

"THE SCARLET STREAK!"

SENSATIONAL NEW  
STORY INSIDE.

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

# The GEM 2<sup>D</sup>

LIBRARY

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April 24th,  
1926.

TRIMBLE'S  
CUP  
FINAL  
PARTY



**TOM MERRY & CO. AT WEMBLEY STADIUM!**

(An animated scene just before the start of the Cup Final! Read the splendid school story inside.)

# OUR "SCARLET STREAK" COMPETITION

## First Prize £5.

AND FIVE PRIZES OF £1 EACH.

### YOU MUST NOT MISS THIS, BOYS!

**H**ERE'S yet another £10 to be won, you fellows, in a really topping one-week competition. You will enjoy it, because it is a novel idea, with such jolly good prizes.

You are all reading our grand new serial, "The Scarlet Streak," which appears on page 23 of this issue. Well, we have written a paragraph about it, which the artist has put into picture-puzzle form.

This, by the way, is the third of a series of one-week contests, and with each new puzzle there will be more splendid prizes.

In attempting to solve the puzzle it will help if you read the story and see the film; also, the sense of the sentences will assist you. But you should remember that each picture or sign may represent part of a word, one, two, or three words, but not more than three words.

Try your hand at solving the paragraph—you can see that the opening words are: "Bob Evans is a . . ."—and then write your solution IN INK on a sheet of paper. Cut out the puzzle and the

coupon together; attach your solution to the tablet, and, having signed and addressed the coupon IN INK, post your effort to:

GEM, "Scarlet Streak," No. 3,  
Gough House, Gough Square,  
London, E.C.4 (Comp.)

so as to reach there not later than FRIDAY, APRIL 30th. Any efforts arriving after that date will be disqualified.

#### RULES WHICH MUST BE STRICTLY ADHERED TO.

The First Prize of £5 will be awarded for the correct, or most nearly correct, solution. The other prizes will follow in order of merit. The Editor reserves the right to divide any of the prizes should it be necessary in the case of ties.

You may send as many efforts as you like, but each must be complete in itself, and must consist of a solution, a puzzle, and a signed coupon. Solutions containing alternatives will be disqualified. The decision of the Editor will be absolutely final.

No one connected with the staff or proprietors of this journal may compete.

Our Grand Story, "The Scarlet Streak," has been filmed by the Universal Co. Read the story and see the film.

"THE SCARLET STREAK" NO. 3

I enter "Scarlet Streak" Contest No. 3, and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

Name.....

Address.....

3

GEM. Closing Date, Friday, April 30th.

**MUCH SOUGHT AFTER!** It's surprising how many friends Baggy Trimble discovers when it becomes known that he is taking a party to Wembley. Fellows who previously had been in the habit of booting him now flock round him with friendly smiles and offers of loans, doubtless in the hope of being included in—

# TRIMBLE'S CUP FINAL PARTY



*A Rousing Story of Tom Merry & Co., the chums of St. Jim's, with Baggy Trimble, the Paul Pry of the Fourth, playing the principal role.*  
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

## CHAPTER 1.

### Nothing Doing!

**“YOU fellows going to be all day?”**

Tom Merry, the junior captain of St. Jim's, poked his head into Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage, and made that remark.

“Just coming,” said Blake, who was tying up the lace of his football boot.

“Have Hawvy Wharton and his team awwiyed?” asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, pausing in the task of brushing his elegant head of hair before the study mirror.

“No,” said Tom Merry. “But we want to get in a bit of practice before they come over. We've got to win this match, you know.”

“Yaas, wathah!” agreed Arthur Augustus, resuming his task of hairdressing. “Wely on this study, deah boy.”

“Oh, we'll win,” said Digby, “if that fathead Herries doesn't keep the ball to himself!”

Herries snorted.

He prided himself on knowing footer inside out, and, to give him his due, he was a very useful member of the St. Jim's junior eleven.

“I like that!” he said. “Why, in the Rookwood match last Wednesday—”

Jack Blake held up his hand.

“For goodness' sake don't let us have that all over again,” he said. “We all know how you would have scored a goal, Herries, if Dig hadn't been a silly ass and passed to Jimmy Silver—”

“You cheeky ass!” roared Digby. “I—”

“And we all know how Dig would have notched another point if he hadn't passed to Gussy—”

“Weally, Blake—”

“So let it go at that, my infants,” chuckled Blake. “And let's pile up the goals against Harry Wharton's crowd. It's the last match of the season, you know.”

“Yaas, wathah!”

“Well, if you play as hard as you chin-wag,” grinned Tom Merry, “the game's ours already!”

“None of your cheek, Tom Merry,” said Blake darkly.

“Rats!” grinned the junior captain cheerfully. “But, seriously, though, we've got to win. And don't forget, my sons, there's a whacking feed at the end of the match!”

“What-ho!” chuckled Blake.

“That was a brainy idea of yours, Tom Merry, to give

a feed to the two teams to wind up the season,” said Digby.

“Not bad for a Shell chap,” grinned Herries.

Tom Merry bowed.

“We think of these things in the Shell, you know,” he said modestly. “I'll trot along to Little Side now. You chaps won't be long?”

“Five minutes!” said Blake.

“Weally, Blake, I'm afraid I shall be a twifle longer than five minutes, deah boy,” said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. “I weally must get this bit of wefwactowy hair to lie down, you know.”

“Well, if you don't get it to lie down within five minutes you'll go out of this study on your neck,” said Blake darkly. “Can't keep a footer match hanging about while a silly fathead tries to break a looking-glass. It's a wonder to me how that glass has stood up to it.”

“Weally, Blake, if you are tweyin' to be insultin'—” began the swell of St. Jim's.

“I'm not trying!” said Blake meaningly.

“Vewy well, then,” said Arthur Augustus. “I will ovah-look your wemark. But, weally a fellow must be careful about his appeawance. What are you gwinnin' at, Tom Mewwy?” he added, turning towards the doorway.

“A silly cuckoo!” chuckled Tom Merry. “So-long! Bring him along by his ears, you chaps, if he doesn't get that beautiful head of hair to lie down within five minutes.”

And the captain of the Shell departed, grinning. He swung along the Fourth Form passage at a rapid pace, seeming not to see the fat figure of Baggy Trimble en route.

“I say, old chap—”

Tom Merry quickened his pace.

“I say, Tom Merry—” roared Trimble, hastening after the stalwart captain of the Shell.

“Don't!” called out Tom Merry, over his shoulder.

“But, I say—”

“Nothing doing!”

But Baggy Trimble was not to be so easily put off. He quickened his pace, his fat little legs going like clockwork in his efforts to catch up with Tom Merry.

“Hold on a minute, you rotter—I mean, old chap!” he panted.

“Can't!” said Tom Merry laconically.

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"But, I say—"

"Save your breath, old fat tulip. I've told you once there's nothing doing. I'm stony!"

Baggy Trimble snorted.

"If you think I'm asking for a loan, Tom Merry," he said indignantly, "you're jolly well mistaken!"

Tom Merry came to an abrupt halt.

"Do I hear aright?" he said faintly. "You're not eadging for a loan?"

"Certainly not!"

"Or a feed?"

"Of course not!" roared Trimble, exasperated. "I want to talk to you about footer."

"Eh?"

"Footer!" shrieked Trimble.

"You mean table-footer?" said Tom Merry, puzzled.

Baggy Trimble glared.

"You know what I jolly well mean," he snorted. "I want to talk to you about the footer."

Tom Merry's face broke into a grin.

"But how can you talk about a thing you don't know anything about?" he inquired.

"Really, Tom Merry," said Trimble. "What I don't know about footer—"

"Would fill volumes!" chuckled the junior captain of St. Jim's. "Run away, old fat man!"

But Baggy Trimble showed no inclination to run away. As a matter of fact, he "headed" Tom Merry away from the School House steps.

"It's like this," he began. "You want to win the match against Wharton's crowd this afternoon, I suppose?"

"Of course we do, ass!" said Tom Merry impatiently.

"Then why do you leave out the best man?" inquired Baggy Trimble, with some warmth.

Tom Merry looked thoughtful.

"Eh? Best man?" he said. "But Figgins is going to play, you fat ass. His ankle's much better now."

"I'm not talking about a New House rotter!" snorted Baggy Trimble. "I mean a School House chap."

"Oh! Do you mean Kerruish. I know lots of the fellows think he's come on a heap this last month. But Kerruish isn't quite up to the form I want."

Baggy Trimble made an impatient gesture.

"Blow Kerruish!" he exclaimed.

"Then whom do you mean?" asked Tom Merry, puzzled.

"Me!" exclaimed Baggy Trimble dramatically.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. The idea of Trimble as a footballer tickled him, for if there was one thing that the fat junior couldn't do that stood out very clearly above all other of his deficiencies, that one thing was to play football.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "You're too funny, old fat man!"

"I don't see anything to laugh at," said Trimble. "I ought to have figured in all the matches this season, Tom Merry. But I'm a reasonable chap. You play me this afternoon and you'll win the match."

"But, my dear chap, it's a footer match, not an eating contest," grinned Tom Merry.

"Oh, don't rot!" said the fat junior earnestly. "You know I can play football. At Trimble Towers I used to have a professional coach. I believe his name was W. G. Grace, or something—"

"Oh, my hat!" gurgled Tom Merry. "But he was a cricketer!"

"Oh, well, one is apt to get names mixed up, you know," said Trimble. "There are about three dozen servants at Trimble Towers, and one can't remember all the names. We've got a fine cricket pitch in the grounds, and this coach used to put me through my paces. You should see me score boundaries—"

"At footer?" almost shrieked Tom Merry.

"At footer," said Trimble firmly. "I was simply it, I can tell you. I'll take you along to the Towers in the summer vac, if you like. Lots of things there worth seeing. There's the ornamental lake that must have cost pater a fortune. Then there's—"

"Oh, ring off!" gasped Tom Merry. "I've heard all about the ornamental lake and the extensive grounds, the liveried footmen, the old picture gallery, and the Rolls-Royce cars. Give it a rest, old bean!"

"Really, Tom Merry—"

Indeed, there were very few juniors at St. Jim's who hadn't heard about Baggy Trimble's ancestral home. According to Trimble, liveried footmen literally fell over themselves in their efforts to obey his slightest wish, to anticipate his smallest whim, when he was home on vacation. In fact, the Trimble household was incomparable with any other historic mansion in the country—in Trimble's estimation. But as no one had ever seen this palatial

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estate, Trimble's vivid and glorious description was taken with a grain of salt—in fact, several grains of salt.

But that did not have a deterrent effect upon the fat junior. Really Trimble had allowed his imaginative powers such free play in this matter of an ancestral home, complete with all modern, up-to-date appointments, that he almost believed such a magnificent place as Trimble Towers actually did exist.

"I'll take you along there during the summer vac, Tom Merry," said Trimble generously, "if you do the decent thing by me now."

"Thank you for nothing," grinned Tom Merry. "I don't want to spend a summer vac looking for a place that doesn't exist, old fat barrel."

Baggy Trimble looked pained.

"I don't see why you should doubt my word," he said.

"You fellows laugh when I mention my ancestral home. Jealousy, I suppose. But look here, Tom Merry," he added seriously. "You play me this afternoon, and I'll include you in my party for the Wembley Cup Final."

Tom Merry started.

"The Cup Final?" he ejaculated.

Baggy Trimble nodded.

"My pater's sending me some tickets for the show," he said impressively. "And I shall be able to take a few friends with me. You'd like to see the Final, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Tom Merry, for he was keenness itself to see the Manchester City v. Bolton Wanderers match at Wembley.

"Then play me this afternoon, old chap," said Trimble, "and I'll make you one of the party."

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom Merry faintly.

"The pater will send the car to meet us on Saturday," went on Trimble, thinking he had made a good impression on the junior captain. "We shall drive to Wayland Junction and board the express. All eyes will be stood by my pater, of course."

"Oh, my hat!" reiterated Tom Merry.

"There'll be a slap-up feed, too," continued the fat junior, drawing upon his imaginative powers. "A jolly sight better feed than the one you've prepared for the teams after the school match. Not that I'm interested in the feed. I want to play for the honour of the school, you know."

A grin broke over Tom Merry's face. He understood now Baggy's keenness to play for the junior eleven that afternoon. The feed after the match drew him like a magnet.

Baggy eyed the captain of the Shell keenly.

"You like the idea?" he asked.

"Of course," replied Tom Merry. "I'd like it no end to see the Final. But—"

"Then you'll play me this afternoon," said Trimble earnestly. "You stand me a whacking feed to-day—I mean you do the right thing, and play your best men against the Greyfriars team, and I'll include you in my Wembley Cup Final party. See?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes," he said grimly. "And it worries me."

"Eh? What worries you?"

"Your face, old fat bean," said Tom Merry. "And your silly chin-wag about the Cup Final. Now run away before I burst you. You're too funny to live."

Baggy Trimble's eyes glittered.

"Then you won't play me?" he said. "You won't let the chaps see what a good footballer I am?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No. But I'll show you what a good footballer I am. I'll give you an elementary lesson in football," he said, drawing back his right foot.

Baggy Trimble backed a pace in alarm.

"Here, I say— Yoooop! Wharrer you at?" he roared, as Tom Merry's boot clumped home on his trousers.

"Giving you a first lesson in dribbling," said the captain of the Shell. "I'm going to dribble you along the passage, and then I'm going to shoot for goal. Like that!"

"Yoooop!" roared Trimble.

"And that!"

"Yarooooooh!"

"And that!" concluded the captain of the Shell.

But Baggy Trimble did not stay to finish the lesson. He bolted.

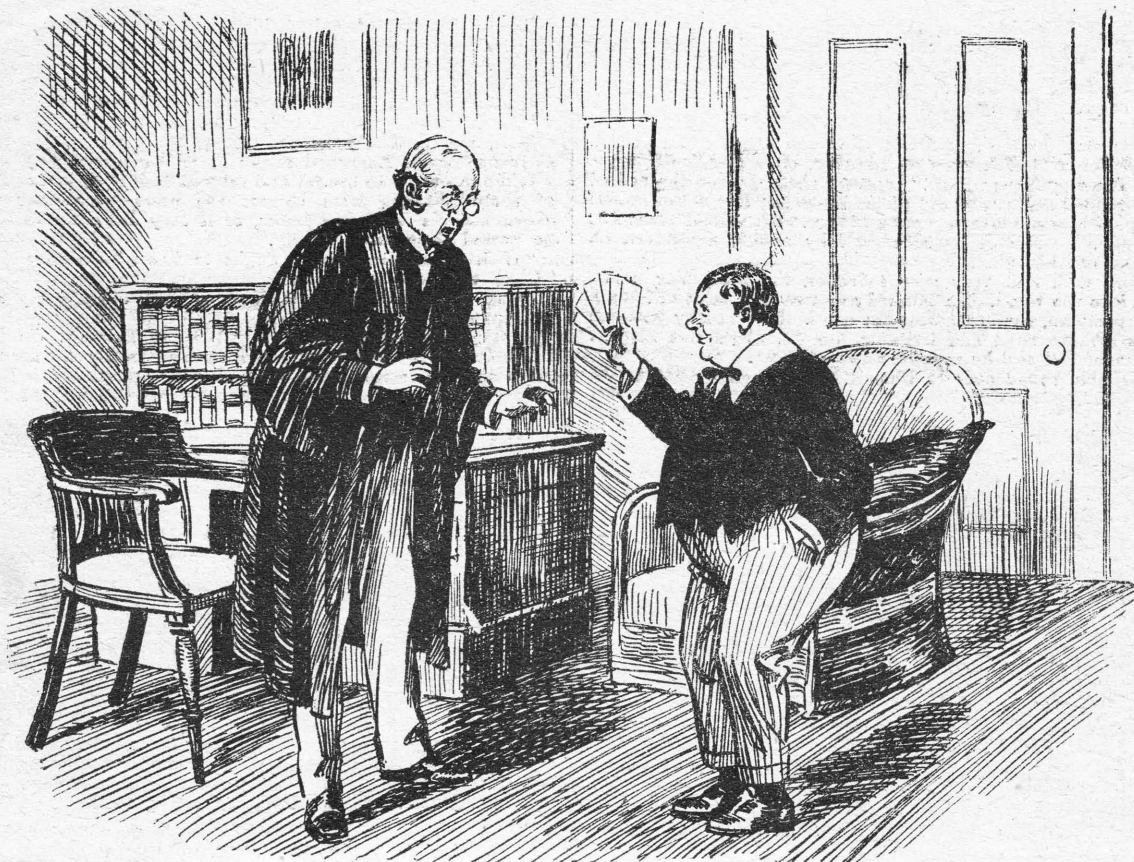
## CHAPTER 2.

### Baggy Trimble's Brain-Wave!

"B EASTS!"

Baggy Trimble paused by the letter-rack and shook his fist at the empty passage. A moment or so earlier he had bolted along that passage like a hunted hare with Aubrey Racke's boot in close proximity to his nether garments.

"I won't take him now," muttered the fat junior. "He's not my class, anyway."



"You agreeably surprise me in your selection of friends, Trimble," said Mr. Lathom. "Hem! Have you the—er— tickets for this proposed trip to Wembley actually in your possession?" "Yes, sir." The fat Fourth-Former fished in his jacket pocket and brought to light the seven tickets. He held them up in front of the astonished Form-master's face as a card player holds a hand of cards. (See Chapter 5.)

Since his lesson in "elementary" football, under the practical tuition of Tom Merry, Baggy Trimble had ambled up and down the Fourth and Shell passages in search of a fellow obliging enough to lend him a half-crown. But it was surprising how many juniors at St. Jim's were afflicted with deafness and hardness of heart that fine spring afternoon.

Upon them all Baggy Trimble had tried his Wembley Cup Final party dodge. He had asked Levison and Clive to lend him half-a-crown until Saturday, and, as an added inducement, had promised to include both of them in his Cup Final party. Keen as Levison and Clive were, undoubtedly, to see the match at Wembley between Manchester City and Bolton Wanderers, they were not prepared, however, to advance Trimble half-a-crown on the strength of that invitation.

Indeed, Clive had openly stated that he thought there was as much truth in Trimble's Cup Final tickets as there was in the existence of Trimble Towers, and declined the invitation with thanks.

Cardew, whom Trimble had next approached, had offered to oblige Trimble, and had promptly obliged him with a well-directed boot. Really, it was surprising how many unbelievers there were in the Fourth and Shell. Here was Trimble extending invitations for a day at the Wembley Cup Final ad lib, as it were, and yet no one took him seriously.

"The rotters!" muttered Trimble savagely. "Yah! I wouldn't take any of the beasts if I had any blessed tickets, anyway!"

He peered along the passage as he heard footsteps approaching, wondering whether it was Aubrey Racke returning to decline Trimble's generous invitation with a few more kicks. But it was Percy Mellish who finally came in sight, and Baggy rolled towards him as a last hope.

"I say, Mellish—" he said.

The cad of the Fourth stopped.

"What do you want, you fat idiot?" he snarled.

Mellish was in a bad temper. He had just been relieved of ten shillings as a result of a little "flutter" in Aubrey Racke's study—a favourite pastime of the black sheep at St.

Jim's. And as Mellish hadn't been present in Racke's study when Trimble had scattered his invitations to Wembley, Trimble decided he was worth trying.

"I say, Mellish," said the fat junior agreeably. "Would you like to go to the Cup Final on Saturday? I'm making up a little party."

"You are?" sneered Mellish. "Tell that to the marines. For one thing, all the tickets have been sold weeks ago, you fat rotter."

Trimble took no notice of the insulting epithet. A chap with invitations to scatter broadcast, so to speak, would not be too particular in such circumstances.

"I know that," he answered. "But my pater's got tickets for me, you know. I'm going to take a party. Lathom will be sporting enough to give us the morning off. There'll be a car to meet us, and—"

"Can it!" exclaimed Mellish, with a grin.

"I'd like to take you, old chap," said Trimble generously. "You're not such a rotter as the other beasts."

"And how much do you want to raise on the strength of that yarn?" grinned Mellish, who, clever as he thought himself, was still credulous enough to believe something of what Trimble had said.

"Well, that's rather a personal way of putting it," said Trimble. "As a matter of fact, I could do with half-a-crown until Saturday, but don't misunderstand me, Mellish. I'm not inviting you to the Cup Final for that reason. Friends don't do that kind of thing, you know. Did you say you'd lend me half-a-crown, old chap?"

Percy Mellish grinned.

"Let's see the tickets, and then we'll talk about the half-crown," he said cautiously.

Trimble grinned in return.

"Well, you see, I'm expecting them at any moment now," he said. "The pater said he'd send them along to-day. But that's all right. You can count yourself one of the party, you know."

"Thank you for nothing," replied Mellish. "I'll believe the yarn about the Cup Final when I see the tickets."

Baggy Trimble shrugged his shoulders.

"Just as you like, of course," he answered stiffly. "But, I say, old chap, you'll let me have the half-crown now?" "No fear," said Mellish promptly. "But I'll let you have my boot, you lying rotter."

But Baggy Trimble had tasted enough "footwear" that afternoon. At the mention of the word boot he had bolted. And Percy Mellish went on his way, chuckling.

"The suspicious rotter!" roared Trimble, when the cad of the Fourth had passed out of the House. "I've a good mind to give him a thumping good hiding. On second thoughts, though, I wouldn't lower myself by soiling my hands on a low cad like that."

And with that very wise reflection the fat junior rolled out into the quad. He blinked as he caught sight of Blagg, the postman, coming across the quad. The worthy postman was looking tired and irritable, for St. Jim's was his last place of call and he was keen to get home.

Trimble rolled over to him.

"Good afternoon, Blagg," he greeted. "Anything for me?"

"Which there's nuthin' for you, Master Trimble," said the postman, with a glance at the letters he carried. "But I wants to find Master D'Arcy. There's a registered package for him, and it's got to be signed for."

Trimble's eyes brightened at the mention of the words "registered package."

"Shall I sign for it, Blagg?" he inquired blandly.

The postman shook his head. He disliked Trimble, and, in his heart of hearts, held no great opinion of his integrity. "Which I'd sooner Master D'Arcy signed for it 'imself," he replied.

"Then you'll have to wait for about an hour," grinned Trimble. "Gussy—I mean D'Arcy's—playing in the footer match."

"Oh, lor'!"

Blagg looked about him hopelessly. Practically all St. Jim's were down on Little Side watching the last match of the season between Tom Merry's eleven and Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars.

"I suppose it'll be all right if you sign for it," he muttered, looking at Trimble fixedly.

The fat Fourth-Former assumed an injured expression.

"Really, Blagg, if you have any doubts in the matter you can jolly well hang around and wait for Gussy to sign it himself."

"Oh, all right, Master Trimble," said the postman resignedly. "Put your name here."

He held out a receipt book and Trimble scrawled his name in the required space. The registered package changed hands and the postman turned on his heel and tramped off.

"Suspicious beast!" muttered Trimble, turning the package over and over in his podgy hands. "I'll take this along to Gussy at half-time. Expect there's a fat remittance inside."

He slipped the package in his pocket and rolled towards Little Side, and as he drew near, the shouts of the spectators reached him. But the fat Fourth-Former had no thoughts for football; he was visualising the whacking remittance he thought the registered package contained.

"Oh, well played, Gussy!"

It was a terrific shout from the assembled juniors and seniors round the touchline, for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had opened the scoring for St. Jim's with a wonderful first-time shot.

"Played, Gussy!"

"Played, St. Jim's!"

Tom Merry & Co. clustered round the swell of St. Jim's and thumped him heartily on the back, and Gussy bore the honours showered upon him with becoming modesty and fortitude.

"One up!" chuckled Blake. "Good for you, Gussy, my son."

Harry Wharton & Co. were looking very grim as they walked back to the centre line. That one goal deficit in a match against such redoubtable opponents as Tom Merry & Co. would require some wiping out.

"Good old Gussy!"

Even the juniors gathered on the touchline thumped Arthur Augustus on the back as he resumed his position on the wing. And at that moment Baggy Trimble pushed his way through the group.

"I say, Gussy, old chap," he began. "There's a letter for you."

"Oh, don't bothah now, Twimble!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Shall I open it for you?" asked the fat Fourth-Former eagerly. "There might be a remittance in it, you know."

But the swell of St. Jim's had no time to waste on Baggy Trimble just then, for Kildare had blown the whistle and the game broke into life once more.

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Baggy Trimble detached himself from the crowd and his hand came into contact with the registered package. He drew it out of his pocket and began to turn it over and over.

He noticed that it bore the postmark of Easthorpe. "From Gussy's pater, I expect," he muttered. "Might be urgent, for all Gussy knows. Suppose something's wrong at home? Lord Eastwood might be ill, or something."

It did not occur to the fat and fatuous Baggy that if either of those theories were correct the news would not be dispatched via registered letter, or if they did occur to him he passed them aside lightly.

"If it's bad news Gussy ought to know," he reflected. "Chap wouldn't like to think afterwards that he had been playing football while his father was lying dangerously ill, perhaps dying."

That alarming thought disturbed Baggy Trimble. In his interest in the welfare of the Eastwood family he almost came nigh to tearing open the paper wrapping.

He turned the package over again and blinked at the writing.

"It looks urgent," he muttered. "I think a pal ought to help another pal in a case like this. I'll be doing Gussy a good turn if I open it. After all, if it isn't bad news it will keep. No harm done. Besides—"

Before he quite realised what he was doing, Trimble had torn the wrapping off the package. He did not pause to think that what he was doing amounted almost to a criminal action, but he realised it the moment after he had done it.

"Oh, crumbs!" he muttered. "I wonder what Gussy will say. He's such a suspicious beast. He might think I opened it with some ulterior motive in view."

Despite that disquieting thought, however, Baggy Trimble unfolded a letter that was folded around some green-coloured tickets of some sort or other. Only one glance he gave these and a disappointed frown settled on his podgy brow as he realised that they were not currency notes.

Having gone so far the fat Fourth-Former now held no scruples about reading the communication accompanying the tickets. And a very surprising communication it was.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Trimble, having read the letter. It ran:

"Dear Arthur,

"Some time ago you expressed a desire to see the Cup Final at Wembley this year, so I am sending the enclosed tickets with the idea of giving you an agreeable surprise. You will doubtless be able to find six friends to accompany you, and I have therefore arranged to send a car down to the school on Saturday morning, at 9.15 a.m., to ensure your catching the main line express at Wayland.

"You will, of course, on my behalf, intimate that all expenses will be met by me. Should you experience any difficulty in obtaining leave from your Form master on Saturday morning for yourself and friends, let me know over the phone. In any case, I hope to run down to St. Jim's on Friday afternoon, arriving about four-thirty, and I shall be able to give you a look in for a few moments. Till Friday, then, my dear boy,

"Your affectionate Father."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Trimble for the second time.

He eyed the letter, and then he scrutinised the tickets—seven in all. They were two-guinea tickets, entitling bearers to places in the Stadium at Wembley on Saturday, April 24.

"Fourteen guineas!" ejaculated Baggy Trimble. "Fancy wasting fourteen guineas on a blessed football match! My hat, what a feed that sum would buy!"

He looked at the tickets again, likewise the letter, and a glimmer of a great idea began to take root in his slow-moving intellect, an idea so audacious that it almost took his own breath away.

"What a wheeze!" gasped Trimble, as the idea began to sprout.

He sat down under an elm, read and re-read the letter, and at last made up his mind. Then he tore the letter into a hundred fragments and scattered them to the four winds. The tickets found a lodging in Trimble's inner jacket pocket.

"That's done it!" he muttered as the remnants of the letter were scattered before him. "Oh, crumbs! I must go through with it now!"

He licked his dry lips. Something deep down in him, some whispering voice told him that he was doing something of which he ought to be ashamed; something which any ordinary, decent fellow would shrink from doing. But conscience with Baggy Trimble never played a heroic part. The misgivings came and went in a flash leaving the fat and fatuous Fourth-Former—the fool more than the rogue—in complete possession of what he considered his great idea.

And intent upon setting it in motion without further delay the fat junior scrambled to his feet and rolled

towards that portion of Little Side where the match between St. Jim's and Greyfriars was in progress.

As he reached the touchline a mighty shout echoed skywards, for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was in great form, had sent in another amazing shot that had beaten Bulstrode, the Greyfriars goalkeeper, hands down.

"Bravo, Gussy!"

Even Baggy Trimble, uninterested in football as he was, joined in the general acclamation, for he felt kindly disposed towards the elegant junior who had, indirectly, supplied him with his great idea. And when conscience pricked him for the second and last time Baggy Trimble smothered its point, as it were, in a long drawn-out roar of:

"Well played, Gussy!"

A surprising circumstance in itself, for at that moment, the game having re-started, the ball was yards away from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

### CHAPTER 3. In the Limelight!

"I SAY, Tom Merry!"

Baggy Trimble called after the junior captain as the players came off the pitch an hour later. Harry Wharton & Co. had been beaten by the narrow but decisive margin of one goal. It had been a gruelling game in which Robert Digby had had the misfortune to "crook" his ankle, and both teams were glad when the final whistle sounded.

"A jolly good game," said Tom Merry warmly, as he walked off the field with Harry Wharton. "You chaps had a bit of bad luck."

"It's nice of you to say so," smiled Wharton. "But you deserved your win. Jove, I've never seen D'Arcy play like that before!"

"He certainly was bang on form to-day," smiled Tom Merry.

"I say, old chap—"

"Run away, Trimble," said Tom Merry, as the fat Fourth-Former planted himself in his path.

But Trimble did not run away. He smiled.

"About that Cup Final party," he began. "If—"

Tom Merry waved a hand impatiently.

"For goodness' sake don't let us have that all over again, fatty," he said.

"But I mean it, you know," said Trimble. "I'll overlook your shabby trick of dropping me this afternoon. I'm a forgiving chap. Would you really like to be in my Cup Final party?"

Tom Merry forced a smile.

"Oh, yes! Anything for a quiet life. Now run away."

"You won't let me down," went on Trimble seriously.

"If you say you're coming and then you let me down at the last moment I shall be in a hole."

"Oh, I sha'n't let you down!" grinned the junior captain. "Count me in your party, old bean."

The fat Fourth-Former pulled out a stub of pencil from his pocket and began to write Tom Merry's name down on a piece of paper.

The junior captain eyed that proceeding with astonishment. Not for one moment did he imagine that Trimble was giving a Cup Final party.

"You'd like Lowther and Manners to come, I suppose?" asked Trimble at length.

"Oh, rather!" said Tom Merry sarcastically. "You going to put their names down, too?"

"That depends," said Trimble cautiously.

"Oh, it depends, does it!"

Baggy Trimble's round little eyes glistened.

"Well, a feed isn't much to expect in return for a whole day's outing at Wembley on Saturday," he remarked. "If I put Lowther and Manners on my list you might do the decent thing and let me come into the feed."

Harry Wharton smiled.

He fancied he saw a strong likeness in Baggy Trimble to Billy Bunter of Greyfriars.

"You want me to do the decent thing?" asked Tom Merry thoughtfully.

"Of course, old chap!"

"Then here goes!"

"Yaroooooh!"

Baggy Trimble let out a terrific roar as Tom Merry caught him by the shoulders and sat him down on the hard ground.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Harry Wharton.

"Wow! You beast!" roared Trimble. "What did you do that for?"

"You asked me to do the decent thing," chuckled Tom Merry, "and I've obliged you. To do it properly I ought to jump on you now, but—"

"Yah!" roared Trimble, scrambling to his feet. "I'll cross your name off my list now, you rotter. Bass ingrati-

tude, I call it. And I jolly well won't put Manners and Lowther down now—"

"Hallo, who's talking about putting me down?" asked Monty Lowther, as he came along with Manners and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Baggy Trimble glared at him.

"I was telling that rotter, Tom Merry, that I won't include him in my party to the Wembley Cup Final," he said. "And I'm not going to put you down either, Lowther."

Monty Lowther chuckled.

"Quite right for once," he said. "But I'm going to put you down, my son. I—hallo! Where are you off to?"

But Baggy Trimble hadn't waited for Monty Lowther to put his words into action. He disappeared as fast as his fat little legs would carry him.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, gazing after Baggy's fast receding figure. "Is that fat duffah weally takin' a party to see the Cup Final?"

"So he says," said Tom Merry, with a smile. "But it's only a little more of his swank. It's the feed he's after. Trimble would take a party to North America if he thought he could bag a feed on the strength of it."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"He's as bad as Bunter," he said. "Still, talking of the Cup Final makes me wish that I could see it."

"Same here," agreed Tom Merry.

And Manners and Lowther and Arthur Augustus nodded in agreement. The Cup Final was the talk of the school, and a deal of interest centred around Kildare and Darrell who had booked seats in the Stadium. The Lower School, with few exceptions, envied the mighty men of the Sixth their good fortune in being able to see the greatest match of the season.

"I suppose that fat boundah isn't weally gettin' up a party?" said D'Arcy thoughtfully.

"He may be getting up a party," grinned Lowther. "But that's where it'll stop. You know all the tickets are sold?"

"Are they, bai Jove!"

"Trust old Gussy to be a month behind the times," said Manners.

"Weally, Manners!"

"Never mind Trimble and his imaginary Cup Final party," said Tom Merry. "What about tea?"

And the subject was dropped. Tea at that moment was of far greater importance to the footballers than even the Cup Final. In a merry talkative throng the two clevens entered the School House, and changed into their ordinary attire. Then they trooped into the Common-room for tea.

Toby, the page, met them at the door. He had been given the job of waiter, head cook, and bottle-washer, so to speak. Incidentally, too, Toby had mounted guard over the array of good things spread out on the trestle-tables—a wise precaution, with such hungry fellows as Baggy Trimble about.

"Sit down, you chaps," said Tom Merry, "and pile in!"

"What-ho!"

The footballers sat down and piled in, a cheery buzz of conversation running round the table on the subject of the forthcoming cricket season.

And when Harry Wharton & Co. finally rose to go the trestle tables that had almost groaned under the weight of the good things laid out thereon now looked as desolate and uninviting as the interior of Mother Hubbard's celebrated cupboard.

Tom Merry & Co. walked down to the gates with their visitors and saw them off in their brake. A rousing cheer followed them, and an equally hearty cheer was sent back by the Greyfriars juniors.

"Good fellows," remarked Tom Merry, as he walked back with his pals.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But not quite so good as little us," said Monty Lowther, with a chuckle. "We beat them this afternoon, anyway."

"Thanks to Gussy!" said Tom Merry.

"Oh, wats!" exclaimed D'Arcy modestly. "Bai Jove!" he added. "What's w'ong?"

The juniors gazed in the direction their elegant chum indicated and started.

Gathered on the steps of the School House was a crowd of juniors from the Shell and Fourth, and on the topmost step was Baggy Trimble.

"Looks interesting," said Tom Merry, quickening his stride. "What's Baggy up to now?"

"Booking names for his Cup Final party, I expect," chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther, however, was very near the truth. As Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. neared the School House steps they could hear the remarks that were floating out on the evening air.

"Put me down, Baggy, old chap!"

"Sure, an' you can count me in entirely."

"I've always admired you, Baggy. Put my name down!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy Trimble's fat face was flushed. In his hands were a pencil and paper, and every now and then he scribbled a name down on his list. Already he had jotted down twenty-three names, and there seemed no limit to the requests to be included in his Cup Final party.

"What's the giddy game?" asked Tom Merry, as he drew level with Bates of the Fourth.

"Trimble's had some tickets sent him for the Cup Final on Saturday," said Bates. "He's making up a party. Going to be done on a grand scale, too. Car to meet the party, you know, and all expenses found."

"Oh, my hat!" roared Tom Merry. "Has the fat spoofer been gassing about that imaginary party again?"

"Nothing imaginary about it," said Hammond of the Fourth. "Leastways, he's got the tickets."

"What?" It was a chorus from Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co.

Hammond nodded.

"Seven of 'em!" he grinned. "And about umpteen fellows want to be included in the party."

"But he's spoofing!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "He told me about his blessed party this afternoon before the match. It's all silly gas, I tell you!"

"It might be gas about the cars and the expenses part," said Hammond, "but he's got the tickets. I've seen 'em!"

"You've seen them!"

"Yes," replied Hammond. "And what beats me is that they're for two guineas each!"

"Two guineas each?" said Monty Lowther faintly. "Trimble's got seven two-guinea Cup Final tickets?"

Hammond nodded.

"Well, carry me home to die!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Lucky Trimble!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked like fellows in a dream. To think that Baggy Trimble had been telling the truth for once, and on so expensive a scale as two guineas a time, as Monty Lowther expressed it.

The fat Fourth-Former caught sight of Tom Merry & Co. He waved a podgy hand in their direction.

"You beasts needn't apply for a place in my party," he said loftily. "I'm taking my friends—not fellows who doubt my word!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom Merry faintly.

"We don't want to come in your rotten party!" said Monty Lowther. "We don't want to be run in!"

"Eh?" ejaculated Trimble, with a guilty start. "What do you mean?"

"I expect the fellow who's lost those tickets will be making inquiries," said Lowther. "He might have the block numbers, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But they are my tickets!" hooted the fat Fourth-Former. "My Uncle George sent them to me this afternoon."

"Bogorrah, an' you said it was ye father who sent 'em five minutes ago!" said Patrick Reilly.

Baggy Trimble snorted.

"I meant my father," he said.

"Then where did he get them from?" asked Monty Lowther. "Did he pinch them?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Lowther, you know jolly well that my pater could afford to buy up a hundred seats at Wembley!" said Trimble warmly.

"But could he pay for them?" inquired the humorist of the Shell sweetly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was going to put your name down on my list, Lowther," said Trimble. "But I shall have to reconsider it now."

"For which many thanks!" answered Lowther gravely.

And he signalled to Tom Merry & Co. to enter the House.

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

"Trimble's patah must be in funds to send Baggy seven two-guinea tickets! Jolly genewous of him, and surprisingly genewous of Baggy to take a party, you know."

"Too jolly generous!" remarked Digby, who was limping in the rear of the party as a result of his fall in the match that afternoon. "There's something fishy about it!"

"Weally, Dig, I don't see why you should say that!"

"You wouldn't!" replied Digby. "But for Trimble to go round offering to take a party of six fellows with him to the Cup Final is so unlike the fat idiot that I can't quite swallow the story. And I haven't seen the tickets, anyway."

Tom Merry broke in.

"Oh, he's got the tickets!" he said. "Bates and Hammond declare that they have seen them."

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"Well, he'll soon have the party made up," said Blake, with a grin. "There's Scrope and Croke & Co. hanging round his neck already. It's surprising how many fellows will claim friendship with Trimble now that he's got some Cup Final tickets to give away."

"But if the fat idiot's speaking the truth," said Tom Merry, "he's going to make a day of it. His father's sending a car to meet the party to take them to Wayland. They'll catch the London express there. And all exes will be met by Trimble's father."

"Thumping queer!" said Monty Lowther. "I'm inclined to think the same as Digby; it's too fishy for words."

"And Trimble's pater isn't rolling in filthy lucre to that extent," said Digby thoughtfully. "You chaps remember it was only a short time ago that Trimble senior was in a bad way of business. Nearly went bankrupt, or something."

Tom Merry grinned.

"Perhaps he's recovered and wants to make a bit of a show," he said. "Anyway, Trimble's got the tickets. We shall see if the car calls for the party on Saturday."

"Yaas, wathah!"

There were other juniors besides Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. looking forward to Saturday. Scrope and Mellish and Croke already saw themselves as members of Trimble's party. Not that they were particularly interested in football, but they relished the prospect of dodging lessons on the Saturday morning, and the run up to town at Trimble senior's expense. Like Tom Merry, the black sheep of the Fourth and the Shell had doubted Trimble's story of the Cup Final in the first place and had rejected his invitation with more force than gracefulness.

That, however, was before any of them had seen the precious tickets. And, having seen them, they were now, like a good many other juniors, prepared to accept the whole of Trimble's story even down to the Rolls-Royce car that was to call for them on Saturday.

Trimble was decidedly worth cultivating in the circumstances, and the fat Fourth-Former found himself the centre of attraction. Fellows who had refused a few hours ago to loan him half-a-crown now came forward and thrust shillings and half-crowns on him right and left. In exchange Trimble murmured his thanks and vaguely added something about including them in his Wembley party.

He closed his "list" at last, having in the meantime collected about two pounds and several invitations to supper that night and to tea the next day. Really it was surprising how popular he had become. Fellows took it as an honour to be seen in his company, to walk arm-in-arm with him.

That some of these new-found friends were doomed to disappointment was obvious, for Trimble only wanted six to make up his party. But that little circumstance did not worry Baggy. If fellows liked to think that they were to be included in the party, that was their look-out, he told himself. As a matter of fact, the fat Fourth-Former had already made up his mind whom to take on the Saturday, and not one of those now surrounding him with their attentions and flattery was included in that party.

Had Mellish and Scrope and Croke known of that little arrangement their friendship for Baggy would have undergone a startling transformation. But it is said of old that ignorance is bliss. Certainly no doubts entered the minds of the black sheep as they linked arms with Trimble and walked him into Study No. 7 in the Shell passage.

## CHAPTER 4.

### Even Knox!

"SIT down, old chap!" Croke pushed forward the best armchair, and invited Trimble to make himself comfortable, and it was at the precise moment the fat Fourth-Former was putting his feet on the mantelpiece that Aubrey Racke entered the study.

He stared in amazement at Trimble, and glanced inquiringly at Croke and Mellish.

"What's that fat frog doin' here?"

Croke winked with the eye that was farthest away from Trimble, and proceeded to explain.

Racke listened in amazement.

"Gammon!" he said at last. "Trimble's spoofing you!"

"He's not," said Croke. "He's got the tickets. Father's done a bit of good in business, I expect, and wants to chuck some of his money about. Trimble's father's going to stand the exes of the Cup Final party!"

"Gammon!" repeated Aubrey Racke faintly; but he was half convinced. If Croke believed the tale, it was pretty obvious that there was something to back it up, for Croke was as sharp as a needle.

Baggy Trimble, who had heard part of the conversation, deemed it an opportune moment to show some proof to the half-doubting black sheep of the Shell. Accordingly, he produced the seven two-guinea tickets from his pocket, and surveyed them carelessly.



Racke's eyes nearly started out of his head as he beheld those tickets. If Trimble senior could afford to chuck about fourteen guineas or more on football, it was safe to assume that Trimble junior would also be well supplied with pocket-money while Trimble senior's period of affluence lasted.

Aubrey Racke smiled on Baggy Trimble ingratiatingly. A Trimble without money Aubrey Racke had no time for; but a Trimble with money was a different proposition entirely.

"Would you like to make one of the party for Wembley?" asked Trimble, looking at Racke with a greasy smile. "Won't cost you anything, you know."

"Thanks very much!" smiled Racke, in return. "Ahem! What about a bite of supper? I'm feeling peckish!"

Baggy Trimble's fat face lighted up.

"I'm feeling awfully peckish myself!" he said.

"Good!" said Racke. "Lay the table, Crooke. You'd better stop, too," he added, turning to Scrope and Mellish and winking.

The black sheep smiled, and Trimble smiled. In fact, it was a happy smiling party all the time. Supper that night was the pleasantest meal Baggy Trimble had enjoyed for months past, for Aubrey Racke, who was always well supplied with money, did himself well in the matter of tuck.

The juniors were leaning back in their chairs, discussing the prospects of the weather for Cup Final day, when Knox of the Sixth put his head into the study. There was a friendly smile on the unpopular prefect's face that was not lost upon Baggy Trimble.

"Hallo, Trimble!" said Knox cheerily. "Is it true that you've got some tickets for the Cup Final?"

"Yes," replied Trimble, with a grin. "Seven of them. I'm taking a party of fellows, you know."

"Lucky bargeel!" said the prefect enviously. "Wouldn't like to sell a ticket to me, I suppose?"

The Sixth-Former had no intention of purchasing a ticket, despite his words. Even Knox was not above inviting himself to Trimble's party, if he could do so without loss of dignity; and Trimble, slow thinking as he usually was, saw through Knox's artifice.

"I couldn't very well sell you a ticket, Knox," he said, with as near to inferring that he would be pleased to give him one, without, however, actually saying so. "The pater would be annoyed, you know. Besides, it wouldn't be quite the thing."

"No, I suppose not," agreed the prefect thoughtfully. "Still, I thought I'd give you a look in. I'm rather keen to see the Cup Final and I applied for a ticket too late. By the way," he added, "You needn't do those lines I gave you yesterday, Trimble. Perhaps I was—er—a bit hasty."

"I haven't jolly well done them, anyway!" said Trimble valiantly, as he saw the lie of the land.

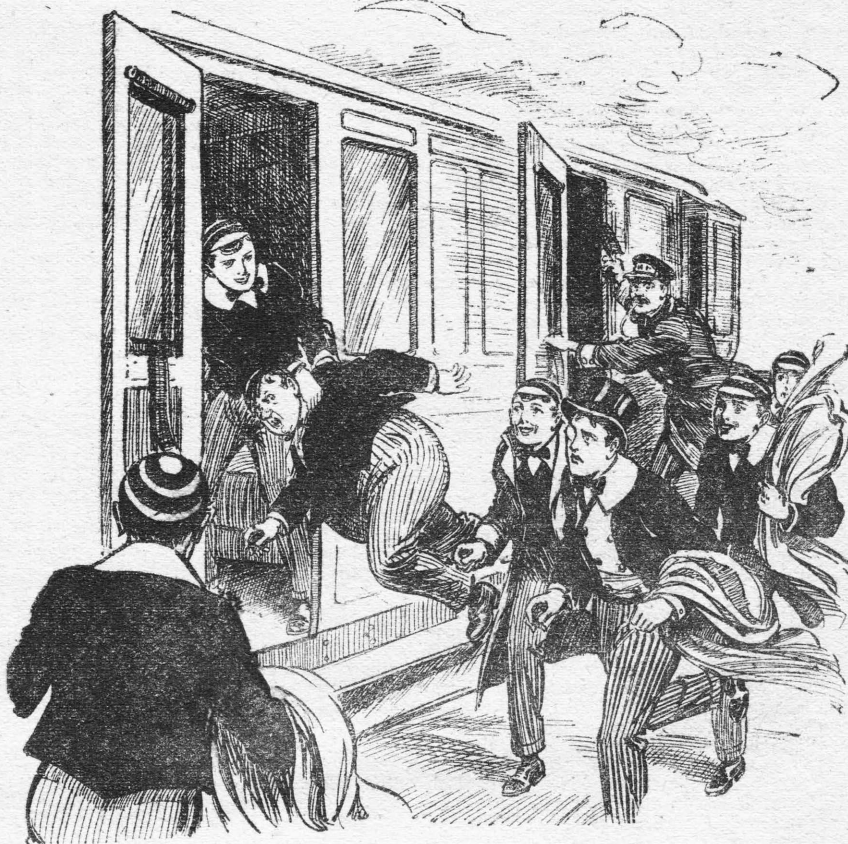
Knox forced a smile. "Well, let me know if you change your mind about selling one of those tickets," he said. "And if you think you'll have any difficulty in getting leave from Mr. Lathom tip me the wink, and I'll see what I can do for you."

With that generous remark the Sixth Form prefect went off down the passage.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Trimble. "Even that rotter Knox would like to bag a place in my party!"

"We're not going to have him with us, are we?" asked Racke.

"No fear!" exclaimed Crooke warmly. "You're not going to sell him a ticket, are you, Trimble, old chap?" asked Mellish, with a greasy smile.



The guard was signalling to the engine-driver to move off when Tom Merry & Co. dashed past him. "Stand back!" he exclaimed, as the train began to move. But the chums of St. Jim's, not to be outdone, scrambled into the first carriage they came to, Baggy Trimble being hauled in by the scruff of his neck. (See Chapter 9.)

Baggy Trimble shook his head. Much as he would like to have sold Knox a ticket for two-guineas, he realised that that would be a trifle too steep. In actual fact, the fat Fourth Former would have much preferred to sell the whole seven tickets for two guineas a time, or even a guinea; but he had gone too far to do that now. Not for one moment did he count the consequences of his action in opening Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's letter and abstracting those valuable tickets. Trimble never met trouble half-way. On the contrary, he seemed fated, having once put his foot in the mire, to sink deeper and deeper.

Besides, he told himself, D'Arcy would be one of the party. Perhaps the only difference made by the ownership of the tickets lay in the fact that, whereas of a certainty Trimble would not have been included in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's party, he was now, as holder of the tickets, a certainty. And a peculiar fate had decreed that Digby should crock his ankle in the match with Greyfriars that afternoon.

"I won't take him!" muttered Trimble, half aloud. "After all, he couldn't go like that."

"Eh? you mean Knox?" asked Crooke, watching the fat Fourth-Former anxiously.

"Ye-es, of course," grinned Baggy, rising to his feet. "I think I'll trot along now, you chaps."

"Just as you like," said Racke, with a smile. "Thought you might care for a smoke and a game of nap."

"Oh, some other time!" replied Baggy loftily. "Some of my pals are expecting me to give them a look in for supper, you know."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Crooke faintly, for Trimble had eaten enough supper at Racke's expense to satisfy three fellows. But apparently the fat junior wasn't satisfied.

He rolled towards the study door.

"I'll try and give you a look in to-morrow," he said. "Cheerio!"

When he had gone Racke aimed a vicious swipe at the cushion on the sofa, visualising it as Baggy Trimble.

"The fat sweep!" he exclaimed savagely. "He'll 'try' and give us a look in to-morrow. Why, I could burst him!"

Crooke and Mellish grinned.

"Oh, let's humour him for a bit!" said Crooke. "After all, putting up with a bit of that fat idiot's swank for a day at the Stadium for nix is worth while. We'll take it out of his fat hide afterwards."

Aubrey Racke nodded.

"Right, we'll let him rip," he said. "But I'll take jolly good care that I don't get left out of the party! That fat rotter's not coming here scoffing my grub for nothing!"

But there Aubrey Racke was wrong, did he but know it.

Meanwhile, the subject of these pleasant "friendly" remarks was rolling along the Shell passage, a fat grin on his face.

"He, he he!" cackled Trimble. "I've taken 'em all in! There'll be a party, all right, and there'll be a car to take us to the station. And Tom Merry & Co. are sure to do the right thing, and stand a chap a feed now and again on the journey. I'm doing Gussy a good turn, really. After all, it's a worrying job getting a party together. I'll do it for him. It's rather fortunate that that rotter Digby creaked his ankle this afternoon. Hope it turns out to be sprained. He won't be able to go to Wembley then. It'll simply mean that I take his place."

That was how Trimble's convenient conscience looked at it. He saw nothing wrong in what he had done, or what he intended doing. He was simply making certain of a trip to London. In fact, he was doing Arthur Augustus D'Arcy a favour by taking over the responsibility of selecting a party. Really, the swell of the Fourth ought to thank him.

And doubtless Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would have thanked Baggy Trimble if he had known of his kindly intentions, the bestowal of same being pretty certain to take the form of a vigorous boot. But D'Arcy did not know. At that moment he was consoling with Digby, his chum, whose lameness had developed with alarming rapidity.

"Wuff luck, Dig," murmured Arthur Augustus. "I weckon you've spawined your ankle, deah boy."

Digby nodded gloomily.

"Nevah mind," smiled his elegant studymate. "It's an injury suffered in a good cause."

"Rather!" exclaimed Digby, with a smile. "But it's a nuisance for all that. Suppose I'd better get you chaps to help me up to the sanny?"

"I think you ought to get it seen to," said Blake. "It's swelling like anything."

Very tenderly the chums of Study No. 6 lifted Digby, and between them carried him up to the sanny. And there Miss Marie took charge of him. She insisted, too, that Digby should remain in the sanatorium at least until the swelling of his ankle subsided, for it was almost impossible for him to walk upon it.

And very reluctantly Robert Arthur Digby gave in to this arrangement.

That night Baggy Trimble noted a vacant bed in the Fourth Form dormitory, and smiled with great satisfaction. Evidently Digby's gammy ankle was more serious than he had at first supposed, which made it a practical certainty that he wouldn't have been able to join D'Arcy's party to Wembley Stadium. That circumstance eased a guilty pang of conscience Trimble felt recurring, and the fat junior slept like a log. It was a case of Digby's misfortune being Trimble's gain.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Baggy, the Host!

**T**AP!

Mr. Lathom looked up from a bulky volume on his study desk as that tap came at the door, and frowned.

It was the interval between morning lessons and lunch, and the master of the Fourth at St. Jim's had snatched the opportunity of digging into a bulky volume of Greek mythology—a subject very dear to his heart.

Tap!

"Come in!"

The door opened, and Baggy Trimble of the Fourth rolled into the apartment.

Mr. Lathom looked at him inquiringly.

"What do you want, my boy?" he asked a trifle testily.

"Ahem! I came to ask you if you would give me an exeat on Saturday morning, sir—" he began.

"What?" thundered Mr. Lathom. "You are aware, Trimble, that Saturday is a half-holiday."

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"And yet, in addition to that, you come to me with a request to be excused morning lessons, Trimble?" said the Form master sternly. "If this is a joke—"

"Not at all, sir," Trimble hastened to explain. "You see, sir, I—I—I—"

Mr. Lathom's eye strayed to his beloved volume on Greek

mythology, and thence to a cane that reposed in the corner. Trimble followed both glances, and made up his mind to take the plunge.

"I've got seven tickets for the Cup Final at Wembley!" he blurted out.

Mr. Lathom looked surprised.

"You have seven tickets, Trimble?" he said incredulously. "I did not know that you were interested in football to the extent of buying seven tickets for the Cup Final."

"M-m-my father sent them to me, sir!"

"Your father!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom. "Bless my soul!"

"You see, sir, my father thought it would be a good thing for some St. Jim's fellows to see really good football," continued Trimble, gaining a little more confidence.

"Indeed!"

"And he has sent me the tickets in the hope that you will allow me to take six friends to see the great cricket—ahem!—I mean football match on Saturday," said Trimble.

"That is very generous of your father, Trimble," remarked Mr. Lathom, who was surprised indeed to learn that Trimble senior possessed such philanthropic sentiments.

His impression of Mr. Trimble had been that of a very busy City man—a man who had little time for anything outside pounds, shillings, and pence. Really, it was very astonishing to Mr. Lathom to learn that Mr. Trimble cherished such laudable principles.

"Very generous of Mr. Trimble," said Mr. Lathom. "Bless my soul!"

"My father is generous, sir," said Trimble. "Nothing mean about any of our family, sir!"

"Ahem! Will you kindly keep to the point, Trimble?" said the Form master dryly. "You wish me, then, to give you permission for seven boys to be excused morning lessons on Saturday for the purposes of travelling to Wembley Stadium to witness the—er—Cup Final?"

"Yes, sir, that's it," said Trimble eagerly. "The pater is sending a big car to the school to—er—ensure our catching the express from Wayland. Of course, all expenses will be met by Gussy—I mean my pater."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom, almost overcome by this fresh testimony of Trimble senior's philanthropy.

"Everything will be in order, sir," went on Trimble, taking advantage of the pause. "My friends will be very circumspect, and all that."

"I trust so," remarked the Form master. "And whom do you propose to include in your—ahem!—party, my boy?"

"Tom Merry—" began Trimble, and Mr. Lathom looked up sharply. "Monty Lowther, Harry Manners, D'Arcy, Blake, and Herries."

"I had no idea, Trimble, that the juniors you have just named were friends of yours?"

"Oh, yes, sir! We're—we're awfully pally, you know."

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Lathom was relieved to think that such exemplary characters as Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. were included in Baggy Trimble's proposed party. That made it easier for him to give his sanction to the affair.

"You agreeably surprise me, Trimble," said the Form master, "in your selection of friends. I might take this opportunity of remarking that if you endeavoured to model yourself upon any one of them, you would be a credit to your Form."

"Yes, sir," said Trimble respectfully. "I—I try to do that!"

"Er—have you the tickets for this proposed trip to Wembley actually in your possession?" was Mr. Lathom's next question.

"Yes, sir."

Baggy Trimble fished in his jacket-pocket and brought to light the seven tickets. He held them up in front of Mr. Lathom's astonished face like a card-player holds a hand of cards. And the master of the Fourth nearly jumped off the floor when he saw that they were for two guineas each. Really, there was apparently no end to Mr. Trimble's generosity.

"It would seem very extravagant to spend all that money on tickets for a mere football match," remarked Mr. Lathom, knowing little of football, and caring for it still less. "Very extravagant. However, that is Mr. Trimble's business. But as your father has bought these tickets, I will certainly grant the necessary permission for you to be excused morning lessons on Saturday."

"Thank you, sir."

"That also applies to the boys Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy," continued the master of the Fourth. "It will be necessary for Mr. Linton to give his permission to the other boys you name. Also Mr. Railton must be approached, as he is your Housemaster. If you would care for me to see Mr. Railton and Mr. Linton, Trimble—"

There was nothing Baggy Trimble cared about more.

"If you would, sir," he hastened to remark, "I should be extremely grateful."

"Very well, Trimble," smiled Mr. Lathom, "I will do so. Er—I trust you boys will conduct yourselves as befits scholars of St. Jim's while you are away from the school?"

"Oh, yes, sir! Thank you, sir!"

"You may go, Trimble," said Mr. Lathom, his glance coming to rest again on his volume of Greek mythology.

And Baggy Trimble, inwardly rejoicing to think that the interview had gone successfully, rolled away down the passage to "break the news" to the members of his party.

He did not trouble to tap on the door of Study No. 6. After all, a fellow who had invited six fellows to the Cup Final had no need to bother about such ordinary points of etiquette as knocking at a door.

Crash!

There was a roar of rage from the interior of the study as Trimble threw open the study door, for Jack Blake was carrying a pile of books across the room while Herries dusted the bookcase. And on top of the pile was a large bottle of ink.

Swooooooh!

Clatter, clatter!

The pile of books wobbled, and the bottle of ink swooshed downwards as the opening door crashed against Blake's arm.

"You thumping idiot!" roared Blake. "You dangerous maniac! You burbling barrel!"

"You fat ass!" exclaimed Herries, taking up the tale, as it were. "You footling idiot! Didn't they teach you to knock at a door in the slum where you were brought up?"

"I must say, Twimble, I considah you severely lackin' in mannahs, you know," chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, from the fireplace, where he was putting the fender and tongs to rights. "I considah——"

Baggy Trimble glared at the occupants of Study No. 6 indignantly.

"You ungrateful rotters!" he exclaimed.

Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy stared at the fat Fourth-Former in amazement. For Trimble to stand his ground after barging unasked into a study was surprising enough, but for him to come out with that expressive remark was more surprising still.

"If you're looking for a thick ear," began Blake darkly.

"You rotten outsiders!" hooted Trimble, feeling really aggrieved that a fellow who had just asked leave of absence from his Form master for these chaps to see the Cup Final should be addressed with such a string of insulting epithets.

"Collar him!" growled Herries.

"Scrag the silly idiot!" roared Blake. "I'll teach him to come barging into this study. Look at the ink! Look at the carpet!"

With a roar like a bull, the leader of Study No. 6 leapt at the fat junior and grabbed him by the collar. Herries was only a second after him, while even Arthur Augustus so far forgot himself in his wrath as to rise from a kneeling position without "lifting" his trousers.

Bump!

Baggy Trimble descended to the inky floor with a thud that shook every bone in his body, and incidentally every article in the study.

"Yarooooh!"

Bump!

"Wow! Yow! Groooooogh! Oh crumbs!"

Bump!

"Now perhaps you'll remember to knock at a door before you barge in in the future!" exclaimed Blake.

"Wow!" gasped Baggy, sitting in a dazed heap on the study floor amidst the scattered books and the running ink. "To think that you rotters should treat me like this after my begging you off lessons for Saturday morning. Yow!"

"What are you burbling about, you fat idiot?" demanded Herries. "I—— Oh crumbs!"

He broke off into an ejaculation of dismay as the study door opened a second time, and a well-known figure came into view.

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Lathom, for he it was, stared down at the extraordinary scene of Baggy Trimble gasping and panting amidst the wreckage of the pile of books and the contents of the ink-bottle.

Jack Blake & Co. exchanged glances of dismay.

"Bless my soul!" reiterated Mr. Lathom. "I understood you to say, Trimble, that these boys were friends of yours. This—ahem!—seems an extraordinary demonstration of friendship. Hem! I came here, however, to tell you boys that Trimble's party has received proper sanction. You will therefore count yourselves at liberty on Saturday to make the journey to Wembley Stadium. I—er—trust you will have a very enjoyable day."

And with a discreet cough and a ghost of a smile

curving the corners of his lips, Mr. Lathom hurriedly took his departure.

He left three blank faces behind him.

"What on earth did old Lathom mean?" gasped Jack Blake.

"Wow! I've included you three rotters in my party for Saturday," explained Baggy Trimble, scrambling to his feet, and feeling himself all over. "I wish I hadn't now."

"You included us?" gasped Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, my giddy aunt!" grinned Herries.

Baggy Trimble nodded.

"And this is how you treated me," he complained. "But I might have expected it from you beasts. Ungrateful, I call it!"

"Carry me home to die," said Jack Blake faintly. "No wonder old Lathom was surprised if he thought we were friends of yours, Baggy."

"Bai Jove, yaas!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to laugh at," said Baggy Trimble. "For two pins I'd cancel your names."

Study No. 6 became serious at once. Really, it was amazing if Baggy had indeed invited them to the Cup Final. Still, not in their wildest moments had Jack Blake & Co. dreamed that the fat Fourth-Former would include them in his party.

"I'm frightfully sorry," apologised Blake. "But it was your own fault, you know. You shouldn't barge into a study like that."

"I only came to tell you that Mr. Lathom had given us leave," gasped Baggy Trimble.

"Bai Jove, I've fwrightfully sowwy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I apologise as one gentleman to another, Twimble. Also I must add my thanks for bein' included in your party, deah boy. I considah it awfully sportin' of you!"

"Same here!" agreed Herries. "But who are the other chaps in the party, old fat man, I mean—ahem!"

Baggy Trimble grinned.

"Tom Merry, and——"

"Hallo, hallo! Who's taking my name in vain?" said the captain of the Shell, appearing in the doorway with Manners and Lowther.

"Trimble is!" said Herries.

"Then prepare to die!" exclaimed Tom Merry, giving the fat junior a hearty slap on the back.

"Wow! Chuck it, you beast!"

"Hold on!" grinned Blake. "Don't knock your giddy host about, old scout."

Tom Merry jumped.

"Host?" he ejaculated.

Jack Blake nodded.

"Yes, Trimble's made up his party for the Cup Final, and old Lathom has given his permission. We shall have a spiffing time!"

"You will?" said Monty Lowther, in astonishment.

"You're not of the party, are you?"

"Yes, my son, and so are you!" chuckled Blake. "That's so, isn't it, Trimble, old bean?"

The fat Fourth-Former nodded.

"Well, I'm thumped!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "But you're joking!"

"I'm not," said Baggy Trimble, enjoying the position. "I've forgiven you, Tom Merry, for being such a beast. I've overlooked your caddishness, Lowther, and I've forgiven your meanness, Manners——"

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Blake, "What a host!"

"And I'm returning good for evil by taking you chaps to Wembley on Saturday."

"Well, carry me home to die," said Tom Merry faintly.

"You're spoofing."

"He's not!" chimed in Herries. "Old Lathom's just been in to tell us. Everything's O.K."

Baggy Trimble grinned.

"Honest Injun!" he said.

"You're taking us to Wembley?" said Monty Lowther faintly. "And there'll be a car to take us to the station? And there'll be a feed when we get there? And it won't cost us a bean?"

"Not a red cent," said Trimble firmly. "It's my treat, you know."

"I can't believe it!" said Monty Lowther. "Somebody pinch me. I shall wake up in a minute and know that I've been dreaming."

"There's just one thing," said Trimble. "I don't want you to let on to the other fellows that you're coming with me. They'll be jealous, you know."

"Oh, we'll keep mum if you want us to!"

Tom Merry grinned. He reckoned he knew why Baggy

Trimble wanted the formation of the party kept secret. Racke & Co., and the rest of Trimble's new-found friends might think that they had been deceived, or, worse still, swindled. But still, that was their affair. They had "sucked up" to Trimble for what they could get out of him, and the process had cost them dear—was likely to cost them dear until they found out that the party was already fixed. What would be their feelings when they learnt that the fellows who had scoffed at Baggy's party, and who had certainly not gone out of their way to be pleasant to him, were the lucky ones? Tom Merry grinned as he pictured the faces of Racke & Co. when they knew the truth. It was a pity, however, that he couldn't picture his own features and feelings when he knew the real truth of that extraordinary party.

### CHAPTER 6. Trimble Stands Treat!

"I SAY, Trimble, old chap—" It was surprising how many fellows smiled upon Baggy Trimble next morning and addressed him as "old chap." Where, a few days before, these same fellows would have glared at him and presented him with the business end of a boot, so to speak, they now took him unto their bosoms like a long-lost friend and wept over him.

Baggy Trimble enjoyed himself. Fatuous as he was, he knew full well that it was the lure of the seven Wembley Cup Final tickets that had done the trick, and he determined to make the most of his opportunity.

He was now standing in the Common-room surrounded by a host of new-found friends. Racke & Co., and several other Fourth-Formers and Shell fellows followed him about like a bodyguard. Every now and then they reminded him of their great friendship, and followed up their flattering remarks with subtle hints about the Cup Final party.

"I say, Trimble, old chap," said Mellish. "I've got a plum cake in the study. Would you care to share it with me?"

Baggy's eyes glistened.

"Oh, I don't mind," he replied. "Don't suppose it's much of a cake, you know. Not the sort I'm used to at Trimble Towers. Still, you can't help that, Mellish. I know your people can't afford to make much of a splash."

There was a titter from the group of juniors around the fat Fourth-Former. Baggy, in his role of "host" for the Cup Final party, was very entertaining.

Mellish grinned sheepishly. Really, he would have dearly liked to take the fat junior by the scruff of his neck and bump his bullet head against the wall of the Common-room. But such an action, he knew, would mean the cancellation of his name from the Cup Final party list. He forced a grin instead, and mentally registered a vow to take it out of the "fat rotter's hide" when the party was over.

"Well, if you care to whack it out with me, Trimble, old man," he said, "it's a go."

Baggy Trimble did not mean to let such an opportunity pass. He grinned as he pictured Mellish's face when he knew that his name was not down on the list for Saturday. Still, that could wait. But the cake couldn't.

"Come on, then," he answered.

Mellish linked his arm in Trimble's, and the pair of them walked out of the Common-room like the greatest of chums. There was a laugh from the rest of the juniors, but Mellish and Trimble paid no heed to that.

They headed for Mellish's study. The cad of the Fourth went to the study cupboard and brought the cake to view. It was a whacking cake, with almond icing on it, and Trimble's eyes glistened greedily as they beheld it.

Mellish did most of the talking thereafter, his fat "chum" being too busy with the cake to take much interest in his conversation. Mellish watched that cake disappear with many a pang. He had "blued" nearly all his pocket-money on it, and every mouthful that Trimble took seemed to give Mellish a pain. But he restrained himself and forced a sickly smile.

"Not bad!" grunted Trimble, when the last crumb had gone. "I've had better—much better—at Trimble Towers. Still, it was quite eatable, you know."

Quite eatable! Mellish nearly forgot himself to the extent of taking the fat Fourth-Former by his ears and hurling him out of the study. But he controlled himself in time. Quite eatable! And that cake had cost seven and sixpence!

"I shall be having another one next week," he said. "Perhaps you'd care to come to tea?"

"Oh, I don't know!" said Trimble loftily. "My friends in the Shell want me to tea with them next week. Can't satisfy everyone, you know. That's the trouble of being so

popular. Some chaps feel peevish if they are overlooked. I have to ration my friends, as it were."

Mellish said nothing. He was incapable of speech at that moment, but his face expressed a lot.

Baggy Trimble grinned. He knew just what Mellish was thinking, and realised that, until Saturday at least, he held the whip hand.

"You're going to take me on Saturday, aren't you, old chap?" asked Mellish at length.

"Well, I've got your name on my list," replied Baggy cautiously. "By the way, I suppose you couldn't lend me five bob until Saturday?" he added. "I shall have a fat remittance then. The—ahem—chauffeur will be bringing me about fifty quid to pay the day's expenses. The pater wouldn't trust sending that amount through the post."

Fifty quid! Mellish's eyes glittered. He was wondering how much of that fifty quid could be transferred to his own pockets.

"Five bob," he said. "Sure, Trimble, I'll be pleased to lend you five bob."

And he fished in his pockets and brought to light the only coins he possessed—which were exactly two half-crowns. He handed them over reluctantly, although his crafty face was very benign.

Trimble's fat hand closed upon the coins, and they dropped with a musical clink into his trouser pocket. Mellish heard the sounds of coin meeting coin, and frowned. When a fellow asked another for the loan of five bob it usually meant that he was broke. But Trimble wasn't broke—not by any means. As a matter of fact, he hadn't enjoyed such a period of affluence as he was now experiencing for many a long day. There were about two pounds in his trousers pockets in half-crowns, shillings, florins and sixpences—all of which had been "loaned" him by his new-found friends, in the hope that their names would be included in the Cup Final list.

"I'll be getting along now," said Trimble, with a fat smirk. "I've got to see my friend Gussy, you know."

And without waiting for further words from Mellish, the fat junior rolled out of the study and headed for Study No. 6.

Jack Blake & Co. were at home. They looked up from a map of Wembley which they had spread over the table as the fat junior poked his head round the study door.

"Come in!" said Blake. "We're just having a squint at the map."

"I was just wondering whether you would care to join me in a snack at the tuckshop," said the fat Fourth-Former. "My treat, you know. And I say, Mrs. Taggles has made some fresh jam tarts. They're prime, I can tell you."

"But we've only just had breakfast," said Blake. "Yaas, wathab, Twimble."

"Breakfast!" snorted the fat junior. "A mouldy helping of eggs and bacon and a cup of weak tea. Do you call that breakfast?"

He did not add that he had eaten enough breakfast for five fellows. Mellish and Scrope and Crooke and others had developed small appetites that morning and had asked Trimble if he would care to have their eggs and bacon. And Trimble made it a practice never to refuse anything in the eatable line. But he was still hungry. Even Mellish's cake had not appeased his gargantuan appetite.

"I'm feeling peckish," he said. "Come along, you chaps. It's rotten for me to scoff tarts on my own."

"Oh, my hat!" gurgled Blake. He had never known the fat Fourth-Former to be so sensitive where grub was concerned. Blake looked at his chums. After all, if Trimble was standing them a day out at Wembley, it was little for them to accompany him to the tuckshop. They might even "peck" at a tart to keep him company.

"Well, if you put it like that," said Blake slowly, "we'll come along with you, Trimble."

"Yaas, wathab, deah boy," smiled Arthur Augustus. "A pleasure, you know."

They rose to their feet, and Baggy linked his arm in that of D'Arcy's. He did not seem to notice the glare of surprise the swell of the Fourth treated him to. It was on the tip of Gussy's tongue to say something and to shake off that "clinging arm of friendship," but D'Arcy was a polite youth. He realised in time that a guest could hardly take exception to his host being so chummy.

The chums of Study No. 6, with Baggy between them, headed for Mrs. Taggles' tuckshop. The good dame eyed Baggy suspiciously as he drew up a stool to the counter, but Trimble jingled the money in his pocket, and that satisfied her.

"Tarts, Mrs. Taggles, please," he said, "and ginger pop!" She bustled away and soon returned with a dish of jam tarts, still warm from the oven.

"Pile in, you fellows," said Trimble generously. "It's my treat, you know."

Blake & Co. drew up stools to the counter and began to nibble at the tarts. They were really very appetising tarts, and despite the fact that the chums of Study No. 6 had had breakfast such a short time ago they managed to eat two tarts apiece. A glass of foaming ginger pop washed them down.

Trimble, meantime, was eating with great rapidity. He had already accounted for half a dozen tarts and he seemed capable of finishing off the remaining dozen on the dish. Blake & Co. eyed him in wonder. Used as they were to his gastronomic feats, Trimble really surprised them with the extent of his appetite so soon after breakfast. For one brief moment Blake thought that the bill would have to be met by him and his chums. It would be like the fat Fourth-Former to invite fellows to a spread and then leave them to stand the racket. And as Trimble's Cup Final guests Blake & Co. were almost prepared to stand the "racket." But Trimble was full of surprises that morning.

He fully intended to pay for the feed, conscious that to do so would make a good impression upon his "guests." It would be time enough later to "stick" them for a loan. Besides, the money he was spending was not really his own—it was the two pounds odd his new-found friends had thrust upon him. In the circumstances, the fat junior could afford to be generous.

He finished the plate of tarts and looked round the little tuckshop hungrily in search of something more, but just at that moment the bell rang for morning lessons.

"There goes the bell!" exclaimed Herries. "We shall have to run for it!"

Baggy Trimble nodded, and signalled to Mrs. Taggles to give him the bill.

"Seven and sixpence, please, Master Trimble!" she said. With a great show of indifference, Baggy Trimble paid the requisite amount and then rolled from his stool.

"Come on," said Blake. "We shall be late!"

And setting off at a run, the chums of Study No. 6, with Baggy Trimble labouring along painfully in their wake, just managed to get into the Form-room before Mr. Lathom arrived.

During the morning break Baggy Trimble was besieged by his new-found friends, but he managed to give them the slip and rolled along in search of Tom Merry & Co. The Terrible Three were just going to give Digby a look in the sanny when Trimble came up to them.

"I say, you chaps," he began, "would you care to come along to Mrs. Taggles' for a snack? It's my treat, you know!"

It was on the tip of Tom Merry's tongue to decline that generous invitation with thanks, but he remembered in time that as a member of the Cup Final party he was under some obligation to the fat Fourth-Former. He looked at Manners and Lowther and they nodded.

"Right-ho!" he answered.

Baggy Trimble smiled and took Tom Merry by the arm. Tom shook off the detaining hand, not being so polite as Arthur Augustus; but Baggy was not to be disposed of so easily. When the four juniors arrived at the tuckshop the fat junior was walking arm and arm between Monty Lowther and the captain of the Shell. And if Tom Merry & Co. resented this sudden familiarity they said nothing. After all, a fellow who was good enough to take them to the Cup Final on two-guinea tickets, and who was going to pay all the exes incurred, had to be treated with a certain amount of tolerance. Not that the Terrible Three were "sucking up" to the fat Fourth-Former, for he had invited them to the party off his own bat. That side of the affair, surprising as it was to Tom Merry & Co., was true; for Mr. Linton had called them into his study and acquainted them with the facts of Baggy Trimble's request. Moreover, the good-natured master of the Shell had readily given his permission to the scheme.

But why Baggy Trimble had invited Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. neither party quite understood. True, they were more his friends than any of the other juniors if it came to that; for Baggy had "tapped" them for loans and invited himself to their study spreads innumerable, which was more than any other fellow of the Fourth or Shell had stood for.

But as Monty Lowther remarked, Baggy, with Cup Final tickets in his pocket, was a different Baggy from the junior they were accustomed to dealing with. Really, it was most surprising.

It was more surprising still when, having demolished another dish of Mrs. Taggles' famous jam-tarts, Baggy Trimble not only offered to pay for them, but actually insisted upon paying for them when Tom Merry good-naturedly offered to stand treat.

That was a new Baggy with a vengeance!

But Tom Merry & Co. did not realise then that Baggy's generosity was something in the nature of the sprat which

certain people dangle as bait to catch a mackerel. Enlightenment was to come later.

There was a fat smile on Baggy Trimble's rather shiny face as he scrambled into class a few moments later. Everything was going well. Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. really felt under an obligation to him now that their names had been given into their respective Form masters as members of his Cup Final party. Not if they wanted to could these juniors very well turn down that kind invitation now; it would appear churlish and ungrateful. They were keen, too, frightfully keen, to see the greatest match of the year. Baggy felt that he had handled a difficult situation with great skill. But he had overlooked one important point in his scheme, and that was the proposed visit of Lord Eastwood to St. Jim's on the following day. If that came about, then all his plotting would tumble about his ears like a pack of cards. But of that possibility the fat Fourth-Former never gave a thought then. He believed in the principle of "sufficient for the day was the evil thereof."

## CHAPTER 7. The Whole Hog!

"TRIMBLE!"

Kildare of the Sixth called to Baggy Trimble as he came along the Fourth Form passage next morning.

"Yes, Kildare?" said the fat Fourth-Former wonderingly.

"Tell D'Arcy that his pater wants to speak to him on the phone in the prefects' room," said the captain of St. Jim's.

Baggy's eyes nearly popped out of his head.

"His pater!" he gasped.

"That's what I said!" rapped Kildare. "Don't stand there staring like a gargoyle, you young idiot! Run along and find D'Arcy. His pater won't like to be kept waiting."

And the captain of the school passed on, leaving the fat junior rooted to the spot in terrified alarm.

Gussy's pater—on the telephone! In his mind's eye, Baggy could see the result of all his scheming coming home to roost with a vengeance. Of a certainty, Lord Eastwood would want to know if the party for the Cup Final was fixed. Baggy shuddered at the thought.

"Wow!" he gasped.

But terror sharpened Trimble's fat wits as no other thing could. At all costs, Arthur Augustus must be prevented from speaking to his pater. But someone had to answer the phone. Lord Eastwood was not the type of man to be kept hanging at the end of a telephone receiver indefinitely. Trimble's mind began to work swiftly.

"It's the only way!" he muttered half to himself.

"What's the only way?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, coming along the passage at that moment.

"Oh, crumbs!" Baggy Trimble's jaw dropped as he saw the swell of St. Jim's. He realised if Kildare saw D'Arcy he would tell him that his pater wanted him on the phone. At all costs, D'Arcy must be steered clear of Kildare.

"Anythin' the mattah, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy, glancing at Trimble's face, which had turned as pale as a piece of underdone pie-crust. "Bai Jove, you look quite queeah, you know!"

"It's all right!" blurted out Trimble. "I say, Gussy, old chap, Tom Merry's looking for you. He's just gone out into the quad."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked surprised.

"Bai Jove, that's remarkable!" he said. "I've only just left Tom Mewwy!"

"I mean Digby wants to see you," said Trimble hastily. "He's in the sanny, you know. Rather inportant, I believe!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy, screwing his famous monocle into position. "If that's so, Twimble, I'd bettah twot along and see him."

"Ye-es," answered the fat Fourth-Former. "It's urgent, you know!"

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "Many thanks, Twimble, deah boy!"

And he turned on his heel and hurried away. Trimble breathed a sigh of relief when he had gone.

"Silly idiot!" he muttered. "What the thump did he want to come along for just then? I—"

He remembered the phone, and with astonishing speed in one of his bulk he rolled along towards the prefects' room. He bumped into Knox on the way. The Sixth Form prefect greeted him with a smile.

"I suppose you haven't decided to sell me that ticket?" he asked.

"Nunno!" gasped Baggy, alarmed at this sequence of misfortunes between him and the telephone in the prefects' room.

room, as it were. "B-but I've got your name down on my—my list, you know."

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Knox, with a silky smile.

"I'm in a hurry now!" stammered Trimble. "My pater's on the telephone, you know. Waiting to fix up the final arrangements, Knox."

"You'd better hurry up, then!" remarked the unpopular prefect, with a genial grin.

And he swung on along the passage. Trimble breathed another sigh of relief when he disappeared from view.

"Beast!" he exclaimed beneath his breath.

Then he rolled into the prefects' room and caught up the telephone-receiver. There came the sound of an angry snort from the other end of the wire. Evidently Lord Eastwood was getting tired of being kept waiting. Baggy Trimble plucked up his courage and coughed into the transmitter by way of a beginning.

"Hallo!" came Lord Eastwood's voice. "Is that you, Arthur?"

Baggy Trimble's heart missed a beat as he replied.

"Is that you, Lord Eastwood?" he asked, disguising his voice.

"It is!" replied D'Arcy's father. "Really, I don't like being kept waiting all this time. But who are you? Why is not my son speaking to me?"

"Your son I am sorry to say, sir, is in the sanatorium," said Trimble, amazed at his own daring.

"Wha-at?"

"He's been taken suddenly ill with—er—measles!" said Trimble.

There was a gasp of surprise over the telephone.

"Goodness gracious! The poor boy! But—but who is speaking?"

Trimble thought quickly, and his answer came easily enough.

"Mr. Lathom, his—er—Form master, you know."

"You surprise me, Mr. Lathom," said Lord Eastwood. "I didn't recognise your voice."

Baggy Trimble could not help grinning. Really, it was not surprising that Lord Eastwood failed to recognise Mr. Lathom's voice, Mr. Lathom at that precise moment being in his own study.

"Voices vary over the telephone," said Baggy Trimble.

"Quite so, quite so. But about my son. Is he seriously ill, Mr. Lathom?"

"Very ill!" assented Trimble, repenting him of that remark a moment later. "A very severe case of pneumonia, you know."

"Pneumonia?" almost shrieked Lord Eastwood. "But you said measles a moment ago."

Baggy Trimble started.

"Did I? Oh crumbs! Ahem—I mean that was a mistake, sir. Your son is suffering from an acute attack of pneumonia."

"Good heavens!" came Lord Eastwood's voice. "Then I must see him at once!"

"Oh, lor!" gasped Baggy Trimble. He had not counted on that.

"What did you say?"

"Ahem! I said it was impossible for you to see Gussy—ahem—I mean your son!" gasped Baggy, beginning to founder in a sea of apprehension.

"Impossible?" snorted Lord Eastwood.

"Impossible!" said Baggy Trimble firmly. "You see measles is a highly infectious disease—"

"What in the name of goodness are you talking about?" stormed Lord Eastwood. "You told me my son was suffering with pneumonia."

Baggy Trimble nearly crumpled up. He wished he had stuck to his original version of the "facts." Measles was catching, and it was pretty certain that Lord Eastwood would not have stated his intention of coming to St. Jim's without delay if D'Arcy had been suffering with measles.

His fat mind worked swiftly.

"It's a combination of both," he answered swiftly. "Measles and double pneumonia is, you know. A very serious case—"

"Bless my soul!" gasped Lord Eastwood. "I must come down and see my poor boy at once. And I shall have something to say to you, Mr. Lathom, when I do arrive for not having acquainted me with the facts before," he added grimly.

"Wow!" gasped Baggy. He was getting deeper and deeper in the mire.

"What did you say, Mr. Lathom?"

"I said I think it highly inadvisable for you to come to the school," said Baggy. "Measles and—er—pleurisy and double pneumonia are extremely catching, sir."

There came an indignant snort from the other end of the wire.

"What!" roared Lord Eastwood. "Really, Mr. Lathom,

I am beginning to think that you are out of your senses. Measles, pleurisy, double pneumonia— Good gad, sir! What do you mean?"

Trimble couldn't very well say that he meant anything that would keep Lord Eastwood from visiting St. Jim's.

"Really, sir—" he began.

"Enough!" stormed Lord Eastwood. "I'll have something to say to you, sir, this afternoon! I shall arrive at four-forty-five, punctually, and shall be able to visit my son, Mr. Lathom."

"But it's a highly infectious case," roared Baggy into the transmitter; but he roared in vain, for Lord Eastwood had rung off.

"Oh, lor!" groaned the fat junior as he replaced the receiver. "The fat's in the fire now with a vengeance! The beast is going to see Mr. Lathom! Oh, crumbs!"

He groaned in anguish of spirit. Really, it was enough to make the most case-hardened schemer groan. If Lord Eastwood came to St. Jim's that afternoon the whole plot would come out. And apart from a reckoning at the hands of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and his friends that would of a certainty follow the exposure of Baggy's trickery, Mr. Lathom would doubtless have something to say to the fat Fourth-Former for making use of his name.

"Oh, crumbs!" repeated Baggy Trimble, as he rolled out of the prefects' room. "I must do something."

That was obvious if he were, to continue with his great idea. But what was he to do? Not only had Arthur Augustus to be kept clear of meeting his pater, but Mr. Lathom had, somehow or other, to be put out of the way for the afternoon.

And Trimble shuddered at the thought of having to remove his Form master for the afternoon. All that morning Baggy Trimble's face was a picture of woe, but by lunch-time he had brightened up considerably. A plan had materialised in his fat brain, a daring plan, but entirely in keeping with Baggy's fatuous character. He little counted the cost, but that was only to be expected.

After lunch the fat junior rolled towards Knox's study. He found the prefect at home.

"Hallo, Trimble!" said Knox genially. "Trot in!"

Trimble rolled in.

"I want leave to use the telephone, Knox," he said. "My pater wants me to—ahem—ring him up about the party for Saturday."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Knox, with a grin. "You can use the telephone, Trimble. Certainly."

The Sixth-Former gave that permission readily. Perhaps he thought that one good turn deserved another. If he were on Trimble's "list," it was a small enough favour in all conscience to allow Trimble to use the telephone in the prefects' room.

"Thank you, Knox!"

Trimble rolled from the study and entered the prefects' room. Once inside, he closed the door and turned the key in the lock.

"I'll make certain no one interrupts, anyway!" he muttered.

Then he took up the receiver, and asked for Mr. Lathom's number. He was soon put through.

"Hallo!" came the voice of the master of the Fourth.

"Who is speaking, please?"

"Is that you, Lathom?" asked Trimble, his fat knees knocking together with fright. "It's Short—Dr. Short—speaking."

"Oh, I didn't recognise your voice," said Mr. Lathom. "The phone does play tricks with the voice, you know."

"I can recognise yours!" grinned Trimble, imitating as near as he could the squeaky tones of the school doctor. "I'm keen to play you a round of golf this afternoon. I shall be on the links at four-thirty sharp. Will you give me a game, my dear Lathom?"

"I shall be delighted."

"Thank you, Lathom. Four-thirty, then. Good-bye!"

"At four-thirty," said the master of the Fourth. "Good-bye!"

Baggy Trimble replaced the receiver, and wiped a stream of perspiration from his brow. What Mr. Lathom would say when he arrived at the Wayland Golf Links at four-thirty Baggy Trimble dared not imagine. One thing was certain. The master of the Fourth would not be at St. Jim's when Lord Eastwood arrived at a quarter to five.

"That's got that beast out of the way!" muttered Trimble, with a faint grin at his own cleverness. "Lucky the rotter didn't say he was otherwise engaged."

It was very lucky indeed, for Mr. Lathom had fully intended to spend his leisure time after classes in delving into his classic work on Greek mythology. But golf with Dr. Short would be a welcome break, especially as Mr. Lathom usually managed to beat the medical gentleman of Rylcombe at that ancient game.

Trimble thought a moment and picked up the receiver



"Let's bump the fat idiot for leaving the tickets behind!" roared Blake, who was raging with fury. "Scalp him!" "Arthur!" The St. Jim's juniors recognised the polished voice of Lord Eastwood, D'Arcy's pater. Baggie Trimble noticed him, and trembled like an aspen leaf. (See Chapter 10.)

again. This time he asked for the garage at Wayland. He was through to the number in a few seconds.

"Hallo! Is that Wayland Garage?" he asked, mimicking the polished tones of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Yes, sir. Who's speaking?" came the respectful query.

"My name is D'Arcy—D'Arcy of St. Jim's," said Trimble.

"Oh, yes, Master D'Arcy."

The tone was more respectful than ever now, for the swell of St. Jim's was a good customer with the garage people at Wayland.

"What can we do for you?"

"I want to wun into the country this aftahnoon in a cah," said Trimble, inwardly rejoicing at his successful imitation of D'Arcy's voice, "with a party of fwiends. There will be seven of us, you know."

"Yes, sir. Would you like the Daimler touring-car?"

"Yaas, deah boy, I mean exactly," said Trimble. "Will you awwange for the cah to awwive at four-thirtay sharp?"

"It will be there, sir," came the reply. "I'll see to it personally."

"Thank you vewy much. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!"

Trimble replaced the receiver for the second time. His scheme was working like a charm. What Gussy would say when he found a bill from the garage people awaiting him a few days later Trimble didn't stop to think. It was enough for him that he had tided over his immediate chances of exposure. The bill, he knew of old, would not be sent in by the garage proprietor for some days, but the car would be at the gates at four-thirty sharp, that was one comfort. All that now remained was to get his party into that car at four-thirty sharp and get them as far away from St. Jim's as was possible before Lord Eastwood arrived. D'Arcy's father had said that he would be able to stop at

St. Jim's for a few minutes. Well, it was his look-out if he had to cool his heels for that time without seeing his son who was alleged to be stricken with measles, pleurisy, and double pneumonia.

Trimble emitted a fat chuckle as he unlocked the door of the prefects' room and rolled away to the Fourth Form quarters in search of Blake & Co. He bumped into Aubrey Racke and his comrades on the way.

"Oh, here you are!" said Racke genially, as the fat Fourth-Former came in sight. "We've been looking for you, Baggie."

"Yes, rather," said Mellish with a friendly grin.

"Have you?" said Trimble.

"Yes, I thought you might care to come to tea with us to-day," said Racke.

Baggy Trimble shook his head.

"Sorry," he said. "But I'm taking out a party of fellows in the car. It's calling at four-thirty."

"Oh, that sounds good!" said Percy Mellish. "I just fancy a run in the country."

"Not a bad idea," said Racke thoughtfully. "We could pull up somewhere and have a smoke and a hand or two at cards."

Trimble grinned.

"But I'm taking Tom Merry and his crowd," he said.

Racke & Co.'s faces fell. It looked as if their friendship for Baggie was under competition. And to-morrow was the Cup Final party. At all costs Racke & Co. wanted to keep Baggie to themselves until after the party.

Baggy Trimble's mind worked swiftly.

"You see, I haven't got their names down on my list," he explained. "So I thought I'd give them a treat to-day instead."

Racke & Co. brightened up. If that's all it was, Baggie

could get on with his run out into the country. It was the morrow's party they were concerned about.

"Well, that's sensible of you," said Croke, with a grin. "You take them out to-day and they won't worry us to-morrow, what?"

"That's it," said Trimble. See you later."

And he detached himself from Racke & Co. and rolled on in search of Blake & Co. He found them in the Common-room with Tom Merry & Co.

"I say, you chaps," he said, with a grin. "I've got a little surprise for you!"

"What's that?" asked Monty Lowther. "Is the Cup Final party off?"

"Eh? Of course not!"

"Then the car's broken down," said Monty Lowther.

He had just come from the sanny, having spent half an hour with Digby. The two of them were still sceptical of the genuineness of Trimble's party despite the evidence of the tickets and the fact that leave of absence had been granted to the seven members of that party.

"The car's all right," replied Trimble. "But I'm planning a little run out in the car this afternoon. I'm hiring one from Wayland Garage and shall deem it a favour if you chaps will come with me. We can have a good spin round the country after lessons and drop in somewhere for tea."

"Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

The chums of the Shell and Fourth were surprised—agreeably surprised.

"Will you come?" asked Trimble.

Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. looked at each other. Really they could do little else but accept that kind invitation. It would be churlish, in view of all the circumstances, to do otherwise.

"Like a shot," said Tom Merry, speaking for the others.

"Right then," said Trimble with a grin. "Four-thirty sharp at the school gates."

And just as he finished speaking the bell for lessons rang and the juniors split up to go to their respective Form-rooms.

So far Baggy's wheeze was working like a charm.

#### CHAPTER 8. A Narrow Shave!

**B**AGGY TRIMBLE was on tenterhooks all that afternoon, and in consequence he earned many a rebuke from Mr. Lathom. The fat Fourth-Former was in a state of terror lest Lord Eastwood should alter his stated arrangement to arrive at four-forty-five and visit the school earlier.

But fortune favoured the fat and fatuous Trimble. Afternoon lessons dragged by, but when, finally, Mr. Lathom dismissed his class Lord Eastwood had not put in an appearance.

Trimble breathed a sigh of relief. He grinned to himself as, standing at the gates awaiting the arrival of the Daimler car from Wayland, he saw Mr. Lathom, golf clubs over his shoulder, striding out for the station.

That was one difficulty overcome. It was pretty certain that Lord Eastwood would not see the master of the Fourth that afternoon. What would happen when he did eventually tax him with his phone message of the morning, Trimble dared not dwell upon. He lived and moved for the present.

Sharp to time the big Daimler touring-car from Wayland drove up to the gates of the school.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry, who with the rest of the party, was at the gates. "Here it comes."

Quite a crowd of Fourth and Shell juniors stood round as the big car drove up. Some wondered why it was that the chauffeur touched his cap to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and took no notice of Baggy Trimble who had hired the car, but no one remarked upon it.

"Tumble in," said Baggy Trimble majestically.

"Yas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus. "I say, Twimble, this is wippin'!"

Baggy Trimble smiled loftily.

"Nothing to what I'm accustomed to at Trimble Towers, you know. Still it's passable, Gussy, old chap."

"Quite passable," said Monty Lowther.

"Rather!"

The chauffeur looked round at Arthur Augustus, whom he knew by sight, for directions as to the route to be followed, and Baggy, realising the situation, turned to the swell of the Fourth.

"Tell him where to go, Gussy," he said. "You know the country round here. I'll leave it to you."

"Wight-ho, deah boys!" said Gussy, and he gave directions of a route to be followed to the driver.

The car started up, and a cheer followed it as it rapidly drew away from the school.

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Baggy Trimble leaning back on the cushions felt quite happy. Difficulty number two had been overcome. That he hadn't the slightest intention of paying for the hire of that car never troubled him a jot. After all, the fellows in the car were Gussy's pals. They would stand by him and settle up the account between them when it all came out. But that would be days ahead. By that time Baggy Trimble hoped to invent a plausible excuse to cover up his folly.

It was a very pleasant afternoon and the chums of St. Jim's thoroughly enjoyed it. They stopped at a comfortable old farmhouse for tea and fed on eggs and bread-and-jam and home-made cake. Baggy Trimble did himself well. When it came to settling up he made some pretence of fishing in his pockets for the necessary cash, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy politely insisted on standing the tea. And Trimble with a show of great reluctance gave in.

Meantime, punctual to the minute, Lord Eastwood's Rolls-Royce had arrived at the gates of St. Jim's. Taggles, the porter, who knew Lord Eastwood by sight and respected him on account of the handsome tip he "allus gave a feller," dived out of his lodge.

"Arternoon, me lord!" he said, doffing his cap.

Lord Eastwood nodded a greeting in return. His lordship was looking extremely worried and anxious, as indeed he had cause to be. He beckoned to Taggles to approach.

"How is my son?" he asked the astonished porter.

"Young Master D'Arcy, sir?" he said. "Why, he's as fit as a fiddle as ever was."

"What?"

Lord Eastwood looked as if he were going to leap out of the car.

"But I understand that my son was ill with measles or pneumonia—"

"Oh, my eye!" gasped Taggles, thinking that his lordship was not quite sane. "E went out in the car with 'is friends a quarter of an hour ago," he added.

"Went out in a car?" exclaimed his lordship.

Taggles nodded.

"Which 'e's gone out for the afternoon with Master Blake and his friends in a car," he said.

"But that's madness, my man. If my son has got pneumonia—"

"E ain't got no numonier, as far as I know," said Taggles in great perplexity. "I've never seen 'im lookin' better, me lord."

"Bless my soul!" murmured Lord Eastwood, completely at sea. "This is decidedly queer. One would almost think that someone with a mistaken idea of humour had been—er—pulling my leg."

Taggles listened to that remark with respect, as became a school porter in the presence of his superior. But he thought, privately, that his lordship had "gone potty."

Lord Eastwood appeared to be thinking. He turned to Taggles at last.

"Perhaps you will be kind enough to acquaint Mr. Lathom of my presence. He is expecting me this afternoon."

"Beggin' your pardon, sir," said Taggles, "but Mr. Lathom 'as gone out, too. I believe he's gone golfing. Leastways, he carried his clubs with 'im."

"What?" barked Lord Eastwood. "Mr. Lathom gone out when he knew that I was coming down here?"

"I dunno about knowin' you was a-coming here, me lord," said Taggles, in great perplexity. "But he's certainly gone out. And Mr. Lathom's not the kind of gentleman to do that if he knew that you were a-coming down, me lord!"

There was a certain truth in the old school porter's words that rang home. Lord Eastwood was sure in his own mind that Mr. Lathom would not be so rude or so inconsiderate as to leave the school if he expected to see Lord Eastwood that afternoon.

His lordship considered for the space of a few moments. Turning the matter over in his mind, he began to suspect—in fact, he was already certain—that his aristocratic leg had been pulled. Obviously his son could not be ill with either pneumonia, or measles, or pleurisy if he were out in a car. And now he came to think of it, Lord Eastwood was certain that it was not Mr. Lathom who had spoken to him over the phone. In his agitation at the time his lordship had not paid much heed to such ejaculations as "Oh, lor'!" "Oh crumbs!" and "Ow!" But now he recollected them he was assured that such schoolboy remarks had not proceeded from Mr. Lathom.

Having arrived at that decision, his lordship could now account, to a certain extent, for the peculiar message as to his son's condition that had come over the telephone-wires in the name of Mr. Lathom.

Some practical joker had been pulling his leg. Lord Eastwood's face set grimly as he reached that judgment. He was a busy man, and he considered it a joke in very bad taste to scare him with news of his son's sudden illness, as indeed it was.

He pulled out his gold watch, and his frown deepened. He



could ill-afford the time he had wasted on that fruitless journey to the school. Someone would suffer for that practical joke, he was determined on that. But he could not take the trouble to investigate the matter at this juncture, especially in view of the fact that his son was out of gates, and Mr. Lathom was away golfing.

Lord Eastwood snapped his gold hunter shut, and turned to his chauffeur.

"Home!" he ordered briefly.

And, with a nod to the astonished Taggles, D'Arcy's father settled himself on the cushions as the car swung out of the drive.

"Well, my heye!" exclaimed Taggles, when only a cloud of dust indicated the direction his lordship had taken. "Well, my heye!"

And, mumbling to himself, he ambled back into his lodge.

The frown deepened on Lord Eastwood's face as his magnificent car raced along. He was annoyed.

He was so deep in his annoyance that he did not notice a big Daimler car approaching from the opposite direction. But someone in the Daimler car had spotted him. And the observant traveller was Baggie Trimble.

His eyes nearly started out of his head as he recognised the tall, austere-looking gentleman in the car speeding towards them.

"Oh, my hat!" he groaned. "That's done it!"

"What did you say, Twimble, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus, who had been looking at the green countryside over the near-side of the car.

Trimble's wits worked swiftly. At all costs he must prevent D'Arcy from seeing that approaching car. It would be passed in a flash, and all would be well.

"Look!" exclaimed the fat Fourth-Former suddenly.

And he leaned over the near-side edge of the car and pointed to a piece of parkland the car was rushing past.

"What's w'ong, deah boy?" asked D'Arcy, screwing his monocle into position.

"Look!" repeated Trimble. "A whole bunch of foxes!"

"What?" exclaimed Blake and Tom Merry in unison.

"A whole bunch of them!" roared Trimble, getting very excited. "Look!"

"Wha-a-at?"

The juniors looked, but they saw nothing but a stretch of park land.

And while they gazed in search of Trimble's imaginary "bunch" of foxes, the Rolls-Royce containing Lord Eastwood flashed past. Trimble saw it whiz by out of the corner of his eye, and he breathed a sigh of relief.

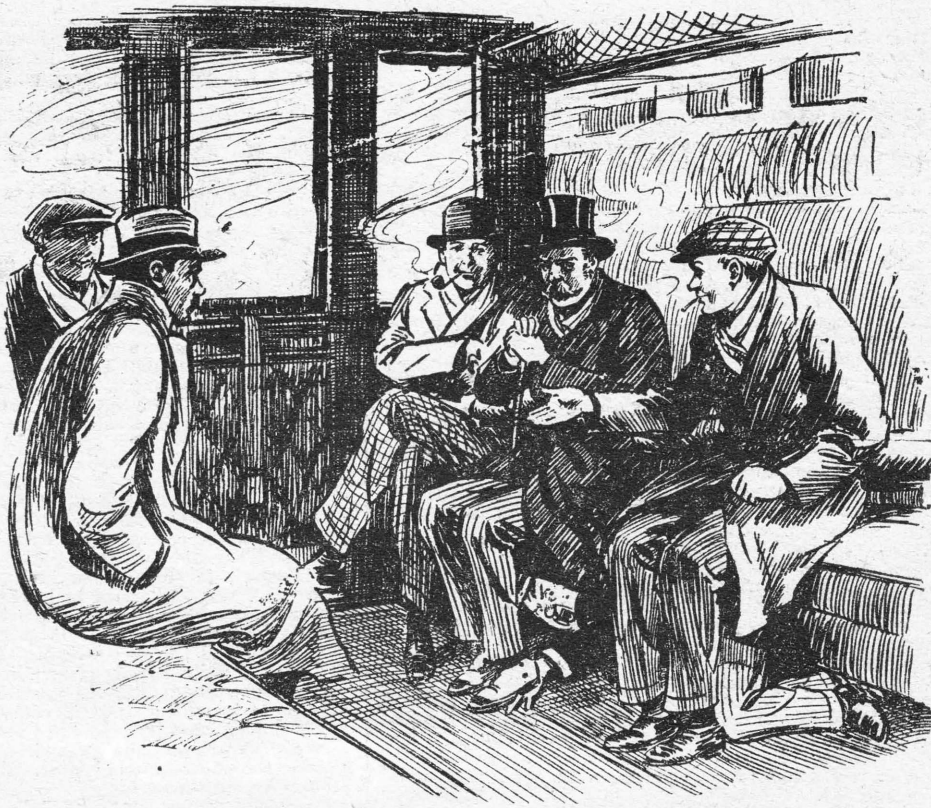
Tom Merry & Co. eyed him strangely, and wondered if he were wandering in his mind. There was not the faintest sign of a fox, let alone a whole bunch of them. And Monty Lowther remembered it was hardly the time of year to see a fox, anyway.

"Blessed if I could see any foxes!" grunted Tom Merry, with a puzzled frown. "You're seeing things, Trimble, old fat man!"

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "There's not a fox in sight, Twimble."

Baggie Trimble grinned.

"It must have been an optical delusion," he explained. "I could have sworn I saw a bunch of the things."



Baggie Trimble's arms and legs were aching with the cramped position he had been forced to adopt, and the heavy-footed gentleman seated over him was more restive than ever. Thud! The heavy-footed gentleman plumped his foot down fair and square on Trimble's hand. "Yarooohoo!" yelled the fat junior. (See Chapter 11.)

And the subject of the "bunch of foxes" was dropped at that. The run back through the glorious countryside was done in record time, and the car pulled up at the gates of St. Jim's five minutes before lock-up.

"Top-hole!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he stepped out of the car. "I've thoroughly enjoyed it!"

"Yaas, wathah! It was wippin'."

Trimble looked at the chauffeur. That individual was glancing at Arthur Augustus. He was expecting a tip, for the swell of the Fourth always tipped his chauffeur handsomely. Baggie stepped into the breach.

"Do you mind tipping the driver, Gussy?" he said, in a whisper. "I've left—er—my wallet in the study, you know. I'll settle up with you later, of course."

"That's quite all right, Twimble," smiled Arthur Augustus unsuspectingly. "Leave it to me."

And he tipped the expectant chauffeur handsomely.

Baggie Trimble breathed another sigh of relief. Really, it was amazing how his luck was holding out. He thought so still more when, on questioning Taggles in discreet fashion, he elicited the fact that Lord Eastwood had called at St. Jim's that afternoon, and had departed therefrom in high dudgeon.

"He, he, he!" cackled Trimble, as he rolled back towards the School House. "Everything has gone off fine!"

And so it seemed. But he was yet to learn the truth of the old saying that "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and lip."

## CHAPTER 9.

### Just Like Trimble!

"**B**AI JOVE! What a wippin' day!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stood at the window of the Fourth Form dormitory next morning and sniffed appreciatively at the crisp spring air.

"Topping!" agreed Jack Blake.

"Spiffing!" exclaimed Herries.

Baggie Trimble yawned. The fat Fourth-Former was always the last out of bed, and the morning of the Cup Final proved no exception. He rolled out from the clothes and went through his ablutions in about three minutes. Then he started for the door.

"Hold on, Trimble, old chap!" said Percy Mellish, intercepting him. "I suppose you've not forgotten to get permission from old Lathom for the Cup Final party? We don't want to get pipped at the last moment, you know."

Baggy Trimble chuckled. Evidently the cad of the Fourth still laboured under the impression that he was one of the party, and Trimble saw no reason for disillusioning him.

"Oh, I've fixed that up all right!" he said loftily.

"Good!" said Mellish, as he went on with his dressing.

Trimble rolled down to breakfast in a good mood. He was treated to smiles from Aubrey Racke & Co., who, like Mellish, fondly imagined that they were going to accompany him to Wembley that afternoon—a much more congenial operation than mugging Greek in the Form-room. But they were, like Percy Mellish, doomed to disappointment.

Fellows eyed Trimble with envy all through breakfast. Right up to the last moment some of the less particular fellows "sucked" up to him in the hope of being included in the Wembley party, whereat Trimble smiled knowingly to himself and suffered their flattery and tokens of good will.

Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co., as agreed, had kept the affair to themselves. It had seemed strange to them, really, for they were the reverse of secretive. But their host had wished it, and it was for them to fall in with his idea.

But when the warning-bell for morning lessons rang out, Racke & Co. swarmed round Trimble, their hats and coats on, and friendship written all over their faces.

Baggy Trimble, a dust-coat over his arm, eyed the black sheep apprehensively. He wished now that he hadn't cultivated the friendship of Racke & Co., that he hadn't "pulled their legs." True, it had benefited him while it had lasted, for loans had literally rained upon him. But now the time came round to explain matters he repented him of his rashness. If only Tom Merry & Co. would come along! They would see that their "host" wasn't handled by Racke & Co. But Tom Merry & Co. were putting the finishing touches to their toilet, whilst Blake & Co. were telling Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in a forcible fashion what they thought of him and the ninth fancy waistcoat he had put on and rejected.

"Well, we're ready," said Racke, with a friendly smile. "You've got the tickets?"

"Oh, yes!" said Trimble lamely.

"And the car's expected here now, isn't it?" asked Mellish.

"Er—yes!" muttered the fat junior nervously. As a matter of fact, he was feeling extremely apprehensive about that car. It had just occurred to him that if Lord Eastwood sent one of his own cars Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would not only recognise it, but would, in addition, recognise the chauffeur. And Trimble was wondering what plausible tale he could invent to account for that extraordinary event.

"Then we'd better be going," said Croke.

Baggy Trimble almost wished for the ground to open up and swallow him. But he cheered up considerably as he saw Tom Merry & Co. coming along the passage leading to the steps of the School House. They would be bound to stand by him, at least.

Baggy took the plunge.

"It's like this—" he began; and Racke & Co. noted his apprehension, and their friendly smiles disappeared.

Instinctively they knew what was coming.

"It's like this," repeated Trimble. "I'm only taking six chaps to Wembley, you know."

"Well, we know that!" said Racke grimly. "We're only six, aren't we?"

"B—but I've asked T-Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. to e-come with me, you see," explained Trimble nervously. "Wha-a-at!"

If looks could have killed, Baggy Trimble would have curled up and died on the spot under the expressions of Racke & Co.

It was some moments before any of them could speak properly.

"What?" roared Racke at length. "You asked those rotters? And all the time you've been scrounging on us, and leading us to believe that we were going to Wembley?"

"I—I'm not responsible for what you b-believe," stammered Trimble, wishing that Tom Merry & Co. would get a move on.

"You fat fraud!"

"You mean rotter!"

"You blessed worm!"

Evidently Racke & Co.'s friendship had only been destined to last as long as they knew they were in the Wembley Cup Final party.

Baggy Trimble backed a pace.

"You swindlin' hound!" roared Racke. "Collar him!"

The black sheep of St. Jim's needed no second bidding. They swarmed all over Baggy Trimble like an avenging army.

Bump!

Baggy Trimble descended to the quad with great concussion, and he let out a roar.

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"Yaroooooh! Leggo! Rescue, Tom Merry!"

The Terrible Three, coming down the School House steps, heard that frantic appeal and dashed forward. In a moment Racke & Co. were being dragged off Trimble's recumbent figure.

"You mustn't treat our host like that!" grinned Tom Merry, digging his knuckles into Racke's neck and hauling him off the fat junior like a sack of coals. "Naughty, naughty!"

Monty Lowther and Manners were also similarly employed with Croke and Mellish.

"Leggo, you rotter!" yelled Racke. "That fat toad's been swindling us!"

"What do you mean?" asked Tom Merry.

"He's been sticking us for free feeds and loans on the strength of taking us to Wembley to-day!" hooted Racke. "And now he says he's taking you rotters!"

"Which is quite correct," said Tom Merry, with a smile.

"The swindling cad! Let me get at him!"

"You're not getting at him!" responded the junior captain. "It serves you right, my sons. You shouldn't have sucked up to him. You're going in to lessons sharp! There's the bell!"

And he planted a well-directed boot behind Racke's elegant trousers that sent the black sheep of the Fourth stumbling towards the School House. Mellish and the others were treated in like fashion. Now that the party was off there was no other course left open to them but to go in to lessons. They did this vowing that they would take it out of Trimble's fat hide when he came back that evening. Knox, too, who had learnt of his exclusion from the party, vowed to take it out of Trimble when he came back. But the fat junior did not hear those generous remarks of his new-found—and now lost—friends. Seeing that Tom Merry & Co. were quite capable of handling the situation without his presence, Baggy Trimble started at a run for the gates, anxious to know the worst in connection with the car and the chauffeur Lord Eastwood had sent down.

Baggy approached the magnificent touring-car that stood outside the gates apprehensively. But he had no cause for fear, if he only knew it.

"G-good-morning, my man!" he said to the uniformed man at the wheel. "You are here sharp to time, I see."

"Good-morning, Master D'Arcy!" came the reply; and the chauffeur touched his cap and jumped down from his seat.

Baggy Trimble started. The chauffeur had addressed him as "Master D'Arcy." Did it mean that the man was new to the Eastwood household? The thought—and it was a feasible explanation—made Baggy Trimble chuckle silently. Luck was following him with a vengeance.

He determined to try out his theory.

"How was the pater when you left home, er—er—er—"

he asked, purposely fumbling over the name.

"His lordship was quite well, sir," said the chauffeur respectfully. "But I think I have not had the honour of meeting you before, sir," he added. "You see, I only came into his lordship's employ last week, when he bought this new car. My name is Mason."

Baggy Trimble nearly let out a whoop of joy. True, if he could have pierced the chauffeur's outward air of respect, he would have been less gratified, for Mason was hard put to it to reconcile the fact that this podgy, overfed, slovenly-looking fellow was the son of Lord Eastwood. He had heard in the servants' quarters at Eastwood Lodge that young Master D'Arcy was a very likeable and well-dressed young fellow. But it was not for Mason to ponder over these things so long as he drew his weekly wage. He was all that could be desired in the way of a respectful servant as he stood there by the side of the door of the magnificent touring-car.

"Here we are, deah boys!"

Baggy Trimble jumped as that voice fell on his ears, but he recovered himself in a moment. After all, there was nothing to fear. He looked round and saw Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, resplendent as ever, in company with Blake, Herries, Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther.

All the juniors were eyeing the car in wonderment. Baggy Trimble was surprising them right and left. Here was the magnificent car, complete with chauffeur, as described by Baggy Trimble. It seemed incredible, but there it was. Really the chums of St. Jim's now began to look forward to a very enjoyable day.

"Bai Jove, Twimble, your patah knows a good eah when he sees one!" remarked Arthur Augustus, surveying the great touring-car through a critical eyeglass.

"Rather!"

"There are others at home," said Trimble, with a wave of his fat hand. "I didn't want the pater to send the Rolls, you know."

"This one's quite good enough for little me!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"



# St. Jim's Jingles!



No. 33— PERCY MELLISH, OF THE FOURTH

**A** SNEAK, a toady, and a cad  
Is Master Percy Mellish;  
He's really not the sort of  
lad

Whose company we relish.  
He hobnobs with the shady set,  
Who occupy their leisure  
With playing-card and cigarette—  
A dubious form of pleasure!

He simply loves to spy and pry  
Upon his schoolmates' actions;  
He's cunning, crafty, mean and sly,  
And base in his transactions.  
You only need to scrutinise  
His face, and note each feature,  
His character to realise—  
He is a worthless creature!

He gets on well with Aubrey Racke,  
They're often seen together;  
For each delights to laze and slack—  
Birds of a kindred feather!  
Racke patronises quite a lot,  
His pursuits are unhealthy;  
But Mellish does not care a jot  
So long as Aubrey's wealthy!



A member of the  
rotters' brigade.

Tom Merry and his chums detest  
The ways of Prying Percy;  
They often pounce on him with zest  
And bump him without mercy.  
They cannot stand his crafty ways,  
So stealthy and so sinister;  
And when a caddish part he plays,  
A hiding they administer!

In Study Number Two he "digs"  
With Wildrake and with Trimble;  
The latter is the worst of pigs.  
The former, blithe and nimble.  
But neither has a high regard  
For Mellish, be it stated;  
And Percy thinks his fate is hard,  
And wonders why he's hated!

I cannot praise, in glowing terms,  
So base an anti-Briton;  
I hope that Percy Mellish squirms  
On reading what I've written.  
He stands for everything that's base  
And odious and unpleasant;  
And I'd repeat it to his face  
If only he were present!

**NEXT WEEK:—DORIS LEVISON,** Ernest Levison's  
Sister.

"Hear, hear!"

"Jump in!" invited Trimble loftily. "We shall have to look sharp if we're going to catch the connection at Wayland. Kildare and Darrell left the school an hour ago."

"But they had to footslog it to the station," grinned Monty Lowther. "Mere common mortals, these Sixth Form men, after all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors climbed into the car, and Baggy followed them. Really things couldn't have worked out better if they had been true from beginning to end. In fact, Trimble almost began to believe that it was his Cup Final party, and that the magnificent touring-car that now sped silently and swiftly to Wayland was indeed his father's.

And certainly no suspicion to the contrary entered the heads of the party. There was no room for doubt. The car and the two-guinea tickets supplied all the proof anyone needed.

It was a merry party that chatted on the possible result of the great footer match as the car sped to the station. Then, just as Wayland Junction Station hove into sight, Baggy Trimble let out an ejaculation of dismay.

"Oh crumbs!"

"What's the matter, old scout?" asked Tom Merry, thinking of the tickets at once. "Surely you've not forgotten to bring the Stadium tickets?"

Baggy Trimble shook his head.

"No; I've got those in my pocket," he replied. "But I've left my wallet behind, in the excitement of the moment, I suppose. I shall have to ask you to loan me a few pounds until I get back," he added.

The chums looked at each other, and the same thought entered their heads simultaneously. Had Trimble really lost his wallet? It would be far more in keeping with the old Trimble if he had started out knowingly without any money. It was an uncharitable thought, in view of the seven two-guinea tickets and the magnificent car, as each one of the party realised, and it passed in a flash.

Arthur Augustus came to the rescue.

"Wely on me, Twimble," he said generously. "I'll see you through until you get back to the school."

"Thank you, old chap!" said Trimble gratefully. "You'd better let me have four pounds to get the railway tickets with."

"Wight-ho, deah boy."

And Arthur Augustus handed over four crisp currency notes into Trimble's fat hand.

"Here we are!" said Monty Lowther, as the car drew to a halt outside the station. "Hop out, my sons!"

The party "hopped" out, and Baggy Trimble whispered a few words in Tom Merry's ear. Tom nodded and slipped a ten-shilling note into the chauffeur's hand.

"I'll settle up with you later, of course," said Baggy, as he rolled towards the booking-hall.

And Tom Merry wondered whether he would. Still, ten shillings for a day's outing, with a two-guinea ticket thrown in, as it were, was a cheap premium, he reckoned, whether Trimble settled up with him or not.

The car drove off, and the juniors walked towards the booking hall, Monty Lowther inquiring the time of the express that stopped at Wayland of a porter.

"We've got five minutes," he remarked.

"Good!" said Tom Merry.

"Hallo!" said Blake suddenly. "There's old Kildare and Darrell!"

"Blow them!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "Where's Trimble?"

"Oh, my hat!"

The party looked round, but there was no sign of their host. They had seen him at the booking-office, and then he had disappeared. And there was only five minutes to wait before the train was due.

"We must find the silly ass," said Blake, frowning. "It'd be just like Trimble to make us lose the only express to town."

"Yaas, he's wathah careless, deah boys," remarked Arthur Augustus. "Let's look for him."

"Buffet first," chuckled Monty Lowther. "I expect he's scoffing tarts and things."

"That's it," agreed Tom Merry, grinning. "Let's root him out!"

The chums made tracks for the buffet and entered it, but there was no trace of Trimble.

Tom Merry & Co. came to a halt, perplexed.

"That's rummy!" said the leader of the Terrible Three. "Where on earth can he be?"

The chums stared at one another uneasily. The minutes were ticking by. It only wanted two minutes to the time of the train. And Baggy, with the tickets was nowhere in sight.

"The silly ass!" snorted Blake. "I'll burst him if we miss the train!"

Another minute ticked by and the juniors were more than a little anxious. Really, it was too bad for their host to dash off like that without any warning.

"Due in thirty seconds!" growled Monty Lowther. "Look, the signal's down. I thought there was a catch in it somewhere. Old Digby thought so, too. I reckon the fat ass will let us down!"

But Monty spoke too soon. Even as the express pulled into the station, a fat figure came flying along the station approach.

It was Baggy Trimble. Under his arm he carried a huge parcel of cream puffs and jam-tarts, for several of them dropped out of the parcel as he pounded along.

"Hold on, you chaps!" he called out.

"Put a spurt on!" called out Tom Merry. "Train's just going!"

"Oh, dear!" panted Trimble.

He raced up, and Tom Merry and Monty Lowther took him by the arms and hurried him along. Blake obligingly taking charge of the parcel of tuck. The guard was just signalling to the engine-driver to move off when the St. Jim's juniors dashed past him.

"Stand back!" he exclaimed, as the train began to draw clear of the station.

But Tom Merry & Co. were not going to see a whole day's outing float away before their gaze without making an effort. They scrambled into the first carriage they could. Tom Merry leaned down and caught hold of Baggy Trimble by the collar and hauled him in in a gasping heap. Manners, Lowther, Blake, D'Arcy, and Herries climbed in over Baggy's prostrate figure.

"Yaroooh!" roared the fat junior, "Get off my hand, Blake!"

"Sorry!"

Blake laughingly withdrew his heavy foot from Trimble's podgy hand, and then the party settled themselves down comfortably. It had been a near thing. Another second and the train would have gone. The Wembley party would have been "off," for no other train was scheduled to reach London in time for the great Cup Final.

"Jove, that was a near thing!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Where did you get to, Baggy?"

"I went to the pastrycook's outside the station," replied Trimble breathlessly. "The tarts at the buffet are always stale, you know."

"Oh!" grunted Blake. "Jolly good job we didn't miss this train, anyway!"

It had been a narrow squeak, due to Baggy Trimble's regard for cream puffs and jam-tarts. Still, the chums of St. Jim's were in a forgiving mood as they watched the countryside flash past. Doubtless Baggy's intentions were of the best; he had wanted to stand them a feed on the way to town.

But in that they were mistaken. The parcel of cream puffs and jam-tarts came down from the rack the moment Baggy Trimble had recovered his breath after that panting struggle to catch the train.

And in silence, under the wondering eyes of his guests, the fat Fourth-Former proceeded to demolish those cream puffs and jam-tarts without once proffering them to his companions.

As Lowther remarked, sotto voce to Blake, they were getting a peep at the old familiar Baggy. And they were destined to get more than a peep before the day was out.

## CHAPTER 10. Spoofed!

**B**AGGY TRIMBLE was just finishing the last jam-tart when he jumped, the action almost causing him to choke. But his guests did not witness that start. They had left Baggy to his own devices, and were gazing out of the windows of the carriage.

"Oh crumbs!" muttered Trimble.

His eyes roamed to the rack where the party had put their light coats. But Trimble's coat was not to be seen. The fat junior remembered now that he had placed it on a chair in the pastrycook's at Wayland, when he had dashed in for a snack just prior to catching the train.

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And in the inside pocket of the coat were the seven tickets entitling bearers to a seat in the stand at Wembley Stadium.

Trimble almost collapsed at the thought.

What would Tom Merry & Co. say when they knew the facts; that the tickets giving them admission to the great Cup Final match had been left behind at the pastrycook's at Wayland?

Trimble licked his dry lips.

What was he to do? If he told the party that the tickets had been left behind they would rag him undoubtedly. And as three-quarters of an hour of the journey to Wembley still remained, the fat junior did not relish the prospect of being ragged for that period of time. That the party would have to wait until Wembley was reached was a certainty, for it was an express all the way, and no one was likely to pull the emergency alarm. It would hardly avail Tom Merry & Co anything to explain to the officials that it was no use continuing the journey to Wembley as the admittance tickets had been left behind.

Baggy groaned in anguish of spirit. There was only one thing to do, and that was to carry on, and see the thing through. What he was going to say when the party arrived at the turnstiles and were requested to show their tickets he hadn't the faintest notion. But that was something of the future, and Baggy Trimble only concerned himself with the present.

"I say, D'Arcy," he said suddenly.

Arthur Augustus looked round, a trifle frigidly. He considered it very ill-mannered of Trimble to scoff that parcel of tuck without once asking his guests to join in.

"Did you speak, Twimble?" he asked coldly.

"I say, old chap," said the fat junior. "I'm afraid I'm running short of cash. I've only a few shillings change from the four pounds I borrowed. Will you let me have another couple of pounds until we get back?"

"Yaas, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus. "Although that will leave me vewy short. I only came out with six pounds ten shillings, you know."

"Well, that'll be all right," said Trimble easily. "You won't need any money to-day, old chap. I'm standing all the exes."

The party was now beginning to have doubts on that score. So far all the money spent since the juniors had left St. Jim's that morning had been supplied by Arthur Augustus and Tom Merry. Still there were the two-guinea tickets—

Arthur Augustus pulled his wallet from his pocket and handed over two more pound-notes, making six in all he had loaned to Baggy Trimble.

The fat junior pocketed them without a word. He, at least, would be able to do something when the critical time arrived, now that he had some cash.

The train roared on.

Somehow or other the cheerful spirits that had so marked the party at the beginning of the journey had now fallen away. There was an unaccountable air of depression in the compartment. It was with a sigh of relief, therefore, that the St. Jim's juniors found the train slowing down almost to a four-mile an hour limit. It signified that the main line to London had been left behind, that the special train was running on the line for Wembley. Trains all seemed to be converging on one spot about half a mile ahead of the Wayland express.

"Wembley!" said Monty Lowther, with a whoop of satisfaction. "I know the place from last year's visit."

"You're right," said Tom Merry, looking out of the carriage window. "Hurrah!"

"Look at the crowds!" ejaculated Blake, as their train slowly drew into a platform.

"Bai Jove!" remarked Arthur Augustus, surveying the steadily moving throng of people on the platforms to right and left of them. "What a wecord crowd!"

It was a record crowd. Old men, young men, a sprinkling of women, too, all were moving towards the Wembley Stadium that towered skywards under a mass of gaily-coloured streamers and strips of bunting. The strains of a band, too, could be heard above the continued buzz of thousands of talking spectators.

From all parts of the British Isles people of all ages had flocked in their thousands to see the Cup Final, the greatest Soccer match of the season.

The sun streamed brightly down upon the moving mass troking towards the turnstiles.

"Here we are at last," said Blake cheerily. "I say, what a crowd."

"We'd better keep close to one another," said Tom Merry, as the train came to a halt and the passengers began to alight. "Got the tickets, Baggy, old bean?"

"The tickets—" began Baggy with a guilty start.

"The railway tickets, idiot!" said Tom Merry, with a grin. "Hurry up!"

The juniors tramped their way along the platform, keeping close to one another. It was a slow job, but they reached the ticket barrier at last, and Baggy gave up the tickets.

"You'd better let us have our return-half tickets," remarked Tom Merry, as they started towards the Stadium, "in case we lose sight of you, Baggy."

"Ye-es," agreed the fat junior.

The return-halves of the railway tickets were distributed, a wise precaution, really, in such a crowd of people. It was quite easy, after all, for members of a party to lose sight of one another. Everywhere people were moving towards the Stadium, some of them joking with the police who were good-naturedly controlling the vast crowds. It was so easy, in fact, to become detached from the party, that Baggy Trimble took his chance, and slipped behind a tall, broad-shouldered North Countryman when the rest of the St. Jim's juniors weren't looking.

"Good!" breathed the fat Fourth-Former. "I'll slip away and get some grub. I sha'n't see these rotters again until I get back to St. Jim's."

But there he was mistaken.

Tom Merry, running his eye over the party a moment or so later, noticed the absence of its principal member—the one whom he fondly imagined held the tickets of admittance.

"Where's Trimble?" he asked suddenly.

"That's done it!"

"We sha'n't get in now!"

It certainly looked like it, for Baggy Trimble was nowhere to be seen. Right and left the St. Jim's party looked for him, but they couldn't see him, for the fat junior was safely concealed behind the broad figure of the North Countryman.

But in the crush that same North Countryman happened to stand on Baggy Trimble's pet corn, and the fat Fourth-Former let out a wild howl of anguish.

"Yaroooooh!"

It was given with all the power of Trimble's lungs, and it reached the ears of Tom Merry & Co.

"That was Trimble's voice!" exclaimed Tom Merry excitedly. "I'd know it anywhere. And he's not far away, either."

He wasn't. As the North Countryman turned to apologise to Trimble the St. Jim's party caught sight of him. Immediately they yelled:

"Trimble!"

Baggy started, and his jaw dropped. He heard his school-fellows plainly enough; indeed, that combined shout could be heard a mile off. Next moment Tom Merry & Co. were pushing their way over to him.

"You silly idiot!" said Tom Merry crossly. "If we hadn't seen you we should have been landed. You've got the tickets. We can't get in without them!"

"Wow!" gasped Baggy.

"I'll take jolly good care we don't lose sight of you again," said Tom Merry grimly, and he fastened a grip on Baggy Trimble's arm.

The fat Fourth-Former was at his wits' end.

A few yards away now were the turnstiles. He looked about him like a hunted rabbit, but there was no escape. Tom Merry gripped his arm tighter than ever as the party gradually moved forwards in the queue.

They reached the turnstiles at last, and Baggy made an attempt to search his pockets.

"Come along, young fellow," said the attendant. "You can't hold up the queue like that. Tickets, please!"

"Wow!" groaned Baggy, diving his hand into his jacket-pocket, knowing full well that the action would not bring to light the requisite tickets.

"Where are they?" roared Blake at last. And Trimble nearly jumped out of his skin at the ferocious expression on Blake's face.

"I—I don't know," faltered Trimble. "I must have lost them!"

"Wha-a-at?"

The St. Jim's party voiced that exclamation simultaneously.

"I've lost them!" gasped Trimble. "I must have lost them. I remember now I had them in my overcoat pocket."

"But you haven't got an overcoat!" said Tom Merry in exasperation.

"My hat!" exclaimed Monty Lowther suddenly. "The fat fool had one when we were in the car. I remember it distinctly."

Trimble nodded weakly.

"I must have left it in the pastrycook's at Wayland!" he gasped.

"Well, of all the born idiots——" gasped Blake.

The St. Jim's juniors' feelings were too deep for words. To get as far as the turnstiles at the Stadium and then to find out that the necessary admittance tickets had been

left behind at Wayland was really too bad. Tom Merry & Co. had reason to feel wrathful.

"Bump the fat idiot!" roared Blake, who was raging with fury by this time. "Scalp him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Arthur!"

That well-known, polished voice brought the whole party up with a jerk, as it were, for everyone recognised the voice of Lord Eastwood, D'Arcy's noble pater. Baggy Trimble noticed him first, however, and trembled like an aspen leaf. But he took advantage of the fact that the eyes of the juniors were transferred from him to Lord Eastwood by dodging away and mingling with the crowd.

Gussy was shaking his father by the hand, delighted to see him at such a propitious moment. In a few moments he had explained what had happened. Lord Eastwood listened in blank astonishment.

"But why were the tickets in Trimble's possession?" he asked. "I sent them to you, Arthur. Surely you were capable of looking after them yourself?"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's turn to be surprised now.

"You sent them to me?" he stuttered. "But they were Trimble's tickets, patah. We were his guests, you know!"

"There's something wrong here," exclaimed his lordship. "If this boy Trimble has lost his tickets, what happened to the seven tickets I sent you on Wednesday?"

"You sent me seven tickets?" gasped D'Arcy.

His lordship nodded.

"And I arranged for the car to pick you up at St. Jim's this morning to take you to Wayland."

"The c-cah?" stuttered D'Arcy, bewildered.

"The new car," explained his lordship, "and Mason, the new chauffeur, was with it."

Tom Merry started violently. He was beginning to see daylight now.

"Hold on a minute," he said. "I believe I can get the hang of this, Gussy. Let's have a word with Trimble."

The party looked in the direction where Trimble had stood a few moments earlier. But there was no sign of the fat Fourth-Former now.

"He's bolted!" exclaimed Blake. "The fat rascal!"

"Oh, great Scott! I can see the wheeze!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Trimble's spoofed us. You remember the day of the Greyfriars match, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said the swell of St. Jim's, who had good cause to remember that match, having been instrumental in giving the victory to his school.

"You remember Trimble said something about a letter he had for you, just as we were about to kick off after the first goal?"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "So he did. I've forgotten all about that lettah, deah boy!"

"Then you can bet your sweet life that Trimble opened it for you," said the captain of the Shell. "I thought it jolly queer that he should have seven Cup Final tickets after the Greyfriars match. He hadn't them before the match, I'll wager, otherwise he would have shown them to me."

"The fat rascal!" hooted Blake. "Then it wasn't his pater's car that fetched us this morning?"

"Of course not!" said Tom Merry. "And now I understand why we were included in the party."

"So do I, bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "With the exception of Trimble, you chaps would have made the same party as I should have taken. And Twimble had weally droppped into Digby's place."

"Oh, my hat!"

Things were becoming clearer now. Lots of things that had puzzled Tom Merry & Co. now became clear, in fact. And Lord Eastwood, as he listened to the excited juniors' chatter began to see why he had been brought down to St. Jim's on a fool's errand. He could see that if Trimble were really guilty of all these actions why he should not want D'Arcy's father to visit St. Jim's. Naturally, Lord Eastwood would have asked his son about the arrangement for the party, and then the fact that the tickets had never been received by Arthur Augustus would have come to light. No wonder the person responsible for that hoaxing telephone message had "given" Arthur Augustus an "infectious disease."

"By gad, that young rascal ought to be severely punished," said Lord Eastwood grimly, and he gave the juniors an account of his experiences the day before.

"The awful idiot!" said Tom Merry, when his lordship had concluded. "Why, he deserves to go to gaol!"

"He certainly does," remarked Lord Eastwood. "But, come, my dear boys, I must see about getting you into the Stadium. Luckily, I am an official of this company, and as I have the numbers of the tickets I don't think I

shall experience any great difficulty in convincing the right people that I bought them originally. Just wait a moment."

His lordship disappeared through the turnstile, leaving Tom Merry & Co. wondering whether they had been to sleep and had been dreaming.

Lord Eastwood came into sight again a few moments later. There was a smile on his face that indicated he had fixed up the question of admittance.

"It's all right, my boys," he remarked cheerily. "Follow me! The game is due to start in a moment or so!"

The juniors followed him readily enough, and once inside the Stadium Trimble was forgotten.

"Hurrah!"

It would be impossible to describe the mighty volume of sound that echoed skywards. Rattles whirred their screeching note, trumpets blared, whistles shrieked, and people shouted. And amongst that terrific volume of noise mingled the shouts of Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co.

"Hurrah!"

"Huwah!"

Then a silence fell upon the vast concourse as the two captains tossed for choice of ends, a silence that seemed all the more acute as another roar from the assembled thousands lent itself as a comparison.

A moment more, and the great game had broken into life, and none amongst the packed stands and terraces watched its progress with more keenness than the party from St. Jim's.

### CHAPTER 11.

#### Poor Old Trimble!

"**W**OW!"

That dismal ejaculation proceeded from Baggy Trimble.

The fat Fourth-Former had cause to feel dismal, indeed. It was five hours since he had set eyes on Tom Merry & Co.—five hours from the time Lord Eastwood had approached the party and Baggy Trimble had bolted.

And those five hours represented the worst period of Baggy Trimble's life.

Having successfully dodged away from the awkward explanation that he knew was in store for him, the fat junior had been pushed and jostled by the crowd until he was sick and dizzy, and his throat was parched with the flying dust.

Baggy hated Wembley, hated the crowd, the policemen, the very place itself. Hot and dusty and tired, he at last wandered into a refreshment buffet and ordered an extensive feed. Indeed, the waitress who took the order almost collapsed when she learnt that the order was for Baggy's own consumption. But that was not all; she suspected the fat junior was "having her on a piece of string," as she expressed it—a suspicion that grew into a certainty when, having brought the required goods to the counter, Baggy Trimble suddenly discovered that he hadn't a brass farthing about his person.

"I've been robbed!" he roared in a frenzy.

And for once in a way Baggy spoke the truth. He had been robbed. Even his return ticket had been taken from him, but that he learnt later. Meantime, the young lady at the buffet took back the tuck Trimble had ordered and spoke a few words to the attendant at the door, with the result that Trimble found himself pitched out of the buffet a second or so later, accused of being a bilk.

Really, it was a very unhappy anti-climax to Baggy's Cup Final party. But the end was yet to come. For hours the unhappy Fourth-Former wandered about, hungry and bewildered. Then it was he discovered the loss of his return ticket.

"Oh, crumbs!" he groaned

It was the crowning point. Like a fat, startled rabbit Trimble rushed hither and thither when the great Soccer match was over, looking for Tom Merry & Co. He much preferred delivering himself into their hands to spending a night at Wembley without a penny in his pockets.

But Baggy Trimble never once caught sight of the St. Jim's party. He did not know that they had left by the first train after the match, having forgotten, for the time being, the very existence of Bagley Trimble of St. Jim's.

Backwards and forwards—Baggy's head was in a whirl with it all. Unable to help himself, he was carried along with the surging crowd now intent only upon getting back to their homes.

But Baggy had no means of getting back to St. Jim's.

"Wow!" he moaned. "What shall I do?"

That was indeed a problem. He heard the raucous shouts of a porter informing all and sundry that: "This is the train for Wayland Junction," and somehow or other

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Baggy determined to get on that train. By more luck than judgment he was successful in passing the ticket barrier, and, finding an empty first-class carriage, scrambled into it and dived underneath the seat.

"Wow!" he gasped, as the passengers began to swarm into the compartment. "This is awful!"

But he thanked his lucky stars a moment later that he had hidden under the seat, for when the compartment was full an inspector jumped in and requested the passengers to show their tickets.

What would have happened had Trimble been sitting like any ordinary passenger he dared not dwell upon, but the inspector naturally did not look under the seat, and Baggy breathed a sigh of relief when he had gone.

For all that he was afraid to show himself, at least until the train had started, for fear the inspector should come back. And the train was about half an hour in starting. During that half hour the compartment filled with tobacco smoke and Trimble felt his lungs bursting. He was getting cramp, too, and to make matters worse, a heavy-footed gentleman had a constant habit of treading on Trimble's fat hand.

"Oh, dear!" he muttered. "This is awful!"

It was. It was borne in on Trimble's fat mind that he would have done better to have left Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to open his own letters. But repentance with Trimble came always after the event and not before.

"Wow!" he gasped. "I can't stand this any longer!"

His arms and legs were aching with the cramped position he had been forced to adopt, and the heavy-footed gentleman was more restive than ever. But just then the train started.

Thud!

The heavy-footed gentleman plumped his foot down again—this time fair and square on Trimble's hand.

"Yaroooooh!" yelled Trimble.

Immediately all eyes were turned in his direction. There was nothing for it now but to come out from his hiding-place. Trimble did so.

He looked a picture of woe. His hair was matted and awry, his collar was crumpled and dirty, his podgy features were muddy with perspiration and dust, and his clothes looked as if they had been hauled through a dustbin.

The passengers stared at him speechlessly as he crawled painfully from under the seat. But they were sympathetic—very sympathetic. When Trimble explained that he had been robbed of every penny he had the heavy-footed gentleman put a pound-note into Trimble's grimy hand and told him that doubtless it would see him home.

That was the only consolation the fat junior had extracted from his journey to Wayland. He would at least be able to escape being arrested as a "bilk" when Wayland Junction was reached—so he told himself.

But, as a matter of fact, when Wayland Junction was eventually reached Trimble found himself able to dodge through the ticket barrier without the necessity of paying his fare, which went to prove that, despite his painful experiences of the day, Baggy Trimble was the same old Trimble.

And when, eventually, he arrived at St. Jim's and found Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. telling an amazed audience in the Common-room of Trimble's latest escapade he had the amazing effrontery to grin.

"He, he, he!" he cackled. "It was only a j-j-joke, you know!"

That did it!

With one accord Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co.—not forgetting Racke & Co.—pounced on the fat Fourth-Former and gave him the ragging of his life. In reality, Trimble was surprisingly lucky to get off so lightly, but that was due to the pleading of Arthur Augustus. In addition to settling the bill with the people at Wayland Garage, he had prevailed upon Lord Eastwood to let the matter drop. As Gussy remarked, no real harm had been done. His party, after all, and not Trimble's party, had seen the Cup Final.

And Lord Eastwood had yielded to his son's pleading. He agreed to let the matter drop.

Everybody was satisfied—with two exceptions—Baggy Trimble, who was a mass of aches and pains, and Mr. Latham, the master of the Fourth. He was still wondering who it was had hoaxed him into travelling over to Wayland Golf Links to play the Rylcombe doctor at golf.

And, so far, as he is concerned, that little circumstance is likely to remain a mystery to him till the end of his days. Certain it is he never once connected it in any way with Trimble's Cup Final party.

THE END.

(There will be another rattling fine long complete story of Tom Merry & Co. next week, entitled: "COUSIN ETHEL'S CHUM!" By Martin Clifford. Make no mistake about ordering your GEM well in advance, chums.)

**BEGIN THIS FINE SERIAL TO-DAY!**

**THE MONK v. BOB EVANS!** Always between the arch-soundrel, the Monk, and his ambition to possess the death-leaving invention known as the Scarlet Streak, stands Bob Evans, the youthful reporter of the "Daily Times!"



A Sensational Story of Romance and Adventure based upon the Death Ray—the greatest scientific discovery of modern times.

**After the Fight!**

**B**OB and his assailants hurtled through the broken balustrade, twisting and writhing as they fell through thin air, with wood and debris showering down all about them.

Bob had a glimpse of the brilliant ball-room—of the dancers running from the scene, of scared faces and startled eyes—then came a terrific crash as he and the sailors plunged into the breach that the grand piano had made in the floor.

Laths and plaster plucked at their clothing, breaking even as it partly checked their fall. Bob had a vision of white dust all about him. His ears were filled with the sound of shattering wood; then came a thudding shock as the three men beneath him hit the floor—one of them knocked unconscious by the impact.

By a miracle none of the others were hurt; the falling of the piano had shattered the floor of the ball-room. It had dislodged the polished wood blocks for a considerable area, taking them through the breach with it; but the laths and plaster of the ceiling beneath were almost intact, and it was this that had, in a measure, preserved the struggling group.

For a moment Bob felt as though he was standing on the back of his neck; then a fist slugged at his jaw, and the gang were at him again. A twisted face loomed before his eyes as his body slumped to the horizontal. He saw a blood-smirched fist lifted to swing a second time, and with all his might he crashed out and got home beneath the fellow's jaw.

The sailor went down, and Bob twisted from the clutch of the other man, flogging him backwards with a fierce right. The man's head cracked against the side of the wrecked piano, and he dropped inert.

Bob scrambled to his feet. His head was buzzing like a beehive. He stood there, one hand to the side of his head, staring at the wreckage all about him. Above, a great hole yawned in the ceiling, with plaster still trickling down. The wires and broken hammers of the smashed piano were tangled with the splintered wood of the casing—all smothered in plaster and dirt.

Two of the men who had fallen with him were knocked

out, and the third was too groggy from that punch on the jaw to get to his feet. Bob saw that he had nothing more to fear from them, and he started across the kitchen to the stairs that showed beyond the doorway.

He recollected that he had heard Mary's voice calling for help. He had gone to assist her, not knowing that it was Leontine who had imitated Mary's tones. And then the fight had started!

It was as he raced across the room, staggering a little as he went, that he remembered the last he had seen of the inventor was when the Monk had been standing over him in the laboratory!

The remembrance acted like a tonic to the young reporter. He stumbled up the stairs, gaining new strength with every step. He found himself in a passage at the top, and the whole house was strangely silent. All the guests had left hurriedly at sight of the fight on the balcony.

Bob half ran down the passage, and as he passed an open door he glimpsed the moving figure of a man ladling punch from a bowl set on a table. Evidently the fellow was a guest; but even at a hurried glance Bob could see that the man had been drinking freely. He stepped into the room and caught him by the shoulder.

"Have you seen Miss Crawford?" he asked quickly.

The man stared at him stupidly, and gesticulated to the bowl.

"Goo' stuff! Have some o' th'—"

Bob shook him roughly, and he thrust his grim-set face at the other.

"Miss Crawford— Pull yourself together, man! This is a matter of life and death! Have you seen her?"

"Mi-mish Crawf'd?" The fellow blinked at him as though he was trying to remember something. "Mary's a fine gurr! Jus' saw her with Cle'patra!"

"Cleopatra? Wh a t the—" It seemed to Bob that the man was talking nonsense. He did not know that it was Leontine who had come to the ball dressed as Cleopatra. With an exclamation of disgust, he thrust the man away and leaped from the room, making for stairs which he knew led to the laboratory where he had left Mr. Crawford in the hands of the Monk.

Three at a time Bob went up those stairs. At the top

**THE OPENING CHAPTERS.**

**BOB EVANS**, a young reporter on the "Daily Times," has been ordered to find the inventor of the Scarlet Streak, a wonderful invention which emits a powerful, destructive ray. Possession of it will mean kingship of the world. The inventor is

**RICHARD CRAWFORD**, whose real name is John Carson. He has been working on the invention for years with the sole assistance of his daughter,

**MARY CRAWFORD**. The inventor has changed his name because he fears that the Scarlet Streak will fall into the hands of

**THE MONK**, a crook who, with **LEONTINE** and **COUNT K.**, seek possession of the invention that they may terrorize the world. Bob locates the inventor and his daughter about the same time that the Monk finds the Crawfords' home. At a masked ball which is being given there, Leontine lures Mary away, while the Monk and some of his gang, disguised as sailors, make an attack on the inventor's laboratory in search of a blueprint which will disclose the secrets of the Scarlet Streak. Bob dashes to the rescue of the inventor, and is attacked by the sailors. A terrific fight rages, in which Bob is forced out on to a balcony, where the band is playing to the dancers in the ball-room below. The grand piano crashes through the balcony railing and smashes through the floor beneath to the kitchen. An instant later Bob and the sailors harlie after it!

(Now read on.)

he saw the shattered woodwork of the door that led to the balcony, with broken glass strewn the carpet of the corridor. Beyond were disarranged hangings, and near them the wide-open door of the laboratory. For an instant Bob paused. Absolutely no sound came to his ears. Had the Monk made away with the inventor as well as with Mary?

He leaped for the open doorway, and his heart thumped in relief as he looked in. Mr. Crawford was crouched at the base of the Scarlet Streak, and he turned as he heard Bob's footsteps. For a moment his pallid face showed alarm. That expression changed to a smile as he recognised Bob. He straightened up and stepped towards the youthful reporter.

"Thanks to you, my boy, their attack was a failure! They got nothing!" he exclaimed.

"But where is Miss Crawford?" Bob asked. "She was with me when the attack started!"

"Don't you know where?" The inventor's eyes widened. Every vestige of the colour remaining in his pale features was drained away. "Isn't she—I—I thought she was with you, and safe!" he gasped.

"She was. But I left her when I dashed up here to you—when that pistol-shot sounded!" Bob told him. "Surely the Monk can't—"

He left the rest unsaid as he gazed about the laboratory. The floor was littered with papers that had been knocked from the inventor's desk. Among them was the draft of the Cross Word puzzle on which Mr. Crawford had been working when the Monk began his attempt to get the secret of the Scarlet Streak. The Monk did not know that the Cross Word puzzle contained the secret of the whereabouts of the hidden blueprint. And that blueprint held the secret of the death-ray machine!

Both turned as a step sounded in the corridor outside. It was the butler.

"Have you seen Miss Crawford?" Bob ripped at him.

"No, sir. I—I was knocked out myself, and—"

"Then the Monk must have got her!" groaned the inventor. "She must be in his hands!"

He staggered as the awful realisation came home to him. The butler caught him as he swayed. The grey-haired inventor had been through a great deal in the last fifteen minutes. The moment that he had recovered from the fight he had started to assure himself of the safety of his terrible invention. That effort had tried his already over-taxed strength, and now he all but swooned.

"He'll be all right with me, sir!" the butler exclaimed to Bob. "You look for Miss Mary, and I'll—"

"I will!" Bob bent and looked into the colourless features of the inventor, and he said grimly: "Mr. Crawford, I'm going to find Mary. I'll get her back if I have to fight the Monk's gang single-handed!"

With the words he turned and leaped for the door.

### In the Clutches of the Monk!

IT was while Bob had been fighting for his life against the gang that Mary had been swiftly borne away in the car into which she had been entrapped. She was more than a little dazed from the fumes of the sickly-smelling pad that had been clapped over her mouth, and it was not until the car stopped that she fully recovered.

Strong arms wrapped about her, and she was lifted from the car. She discovered that she was the captive of a woman fully double her own size; a hard-faced, tight-lipped woman who looked as though she might have been a prison wardress.

Through a door that slammed with sinister meaning behind her, Mary was forced up a flight of stairs, and then the woman pushed her into a room. There was a close, sultry atmosphere about the building, an airless, confined feeling that set Mary's heart beating with an apprehension that she tried to stifle.

She was in the gloomy, shuttered building which was the headquarters of the Monk's criminal organisation. The House of the Closed Shutters was the only name by which it was known.

The door closed and the woman locked it as she followed Mary into the room. Mary had been tricked by Leontine into believing that her father had been got away from their home and that she was being taken to him. Now she knew the truth. She was in the clutches of the Monk!

Half unconsciously Mary crossed to the window, pulling back the curtains, only to find that all chance of exit that way was barred. She turned to the woman.

"You needn't try to get out!" the woman hissed at her. "There's no way out of this house—once you're in! You can try all—"

She broke off, and her dark eyes glinted as Mary dashed past her to another door that showed at one side of the

room. Eagerly she thrust it open and looked through. Even as she did so, the woman leaped at her from behind and pushed her through to the room beyond, jerking the door shut behind her.

It was a bed-room. The force of the woman's push had half thrust Mary on to a bed just by the door, and she dropped on it as she heard the key turn in the lock. It was the sound of the turning key that roused Mary, and she tried the door. It resisted her every effort.

She ran to the window—stout iron-bars showed there. As she stared at them despondently, the door opened once more and the woman darted in, pitching some clothes on to the bed. Mary rushed towards her, only to be thrust back as the woman slipped through the door and locked it again.

Once more Mary tried it, beating frantically on the panels and calling. It was useless and she realised it; she dropped into a chair and rested her elbows on a table, her head in her hands. She was trapped indeed, and she knew that the Monk would have no mercy; he would use her as a hostage to force her father's hand—to force him to disclose the secrets of the Scarlet Streak.

And with the death-ray machine at his command, the Monk would start his campaign to gain the lordship of the world.

Even then the Monk was on his way to his headquarters; elated at the capture of Mary, but cursing because Bob's intervention had thwarted his attack on the inventor.

Accompanied by Leontine and Count K, he hurried from the Crawfords' house to where his limousine stood.

"Mary Crawford was taken to the House of the Closed Shutters in our car!" Leontine told him exultantly. "Our next move is to get Bob Evans!"

"We can't go back and fix him now!" the Monk growled, and his sunken eyes blazed venom as he spoke. "The police will be here in no time—everybody in the place has gone running to the street. The sooner we make ourselves scarce the better! We'll get Evans—but we'll deal with the girl first!"

The three dived into the waiting car, and with the arch-soundrel at the wheel, drove at high speed towards the gang's headquarters. Mary's wardress greeted them with a grin when they entered the room in which they usually held their consultations.

"Got her under lock and key, eh?" snarled the Monk.

"All right, I'll call you when I want you!"

The big woman left, and Count K. said quietly:

"I don't like dragging the girl into this business. It's not—"

The Monk glared at his handsome features, and the gang-leader's eyes glinted.

"You don't like it, eh?" he grated. "P'raps you forget what's at stake. If we can get Bob Evans out of the way—the rest'll be easy! This is the second time he's butted in and spoilt things. I'd have got all I wanted to-night, but for him! Let me get him into this house, and that's all I'll ask!" He grinned in sinister fashion, and even Leontine, hardened as she was, shuddered a little at the expression on his face. "I'm going to use the girl to get him!" the Monk went on. "Here's how!"

For an hour the trio plotted there; then the woman was called in and given her instructions.

"But we won't act until the morning!" the Monk said finally. "We'll give that girl a night of it in that room. She'll be feeling desperate by the morning!"

The night slid silently away with Mary still seated at the table. She was wondering what her father was doing—whether he, too, was somewhere in that house.

The inventor, as a matter of fact, fearing another attack from the Monk, was hurrying to complete the puzzle-code locating the hidden blueprint; while Bob Evans was scouring the city for some clue that might lead him to the Monk—and Mary.

It was full daylight when the door of Mary's prison clicked open, and she shrank back as the powerful figure of the Monk showed in the doorway. He stood glaring at her, then stepped forward.

"Well, I've got you, at any rate!" he snarled. "You know nearly as much about the Scarlet Streak as your father. Where does he keep the plans of—"

"I shall tell you nothing—nothing at all!" Mary exclaimed passionately. "You can do what you like with me, but I—"

The Monk growled deep in his throat, and he stepped closer, his fingers crooked like claws.

"I've got ways and means of learning what I want to know," he snarled. "Don't make me—"

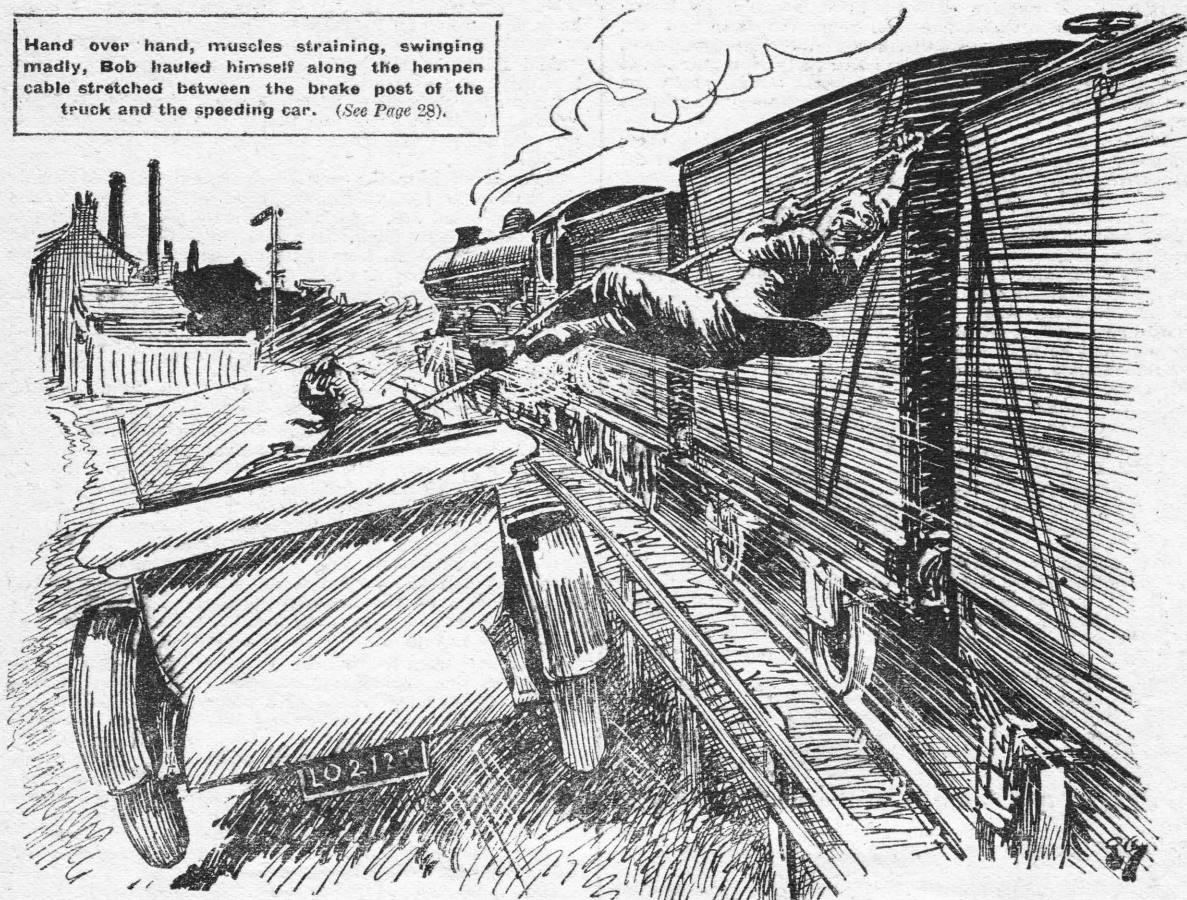
He broke off abruptly as the woman who acted as Mary's wardress caught him by the arm and pulled him back.

"None of that!" she cried. "I won't stand for it!"

Her hard face was set as she faced him, and she stepped between him and Mary.



Hand over hand, muscles straining, swinging madly, Bob hauled himself along the hempen cable stretched between the brake post of the truck and the speeding car. (See Page 28).



"I'll not stand by and see you harm this defenceless girl!" she snapped. "You'll leave her alone while I'm—"

The Monk's dark eyes blazed as he saw the woman slip an arm about Mary. His stained teeth showed as he glared at the woman; for an instant, the shadow of a smile flickered about his lips, then he turned abruptly on his heels and stepped out of the room.

"He's scared o' me," the woman half whispered to Mary. "I know more'n a thing or two about him! I ain't goin' to let him hurt you while I got the chance to do anything!" and the pressure of her arm about Mary's shoulders reassured the girl. The woman went on: "I'd help you get away, but they watch me too close—but I might be able to deliver a message."

"A message!" exclaimed Mary, and her eyes lit up as she looked at the woman. "If I could only get word to Mr. Evans, he would notify father!" she said eagerly.

"Then write it now—while we've got a moment together!" the woman whispered quickly. "There's paper and ink over there!" and she pointed to the table.

Quickly Mary crossed the room, and she wrote with the woman standing behind her. Mary did not know that there was a sneering smile on the woman's face—nor that the Monk and Count K. were listening outside the half-closed door.

While Mary finished the note, the woman took a hat from a drawer, and she threw another sneering grin at the door as she moved back to the girl; Mary rose from the chair and handed the swiftly-written note to the woman. She slipped it into a pocket of her dress.

"You leave this to me, dear," she said, and Mary watched her as she left the room, locking the door behind her.

The Monk and the others were waiting for their confederate, and they all looked at her expectantly as she entered the room in which they were now seated.

"She fell for it!" she said, as she moved towards the Monk. "With her and Evans in our power, Crawford will come across!" and she laughed as she drew the note from her pocket.

Count K. grabbed it from her and scanned the written words. The Monk took it and read it with Leontine, an evil smile creasing his face.

"You'd better get along with that right away!" Count K. told the woman, and he stepped to the table as the Monk handed back the message. With his fingers the Count

pressed a button half hidden at one side of the table. Instantly a panel whipped smoothly upwards in the wall opposite, and the woman slipped through.

The panel dropped again, and the Monk turned to Count K. with an ironical bow.

"I think that will settle Bob Evans!" he said softly.

### The Rope of Hazard!

**A**FTER a night of fruitless search for Mary, Bob Evans returned to the "Daily Times" office. He went to his desk and lifted a paper that lay on there, but he did not see the words which showed before his eyes.

He was worn and dispirited, wondering what his next move could be. All around him was bustle and life; but his own heart was heavy, and he felt tired from a sleepless night.

"Mr. Evans!"

A boy's voice sounded behind him, and a paper was thrust over his shoulder. It was the message from Mary, and Bob idly eyed the written words:

"I'm at 2645, Winding Way.—MARY CRAWFORD."

Twice Bob read it before he realised what it meant, then he jerked out of his chair and stood staring around in bewilderment, looking for the boy who had brought the message. But he saw nothing of him, and he read it over again.

The address meant nothing to Bob; he did not connect it with the Monk, but as he made for the door his hand slipped to where an automatic nestled snugly in his hip pocket.

He went out of the room and down the stairs in a rush. His car stood outside the office door; ten seconds after he got behind the wheel the machine was streaking into the passing traffic. He drove like a madman half across the city, located Winding Way, and then found the house that he sought.

He sat for a moment staring at the barred windows of the building, seeking a meaning in its gloomy, mysterious exterior. The shuttered windows frowned menacingly, almost warningly, down on him; instinctively, he sensed

danger. That quarter of the city was lonely, he knew; but Mary was in that house; and he was there to find her.

He leaped from the car and made for the dilapidated door. It was guarded by paint-blistered and rusty iron gates. He pushed them open and was about to knock on the door when the door itself swung silently open. But there was no one there!

There was only shadowy darkness, with double doors showing beyond. Cautiously, Bob stepped through, and the front door closed behind him with a vicious slam!

He dropped his hand to the butt of his gun as he looked cautiously round, then stepped, towards the double doors. They opened before him, and he surveyed the hall beyond before he entered it.

Steps confronted him. He thought he heard a movement at the top, and stood listening. No further sound came, and he mounted the steps. There was a corridor at the top, with doors leading off from it. He tried two, but both were locked, and he went on.

His footsteps rang on the flooring. Suddenly he pulled up. He could hear a muffled voice calling from somewhere near at hand. He located the sound and went towards it—to find his path barred by curtains that hung across a doorway.

The sound came from beyond those curtains, and now he thought he could recognise Mary's voice. With a sudden, swift movement he snatched the curtains aside, and distinctly he could now hear the thudding of fists on a doorway that showed on the opposite side of the room into which he was looking.

He jumped towards it, slipped the catch, and flung it wide, to find Mary standing beyond!

"Bob!" she gasped. "I heard—"

"Is it the Monk that—"

He broke off as she cut in quickly:

"Yes. But I think he's gone now! Oh, I've been hoping that you'd come! I was afraid—"

"Well, I'm here now!" said Bob cheerfully. "But I'm not staying any longer than we can help! There's too many queer things happening in this place to suit me. Doors open by themselves, and— This way!"

"No, this way!" exclaimed Mary, and she indicated another door on the far side of the room. "I know how I came in, and—"

She pushed open the door as she spoke, and they ran together to another door that showed on the far side of the room. They were two yards from it when it was flung open, and the Monk himself stood grinning at them as both stopped dead.

"Bob Evans!" he snarled. "Nicely caught—eh? You thought you could upset my plans. But now I've got you dead to rights!"

"You think so!" Bob ripped back. "You'll know different before—"

He broke off and half turned. He was in time to catch a glimpse of a wall-bed swinging round. The fraction of a second later and a man had leaped from the cavity disclosed. He jumped on Bob from behind, wrapping sinewy arms about him, and pinning his arms to his sides.

At the same instant the big woman who had played traitor to Mary leaped out at the girl, grabbing her ere she could move.

Bob struggled frantically, heard the Monk laugh, and he saw the man leering over Mary.

"Now, my girl, no more nonsense from you!" he snapped. "You'll phone your father to bring us the plans of the Scarlet Streak. That's all I want of—"

He broke off as Bob, striving to break the grip about his body, half threw his captor off his feet.

"Get him into the other room!" the Monk growled.

And Bob was thrust through the doorway out of which the Monk had appeared.

"Now, if you want to save him you'll phone!" the Monk growled to Mary. "If you don't, he's for it!" And he jerked his head back to the room into which Bob had been thrust.

Mary could hear the sounds of struggling, and already she had seen the vindictive power of the Monk. The wardress loosed her, and thrust her towards the telephone that stood near at hand. The Monk picked it up, and held it out to her just as, from the room behind, there came the sound of a cry that was half a groan.

"That's the voice of Bob Evans!" the Monk snarled. "They've started on him—you'd better phone!"

Mary's eyes were wide with alarm. Furious sounds came from the room; she caught Bob's voice gasping in a smothered way.

She lifted the instrument, and called into it the number of her father's telephone, and while the connection was being made Bob was fighting madly in the next room.

With the man hanging on to his back Bob bent and tried to heave him off, but the fellow clung on with all his strength, though Bob lifted him clear of the ground with the effort. As the fellow found his feet again, Bob ducked once more, and twisted desperately. He half broke the man's grip, twisting one of his arms so that the fellow yelled aloud.

A second later, and Bob was free, ducking as the man rushed at him again. He was one of the gang who had attacked Bob on the balcony above the ball-room at the Crawfords' House. Bob recognised his brutal features as he lashed out at him.

The fellow tried to duck the blow, but Bob caught him on the side of the jaw and staggered him. He followed up the punch, and the man tried to butt. As he came, Bob grabbed him round the neck and swung him sideways. For the fraction of a second the man flailed in the air, then he crashed down on a pedestal, struggled for a moment, and then flopped to the floor, while Bob made for the door again. He was just in time to hear Mary talking into the phone:

"Is that you, father? This is Mary! The Monk—they're torturing Bob! They've got us both, and the Monk says you—"

Her voice snapped off as Bob, leaping forward, dashed the instrument out of her hand. It thudded to the floor as he turned to the Monk, and lashed out at the bearded jaw.

"You hound!" he growled. "I'm all right, Mary! I'll—"

He broke off as the Monk tried to close with him. Bob's right fist went back, and came swinging in; it caught the Monk fairly between the eyes, and he went headlong to the floor, while Bob's late assailant came leaping in from the other room.

Bob heard Mary call, and he turned in time to glimpse the big woman picking Mary up and struggling with her, forcing her out of the room. A second later and the man was at him.

His fist thudded to the side of Bob's head, but the young reporter's blood was up now, and he hardly noticed it. His bunched knuckles ripped home to the man's ribs as the fellow came in, and the two fought madly. Meantime, the Monk staggered to his feet and followed the woman and the girl from the room.

The crook tried to get his arms round Bob to bring him down; but it was Bob who sent the man crashing to the carpet. The fellow was on his feet again almost before he touched the floor, and he rushed anew, uttering imprecations as he came.

Bob met him with a swinging right that knocked him backwards into a chair, but the man was as tough as he was crooked, and he rushed in again.

For a moment or so they struggled madly. Bob could feel the man's fists crashing home on his body; twice light seared across his eyes, as the man slammed high on his face, and then Bob got in a smashing blow that jolted the man right down to his heels.

For an instant the fellow staggered. Bob finished him off with a pile-driving right that crashed him backwards—dead to the world! Without waiting to see where he fell, Bob shot out of the room.

Out in the street the big woman was thrusting Mary in the back seat of the car that waited there, while the Monk came rushing down the steps.

"Don't let her get away!" he yelled, as he leaped to the



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seat behind the steering-wheel. "She means everything to us now!"

An instant later, and the car was off, just as Bob came diving out of the house. He saw them go, got a glimpse of Mary's white face turned appealingly back to him, he saw her wave her arm; then the machine skidded round a corner, and vanished.

Bob leaped to where his own car stood, and roared off in pursuit. He skidded the corner, to find that the Monk had gained on him. He opened the throttle wide; hunched behind the wheel, he gave his machine every ounce of power that he had got; but still the Monk drew away from him!

Winding Way was on the outskirts of the town, and in a matter of seconds they were out in the open country. Twice Bob glimpsed the crooks' car; and once he saw Mary standing up and trying to jump out, only to be clawed back and thrust on the seat again.

With gritted teeth, Bob sent his machine leaping and lurching over the road. The Monk's car was faster, Bob knew that. His own machine was an ordinary car, and the Monk's looked the same; but Bob knew that there must be a highly-tuned engine under the bonnet—that was why he was being beaten in the mad chase.

Ahead, the Monk was yelling back to the woman.

"Are we leaving him behind?"

"Yes; he's got nothing on us!" the woman answered, her voice shrill above the roar of the engine and the thunder of the speeding car. "The girl's fainted!"

"Good! Keep her quiet for a bit! Sit tight—rough stuff!" He yelled the words back as he turned the car off the main road to a side track. Bob was out of sight now, and the Monk thought that he might balk him by leaving the highway.

For half a mile the crooks' car streaked over the rutted roadway; he glanced back, and he was just in time to glimpse Bob's machine slicking over the main road, a long way behind, but in a position that commanded a full view of the Monk's machine.

The Monk cursed viciously, and sent his car on at renewed speed. The by-road swept in towards a railway-line that ran alongside it, with a goods train standing in a siding, the engine's safety-valve blowing steam.

"I'll get to the main road in a— Ah!"

The car lurched suddenly, and they almost left the road. The Monk's strong hand on the wheel yanked the machine straight; he braked hard and brought the car to a stop.

"Tyre burst!" he growled, and leaped from the machine.

The near-side rear tyre was flat. His face was twisted with fury as he stared at it; then he looked back to where, far distant, a lifting cloud of dust marked the approach of Bob Evans.

From the cloud-dust the Monk looked to the train, then he turned to the woman:

"The train's our only chance!" he exclaimed. "Come on!"

He lifted Mary from the car, handed her to the woman, and then ran ahead to where the train stood on the siding. By luck, they had stopped almost level with it, and a guard showed in the rear van as the Monk rushed up, the woman with Mary close behind him.

"The girl's very ill!" the Monk gasped. "We're trying to get to town. Can you give us a lift—our car's broken down! It's most urgent, and—"

The guard's eyes widened as he looked at Mary's white face and her still figure.

"Sure!" he exclaimed. "We'll be starting in ten minutes—when the driver comes."

He bent as he spoke, and helped the woman to lift Mary into the van. As he lifted the girl in, the Monk spoke hastily to the woman: then he sped away, making for the front of the train. He was near the engine when Bob braked his car to a skidding halt beside the Monk's.

The reporter leaped from the machine, glanced at the flat tyre, then looked towards the train. He was in time to see the sinister figure of the Monk clambering to the footplate of the engine. An instant later, and the train rolled forward, with the Monk at the throttle!

With a yell, Bob started to run forward. He got a glimpse of the fireman running from the side of the track, staring at the engine in amazement. A moment later, and the man was clambering to the tops of the covered truck, running forward along the moving train.

Bob pulled up as he saw the shouting fireman leap over the tender to the footplate, then the young reporter ran back to his car and leaped in. He sent it after the train—it was gathering speed now, thundering on the rails.

Bob let his car go, thrusting forward towards the engine, and as he drove he got glimpses of the Monk and the fireman struggling on the footplate of the rocking cab. A lurch of the engine sent them flailing out, locked together as they rolled down the low embankment in a cloud of dust.

The Monk staggered to his feet, and then fell again. The fireman stumbled over him, and began to run futilely after

# READ THE STORY!

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Lyric	Wardsworth	Palace	W. Houghton
W. London	Edgware Road	Globe	Cheetham
Geisha	Bow	Cosy	Bacup
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Empire	Westwell	New	Bargoed
Victory	Chamberfield	Crumlin	Belfast

# SEE THE FILM!

the train, shouting desperately. He caught the sound of the car as Bob roared up, and the distracted man came running towards it as Bob skidded round the prostrate figure of the Monk and trod on the brake.

"The train is running wild!" the fireman yelled as he jumped on the footboard. "There's nobody on the engine!"

"I know it!" Bob shouted back. "Hang on! We'll—"

Bob's foot went hard down on the accelerator pedal; they began to overhaul the train. It had reached the top of the speed at which the throttle would allow it to travel now, and they gradually ran down its length.

Bob guessed that Mary was somewhere in one of those closed vans, doomed—unless the engine could be stopped!

"Got to get aboard—got to get aboard somehow!" the fireman gasped. "Heaven knows how we can—"

"There's a rope under the back seat!" Bob shouted to him. "Get it out!"

The man clambered obediently over the side of the car. The roar of the rocking train and the bellow of the machine's engine thundered in Bob's ears. Through it came the fireman's voice:

"I've got it!"

From the corners of his eyes Bob saw him with the long rope in his hands.

"Can you drive a car?" Bob called.

"Yes!"

"Then take this wheel; run the machine on the grass, an' keep her close to the train. Quick!"

Bob edged out of his seat as the man squeezed in behind him. A moment later, and he was in the back of the car, making a noose at the end of the rope.

"I'm going to try and get a loop over that brake-post!" Bob shouted. "Pull in!"

The fireman sent the car off the road on to the grass. The machine lurched wildly, while Bob marked the distance of the wheel-surmounted brake-post that showed on the roof at the front of the van immediately behind the engine.

His face was set and grim. He knew that he was going to do the riskiest thing that he had ever done; but Mary was in that runaway train.

"Closer—closer!" he shouted. "Closer still! Pull her in! That's it; keep here there, and—"

He broke off; the noose of the rope swung round his head, hissing in the air. He loosed it suddenly.

The hempen cable snaked blackly against the sky. For an instant he thought that he had missed; then the noose dropped cleanly over the brake-post, and a sudden jerk of the car pulled it tight.

"Round the steering-pillar with this!" Bob shouted to the fireman; and he leaned over and wrapped the loose end of the rope on the pillar below the steering-wheel. "Keep it taut, for the love of heaven! I'm going up it!"

The rope showed—slim and tender—a link with the roaring, runaway train. The only chance of saving it!

# "THE SCARLET STREAK!"

(Continued from previous page.)

"You'll never—"

But already Bob was standing on the running board. His strong hands slid out on the rope. An instant later, and he was clear of the car, clinging to the rope with feet and hands—hanging in mid-air as he began to work his way along the cable!

To him floated the voice of the fireman:

"Quick! There's a village just down the line and a river! I can't keep level with the line much farther!"

Houses alongside with the line would baulk the car. Bob realised that he had got to do his work in a matter of seconds—else it would be too late. The car would crash—for the fireman was one who would stick to the wheel until the last moment—the rope would break, and he himself would be flung from the hurtling train.

Hand over hand, muscles straining, swinging madly, he hauled himself desperately along the rope. He glimpsed the red roofs of houses ahead. The rattling roar of the train blurred in his ears; he glimpsed the grey-painted sides of the leading van.

Desperately he struggled on. He caught the voice of the fireman—thin and distant. His straining muscles began to weaken, mists swung before his eyes, and then his shoulders were thumping against the shifting roof of the truck. His

wearied hands found a grip on the brake-wheel, and a second afterwards he hauled himself up, in time to see that a house was looming a bare hundred yards in front of the car.

Bob whipped out his pocket-knife and slashed desperately at the rope. It parted, and the car curved away—with bare feet to spare.

It was as Bob made to lower himself down on to the engine-tender that he looked along the line ahead. Houses and gardens bordered it; he saw a woman running forward, waving her arms as she raced towards the line—pointing to something on the track.

Bob dropped to the tender and leaped down to the empty footplate. As he dropped a bruised, stiff hand to the throttle, he looked ahead along the line, peering through the observation-window.

A child was sitting between the rails, a doll beside her, playing with it and with the track ballast on which she sat.

With a gasp, Bob hauled the throttle shut and leaped to the side of the footplate. He was out, one hand hauling on the wheel of the hand-brake as he moved. With his heart in his mouth, he clambered along the side of the engine, hanging desperately to the sooted hand-rail.

Engrossed in her play, the baby girl did not even look up. With awful speed, the giant locomotive swept down on her.

*(Will the plucky Bob Evans be able to effect a rescue? Look out for another full-of-thrills instalment of this powerful serial next week, chums. And don't forget there will be another £10 in Prize Money offered in connection with this great treat.)*

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