upon which the stage-door opened.

Two men were coming out of the stage-door as he passed, muffled up in coats, but with the traces of grease-paint still plainly discernible on their faces.

Baggy peered at them inquisitively, and recognised one as Mr. Randolph Stuckey, whose portrait was on the boards outside the theatre.

The young man did not look so princely as he had looked on the stage as Hamlet.

His ordinary attire was in fact, rather shabby, and his overcoat looked as if it had seen service in many severe winters. He was speaking to his companion as they passed Baggy, and his tone indicated discontent.

"Rotten house!" he said. "If it doesn't fill up better'n that we sha'n't do much in Wayland. Half the seats empty, and half the rest filled with paper. Pah!"

"Rotten!" agreed his companion.

"Looks to me as if the ghost won't walk," pursued Mr. Stuckey, pausing to light a cigarette. He was not alluding to the ghost in "Hamlet," but to the possibility of a scarcity of cash on payday.

"Shouldn't wonder! After you with that light, Stuckey!"

"Anyhow, there won't be a matinee Saturday," said Mr. Stuckey. "No blessed good playing to an empty house. We may pack it on Saturday night. That'd see us through. Mistake, these matinees in a dead-and-alive hole like this!"

"You're right!"

"The public don't want good acting!" said Mr. Stuckey, with bitterness. "What they want is the pictures, with a tomfool playing tomfoolery with a hat and stick! Pah! Come and have a drink!"

And the two young gentlemen walked on, Baggy Trimble grinning as he blinked after them.

But it suddenly occurred to Trimble that, as the actors were leaving, he these would be empty, and he hurried round to the front to catch Tom Merry & Co.

"Bai Jove! Heah's Twimble!"

Trimble hurried up to the group on the pavement. The audience were clearing off, but Tom Merry & Co. were debating the question of a taxi home. Trimble joined them.

"Hallo, you chaps! Like the show?"

"Yaas, watah!"

"Not so good as we do in our Dramatic Society at St. Jim's," said Monty Lowther critically. "How did you get on with his noble nibs, Baggy?"

"Oh, topping!" said Trimble. "I didn't stay for the finish. Lord Westwood left early, and insisted on taking me back with him in his car."

"Bai Jove!"

"He's rather attached to me, you know, as the son of his oldest friend," explained Trimble.

"How did you wedge into his box?" asked Manners.

"Eh?"

"We saw you there, you know," said Manners pleasantly. "You've got off the ragging. But how did you work it?"

"As my father's oldest friend, of course—"

"Cut it out!" said Lowther, of course—

"Can it, dear boy—can it!" said Blake.

Trimble sniffed.

"You saw me there!" he said. "I could scarcely have been there without an invitation from his lordship, I suppose?"

"You get into a good many places without an invitation," said Tom Merry, laughing. "It's all serene, Trimble—you're left off the ragging. You deserve that for your neck! But you might tell us how you worked it?"

"Look here, you know—"

"Here's a taxi!" said Levison. "Let's make a bargain with him to take the lot of us."

"Right-ho!"

"Me, too!" exclaimed Trimble.

"Bai Jove! There will be scarcely woom for all of us in one taxi," said Arthur Augustus. "Certainly not with Twimble."

"Gussy, old chap—"

"Wats!"

"Look here, you're not going to leave me behind!" exclaimed Trimble, in dismay at the idea of a three-mile walk home after his long wait. "I—I came with you, you know. I—I'd have got you into his lordship's box— I-I mentioned it to my old friend, but he wasn't taking any."



Baggy Trimble beckoned to the commissionaire as he came along. "Has Lord Westwood arrived?" he asked. "Yes, sir," answered the gentleman in uniform. "He's in his box." "Good," said Trimble. "Show me to him, will you?"

I did my best, as I said I would. But Lord Westwood said—

"Cheese it, old trump!" said Blake. "Walk home, and work off some of your fat, old porpoise!"

"I—I say—"

"Buzz off!" grunted Herries.

"Look here," exclaimed Trimble, "I'll tell you what. You fellows stand me the taxi home, and I'll—I'll—"

"Well, what will you do?" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"I'll tell you what—I'll ask my friend the prince—"

"Your whatter?"

"I'll ask my friend the prince to drop in at St. Jim's, and give you an introduction all round!" said Trimble.

"You don't often get an offer like that."

"Oh crumbs!"

"He's an awfully decent chap—you'll like him," said Trimble, while Tom Merry & Co. stared at him blankly.

"No side about him at all—just real decent. He—he—he'll come if I ask him."

"Are you alludin' to the Pwince of Wania?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in an ominous voice.

"Yes; my pal Ted—"

"You utah young wotah; I wefuse to allow you to speak of the Pwince of Wania in that wotten, familiar way!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I have a great mind, I wimbale, to give you a fearful thwashin'!"

Trimble dodged back.

"Keep your wool on, Gussy! You needn't be jealous because I'm on pally terms with Royalty—"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'm offering you an introduction—fellow can't do more than that," said Trimble. "I mean it. Some fellows would keep these nobby acquaintances all to themselves. That's not my sort. I'll present you all to Ted, all round, if you like. Are we taking this taxi?"

"Isn't he the real, gilt-edged limit?" said Monty Lowther in almost an awed tone. "His pal, the prince! My only summer bonnet! You'll ask him to St. Jim's to meet us, Trimble—"

"Certainly!"

"When?" gasped Manners.

"Saturday, if you like," said Trimble recklessly.

"Great Scott!"

"This taxi?" asked Trimble.

He clambered into the taxi as he spoke. Tom Merry looked in after him, with a grim brow. Somehow, Tom Merry did not know how Trimble had escaped the proper punishment of his "spoo" with regard to Lord Westwood; he had kept his compact, somehow. This time Tom Merry meant to pin the fat and fatuous Baggy down without a loophole of escape.

"Think it out, Trimble," he said. "If we give you a lift home, you're to produce the Prince of Rania at St. Jim's on Saturday."

"There was a chortle from the juniors round the taxi.

"Done!" said Trimble, with utter recklessness.

"If you don't, Trimble, you're going to have the ragging you've dodged to-day—only doubled," said Tom Merry.

"I—I say—"

"Calling it off?" chuckled Blake.

Trimble hesitated one moment.

But he thought of the long tramp home to the school, and made up his mind. It was several days yet to Saturday, and in the intervals he might think of some dodge, some whacking "whopper" that would see him through. Trimble had great faith in his powers as an Ananias. A lift to-day was so much clear gain, Trimble considered, and the future could be left to take care of itself. His hesitation was brief.

"It's a go!" he said desperately.

"We shall hold you to it!" said Tom grimly.

"Done!"

"Bai Jove! Of all the fearful fabwicatahs—"

"Jump in!" said Tom Merry. "We're giving Baggy a lift, and on Saturday we expect to see his pal the prince at St. Jim's."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And if the prince doesn't turn up, Baggy is going to be put through a ragging that will make his hair turn grey!"

"Yass, watah!"

And the St. Jim's party taxied home, chuckling—only Baggy Trimble did not chuckle. The prospect of Saturday was not quite a reassuring one to Baggy Trimble, and he did not feel in a mood for chuckling.

CHAPTER 5.

A Very Painful Predicament.

TOM MERRY smiled when he came across Trimble of the Fourth in the quadrangle the next day.

Baggy Trimble wore a thoughtful look.

Probably he was thinking of Saturday, and of the dire necessity of producing a princely pal on that day.

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Baggy could not help feeling that, in a way, he had landed himself at last. His most tremendous "whopper" had come home to roost, as it were.

All things are subject to Nature's law of growth. Baggy Trimble's "whoppers" were no exception. They grew and grew, like the celebrated little peach in the orchard.

From mere exaggeration, Trimble's "swank" had progressed to the most enormous fibs; and he had exaggerated so much, and told so many fibs of various sizes, that it was probable that Trimble himself did not quite know how much truth there was—or wasn't—in his amazing yarns.

Diabolical in his statements only seemed to egg him on to amplifying them, perhaps in the hope of thereby convincing the doubting Thomases.

Now, with utter recklessness, he had committed himself in the most hopeless way.

By sheer luck, added to cunning, he had contrived to pull through his scrape at the Theatre Royal. But certainly there was no prospect of pulling through his new scrape in the same lucky way.

His chief hope was that the St. Jim's fellows would forget all about the matter and dismiss it from their minds, Baggy occupying their thoughts for long.

But in this Baggy was doomed to disappointment.

The fact was that the juniors were "fed up" with his insufferable brag, and they considered it advisable to give Baggy a lesson.

They had heard quite enough of Trimble Hall, and the Trimble motor-cars, and the Royal and princely guests at the Trimble family mansion. It was time, Tom Merry & Co. considered, that Baggy Trimble was shown up, so that he would have to admit himself, by his own mouth, that his astonishing yarns were "gas" from start to finish.

So instead of dismissing the matter from their minds Tom Merry & Co. gave it their very particular attention.

There was some entertainment, too, in watching Trimble wriggle, as Monty Lowther expressed it.

By what devices he would seek to wriggle out of his commitment was a very entertaining question.

Tom Merry was not surprised when Baggy rolled up to him in the quad that morning with a rather uneasy grin on his fat face. The captain of the Shell could guess what was coming.

"I—I say, Tommy," began Trimble.

"Go it!" said Tommy cheerily.

"About Saturday—"

"What about Saturday?"

"About—about my pal Ted, you know—"

"That's all right!" said Tom Merry gravely. "We're all going to rally round and give his Highness a reception. I've warned Gussy to look out his best topper for the occasion."

Trimble smiled in a rather sickly way.

"It's occurred to me," he said, "that his Highness mayn't be able to come down this—this Saturday—"

"Only just occurred to you?" asked Tom. "It occurred to me yesterday."

"He, he, he!" Trimble giggled feebly. "The—the fact is—that Ted has a lot of engagements; he told me so the last time I heard from him. He—he may be doing some public stunt next Saturday. I—I never thought of that. You know they're always getting him to lay foundation-stones, and open lecture-halls, and—make speeches and things. If he's got some public function on for Saturday, you know—"

"Better write to him to put it off."

"He would do it for you, of course."

"Oh! Yes! Certainly! But—"

"Explain to him," said Tom Merry seriously, "that you've undertaken to introduce us all on Saturday—"

"Yes; but—"

"And mention that if he doesn't come you're going to get a ragging that will be a real record—"

"Oh, I say!" murmured Trimble.

"For instance, you'll be made to run the gauntlet of the whole Lower School—"

"Oh!"

"Then you will be spread-eagled in the dorm and whacked with a Fives bat—"

"Ow!"

"Then you are going to be paraded round the quad with a label on you, announcing you as the biggest fibber going."

"Wow!"

"And then you'll be sent to Coventry for the rest of the term."

"Oh, I say!"

"And every fellow will agree to give you a kick every time he comes across you—"

"Oh dear!"

"When Ted knows all that he's sure to play up, isn't he?"

asked Tom Merry sweetly.

"Ye-es, of—of course!" groaned Trimble.

"See that he does!" said Tom. "I mean it, every word. Trimble! The fact is, it's time you stopped telling lies, and if you don't make your word good this time you're going to have a lesson that will be no end of a benefit to you. All for your own good, you know."

And Tom Merry walked away cheerily, leaving Baggy Trimble feeling anything but cheery. The lesson he was going to receive might be for his own good, but Trimble would have preferred to be left to go to the bad. But his preference, evidently, was not going to be regarded in the very least.

However, Trimble comforted himself with the reflection that it was only Thursday, and that anything might turn up before Saturday.

To his great annoyance, he found that Tom Merry & Co. had related far and wide the great event that was to happen on Saturday—or wasn't to happen. It had already become a standing joke in the Lower School.

All the Fourth and the Shell chuckled over it, and debated what terrific lies Trimble would invent to account for the non-appearance of the prince when the great day came.

That he would own up, if he could help it, nobody expected. Although his humbug was transparent enough for a blind man to see through, Trimble was never likely to admit that it was humbug. Somehow, anyhow, he would try to save his face, piling lie on lie, whopper on whopper, like Pelion piled on Ossa. Even when Saturday came, and the prince didn't, it was unlikely that Baggy would own up that it was all spoof; it was pretty certain that he would be ready with some astonishing fabrication. But that, the juniors determined, should not save him from his just punishment. And Baggy realised that they were determined.

That day the principal topic of conversation at St. Jim's among the juniors was Baggy's pal, the prince.

In the School House he was asked unnumbered questions about his princely chum, with much laughter. Fellows came over from the New House to ask about "Ted." Not only the Fourth and the Shell, but the fags took up the game. Wally & Co., of the Third, joined in with great glee. By the time bedtime came on Thursday, Trimble of the Fourth was the most repentant braggart that had ever bragged and repented.

But it was too late for repentance.

He had to produce the prince, or face the penalty.

Producing the prince was about as easy a task, for Trimble, as producing the man in the moon.

He dreamed that night of running a gauntlet of a couple of hundred juniors, every one of them anxious to get in a swipe.

It was a horrid dream.

On Friday, Trimble had a faint hope that the affair might die away. So far from that he found the fellows more keen on it than ever.

"To-morrow, deah boy!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked after breakfast.

Trimble gave him almost a ghastly look.

"To-morrow?" he repeated faintly.

"Yaas, wathah! What time do you expect the pwince to awive?" chuckled the swell of St. Jim's.

"Is he coming to lunch?" asked Blake.

"Railton ought to be told to put on a rather special lunch, if the prince is coming," remarked Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Better mention it to Railton, Trimble," suggested Digby.

"I—I—I think my—my pal won't be coming to lunch," said Trimble feebly. "He—he's coming after lunch. N-no need to mention it to Mr. Railton."

"Will he be coming down by car

asked Blake.

"Oh, good! We'll be on the watch!"

"Of—of course, the car might have a breakdown on the road!" said Trimble, with a gleam of hope.

"Bai Jove!"

"It might," said Blake. "In fact, I think it highly probable—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But if it does, Trimble, you'll be in Queer Street," said Blake, shaking his head. "You'll get the ragging, you know. Better drop the prince a line, and ask him to speak seriously to his chauffeur before he starts."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Trimble rolled away in a dismayed frame of mind, followed by a loud chortle from Study No. 6.

Saturday was much nearer at hand now, and the prospect-

was really unnerving. Trimble felt a great deal as the celebrated Ananias must have felt when the feet of the young men were heaped at the door. His worried frame of mind was perfectly obvious to everybody; but there was no sympathy for the champion fabricator of St. Jim's. All the fellows seemed to be looking forward to the morrow. And Trimble knew that they weren't looking forward to seeing the popular prince; they were looking forward to ragging Trimble—the record ragging of the term. And that day, much to the detriment of his lessons, Baggy Trimble did some very hard thinking. And the burden of his deep reflection was, just what he was going to get out of the fearful scrape his lying had landed him in? That was a question of the most thrilling interest for Baggy Trimble.

CHAPTER 6.

Baggy Has Another Brain-Wave!

"BY gum!"

Trimble uttered that ejaculation suddenly. The fat junior was seated on a bench under the old elms in the quad, his fat hands driven deep into his pockets, and a deep wrinkle in his podgy brow. It was after dinner—and Trimble, for once, had not enjoyed his dinner—there was too much worry on his mind. Now, instead of digesting his dinner in peace, he was thinking out his problem; exerting to the full his mental powers—which were not considerable.

But necessity is the mother of invention. Under the spur of dire necessity, Trimble's fat brain worked with unusual activity.

His fat face suddenly lighted up.

An idea, evidently, had flashed into his brain.

Baggy Trimble had had another brain-wave!

"By gum!" he ejaculated.

He jumped up, quite excited, and paced to and fro under the leafless elms, debating the wonderful idea that had come into his mind.

Shakespeare has remarked that desperate diseases require desperate remedies. And certainly it was a desperate remedy that Trimble had thought of.

In twenty-four hours he had to produce the prince—or take the consequences. Taking the consequences was not to be thought of. Producing the prince was impossible. There only remained some tremendous spoof—some spoof gigantic enough to impose its persecutors, and save him from the consequences of his brag. And it was that tremendous spoof that Baggy had thought of at last!

"He's got to come!" murmured Baggy. "If he doesn't, those rotters will take it out of me! He's got to come! But they've never seen him—only at a distance, anyhow, in public. Of—of course they know his face from the pictures in the papers. But—it will work!"

Trimble grinned.

"That fellow Stuckey—he played the prince in 'Hamlet,' and he looked the part all right. He's just about the age, and he can act! And I know—he's hard up; I heard him saying so to the other fellow that day. There won't be a matinee on Saturday—he said so—so he'll be free for the afternoon. He will be glad to earn a quid or two. I'll tell him it's a lark on the fellows—a bet or something. If he can make himself up as the Prince of Denmark, he can make himself up as the Prince of Rania!"

Trimble chuckled.

His old fat confidence was returning, as he pursued his extraordinary reflections.

"I can get his address at the theatre—he's staying in Wayland somewhere. I can offer him a fee—"

Trimble paused there.

So far, his amazing scheme seemed feasible enough. But certainly Mr. Stuckey, if he accepted the commission, would want a fee, and he would certainly want cash down.

Cash and Trimble were only distant acquaintances. The question of cash would have to be settled. That really was the only question to settle.

All the rest, Trimble felt, would be as easy as rolling off a log.

His fat face brightened again.

Once the prince had appeared as a visitor of Trimble's at St. Jim's, his amazing yarns would be substantiated; the affair would turn out to his credit and profit after all.

For ever afterwards, Baggy would be able to swank about his pal, the prince, and there would be no one to say him nay.

After that, even his gorgeous descriptions of Trimble Hall and its marvels could scarcely be discredited. For a fellow who was the bosom pal of the Prince of Rania would naturally be supposed, Trimble considered, to have a rather swanky home.

All was plane sailing if only the prince turned up. And any old prince would do!

Certainly, Tom Merry & Co. were not likely to suspect

such a terrific spoof as that! All was serene—everything in the garden was lovely, so to speak—if only Trimble could raise the necessary cash to enlist the services of Mr. Randolph Stuckey!

"Hallo! Thinking it out?" It was Tom Merry's voice as the Terrible Three came sauntering under the elms. Trimble looked round at them loftily.

"I was just wondering about it," he said calmly. "You see, the prince will naturally expect a rather decent tea when he gets here. I happen to be short of money at the present moment. I lent Figgins my last fiver in my thoughtless, generous way, you know—"

"Still keeping it up?" asked Manners.

"Keeping up what?"

"About the prince?" chuckled Manners.

"I don't quite follow your meaning, Manners," said Trimble haughtily. "I've mentioned that my pal, the prince, is coming to St. Jim's to-morrow. I've asked him specially, and he's agreed to come."

"Eh?"

"Nothing to make a fuss about that I can see. Of course, it's rather an honour for the school."

"No doubt," assented Tom Merry, with a laugh. "Mind that he comes, Baggy. You know what's going to happen if he doesn't!"

"That's all right! I've heard from him that he's coming."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I telephoned to the Ritz Hotel, you know," said Trimble calmly. "Ted assured me that it would be all right!"

"Great Scott!"

"But there's one thing," said Trimble, blinking at the amazed Shell fellows. "I'm short of money, and a fellow doesn't want to be stony on such an occasion. You see that?"

"Oh, yes!" gasped Tom Merry. "Quite so!"

"You'd better ask Figgins for the fiver you lent him in

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NEXT WEEK.

your thoughtless, generous way!" suggested Monty Lowther, with sarcasm.

"Well, I don't want to dun Figgins. Could you fellows let—"

"Ha; ha, I No!"

"A few pounds—"

"Not a giddy brown!" chuckled Lowther.

"I don't think you ought to be mean on an occasion like this—"

"We do!"

And the Terrible Three strolled away laughing.

"Rotters!" murmured Trimble.

A little later, Baggy Trimble might have been seen in earnest conversation with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. But that earnest conversation was fruitless. Gussy, kindhearted as he was, declined to part.

Until afternoon classes, Trimble was making a round of the Lower School. Grandy of the Shell had plenty of money; but for reasons that seemed good to Grandy, he declined to let Trimble have any of it. Cardew was rich—but all Trimble obtained from Cardew was the momentary loan of the toe of an elegant boot. Which was useless, as well as painful. When the bell rang for lessons, Trimble rolled disconsolately into the Form-room, as impetuous as when he had started his quest.

But as we have remarked before, desperate diseases require desperate remedies. Only the intervention of Mr. Stuckey could save Trimble from his rich deserts; and Mr. Stuckey's intervention could not be obtained without cash. So Trimble came to the really desperate resolve of standing the necessary cash himself! After lessons he wheeled out his bicycle and rode over to Wayland.

When he came back, just in time for call-over, he was on foot. The bicycle had been disposed of.

It was really a desperate resource, but Trimble felt that it was worth it. Not only was there the ragging to be escaped, but there was the glory that would accrue from a princely visit. And Trimble had hopes of getting a new bike from his father by means of a sad tale of a terrible accident.

The bike was gone, anyhow; and the cash was Trimble's. And he had found out Mr. Stuckey's address at the theatre, and called on the "Prince of Denmark" in the little room he rented at the Red Cow. And he had found Mr. Randolph Stuckey in a most reasonable mood. Certainly, the young

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man had been gruff at first. Trimble had called on him just when he was wondering how he was going to settle his bill at the Red Cow. When Trimble explained the object of his visit, rather timidly, Mr. Stuckey had listened in blank astonishment. But when Trimble mentioned diffidently a fee of two guineas, Mr. Stuckey had smiled genially.

"Only a lark on the fellows, of course," Trimble explained. "A wager, you know—a little bet on the subject. You catch on?"

"I do!" said Mr. Stuckey.

"You're such a jolly good actor. I've seen you in 'Hamlet.' You could play the part on your head!" said Trimble. Baggy astutely considered that a little "soft sawder" would not be thrown away in the circumstances.

Mr. Stuckey looked more genial than ever.

"Leave it to me," he said. "Only a bet, you say—just a little harmless spoof on some schoolboys—"

"That's it!"

"No harm in that, if you tell them afterwards!"

"Of course, I shall tell them next day!" said Trimble mendaciously.

"I think I shall be free on Saturday," said Mr. Stuckey thoughtfully. "There's no matinee! I'd half-promised to give a recital at Lord Westwood's—and the Dowager Duchess of Dumfries wants me to come—but dash it all, business first. Two guineas, you said?"

"Yes."

"My fee for an afternoon's performance of any kind is ten guineas!"

"Oh dear!"

"But this being a—lark, as you say, I think I could oblige you for five."

"I could make it three!" murmured Trimble.

"Three, and a guinea for the car!" said Mr. Stuckey. Trimble had five pounds in his pocket. He came to Mr. Stuckey's terms.

"Cash down!" said Mr. Stuckey.

"Two down and two after," said Trimble cautiously.

"Done!"

Baggy Trimble walked home to St. Jim's minus his bike, but in a fairly satisfied mood. He answered to his name at calling over quite cheerily. When the juniors came out of Hall, Levison of the Fourth tapped Baggy on his fat shoulder.

"Insured yourself for to-morrow?" asked Levison.

Baggy eyed him haughtily.

"If that means that you doubt my word, Levison, I decline to discuss the matter with you. You'll see to-morrow."

"Still keepin' it up?" grinned Cardew.

"Rats!"

"That chap's got a neck!" remarked Ralph Rockness Cardew, as Baggy rolled away with his fat little nose in the air. "He'll keep it up to the very last minute—you'll see."

And certainly Baggy Trimble did keep it up. Rather to the surprise of the juniors, he showed no signs of uneasiness on Saturday morning. At lessons that morning he was quite cheery.

At dinner he was fat and smiling and cheerful as ever. Tom Merry & Co. looked at him and wondered.

They had expected Trimble to "keep it up" to the last minute. But they certainly had not expected to see him so full of confidence on the eve of exposure and punishment.

After dinner, the Terrible Three bore down on Baggy. They found him preferring a request to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy for the loan of a topper.

"Mine's a bit fluffy," Trimble explained, "and a fellow wants to look his best when he's getting a prince as a visitor."

"Weally, Trimble—"

"We're giving you till four o'clock, Trimble," said Tom Merry.

Trimble glanced round.

"Ted will be here at half-past three!" he answered.

"My only hat!" said Lowther. "Where does he get his nerve from? You know what you're going to get, Trimble!"

"Only if the prince doesn't come!" smiled Trimble.

"You know he won't come!" howled Lowther.

"Wait and see!" answered Trimble.

And the Terrible Three could only stare at him in astonishment. They even began to wonder dazedly, whether there was "anything in it." Unless there was something in it, Trimble's confidence was simply inexplicable.

CHAPTER 7.

His Chapter Arrives!

"LOOK at him!"
"It beats me!"
"Yes, wathing!"
It was amazing! Tom Merry & Co. frankly confessed that they didn't know what to make of it. It was

past three o'clock on Saturday afternoon. Trimble had been given till four to produce his prince. Fellows were already getting ready for the ragging. And there was Baggy Trimble, in a shiny topper borrowed from Arthur Augustus, and a bright necktie bagged from Cardew's study, his clothes unusually well-brushed, his shoes unusually well-polished—there he was, standing at the gates, evidently in a state of great expectation. Trimble was looking and acting exactly as he would have looked and acted if he had really expected His Royal Highness the Prince of Rania to drop in and see him that afternoon.

What did it mean?
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his eyeglass on Trimble in great perplexity. Jack Blake wrinkled his brows in cogitation.

Manners and Lowther simply gave it up. Herries and Digby shook their heads as over a problem that was beyond them. Levison of the Fourth, keen as he was, admitted that he couldn't make it out. Cardew, keen as a razor, was beaten to the wide, as he confessed. There simply was no making out the attitude of Trimble.

If he had gone down to the gates with the idea of dodging out and postponing his punishment, the juniors could have understood it. But that evidently was not his object. He only smiled when a group of juniors posted themselves near at hand to keep an eye on him and cut off his escape.

"There can't be anything in it, can there?" said Digby at last. "We can't really have been mistaken in the fat bounder, can we?"

"Wats!"
"After all, he did get into Lord Westwood's box the other day, as he said he would!" remarked Digby.
"That was some sort of a trick," said Manners.

"Neither do I; but he wangled it somehow. He doesn't know old Westwood any more than he knows the Prince of Wales or the President of the United States."

"He managed it somehow," said Clive, laughing. "Perhaps he'll manage this somehow."

"But this is different," said Lowther. "He can't possibly get a prince—any old prince—to amble along to the school to see him through. Princes are cheaper nowadays than they used to be, but they don't grow on every bush."

"Wathah not! I suppose that Trimble is simply bent on pulling our leg up to the last possible moment!" opined Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry glanced up at the clock-tower.

"Twenty-five past three!" he said. "He hasn't long to wait! And he don't look nervous! Looks as confident as possible!"

"Yass, it's queeah!"
Several more juniors joined the group near the gate—Kangaroo and Julian and Figgins & Co. of the New House. They were all curious and all puzzled. Trimble waved a fat hand at them.

"Won't be long, now!" he said airily.

"Bai Jove!"
"Is it time yet?" queried D'Arcy minor—Wally of the Third—coming along with Reggie Manners and Frank Levison. "I've got a stocking stuffed with old exercises for Trimble! I'm going to see that he gets at least one terrific cosh!"

"Weally, Wally, you should not speak in that slangy way," said his major reprovingly.

"Don't you begin, Gus," said Wally cheerily. "Shall we collar him now, Tom Merry?"

Tom Merry laughed.
"We've given him till four!" he answered.

"Oh rot! What's the good of waiting till four?"

"But his friend the prince is arriving at half-past three!" said Monty Lowther.

"Only a few minutes now."

"Jewer hear of such rotten gammon!" said Reggie Manners.

"Hardly ever!" grinned Manners major. "Hallo! I can hear a car!"

"The prince's car!" grinned Levison.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors moved nearer to the gates. It was just on half-past three, and it really was a coincidence that a car

should arrive just at the time Baggy Trimble had fixed for the arrival of the prince. And the car was stopping, too! It stopped at the gates, and Baggy Trimble stepped out towards it!

Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another. The car was rather a handsome one, but certainly not a Royal car. There was no Royal insignia about it or about the chauffeur. That went for little, however; the modesty of the prince and his dislike of "side" was well-known. There was a young man seated in the car, in full view of the juniors. They looked at him, and they looked at one another, and they looked again!

"Bai Jove!" breathed Arthur Augustus.

"Is—is it possible?" articulated Lowther.

All the fellows, of course, had seen numerous portraits and photographs of the prince. Arthur Augustus, indeed, had seen the prince himself at a public function, to which he had accompanied his noble pater in the holidays. And Arthur Augustus was looking flabbergasted now.

The young gentleman in the car was a good-looking, good-humoured young gentleman; he carried his head erect, and, undoubtedly there was an "air" about him. And he was as like the portraits of the Prince of Rania as two peas are like one another.

Blake caught D'Arcy by the arm.
"Gussy, you ought to know—you've seen the chap at close quarters. Is that the prince?"

"Yass."

"Wha-a-at?"
"It's extrawordinaw, deah boys; but it's the pwince!" said Arthur Augustus. "I cannot make it out, but that is the Prince of Wania, or else his twin bwother; and he hasn't a twin bwother."

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

Racke and Crooke of the Shall came along, grinning. But they suddenly ceased to grin at the sight of the young man in the car.

"Why, my hat!" ejaculated Aubrey Racke.

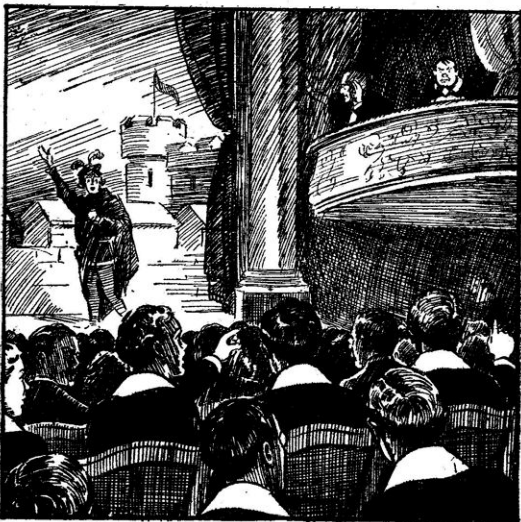
"You—you recognise him, too?" exclaimed Tom Merry faintly.

"'Tis the prince!"

"Great Scott!"

Baggy Trimble had advanced to the car, and opened the door. The young man stepped out.

He extended a gracious hand to Trimble, and Trimble dropped on one knee, and kissed the hand.



Baggy sank silently into a chair beside Lord Westwood. Resting his elbows on the push before him, he gazed down out of the box on to the audience. There was a gasp from the juniors in the stalls below. "Look!" whispered Monty Lowther. "Baggy! In Lord Westwood's box!"

The juniors regarded him, fascinated. The age of miracles, evidently, was not past, as had been erroneously stated. Trimble's prince had arrived!

"My dear fellow, no ceremony!" said the prince, in a pleasant voice. And Trimble heaved up his heavy weight to a perpendicular position again.

"So jolly glad your Highness could come!" said Trimble. "His Highness!" murmured Blake, overcome.

"Bai Jove!"

"I know how busy your Highness always is," continued Trimble. "It was really kind of you to give me a look in! Can you stay to tea?"

"Certainly, my dear fellow! I can give you an hour," said the prince. "I'm quite delighted to come! St. Jim's is one of the few public schools I have not visited. Now, no ceremony, I beg! You know how I detest it! Just let me drop in like an old friend, without any fuss."

"Certainly, your Highness!"

And the prince, after giving some direction to his chauffeur, linked arms with Baggy Trimble, and walked into the quadrangle with him.

CHAPTER 8. Glory For Trimble!

TOM MERRY & CO. were quite dazed. The ragging was off; Trimble's prince had materialised. It was amazing, incredible, unrealisable; but there it was—Baggy Trimble, somehow, miraculously, had been telling the truth! For here was the prince in person!

Trimble cast a lofty, exultant look around, as he walked in with his pal the prince.

It was a glorious moment for Baggy. Tom Merry & Co. took off their caps mechanically to the prince. He acknowledged the salutes graciously.

Through a deep and respectful silence the prince walked on with Trimble. Then there was an amazed murmur among the astounded juniors.

"It's him!" said Blake emphatically and ungrammatically. "The genuine article!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Trimble knows him!" said Blake. "Looks as if he does!" said Tom Merry, rubbing his eyes.

"I suppose we're not dreaming this?" Arthur Augustus coughed.

"My dear fellows, we have done Twimble w'ong," he said. "We thought he was bwaggin'—"

"He was bragging!" grunted Herries. "Well, yaas; but he was tellin' the truth about knowin' the Pwince. They must be awfully friendly for the pwince to make a special journey to see him!"

"Ye-e-es."
"We weally owe him an apology, deah boys."
"I—I suppose we do."
"There may be something in his yarns about Trimble Hall after this!" said Figgins dazedly.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Bai gum!" said Racke, his eyes glistening. "Who'd have thought it! There must be somethin' in his thunderin' yarns! I'm jolly well goin' to be nice to Trimble!"

"Same here!" agreed Crooke. "It beats me!" said Tom Merry helplessly.

"We're entitled to an introduction!" grinned Monty Lowther. "That was the condition, you know."

"Bai Jove! We mustn't wedge in on the pwince, Lowthah!"

"My dear chap, I don't meet princes every vac, as you do, and I'm going to make the most of this!" answered Lowther. "Come on, you fellows!"

Trimble had conducted his friend into the School House. A good many amazed fellows had followed them in; and Tom Merry & Co. followed. They were still half-wondering whether they were dreaming. Trimble and the prince had paused inside, in elegant conversation, and as Tom Merry & Co. came in, Baggy turned to them.

"His Highness wishes my friends to be presented to him!" said Baggy loftily.

"Delighted!" said the prince.

Trimble, who seemed quite at his ease in such high society, presented Tom Merry & Co., and the prince received them with flattering graciousness. To each of the juniors he made some gracious, pleasant remark, in the well-known fascinating manner they had heard of. The juniors did not wonder that the prince was popular wherever he went, if he was always like this.

"His Highness is going to stop to tea, Merry," said Trimble. "You'd like to have it in your study—larger than mine?"

"Jolly pleased!" said Tom. "If his Highness will be so kind—"

"Delighted, dear boy!" said his Highness. "This was your Highness!" said Trimble.

He piloted the Royal visitor up the staircase. A breathless crowd followed on.

Tom Merry wished, from the bottom of his heart that he had made his study look a little tidier for the afternoon. Of course, he hadn't been expecting Royalty.

There was a rather muddy footer on the table, a Latin grammar on the floor, and some of Manners' films were drying at the window. But the prince was graciously pleased with all he saw.

"What a cheery room!" he remarked. "Reminds me of my own schooldays, by gad! Not so very long ago—what?"

The armchair was wheeled out for the prince. Manners gave it a surreptitious dusting with his handkerchief.

The prince sat down.

Outside Study No. 10 the passage was crammed. The news had spread like wildfire that the prince had arrived.

In the quadrangle there was a sound of cheering. It rolled up to the window of Study No. 10.

If Trimble had chosen, and if the study could have accommodated them, there might have been hundreds of guests to tea. But Trimble selected his party very carefully. The Terrible Threps were allowed to stay, as it was their study, and D'Arcy was included, and Cardew. And, naturally, those two wealthy guests made no bones about providing the wherewithal for a handsome tea. It was not every day that they entertained a prince.

Wing hands brought supplies from the tuckshop. Study No. 10 was, for the time being, a land flowing with milk and honey.

The tea was not made in the study fender, as usual. Some ceremony had to be observed. It was made in the next study, and carried in, in state. And the prince graciously expressed himself pleased with the tea and delighted with the cake. And Trimble, in spite of the nobby society he was now in, did not forget to do full justice to the spread that was provided in honour of the prince. The prince did fairly well; but Trimble bade fair to beat his own record.

There was a festive hum of conversation in the study as soon as the juniors felt more at ease with their guest.

The prince talked freely and cheerfully.

He talked of his famous voyage from Rania, of State functions and duties, and remarked how happy he was to throw the cares of State aside for a time, and enjoy himself in an informal way among such congenial company as he now found himself in.

Which was very pleasant hearing to the congenial company. "Another cup of tea, Ted?" said Trimble.

The juniors caught their breath. Trimble had addressed his Royal visitor as Ted!

And the prince only smiled and replied cheerily:

(Continued on page 17.)

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"MY READERS' OWN CORNER."

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ONE WAY.

"I say," queried the visitor from town, "can you tell me how to make a slow horse fast?" "Certainly," was the reply; "don't feed him."—Noel Hickman, 35, Norman Road, Gosport, Hants.

PLAIN ENGLISH.

"What's that strange bird?" asked an old gentleman of a longshoreman who was standing by him. "That's a halbatross," was the reply. "A rara avis, I presume?" "No; a halbatross." "Yes, yes, my dear fellow; but I call it a rara avis, just as I would call you a genius homo." "Oh, you would, would you?" retorted the longshoreman. "Well, I call that bird a halbatross, just as I would call you a blank idgit!"—Arthur Gordon, 207, Jepps Street, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa.

GOOD COMPANY.

A fresh boy at the school had a queer way of talking to himself, and one day a Sixth-Former tackled him on the subject. "Why on earth are you always talking to yourself?" asked the senior. "I have two reasons for doing that," was the reply. "Well, what are they?" "One of them is that I like to talk to a sensible man, and the other is that I like to hear a sensible man talk."—C. G. Howell, Highbury, Hill Crest, Natal, South Africa.

WISE BRIDGET.

Mistress: "Why, Bridget, you surely don't consider these windows washed?" Bridget: "Sure, I washed 'em on the inside, mum, so ye can look out. But I intentionally left them a little dirty on the outside, so them dirty, signarent children nint door couldn't look in."—Sam Gold, 1652, Clarke Street, Montreal, Province Quebec, Canada.

MUCH WORSE.

"Can you imagine," asked a natural history teacher, "anything worse than a giraffe with a sore throat?" "Yes, sir," answered one of the pupils; "a centipede with corns."—Harold Allen, 469, Beverly Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

"I'm sorry I cannot give you a bun," said the small boy's mother. "I've lost the key of the pantry, and the bunns are on the pantry shelf." "That doesn't matter," said Horace. "If I go round to the back, and climb on to the top of the water-but, and reach right into the pantry window with the toasting-fork, I can get them." "That's just what I wanted to know," said the mother. "Now you can go right up to your room till your father comes home."—Wm. Wyatt, Coullie Hare, Udney, Aberdeenshire, N.B.

CAN'TS AND CANB.

You can't cure hams with a hammer, You can't weigh grammes with a grammar,
Mend socks with a socket, Build docks with a docket,
Nor gather clams with a clamour. You can't pick locks with a pickle, You can't cure the sick with a sickle, Pluck figs with a figment, Drive pigs with a pigment,
Nor make your watch tick with a tickle.
You can't make a mate of your mater, You can't get a crate from a crater, Catch moles with a molar, Bake rolls with a roller,
But you can get a wait from a waiter.—Percy H. Brown, 1386, Buller Avenue, Alta Vista, Burnaby, British Columbia.

THE TIN TACK.

A tin tack in a road crevice was stuck, A Dunlop swept over it—pew!
"I guessed," grinned the tack, "If I just kept my end up,
"Some day I was bound to get through."—R. Perry, 10, Jamieson Street, Cape Town, South Africa.

VERY CLEVER.

Jack was back home for the holidays, and immensely clever. At dinner with his father and mother, Jack looked at the covered dish containing two boiled chickens. "You think there's only two chickens there," he said. "I will prove there's three. This is one, and this is two—and one and two make three." "Very good!" said Jack's father. "I'll have one, mother shall have one, and you can have the third."—Frederick T. Pearce, 23, Colet Gardens, Hammer-smith, W. 14.

WELL CAUGHT.

At a dinner a gentleman told the company that he always carried himself according to the people among whom he sat. "It's this way," he said. "If I sit among scholars, I am a scholar; if I am in the company of aristocrats, I am an aristocrat." "And if you find yourself amongst asses, what then?" asked somebody. "Ah!" was the reply. "This is the first time I have dined with asses."—Miss May Zidel, 43, Terrace Road, Fordsburg, Johannesburg, South Africa.

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MATCHES PLAYED LAST SATURDAY.

By HARRY NOBLE.

SENIORS.

St. Jim's v. Highcliffe.
Rylcombe v. Rookwood.
Abbotoford v. St. Jude's.
Bagshot v. Redcliffe.

Results.

4-3.
6-1.
2-0.
5-2.

JUNIORS.

Greyfriars v. St. Jude's.
Rylcombe v. Redcliffe.
Bagshot v. Courtfield.
St. Jim's v. Highcliffe.

Results.

4-3.
4-1.
0-2.
1-1.

INTER-HOUSE.

Bolsover's Bathers v. St. Jim's School House Second Team.
Highcliffe School v. Grundy's Greyfriars New House Second Team v. Greyfriars Middle School.

Results.

4-20.
8-8.
2-8.

OTHER MATCHES (Unofficial).

Imtter Minor's Eleven v. Rylcombe Fags.
St. Jude's Fags v. Rookwood Fags.

Results.

8-5.
3-1.

NOTES.

(Harry Noble wrote a long report on each match, enough in all to fill several pages, if I had the room. But, unfortunately, I haven't, and the following is the most interesting event which will fill the allotted space.)

BUNTB ON THE BALL.

Every Jack-man in Sammy's team put in an appearance this week. As the senior and junior elevens of St. Jim's were both playing away the playing-fields were deserted. Rain fell in torrents, and Big Side was saturated. The two teams met on the senior ground five minutes before kick-off. There were no spectators, and rain came down heavier every minute. If there had been two feet of water on the field the fags would have been just as undaunted. They had only scored a few goals—nothing worth speaking of, in their opinion—when they decided to abandon footer. The remainder of the time was occupied in sloshing about on what can only be described as a mud and water skating-rink. When this had been going on for about ten minutes, the school porter arrived on the scene with his broom. Taggles put an end to the game all right—but not before the fags had almost put an end to Taggles.

HARRY NOBLE.

JUST GOSSIP.

Skimpole's activities are remarkable. Apart from the museum of relics and interesting antiques he has established, the worthy fellow is celebrating the winter season by starting as a cheerful letter-writer in the blue generally to communicate with him, and he will promptly forward a cheer-up letter by return.

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There has been a good deal of friendly gossip in the Shell passage regarding the competition for saying as many words as possible in half a minute. The prize was a bag of the best buns. Trimble declares he was deprived of the prize by unfair means, but the committee decreed that his claim fell because he splashed. The sentence chosen was "Arrested for seasquipedalian verbosity," and Baggy appears to have had trouble at the sharp turns in the phrase.

D'Arcy is by no means idle. He has thought out a grand scheme for generally improving the looks of the St. Jim's boys. He deplores the lack of care in the selecting, and all interested are requested to call on him for advice. Gussy has some nice colours blend. His little handbook, "How to Dress," will be published before Christmas.

In tuckshop circles they are saying that monotony in grub leads to dullness of intellect. Baggy considers that while there is much to be said on the appalling lack of variety in the menu as furnished by the tuckshop people, the main thing is its expense. He has always been a prominent supporter of the Free Food Party.

Our Information Bureau.

SEE REPLIES TO YOUR QUESTIONS HERE.

By DICK JULIAN.

DORIS LEVISON cannot ride a motorcycle, and has no desire to do so. Her father taught her to drive a motor-car a year ago, and quite a number of fellows feel envious of her ability in that direction.

GEORGE FIGGINS is the lucky young gentleman who successfully catches the eye of cousin Ethel. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is the unfortunate youngster who doesn't!

MR. RATLOFF has been a Housemaster at St. Jim's five years longer than Mr. Ralton. When Dr. Holmes resigns it is certain, however, that he will hand over the reins to Victor Ralton.

DICK ROYLANE and GEORGE DURANCE arrived at St. Jim's in 1918.

THE colours of Rylcombe Grammar School are green and black.

PERCY WYATT of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's has recently formed an opinion of his own ability and importance which is astounding. He has stated his opinion of becoming a famous author, and on one occasion loftily condescended to offer his assistance to Tom Merry as a sub-editor. We find him highly amusing.

THE favorite dinner of D'Arcy minor's dog, Pongo, so I have heard from the fags, the "dem." raw carrots, and old copies of

GEORGE ALFRED GRUNDY is the best dancer, singer, and pianist at St. Jim's, in his own opinion, but in nobody else's. In my opinion, Lefevre is the best senior pianist, and Lowther the best junior; Baker is the best senior at dancing, and Cardew the best junior; Langton is the best senior I have heard sing, and Dick Brooke the best junior.

HARRY HAMMOND'S father made for himself a million of money through selling a variety of hats all at the one price of three-and-nine each.

THE subterranean tunnel running from the Monk's cell in Rylcombe Wood to the old cellar under Pepper's barn is only known to Ralph Reckness Cardew and your humble.

AUBREY RACKE says he is going to write a very interesting article for the "St. Jim's News," describing what he does on Sundays.

THE occupations the boys of St. Jim's desire to follow when they leave St. Jim's are varied. Skimpole wants to be a missionary and a scientist; Aubrey wants to be a "b'boy," and have a "good time"; Baggy Trimble hopes to own a place like the Boulder (going home); Ralph Reckness Cardew hopes to find that wonderful job where a fellow is paid ten pounds a week for blowing out the seat of an arm-chair; Harry Nobis wants to play for Australia; Bate wants to be a general in the Army and hopes George Figgins will one day meet him in battle; Gussy wants to one day "let 'em have it" at Westminster; Grundy only wants to be the King of England (King Grundy, for ever and anon); Joe Frayne says he might one day be the headmaster of St. Jim's. (Can't we picture the Head in thirty years time entering the Sixth Form class-room and commencing: "Nar look 'ere! I want yer to all be've proper to-day! If yer don't do yer gogger-fry right, I'll detenshun yer for hall the 'old 'arf-oiday! So there!")

HERRIES has been the master of Tower ever since that troublesome pup was three weeks old.

CARDEW'S grandfather's residence is in East Berkshire. Cardew occasionally goes there for the week-end.

KIT WILDRAKE'S weekly allowance is fifteen shillings; Trimble's is half-a-crown; Melish's three shillings.

TOM MERRY is an orphan, looked after financially by Miss Priscilla Fawcett, his guardian.

AUBREY RACKE'S father pays Sloane five pounds a week to act as chauffeur to his son.

RACKE and CARDEW had their licences suspended three months for riding motor-cycles in a dangerous manner last term. Racks' arse till he was nearly black in the face that he had only been going at eight miles an hour. The policeman was not at all impressed by that statement, and neither was I, when Cardew told me his speedometer had indicated fifty.

NEXT week will see the grand Christmas Number of the GEM. It will be the finest number of your favourite paper yet published and will be a greatly enlarged number, and will contain many good things, including a splendid Christmas story of the chums of St. Jim's and a magnificent coloured cover. You should make a point of ordering your copy RIGHT NOW!

DICK JULIAN.

The Queer Case of Dr. Brutell

Written by Professor Hector Gordon, Science Master of St. Jim's.



An extraordinary story, dealing with incidents in the life of Dr. Brutell, the well-known scientist. Brutell, in his normal moods, is a highly respectable man, but he is afflicted with a strange malady which alters his whole character.

(Continued from last week.)

THE cunning brains belonging to the hunted members of the Black Circle were already thinking out some scheme which would enable them to foil their pursuers for them to put on the villainous crowd at that moment. They realized that their victims must be close on their track.

As a matter of fact, Dr. Brutell and the sheriff were less than two miles distant, and they were riding their horses so hard that it was quite impossible for them to put on the slightest extra speed. The thrill of the chase delighted each one of these rugged men of the West, and they did not intend to let Hammer and Finchers and the rest of the Black Circle elude them if they could help it.

The country was in many places exceedingly difficult to cross, but their well-trained and fearless horses performed wonders, and excellent headway was made the whole time.

The leaders of the Black Circle considered two or three schemes which were put before them, and presently they decided upon one. Finchers roared with laughter as one of the men explained the details to him, and then they all set to work to carry it into execution.

A number of logs were first obtained, and these were wrapped inside the coats belonging to the bandits. Then the men's hats were placed on top, and this completed the rough disguise.

The next move was to place the dummies inside the large motor-car, which they had pulled up just in the nick of time. But for the alertness of their chauffeur the vehicle would surely have crashed to the precipice below, and the whole villainous crew would have been dashed to certain destruction.

The plan was to send the motor containing its load of dummies over the edge, so that anyone passing that way would believe that a terrible fate had overtaken the outlaws. Finchers could refrain from expressing his thought of the simple way the sheriff and his party would be fooled.

"They'll sure think we are in the scrap-hunt with that motor," he told the men around him, and they all laughed loud and long as they contemplated the expressions of mingled dismay and disappointment on the faces of their pursuers.

The chauffeur now walked towards the car in order to start the engine, and soon it started moving towards the edge of the precipice, where a few hours before had stood the wooden bridge over Wild Cat Canyon.

The car rapidly gained speed, and a moment or two later, to a chorus of excited shouts from the outlaws, it toppled over the edge, and crashed down into the canyon hundreds of feet below.

The gang waited to hear the final deafening roar which told them that the vehicle had smashed to atoms, and then the rocky ground below, then, very cautiously, they peered over the top of the precipice. So far, their scheme had worked splendidly. It would have been quite impossible for anyone to tell that the hats and coats which were mixed up with the mangled mass of

wreckage below belonged to dummies and not to human beings.

The track of the car could be easily followed to the edge of the precipice, and so it was the most reasonable thing in the world for anyone to believe that the clothing below covered the remains of the tragic occupants of the car.

Finchers now led the way to some bushes which were only a short distance away from the scene of the crash.

"We will hide in here," he said, "until the sheriff and his party arrive. It will be interesting to hear what they have to say when they see what a terrible fate has overtaken us."

The scoundrel could not resist laughing at his own feeble joke. His mood changed rapidly, however, when an ominous sound reached his ears.

It was the pounding of horses' hoofs on the hard ground, and long experience told him that they were approaching at a great speed. In deciding to take refuge in the bushes they were only just in time. A few minutes longer, and the eagle eyes of the ranchmen would have discovered them.

Finchers warned his men to be silent. "The slightest noise," he said, "will give the men the alarm. Remember they are no fools. If we are caught—"

The leader of the party finished his sentence by making a significant sign which they could hope for was stringing up to the nearest tree.

Although these outlaws had plenty of pluck when things were going well with them, they were different men when they were cornered; and with loud curses on their lips they withdrew to the safety of their hiding-places.

Dr. Brutell and the sheriff were in the van of the party of horsemen, and they were now within one hundred yards of the still burning bridge. Brutell held up his hand as a warning to the men behind, and they all reined in their steaming horses.

"The gang are trapped!" he said, with evident excitement. "The bridge over Wild Cat Canyon has gone. It has probably been destroyed by some of the others who are on the trail of the Black Circle. Anyway, it is certain that Finchers and his crew could not have gone forward. We must look about for them somewhere else; their other trail should be somewhere about here."

With that the doctor dismounted, and he carefully scrutinized every foot of the ground. Soon the sheriff followed suit. The ground round about was very hard, and it was very difficult for the two men to pick up the tracks made by the motor-car.

"That's very queer!" exclaimed Dr. Brutell at length.

The sheriff heard his companion's remark, and walked over towards him. "I have discovered the wheel marks of the motor again," announced the doctor, "but the strange thing about it is that they lead towards the edge of the precipice where the bridge over Wild Cat Canyon started. Can it be that the car containing Finchers and his followers fell over the fall over there?"

Brutell paused and shuddered. Although these men were criminals of the worst type, if this was their fate, it was one which he could not think of forgetting so easily.

The sheriff looked on the ground where Dr. Brutell indicated. Yes, that was undoubtedly the wheel track of a motor-car. Then the sheriff glanced towards the edge of the precipice.

"It may be that your theory is correct, Dr. Brutell," he said. "It is more than possible that in their haste to get away the gang did not notice that the bridge across the canyon had been destroyed; or, again, perhaps their car was traveling at so great a speed that it was not possible to put up until it was too late. Let us go over to the edge of the precipice and investigate."

Dr. Brutell agreed to the proposal. "No doubt we shall soon be able to settle the question," he said.

One look over that dreadful precipice was sufficient to set at rest all the doubts of the doctor and the sheriff concerning the fate of the hunted outlaws. It was a long way to look down, and it made the men dizzy, but there, sure enough, lying amongst a heap of motor-car wreckage, were the mangled forms of the men they had so recently been chasing.

No doubt the sight of the two men looking over the edge of the precipice of death was the cause of a good deal of amusement to Finchers and his company, who were safely in hiding in the clump of bushes.

There was no amusement in the hearts of Dr. Brutell or the sheriff, though. As they gazed upon what they thought were the remains of the bandits, pity for the men and shame and indignation filled their hearts. The two men moved away from the scene.

"There is nothing more to be done now so far as they are concerned," murmured Dr. Brutell; "but Madeleine has still to be found. She must be in captivity somewhere in this district, and I am determined to find her!"

The sheriff agreed heartily to this plan. "We will tell the men the news concerning the fate of the outlaws, and start at once upon a search for the ranch-owner's daughter. The best thing is for all of us to split up into small parties, in that way we can cover as much ground as possible."

Brutell intended to lose no time in searching for the place where Madeleine had been hidden. He turned to the west, and set off along the mountain-side. The instructions were that the whole of the district should be gone over thoroughly, and the parties would meet together again at an arranged time.

Meanwhile, the poor, unfortunate Madeleine was experiencing a most unhappy time in her prison. The warning given her by the leader of the gang before his departure still rang in her ears.

"Don't lean against that post too hard, or the roof will fall in!"

These were the words of the cruel Finchers as he set off with the gang.

Madeleine knew that it was an artful scheme to prevent her from struggling in order to free herself. She had been tied in this uncomfortable position for a long time now, and owing to her inability to move, her limbs were tired and cramped.

At frequent intervals she cried out for help, hoping that someone passing by would be able to hear and come and investigate. But so far her efforts met with no success.

It seemed to her that she had been a prisoner now for hours, and although the plucky girl was not the sort to give in without a struggle, it really seemed that she would have to give up any hope of being rescued.

Even at this late hour, however, her courage did not fail her. She determined that she would fight on to the last. Once more she gazed at the top of the wall, and her piteous cry for assistance travelled a long way in the still air.

At that moment a solitary horseman was riding slowly east some way from Wild Cat Canyon. He was that? The man reined in his horse, and listened with eagerness.

Again the unmistakable cry for help reached his ears.

Dr. Richard Brutell—for this was the rider's name—hastily dismounted, and tied his horse to the nearest tree. Then he walked about the place in the direction from which the sound came.

Could it be Madeleine? This was the thought which was uppermost in the mind of the distinguished doctor.

"Who is there?" he shouted back, in response to the repeated cry for assistance. "My name is Madeleine Stanton! Come quickly, it is I!"

(To be continued in next Wednesday's "GEM".)

THE VALLEY OF SURPRISE

Read this magnificent story dealing with the adventures of three chums in a strange country.

By REID WHITLEY.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Hobby Tarrant and Tony Matthers, with Billy Kaddie, a trusted negro servant, are on an expedition in the Andes. A volcanic eruption, causing a tremendous tidal wave, carries their canoe into the Valley of Surprise. The party explores the valley, and meet many weird and wonderful animals, and experience many adventurous times. Reaching a village, they are confronted by a race of strange, primitive men, who show great hospitality, and make friends. But Maxia, the medicine-man, hates the newcomers, and through a dastardly scheme which he hatches, they very nearly lose their lives. For this action the Ariki loses faith in him. Maxia then succeeds in making friends with the Mangas, a party of red-haired, semi-human brutes, who are busy in wreaking further vengeance upon the Ariki.

"We'll have to organise a search for Maxia," says Tony gravely. "There'll be no peace until he's settled."

Tony's Heroic Action.

But that talk with the chief was not destined to do him any good. He had Hobby disposed of his third helping of broiled pigeon than one of the men on guard yelled an alarm, and everyone flew to arms.

The women snatched up their children and fled into the upper branches. Lalo rushed to the man who had shouted, peered down through the forest, and turned towards those who had risen to join him, weapons in hand.

"Horro!" he shouted; and at the word a shudder seemed to pass through his followers. "Oh, my aunt!" exclaimed Hobby. "Look! What a whopper!"

It was. Already they thought they had seen the largest of the terrific reptiles that survived in the valley. They had been mistaken. The thing that now slowly advanced through the forest was bigger by far than the bronchosaur that they had seen on their first night in the place.

It had the same huge hind-legs, and long, scaly, spiked tail, but its forelegs were longer. So, too, was its neck, while its jaws were tremendous, and armed with an array of teeth that could have minced a horse in one crunch.

This enormous horror advanced slowly, sniffing the air, while its keen eyes, very small for its size, yet bigger than dinner-plates searched the bushes overhead. The men stood apart, watching its approach with fascinated awe, flint-tipped arrows or bullets appeared alike useless against that terrific bulk. Shells, or the torpedoes for which Billy had longed, seemed to be the only weapons appropriate, and they had neither one nor the other.

"Fire!" exclaimed Tony. "Get all the grease-pots. Melt the stuff. Soak some mats and drop them flaming off its head. Jump to it!"

Billy translated as he sprang to the nearest hut, and emerged carrying its owner's supply of grease and a couple of mats which the women used for bedding. Others followed suit. Like many savages, the Ariki were in the habit of greasing themselves all over, partly because they liked it, partly to protect the skin from insects. There was a good supply of fat on hand, and in a minute it was slowly melting in a big pot over a fire.

But now the monster had made up

its mind to try and sample the odd little creatures who had built their nest so high aloft. It reared itself upon its hind-legs and advanced, hopping like a kangaroo, its huge jaw snapping with anticipation. The juicy morsels they were so soon to engulf.

And now it had reached the outermost of the trees upon which the village stagers rested. It halted, raised itself still higher upon its hind-legs, using its tail to assist it, clasped the trunk with its clawed fore-paws, and drew itself up.

The tremendously long neck writhed back, then the head shot forward like a battering-ram and smote one of the struts, which gave with a crash. A section of the platform swayed and sagged onwards. Tony, Hobby, and Lalo had only time to leap back as the tree shook beneath another terrific blow, and the weakened woodwork gave way altogether. Down it fell, and up over the jagged edge of the planking appeared the brute's nose and one eye. Using its tail as a lever, it was hitching itself higher. Every movement set the tree, and the whole frail structure made for its swaying wildly.

At that moment that horrible head would dart out and snatch its victim. Tony lifted his rifle and fired straight into the swaying creature, aiming at him from a distance of a few feet. The bullet went true, blood spouted, the eye dulled, it was blinded. The head went back. A few more feet of blasting gave way as it thrashed the stagers. The tree shook to the thrust of the maddened creature as it strove to claw itself still higher.

There was a shrill shriek from overhead. Something fell from a high branch. A woman, with a child clasped to her breast, had lost her hold and whirled downwards to a deadly death.

But even as she fell her free hand had shot out, clutching a dangling liana. It had been looped up overnight, and as her weight fell upon it, letting her as it brushed the stagers, the hung swinging within easy reach of the terror.

For an instant it did not see her, for she was on the left-hand side. Then, as great head turned, she flashed past, almost touching its snout. With a snort, it swung about—and Tony leapt to his rescue.

Dropping his rifle, he grabbed Billy's hatchet which the darkie had laid down when he began to collect grease. Seizing a line with the other hand, he jumped from the platform straight at that ghastly head.

It was a mad thing to do, yet, like other deeds of heroic insanity, it succeeded because it was totally against all reason, and therefore not to be expected. In all its long life the monster had never been attacked. Always it had been given a clear path. Even the great bears and the ferocious tigers of the wild had allowed right of way to a brute which could have cut them in twain with a single snap of its enormous jaws.

It could not have dreamed that so puny a creature would dare the pluck to assail it, the lord of all it surveyed. Tony leapt down upon it like a falling star, and as he plunged he smote with the hatchet, the impetus of his leap lending force to the blow.

The keen edge crashed upon the snout ridge above the monster's good eye, cut clean through it and through the eye itself. With a noise like the blowing off of a hundred high-pressure steam-boilers, they broke, flew itself backwards, lost its balance, and, toppling over its tail, fell with a thundering crash that made the earth tremble.

"Oh, Harse Tony!" howled Billy, in an extremity of terror.

He had seen the mad plunge into the jaws of death, powerless to aid or prevent.

Now he laid hold of the line from which Tony hung, and began to pull it in, while Lalo, with several of his astounded followers, rushed to haul up the woman and child.

"Hold of Marsa Tony! Hold on! I've got you! Golly! Oh, J'rootem! Pull, nigger!" And with a final mighty tug he landed Tony safe and sound.

But there was no time for congratulations or any sort of sentiment. The terror had picked itself up. Maddened by the loss of its sight, it made once more for the nearest tree, guided by its keen sense of smell. Again

it reared up, clawing madly at the smooth bark, into which its claws sank deep. Up it rose, higher and higher. This time it would not fail. At the least, it would wreck the whole village, destroy the labour of years, even if it did not succeed in catching any of the villagers.

"The mats!" called Tony. "Get 'em, man! A light! Smart, or it'll be up!"

Billy moved first, a stream of black lightning. He grabbed the bundle of mats, and, careless whether he scalded himself, plunged them into the cauldron of bubbling grease, then into the fire, until they had heated it.

The dried grass plait caught, a flickering tongue of flame shot through the bundle; Billy reared it aloft, ran a few steps to the edge of the tottering stagers, and dropped it neatly on top of the terrible head now only a few feet below.

It caught upon the spikes that adorned and protected the monster's seven feet of snout, and hung flaring, little rivulets of blazing fat trickling down the furrows between the scales.

Once again the forest rang for an enormous hissing hoot. Stupefied, dazed, unable to understand what was happening, the huge creature remained motionless, its frightful noise making the leaves flutter as though a gale blew through the forest.

Then, as the flames bit deep, it realised that the unknown thing was hurtful. Hastily it backed down and drooped heavily upon all fours, reared, brushed the flaring remnants of the mats from its half-roasted snout, and whirling about, blundered off, stamping against large trees, breaking down saplings in its panic flight.

Not till the noise of its going did anyone on the staging more. Then Billy's pent-up feelings found vent.

"Three cheers for Marsa Tony!" he yelled, and gave them.

Hobby joined in the first, then the Ariki caught the infection, and took up the second, the third, and continued till their breath gave out, and they were forced to stop.

Tony, leaning against a rickety bit wall, felt something touch his hand. He turned. The woman whom he had rescued from certain death at such frightful risk to himself, was kneeling beside him, kissing his hand. Behind her was her husband, banging his head on the platform.

"She say dey are your servants from now," Billy translated. "She say de baby is to be called your name, sah!"

Tony patted the woman's bowed head and the cheek of the wondering infant.

(Continued on page 15.)

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"TRIMBLE'S PAL, THE PRINCE."

(Continued from page 12.)

"Certainly, Baggy, old fellow!"

When the prince looked at his watch and announced that his car would be waiting there was general disappointment. The juniors would have liked their Royal visitor to remain a great deal longer. But they understood that, no doubt, he had many engagements—and certainly did not suspect that his next engagement was the evening performance at the Theatre Royal, Weyland.

The prince rose, and a numerous and happy party escorted him downstairs.

The prince walked away to the gates with Baggy Trimble and a crowd of juniors. The car was in waiting. At the door of the car the prince shook hands with Baggy in the most friendly manner, the juniors standing back, hat in hand. And they never suspected that Baggy Trimble was handing over the balance of two guineas as he shook hands with Royalty.

"Good-bye, Ted!" said Trimble.

"Good-by, your Royal Highness!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a cheer as the car rolled away. And then Baggy Trimble walked in, his fat little nose in the air, looking as if he were treading on air—and surrounded by admiring fellows.

CHAPTER 3.

Als for Baggy!

GORGE FIGGINS of the New House strolled across the quad, and strolled into the junior Common-room in the School House.

It was evening, and most of the School House juniors were in the Common-room, and the talk there ran chiefly on the prince.

Baggy Trimble was quite a lion.

Admiring fellows talked to him respectfully. In spite of the prince's visit, it all seemed incredible, somehow, to Tom Merry & Co. But they could not disbelieve the evidence of their own eyes. They had not yet recovered from their amazement—but they were soon to recover.

Figgins was the reason.

Figgins had a newspaper in his hand, and a very peculiar expression on his face, and a curious glimmer in his eyes, as he strolled in. Baggy's voice was audible through the crowded room.

"When I see the Amir again—"

"Hallo! Going strong, Baggy?" grinned Figgins.

Baggy turned a haughty look on him.

"Been gathering up any more giddy princes, old top?" chuckled Figgins. "I've brought this paper over, you fellows—there's some news in it about Baggy's nobby pal."

"How's that?" asked Tom Merry.

"It's this evening's paper," explained Figgins. "I got it to see how Tottenham Hotspur had got on. There was another item of news, though, that I found rather interesting. Shall I read it out?"

"About the Pwince of Wania?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Exactly!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Read it out, Figgins."

"Hage goes!" said Figgins.

And he proceeded to read:

"This afternoon at three o'clock the foundation stone of the new Public Hall at Brumley was laid by his Royal Highness the Prince of Rania. His Royal Highness left by train at four o'clock."

That was all. But it was enough!

Baggy Trimble's face turned quite green as there was a yell from every corner of the Common-room.

"Brumley—at three o'clock!"

"Left Brumley at four!"

"Just the time he was having tea in the study!"

"What the thump—"

"Trimble, you spoofer—"

It was a roar that rang through the Common-room. A score of fellows rushed to look at Figgy's paper.

There it was in plain print; there was no doubt about it. At the very time that Trimble's pal, the prince, was at St. Jim's, his Royal Highness the Prince of Rania had been laying a foundation stone at a town a hundred miles away!

The juniors gasped.

Baggy seemed to have been struck dumb. He had just been telling Ramko that he was going to do when next he saw the Amir. Now he seemed quite to have forgotten the Amir. He blinked round, in great apprehension, at the excited juniors.

"What does this mean, Trimble?" roared Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! What does it mean, you faithful spoofer!" Baggy stutted.

"I—I—"

"Who was it that came here this afternoon?" yelled Blake.

"Zeh! My pip-pip-pip-pal, the prince, of course—"

"He was at Brumley—"

"A hundred miles away—"

"Bump the truth out of him!" shouted Blake, in great wrath.

"Yarocoooh!"

A dozen hands seized Baggy Trimble. He smote the floor of the Common-room with a heavy bump.

"Yarocoooh! I—I say, it—it was only a j-j-joke!" shrieked Trimble. "C-c-c-can't you take a j-j-joke!"

Bump!

"Yoop! Help!"

"Are you going to own up?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Yow-ow-ow! It—it was Stuckey!" gasped Trimble.

"Stuckey! Who's Stuckey?"

"Bai Jove! That atch chap who did the pwince in the play—"

"So you got a blessed actor to make himself up as the Prince of Rania to spoof us!" gasped Tom Merry.

"You faithful boundah!"

"Only a j-j-joke!" moaned Trimble. "Can't you take a joke? I was going to tell you of course! I—I— Leggo! I say, it cost me four guineas— Yow-ow! I had to sell my bike for it! Grooogh! Leggo!"

"Bump him!"

"Rag him!"

"Snatch him bald-headed!"

"Yarocoooh!" roared Trimble. "Help! Police! Fire!

Oh crumbs! Yooooooop!"

What followed was like a nightmare to Baggy Trimble. The long-overdue ragging had come at last. Trimble's tremendous spoof, instead of saving him, had failed him in the hour of need—and it had only added to the tale of his offences! His last and greatest spoof had to be paid for, as well as all the rest—and there was no escape for Trimble!

It was such a ragging as Baggy had never dreamed of in his most ghastly nightmares. And the fact that he deserved it was no comfort to Trimble. He paid for his many sins all at once—and for quite a long time afterwards Baggy wondered whether life really was worth living.

It was a very subdued Baggy who lurked about St. Jim's on the following days, dodging fellows who prepared to kick him when he came near. For a long, long time after that princely visit Baggy Trimble was not heard to refer to Trimble Hall, or the glories thereof; and never, never again was he likely to refer to his pal, the prince.

THE END.

(Don't forget that the grand Christmas Number of the "GEM" will appear next week. This greatly enlarged number will contain a grand Christmas story of the Chums of St. Jim's, entitled: "LORD EASTWOOD, and CHRISTMAS PARTY," by MARTIN CLIFFORD, and a host of other fine features. To avoid disappointment you should order your "GEM" now.)

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Tony swept down upon the enormous brute like a falling star, and as he plunged he smote with the hatchet, the impetus of the leap lending force to the blow.

The Valley of Surprise.

(Continued from page 16.)

"Tell her she can if she wants to," he said, and took a battered, lucky sixpence from his pocket which he had carried for years. "Breading a string through the hole in it, he hung it about the baby's neck. "And tell her that's for luck!" he added, then moved away, anxious to avoid more thanks.

Seating himself with Hobby on the farther side of the village, the pair remained silent for a while, each deep in thought. Hobby was the first to speak.

"A catapult might do it," he said, half-aloud.

"Do what?" inquired Tony.

"Settle the hash of that great brute and others like it," replied Hobby. "The old Romans had no cannon, but they got along pretty well with catapults which slung huge stones a long way. I think I could plan one that would give even a brontosaurus something to remember. All these fellows are handy with their axes. I see no reason why we shouldn't try the thing, do you?"

"None at all. But when you've got the thing rigged, how are you going to get the beast into position? Will you use ground-bait?"

"Oh, someone could tempt the beast to run into line. That's easily arranged," said Hobby airily. "I'll just work out the plans now."

EDITORIAL.

My Dear Chums,—

It was in my mind to start straight-away and refer to the splendid "Gem" Christmas Number—the best yet, and one full of good things, but I want first to mention a letter from an Auckland reader who has a "dew" on Baggy. This correspondent calls Master Trimble's talk about Trimble Hall silly. Well, it is all a matter of opinion, but doubtless the thought of a handsome castle with footmen in sky blue liveries, and heaps of motor-cars, pleases Baggy mightily.

And securing a piece of smooth bark and a charred stick, he began to lay out the design of his contraption.

Tony looked on for a little, throwing out suggestions which Hobby rejected, then, growing tired, strolled away to see how the repairs of the staging were progressing.

He found Billy hard at work, his steel hatchet accomplishing more in half a dozen strokes than the flint tools in twenty. The darky went from group to group, chopping and hammering, quite in his element.

"Dis' here like de ole times wid de circus, Marsa Tony!" he called. "Just like when de wind blowed down de big top, and we all had to turn to rig up de benches for de evening performance. Please to get out of de way!"

Tony found a bundle of dangling lianas, and descended towards the ground. Someone called a warning. He looked up. The woman whom he had saved from the edge of the staging, he saw, as though to tell him that it was full of dangers.

"I know that already," he laughed. "Don't worry! I'm only going down a little way."

She did not understand him, of course, and continued to shake her head doubtfully.

Tony looked and listened. Below him the forest seemed empty. Assuredly there was no danger. He went down farther, till he was only some thirty feet above the ground.

There he awoke, looking at the tremendous prints left by their horrible visitor, without thought of peril. Suddenly he felt a shudder of apprehension. Something was looking at him, he knew not what.

He faced about, and out of the suspended screen about the nearest tree swung two great Mangas. They flew out across the intervening space, each clinging to a liana, straight towards Tony. He scrambled up a foot or two. It was too late. With a swish and a swirl of air, they were upon him.

Iron hands clutched him, tore him from his hold. One sought for help ere a great garbled hand clasped across his face, then he was swung across the gap, fast held by both of his captors, while the scream of the woman aloft pealed an alarm.

Through the hanging screen they plunged, and landed on a short branch. Someone clung there, grinning with fenshish triumph. It was Maxia.

The Secret Hiding Place.

Tony gave himself up for lost. He had left his rifle in the hut, and lent his knife to Lalo. But even if he had, he would have been arrested if he had. He had availed him nothing. The grip of the Mangas was absolutely paralyzing. Their fingers sank into his flesh, as, at a signal from the chief, they clanked behind the lad between them as easily as if he had been a doll.

Tony managed to retain his senses and even note that they were following the same road as that by which the three had returned from their trip on the stegosaur's back.

After ten minutes of this breathless progress, Maxia, who brought up the rear, shouted something. The Mangas halted, dumped Tony between them, and held him firmly while they grunted. They appeared to understand what Maxia said, and to treat him with respect.

He pointed back along the way they had come, then towards the earth. He held up a warning hand. From far away rose a noise of many voices. Tony even thought he could distinguish Billy's roar. Evidently the Arki had not wasted a moment, but were already in hot pursuit.

Abruptly the Mangas rose, peered downwards, grabbed Tony afresh, and leapt out into the void. Tony's heart went into his boots. He had a vague impression of flashing past twisted branchlets to which clung many plants with vivid flowers, through a flock of circling parakeets, ere the Mangas clutched at swaying vines and stayed swinging, halfway to the ground.

At another time he might have appreciated the wonderful strength and skill which they had displayed, but now he was too dizzy and breathless to do anything but thank his stars that they were not all lying in a pulpy heap far below.

He heaved a scant respite. Another leap took them twenty feet higher. A third and they swayed near the ground. The Mangas leaped up. Maxia was sliding down a liana. In a moment he had joined them. A pause, during which they scanned the ground, and every bit of cover within sight, then down they went, touched earth, and, still carrying Tony between them, scampered across the open.

Maxia ran ahead, scrutinizing the great trees as he scurried. Something started in the brushwood. One of the Mangas looped Tony, reached for a big stone, and as the shaggy beast of a great bycuss from the covert, hewed the stone with unerring aim.

There was a howl, a hasty retreat, and they went on to where Maxia was swarming up a thick cluster of creeper roots. Up and up they climbed, till Maxia growled an order. Inwards they swung, gripped the edge of an opening of the bark of the tree, and stopped. They had arrived at a hiding place that defied detection. The tree was decayed, part of it was hollow, and in the hollow

Maxia, or perhaps some predecessor in the office of medicine-man, had constructed a shelter.

(To be continued next week.)

He must almost have come to believe it himself, so he is hardly to be blamed. Lots of people dream they live in marble halls when they don't really. One thing I am certain of, and that is that this week's story of "Baggy" will please everyone. The same writer thinks a mysterious boy ought to come to St. Jim's. I am passing this mystery stunt on to the great and good Mr. Martin Clifford to see what he says about it.

But all these great things apart, the

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For the coming year I have a wonderful programme of stories, and I will give you further information about this later on. Every reader must make a New Year's resolution to get the "Gem" every week, for it is going to be better than ever. Meanwhile, don't miss next week's wonderful Christmas Number!

YOUR EDITOR.



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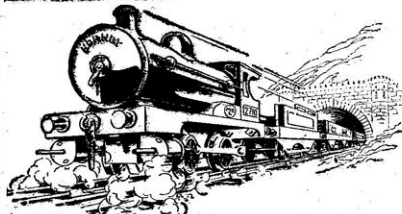
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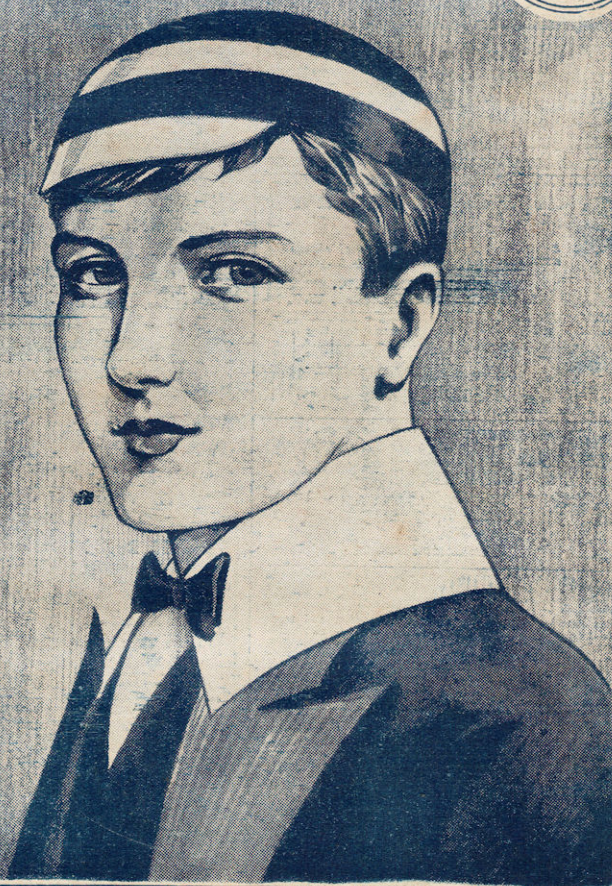


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