

SEVEN DELICIOUS TUCK HAMPERS WON BY READERS!
(SEE PAGE 16.)

EVERY WEDNESDAY.

The GEM 2^d

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Nov. 27th,
1929.



TRIMBLE ON THE "BAWL!"

(A screamingly funny incident in this week's long complete yarn of Tom Merry & Co., at St. Jim's.)



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BY REQUEST!

SEVERAL letters recently have reached me from readers who are keen to see Kit Wildrake, the boy from the Boot Leg Ranch, figuring prominently in a St. Jim's story or a series of stories. I made mention of this matter in a previous Chat and promised you, my chums, that Martin Clifford would pile in with a series of Kit Wildrake yarns. They are to hand, and will be used as a Christmas holiday series. The first of the series will be in front of you in a week's time, and I have not the slightest doubt that it will be well received. While we are on this subject of "special requests" I might just as well mention that there's been a hefty number of readers asking for a Talbot series. Once again Martin Clifford has shown us what an obliging chap he is, for he has written to say that a special Talbot series may be expected in a few weeks. How's that, chums? If you are keen on seeing a certain character as the central figure in a story drop me a line, and we'll see what can be done. But please don't insist—as one or two fellows have done—that the character named should be the central figure in next week's story. That's out of the question, for it must be remembered that this paper goes to press several weeks in advance. This is a tip, too, for the "Enthusiastic" reader who wrote me this morning. He wants to know how old Mr. Clifford is, if he is married, is he bald, and is it right that he is a vegetarian? Really, I don't know where "Enthusiastic" reader picked up these ideas, for Martin Clifford is not a vegetarian, neither is he bald, nor married. How old he is, I don't profess to know, but if there's any truth in the old saying that a man is as old as he feels, then Mr. Clifford must certainly be very young. But here's the point I want my correspondent to get a grip of: he wants all these questions answered in next week's GEM. Having read above that we go to press so many weeks in advance he will not, I am sure, feel aggrieved when he picks up a copy of the Gem dated a few days after he dispatched his letter to me and finds that his queries have not been answered.

NEXT WEDNESDAY'S PROGRAMME:

"THE MAN FROM THE BOOT LEG RANCH!"

By Martin Clifford.

This is the first of the special series of holiday stories I referred to in the above paragraph. I'm not saying who this "man from the ranch" is at this stage. It will bear keeping until next week. But make no mistake about it, boys, this story is a top-notch. Mind you read it.

"WHITE EAGLE!"

By Arthur Patterson.

There will be another ripping instalment of this fine serial on the programme for next week, and "Gemites" shouldn't miss it whatever they do.

"TOBOGGANING!"

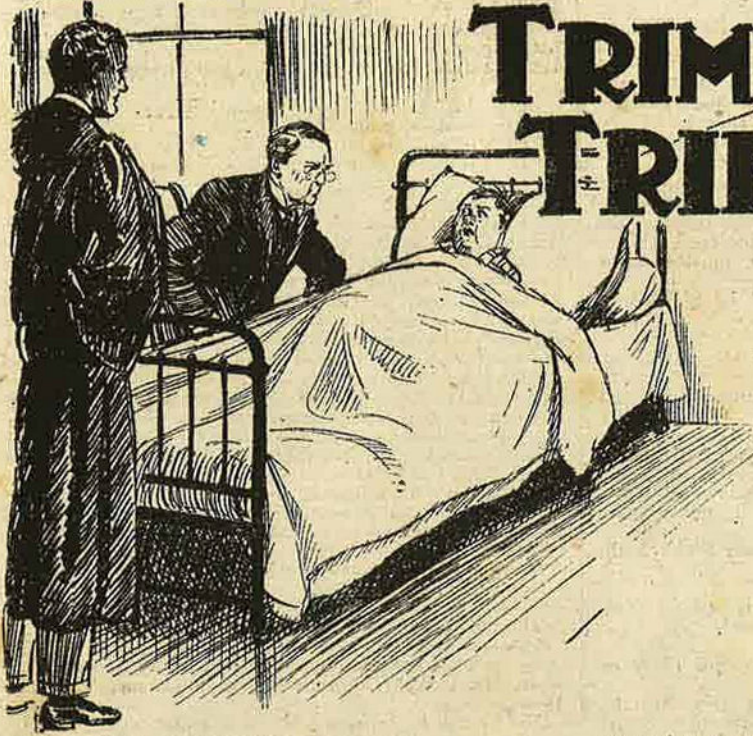
This is the subject our Rhymester has selected for his next jolly little poem. And it goes with a swing.

THE TUCK HAMPERS!

I can't impress upon my chums too much that these Tuck Hampers—awarded for jokes published in our pages—are really worth winning. They're crammed with delicious Tuck, and a feed is always acceptable, I know. Leastways, it was when I was a boy. Just send your joke along and see if it will catch the judge's eye. You'll see in this week's Gem that seven Tuck Hampers have been won. Well, more are on offer. Step lively with those jokes, boys. Chin, chin!

Your Editor.

A FLOGGING is the promised reward of the boy who fails to obtain a certain proportion of marks in the Latin gram mar examination set specially by the Head of St. Jim's. And Trimble, the laziest and biggest duffer in the school, can see his reward in advance, so to speak! His only hope is to escape that dreadful exam, and Trimble's fat brain works overtime in order to bring this about!



TRIMBLE TRIES IT ON!

A Rollicking Long Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co., the cheery Chums of St. Jim's, with Baggy Trimble—not quite so cheery—in the limelight.

By
Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

The Head Comes Down Heavy!

"THE Head!"

A whisper of alarm ran through the St. Jim's Fourth.

Morning classes were in progress at St. Jim's, when the door of the Fourth Form-room opened, and the majestic figure of the Head was framed in the doorway.

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, gave the Head a blink over his spectacles and coughed.

Dr. Holmes advanced into the Form-room.

There was a kind and benevolent expression on his face. Judging by appearances, there was no cause for the alarm that had seized upon the whole of the Fourth Form at the sudden appearance of their headmaster.

Nevertheless, the Fourth were dismayed.

There was no cane under the headmaster's arm; no frown upon his august brow. This sudden visit did not mean a Head's licking for any member of Mr. Lathom's class. But the juniors knew what it did mean.

Really, it was worse than that.

It was one of the visits of inspection and examination which the headmaster of St. Jim's occasionally made to the Form-rooms. Only occasionally; but on each occasion the visit brought dismay to the Form-room honoured by the great man's visit.

For these visits were made without warning beforehand; there was no chance of getting ready for them.

Only by constant and steady attention to school work could a fellow hope to face the Head on such occasions without the prospect of trouble.

Constant and steady attention to school work was a very praiseworthy and desirable thing, as any St. Jim's man would have admitted freely. But it was rather infrequent at St. Jim's.

Certainly, there were "swots" and "saps" in the school who could have faced a Board of Examiners at a moment's notice, and come through the ordeal with flying colours.

But they were few.

Other fellows—just ordinary fellows—would have preferred to know when the Head was coming. Then they could have mugged up sufficient knowledge, for the occasion, to bring a pleased smile to his face. But the Head, no doubt, was "wide" to that, so to speak. He chose to make these little calls by surprise.

"Good-morning, Mr. Lathom!" said the Head pleasantly.

"Er—good-morning, sir!" said the Form master.

Very likely Mr. Lathom was not better pleased than his pupils. No Form master ever really liked a headmaster "butting" into his Form room. Dr. Holmes, probably,

had not liked it in his own early days as a Form master. But in a Form master's career, as in every other, there were certain happenings that are not liked, but have to be tolerated.

So Mr. Lathom suppressed his personal feelings, whatever they were, and looked as pleased as he could.

"Good-morning, my boys!"

"Good-morning, sir!" answered the Fourth Form in tones of enthusiastic welcome.

Their tones did not express their feelings.

But even Trimble, the most obtuse fellow in the Form, could understand that it was no use pulling a long face when the Head butted in. Even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was very particular upon such points, admitted that a little "gammon" was allowable at such a time. It was only common sense to placate the Head at the kick-off, so to speak.

"And how are we going on?" asked the Head pleasantly.

He did not expect any answer to that question.

It was merely the usual formula.

The Fourth Form were droning through Virgil; and Mr. Lathom, a very easy-going gentleman, was taking things easily, as he generally did.

Fellows who had forgotten their prep the previous evening tried hard not to catch his eye—and generally succeeded.

Fellows who could not escape construe did their best, and if their construe was good, they received commendation; if it was bad, as it often was, a few words of censure.

The Fourth, indeed, sometimes wondered why a cane lay on Mr. Lathom's desk—it was so seldom used.

The worst happening, in the case of the worst construe, was a hundred lines; and Mr. Lathom did not always remember to ask for the lines he had imposed.

So life was taken rather easily in the St. Jim's Fourth, as a rule.

But with the Head matters were different. These visits of inspection were made to ascertain the progress of the St. Jim's fellows; and the Head, with all his kindly benevolence, was likely to be short and sharp with fellows who were not up to the mark.

Baggy Trimble made himself as small as possible. It was three or four days since Baggy had done any prep at all; and he had accumulated a quantity of lines which he hoped Mr. Lathom had forgotten. If the Head asked him to display his knowledge of that great Latin poet, P. Vergilius Maro, the prospect was appalling.

But Trimble was by no means the only uneasy fellow, though doubtless the most uneasy.

Blake and Herries, and Digby and D'Arcy, were only

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too conscious of the fact that they had spent the time that should have been devoted to prep, the evening before, in boxing with Figgins & Co. of the New House.

Cardew remembered that he had been in Racke's study instead of working in his own. Mulvaney minor recalled with regret—that he had been fighting Bates of the Fourth, instead of preparing Virgil. And Julian and Kerruish and Reilly had been ragging in a Shell study.

The Head had really chosen an unlucky time to call on the Fourth. It is true that his calls always came at unlucky times.

With a gracious word or two, the Head borrowed Mr. Lathom's book, and proceeded to take the class, instead of the Form master. Mr. Lathom faded into the background, looking as pleasant as he could in the circumstances.

"Now, where are we?" said the Head in the same pleasant way.

He glanced at Mr. Lathom's book, and he glanced at the class.

"Blake!"

"Yes, sir!" murmured Jack Blake; and all the rest of the Fourth breathed more freely.

"You will begin, Blake, at 'conticuere omnes,'" said the Head agreeably.

Blake began, and stumbled. After the boxing match with Figgins & Co. Blake had taken a hasty glance at the section of the *Æneid* which ought to have been prepared. That hasty glance might have seen him through—with Mr. Lathom. He quickly discovered that it would not see him through with Dr. Holmes.

"That will do," said the Head curtly when Blake floundered. "D'Arcy, you may go on."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did his best. His best was not to judge by the Head's expression, very good.

"Cardew!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew was worse than either Blake or Gussy.

The Head's benevolent face was growing grimmer; the Fourth Form growing more and more apprehensive. Mr. Lathom, in the background, frowned and coloured. He would have liked his class to make a good show before the Head. So far, his class had made anything but a good show.

"Trimble!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Baggy Trimble.

In his dismay, the fat Baggy uttered that ejaculation quite aloud, and the juniors could see that the Head heard it.

"Trimble!" repeated the Head in a deep voice.

"Oh, yes, sir!" stuttered Baggy.

"Go on from 'infandum, regina!'"

Baggy Trimble blinked at him helplessly. Even Baggy remembered something of his lessons, and had a vague idea that regina was a queen. But what did infandum mean? Was it an infant, by any chance? Baggy hoped that it was, as he made the plunge.

"The—infant of the queen—" stuttered Trimble.

The look on the headmaster's face stopped him.

Baggy was still blissfully ignorant of the meaning of infandum. But he could see now that it did not mean an infant.

A pin might almost have been heard to drop in the Fourth Form-room. The juniors waited with bated breath.

"Trimble!" said the Head at last.

"Oh dear! I mean, yes, sir," groaned Baggy. "Is—is— isn't that right, sir?"

"Are you serious, Trimble?"

"Eh! Oh! Yes, sir!" Undoubtedly Trimble looked serious—very serious indeed. It was a serious moment!

"You are not attempting to play off a foolish jest, on your headmaster, Trimble?" thundered Dr. Holmes.

Trimble quaked.

"Oh, sir! No, sir!"

Baggy looked in anything but a jesting mood.

"Then you are ignorant, Trimble, of the meaning of so common a word as infandum!" exclaimed the Head.

"Infandum, sir!" gasped Trimble. "It's infandum!" Baggy was losing his head a little.

Dr. Holmes' expression was really terrific now.

"Trimble! Are you absolutely ignorant of Latin grammar?" he boomed.

"Yes, sir—I—I mean, no, sir."

"Are you not aware that the nominative case is infandus, and the accusative case infandum?"

"Oh! No—yes! Quite so, sir! Oh, yes!"

"Are you not aware that the word should be translated 'terrible,' or 'fearful,' or 'unspeakable'?"

"Yes, sir, now you've told me—I—I mean—yes, sir! Oh, yes!"

Dr. Holmes was not looking at all benevolent now. He

gave Trimble a grim look; and the Fourth Form gave him grim looks also. Evidently the Head was disposed to judge the Fourth by Trimble as a sample; and Trimble really was not a fair sample. Nobody else in the Form, certainly, would have dreamed of perpetrating a construe like Trimble's. It was unfortunate that the Head had picked on Trimble so early.

"S-s-s-shall I go on, sir?" groaned Baggy.

"You need not go on, Trimble."

"Oh! Thank you, sir!"

"It is futile for you to continue, Trimble, when you are obviously in a state of hopeless ignorance."

"Oh, sir!"

"I am surprised at this," said the Head. "I am shocked!"

And from that point the Head went on, taking every fellow in the Form in turn, and putting him through his paces. His intention had not been quite so wholesale, when he had entered; but Trimble had done it. Now the Head was in a grim and searching mood; and not a man escaped. Some of the fellows handed out quite a good construe—most of them stumbled—some of them were very bad; though nowhere near Trimble's limit. First lesson should have been over—but the Head carried on through the time belonging to second lesson—Mr. Lathom waiting in dignified silence.

It was a ghastly experience for the Fourth.

It was a cold day; but the Fourth Form were perspiring by the time the Head was through.

It was not till the end of the time that should have been devoted to second lesson, that Dr. Holmes stopped. He really could not carry on any longer, as morning break came next.

He closed Mr. Lathom's book with a sounding snap.

"Mr. Lathom!" he said.

"Sir!"

"I cannot say that I am satisfied with this class."

"Indeed, sir!"

"I shall not encroach upon your authority in your Form-room, Mr. Lathom, by inflicting any punishments," said the Head.

The Fourth Form were glad to hear that, at all events.

"But I must take note of the remarkable backwardness of the class," said the Head. "I must take measures. I am afraid that this Form is very slack."

He turned to the class again.

"Boys! I am deeply disappointed with you. I am afraid that many of you have taken a thoughtless advantage of your Form master's kindness of disposition, and have failed to benefit by his instruction as you should have done. The ignorance of the Fourth Form is appalling!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Figgins.

"Bai Jove!"

"Appalling!" repeated the Head, in a deep voice. "There must be a change—a great change. I shall appoint a special examination of the Fourth Form in Latin grammar. It will take place on Saturday, and I shall conduct it personally. You have a week in which to prepare for this special examination. Any boy who fails to obtain a certain proportion of marks, will be flogged!"

"Oh!"

And the Head sailed majestically from the Form-room.

The juniors gasped as he went.

The Head had come down heavy this time.

Mr. Lathom dismissed his class for the morning interval; and the Fourth streamed out of the Form-room; but they did not pour into the quad with their usual cheery faces and merry voices. The Head had, so to speak, knocked the stuffing out of the Fourth; and they needed time to recover from the visitation of their headmaster.

CHAPTER 2.

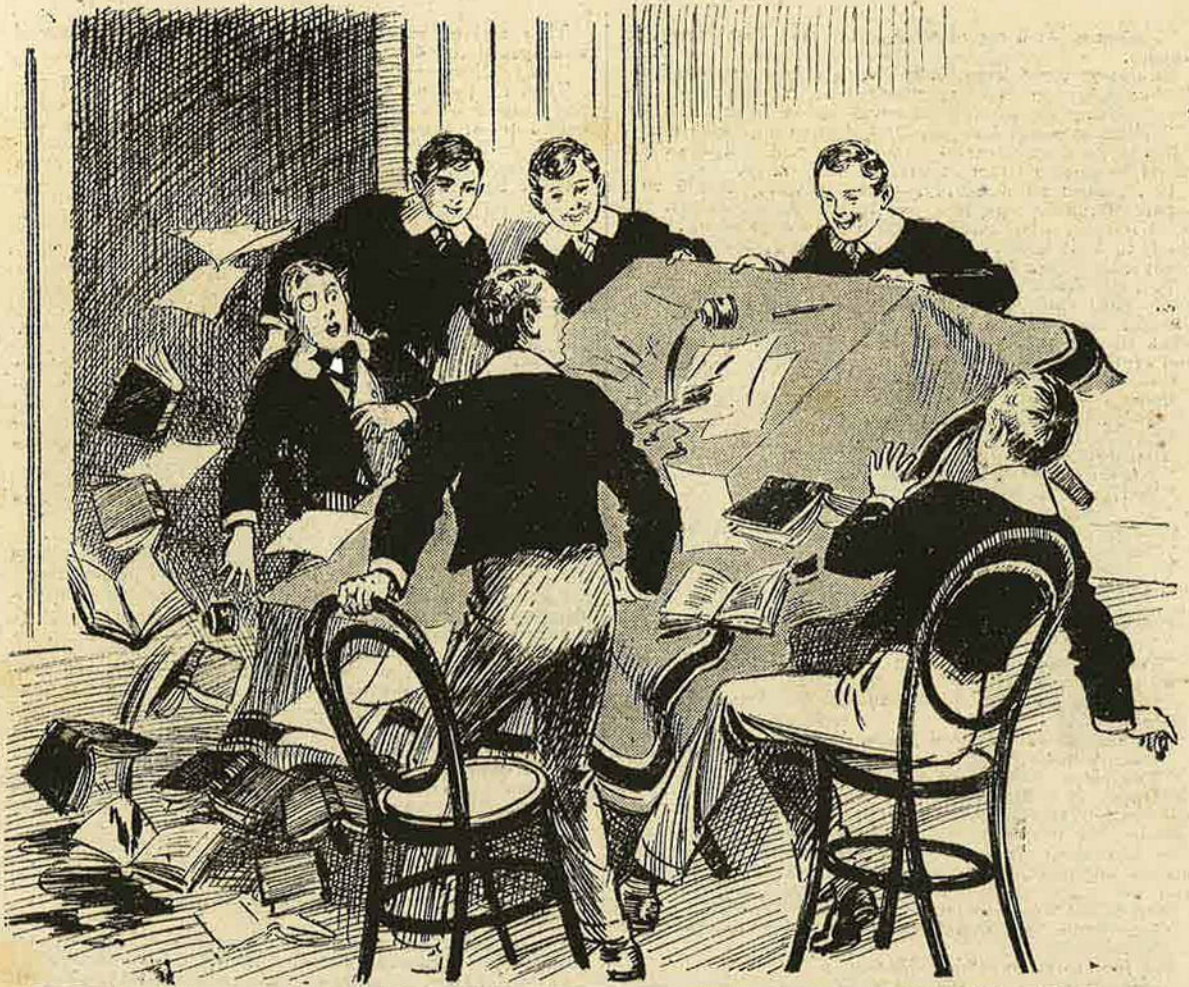
Surprising!

TOM MERRY raised his eyebrows.

He was surprised. Manners and Lowther, his chums in the Shell, shared his surprise.

Classes were over for the day; and the early dusk was thickening over St. Jim's. The Terrible Three, of the Shell, had walked down to the school shop after Mr. Linton had dismissed the Shell; and they had returned to the School House with a parcel each. That was a sign, which those who ran might read, that there was to be a tea of unusual plenteousness in Study No. 10—in fact, a study spread.

Manners had had a remittance that day; and he had debated whether to expend the same on a new supply of films for his camera, or upon a study brew—and the matter had been put to the vote. Manners had voted for the films; Tom Merry and Monty Lowther solemnly voted for the study brew; and Manners had grinned and acquiesced, being in a minority. Hence the visit to the tuckshop, the three



Before the occupants of Study No. 6 realised what was happening, Tom Merry and Co. had grasped the end of the table and up-ended it. Crash! Clatter! Smash! Bump! Books and papers and inkpot and pens went to the floor in wild confusion. "You silly asses!" roared Herries. "You potty chumps!" yelled Blake. "You fivightful wuffians!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Tom Merry & Co. (See Chapter 2.)

parcels, and the cheery expressions on three youthful faces. Naturally, on their way to their study, Tom Merry & Co. stopped at the door of Study No. 6 in the Fourth. On many an occasion, in hard times, they had found hospitality in Study No. 6; and now that Study No. 10 was a land flowing with milk and honey, they were ready to be hospitable in their turn. But as they looked into Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage, they met with the surprise of their lives.

Blake & Co. were at home. Tom knew that they were at home; but he did not know how he would find them occupied. They might have been boxing, or they might have been reading or doing lines; or they might have been doing Cross Words, or they might have been having tea early; or they might have been talking football, or even ragging.

But they were doing none of these things.

They were seated round the study table, which was fairly stacked with books, all of a scholastic nature. They had thoughtful, studious expressions on their faces; and deep silence reigned. They did not even look up as the door opened and the three Shell fellows appeared there. It was close on tea-time, and the sight of the parcels might have been expected to evoke enthusiasm in any junior study. But it evoked no enthusiasm in Study No. 6. Blake & Co. must have known that the visitors were there. But they heeded them not.

Tom Merry raised his eyebrows, as aforesaid. He stared at the four occupants of Study No. 6. He was not merely surprised, he was amazed.

Study No. 6 had never been celebrated for "swotting." All the fellows there kept their end up in class pretty well; but they thought much more of beating the New House at football than of winning any sort of scholastic distinctions. Once or twice one or another of them had gone in for a prize, and had swotted for a season. But such occa-

sions were rare; and certainly the whole study had never been known to swot in concert before. Yet that, obviously, was what they were doing now. Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, were swotting Latin, and were so deeply engrossed in that remarkable and unusual task, that they seemed perfectly indifferent to everything else in the wide world.

"Well, my hat!" said Tom Merry, at last breaking the silence.

Blake looked up at that. He waved a pen towards the doorway.

"Go away!"

"What?"

"Go away quietly."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Pway close the door gently aftah you, deah boys. You're intewwuptin' us."

"What's the name of this game?" inquired Monty Lowther.

"Hush!"

"Did you say 'hush'?" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Yes. Bunk!"

"But what—"

"Good-bye!"

"It's tea-time—"

"Never mind tea," said Dig. "Just bunk!"

"But we were going—"

"You are going, you mean," said Herries. "And, for goodness' sake, go!"

"We were going to ask you—"

"Good-bye!" said the four Fourth-Formers together.

And Blake & Co. devoted their deep attention to Latin again, while the Terrible Three looked at one another in amazement.

"I suppose it's a rag of some sort?" said Tom Merry, in wonder.

No answer came from Study No. 6; only a murmur from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy: "Nocturnus, nocturna, nocturnum." Gussy was looking out words in the Latin dic.

"Pulling our leg, I suppose," said Manners, mystified. Monty Lowther winked at his chums, and laid down the parcel he carried under his arm in the passage.

This sudden outbreak of swotting in Study No. 6 was, apparently, some sort of a weird jest. At all events, the Shell fellows could think of no other explanation. One good turn deserved another, and Monty Lowther was ready with a jest in his turn.

Tom and Manners understood, and laid down their parcels also. They entered the study together, and a swift stride brought them to the table. Before Blake & Co. knew what was happening, the Shell fellows had grasped the end of the table and up-ended it.

Crash! Clatter! Smash! Bump! Books and papers and inkpot and pens went to the floor of Study No. 6 in wild confusion.

Blake & Co. leaped to their feet.

"Bai Jove—"

"You silly asses!" roared Herries.

"You potty chumps!"

"You fidgetful wuffians!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"You have ruined our work—our fearfully hard work!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The havoc was complete. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther backed to the door, chortling, as Blake & Co. turned on them furiously.

"Now tell us what the giddy jest is," said Tom cheerily.

"You uttah ass—"

"Come along and tell us in our study," said Manners.

"We've got a spread—"

"Here, keep off!" roared Tom, as the Fourth-Formers made a rush.

"Kick them out!" yelled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You potty chumps—out you go!"

"Hands off! My hat, I—I—," gasped the captain of the Shell. "Oh crumbs! Back up, you fellows!"

Study No. 6 were evidently wildly excited. For whatever mysterious reason they had been swotting, they were plainly enraged by the sudden interruption of the swot, and the havoc wrought among their Latin papers. They rushed at the Terrible Three to hurl them forth.

There was a wild and whirling scene in Study No. 6 for a few minutes.

But four to three carried the day.

Manners went out first, in a heap; and Tom Merry followed him. And then Monty Lowther flew out, and sprawled across his two chums.

"Ow—ow!"

"Wow!"

"Oooooooop!"

Slam!

The door of Study No. 6 closed on the sprawling Shell fellows, and the key turned in the lock. Blake & Co. were not risking reprisals. Tom Merry staggered to his feet.

"You cheeky Fourth Form fags!" he roared. "Come out, and we'll mop the passage up with you!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Shut up, Gussy!" came Blake's voice. "Don't waste time chatting with those Shell-fish. Pile in!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Don't wag your chin, old man—just work."

Bang!

Lowther was on his feet, kicking at the door. Manners jumped up and added a smite with his knuckles.

"Go away!" roared Blake.

"Open this door, and we'll mop you up!" shouted Lowther.

"Pway wun away and be quiet."

Bang! Thump!

The Terrible Three had called in at Study No. 6 with the most benevolent and hospitable intentions. Now they seemed to be thirsting for the blood of that celebrated study.

But a locked door was not to be argued with. The chums of the Shell had to give it up, after breathing a series of blood-curdling threats through the keyhole.

"Come on!" said Tom Merry, picking up his parcel. "We'll mop them up later. Let's ask somebody else to tea. I suppose they've all gone mad, all of a sudden. Come on!"

And the Terrible Three, a little dusty and breathless, and greatly astonished and wrathful, went on down the passage to Study No. 9, with the intention of asking Levison, Clive, and Cardew to the spread in the Shell, Study No. 6 having been drawn blank, as it were.

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They arrived at Study No. 9, and Tom Merry tapped and opened the door.

"You fellows—" he began.

Then he stopped in sheer amazement. Levison, Clive, and Cardew were seated round the study table, their books before them, thoughtful expressions on their faces—swotting! As it had been in Study No. 6, so it was in No. 9—as if swotting was spreading through the Fourth Form like an outbreak of influenza!

CHAPTER 3.

The Swots!

"DON'T come in!" Levison of the Fourth spoke, politely but firmly. "Shut the door after you!" said Clive.

Ralph Reckness Cardew gave the Shell fellows a droll look. He was swotting like his comrades, but no doubt his heart was not in it. Cardew of the Fourth was about the last fellow at St. Jim's whom anyone would have expected to see doing the minutest fraction of work more than was required of him by stern necessity.

"Are we dreaming this?" asked Tom Merry blankly.

"I think I am, and I think it's the worst nightmare I've ever had," said Cardew.

"Don't talk," said Clive.

"Dear man, I must have a few minutes off. These fellows have butted in, just in time to give me a much-needed rest."

"Pile in, you ass! Do you want to be the one to bag a flogging?"

"Oh dear! No! But—"

"Well, keep on, then," said Levison.

"Look here! What does it all mean?" demanded Tom Merry. "We found Study No. 6 at this, and up-ended their table. Now we find you fellows swotting! Has all the Fourth gone potty?"

Cardew chuckled.

"We came to ask you fellows to tea," added Tom.

"Thanks no end; but we're not stopping for tea," said Levison. "A snack will see us through."

"Will it?" said Cardew dubiously.

"Yes; get on!"

"But what does it all mean?" exclaimed Manners.

"Listen, and I will a tale unfold," said Cardew gravely.

"The ignorance of the Fourth Form is appalling."

"Eh?"

"I had never noticed it before; but the Head says so, and so it's so," explained Cardew. "Straight from the horse's mouth, you know. Special exam in Latin for all the Fourth next Saturday. Fellows who don't bag enough marks to see them clear, will bag marks of a different kind—from the Head's birch. If we don't go for jolly old Virgil, the jolly old Head will go for us. We're choosin' the lesser of two evils. The Fourth have had the fright of their lives. I believe even Trimble's workin'."

"Great Scott!"

"The Head came in to-day," explained Levison. "He put us through our paces, and wasn't pleased. There's to be a special Latin paper on Saturday, see?"

"And floggings handed out to the fellows who don't turn in a good paper," said Clive. "So we're grinding at it."

"Grindin' isn't the word," sighed Cardew. "We're sloggin'—shavin'—wearin' ourselves out. We've all made up our minds to it. Nobody seems to want to be hoisted on Saturday, as a shockin' example to the school. It's not enticin' to think of, you know. So we're swottin'. You idle fellows run away and play."

Tom Merry & Co. grinned.

They understood now the sudden and inexplicable outbreak of swotting in the Fourth Form passage. A special Latin exam, with a flogging promised to every fellow who failed to pass muster, was enough to make the slackest fellow in the Fourth realise that it was time to pull up his socks, so to speak, and grind a little. No doubt, with that dreadful prospect in view, even Baggy Trimble was working. Evidently the Fourth had made up their minds to lose no time.

"You'll find grindin' goin' on in every study in the Fourth, I think," yawned Cardew. "I hardly think it will keep on like this till Saturday; but we're beginnin' well. Too fast to last, what? But for the present we're a Form of swots, and no idle, thoughtless youngsters need apply. Farewell!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry & Co. left No. 9, grinning.

The Head's visitation, and the alarming prospect before them, had made the Fourth take thought, and swotting was the order of the day. But the Shell fellows doubted very much whether it would last for long. As Cardew put it, it was too fast to last. But, curious to see how the rest of the Form were taking it, the Terrible Three looked into some



Baggy Trimble leaned on the captain of the Shell—his whole weight! Tom Merry was a stalwart fellow, but the fat junior's weight was no joke. Tom staggered. "Bear a hand, somebody!" he said. (See Chapter 5.)

of the other studies. In all of them they found studious youths poring over books, or yawning dolorously over them.

Quite interested to see whether Baggie Trimble, the fattest and slackest and laziest fellow at St. Jim's, was working, they looked into Study No. 2 in the Fourth. Wildrake and Mellish and Trimble sat round the study table, with their books before them. Wildrake was working quietly, Mellish with a vicious look on his face, and Baggie Trimble was taking a little rest. He was speaking as the Shell fellows came up to Study No. 2.

"What about tea?"

"Nothing about tea, I guess," said Wildrake. "I'm going to put in another solid hour, and then cut down to Hall for a snack."

"It's all your fault, Trimble!" said Mellish savagely. "It was your rotten con that made the Beak so waxy."

"I guess your con was pretty rotten, too," remarked Wildrake. "There's a pair of you."

"Oh, rats!" snarled Mellish.

"It's your two for the licking, if you don't pull up your socks," grinned Wildrake. "Especially Trimble!"

"Well, I'm sweating, ain't I?" groaned Baggie. "I've been at it hard. I'm hungry now."

"Go it harder," said Wildrake. "You haven't a minute to lose before Saturday. Not a second. The 'infants of the queen' won't go down in the exam, you know."

"The which?" inquired Monty Lowther, from the doorway.

Wildrake glanced round, with a smile.

"Don't interrupt the work," he said.

"They've told us that in every study in the Fourth," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Never saw such a hard-working Form. Mr. Lathom ought to be pleased, if he could see you now."

"I guess he ought to be—if it lasts. Trimble got the Head's rag out. He translated 'infandum regina' as 'the infants of the queen'—"

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

"Look here, you know—" growled Baggie Trimble. "I guess we're all in the soup," said Wildrake. "You galoots run away and play, while industrious fellows are working."

"You haven't time to come to tea in our study?" grinned the captain of the Shell.

"Nope! Thanks all the same!"

Baggy Trimble jumped up.

"Thanks, old fellow, I'll come!" he said.

"Eh?"

"I'm ready," said Trimble.

"Nobody asked you, sir, she said!" sang Monty Lowther. "Oh, take him along and feed him!" said Wildrake. "A galoot can't work with Trimble in the study grousing about grub."

Tom Merry laughed.

"All right. Come on, Trimble!"

And Baggie Trimble—trying to forget the dismal prospect before him if he did not turn in a good Latin paper on Saturday—accompanied the Terrible Three to Study No. 10 in the Shell. There the three parcels were unpacked, and a handsome spread brought a cheery grin to the fat face of Baggie. In Study No. 10 he was able to forget his troubles—so long as the spread lasted, at all events.

CHAPTER 4.

Tom Merry Does Not Play Up!

BAGGY TRIMBLE leaned back in his chair and smiled serenely.

It had been a first-class spread; more than enough even for Baggie Trimble. Baggie, who had been in the lowest spirits since the Head's visit to the Form-room that morning, smiled again. Life once more seemed to be worth living.

"Jolly good, you fellows!" said Trimble.

The spread was over; but Trimble showed no hurry to depart. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther politely waited for him to clear. As a matter of absolute fact, they did not enjoy the company of Trimble of the Fourth—nobody did, excepting the fat Baggy himself. Having fed him, and tolerated his society during the feed, the chums of the Shell considered they had done more than any reasonable fellow could have expected of them, and now they only desired to see the last of the fat junior.

But Trimble set himself comfortably, obviously with no intention of taking his departure yet awhile.

"I've been thinking, you fellows," he said.

"You have?" inquired Manners, in surprise.

"Yes. About that exam, you know," said Trimble. "I want you to help me a bit, Tom Merry. As junior captain of the House, you know it's up to you to hand out help and advice, and all that."

"My hat! I'm not taking on the job of a Latin tutor, though," said Tom Merry. "Better ask your Form master to give you a little extra toot, if you feel that you need it."

"I don't mean that. You see, I'm rather in a scrape," said Trimble. "I generally put in enough work to keep

"My idea is this," pursued Trimble. "All the Fourth have got to turn up for the special exam on Saturday. Not a fellow seems to have thought of working a dodge for cutting the exam. That's my idea."

Tom Merry stared at the fat Fourth-Former. "Cut it out, Fatty!" he said. "The Head means business. You'll have to turn up with the rest, of course."

"Not if I get up a really good dodge," urged Trimble. "That's where you can help me, as junior captain. I've got to keep away from the exam, somehow. You see, it's not a regular exam—only a special Head's exam for reporting progress. Any fellow who was ill, for instance, would miss it, and get clear."

"But you're not ill."

"That's a last resource, of course," said Trimble. "Being ill means going into sunny—and I don't like sunny. The exam's fixed for Saturday afternoon—two hours taken out of a half-holiday, you know; rather thick, what? Now, suppose you had a big football fixture on Saturday?"

"We haven't," said Tom.

"You're playing Greyfriars next week."

"Next week," assented Tom.

"Well, you could write to Greyfriars, and beg them to alter the date, and make it this Saturday instead. You could do that for a very special reason."

"I suppose I could," said Tom. "But I'm blessed if I see how that would help you in a Latin exam, if I did it."

"If!" murmured Lowther, regarding the fat junior with great interest.

Baggy's fat intellect worked in mysterious ways its wonders to perform; and evidently some stunning idea was evolving in his podgy brain.

"Well, then," continued Baggy. "Take it that you've got the Greyfriars fixture for this Saturday. That puts you in a hole, with a lot of your men kept away by a special exam. Half the junior eleven are in the Fourth, you know. Well, that can't be helped. You'd have to play without Blake, or D'Arcy, or Figgins, or Fatty Wynn. But if you made a particular request for one special fellow to be let off, because you couldn't really play without him, I'm sure the Head would listen to reason. He's very particular about never interfering with the games fixtures if he can help it, you know."

"I know," assented Tom. "The exam has been fixed for this Saturday, because there's no school fixture on that date. The Head knows that."

"But the date can be altered to suit, as I've explained," said Trimble. "And you can put me down to play."

"You!" yelled Tom Merry.

"That's it."

"You! But you can't play football!" ejaculated the captain of the Shell, staring blankly at Baggy.

"Well, I play a fairly good game," said Baggy. "That will be all right. Besides, the Head knows about our fixtures; but he doesn't know about every fellow's football form, of course. If you explained to him that the Greyfriars match had to be played this Saturday, and that you simply dared not face them without me in the team, I know jolly well the Head would let me off the exam."

"My only hat!"

"See the idea?" asked Trimble complacently. "Of course, the Head wouldn't let a lot of fellows off. You'd have to play without Blake and Figgins and Wynn, and D'Arcy and Kerr, and Redfern. But you'd have me."

"You!" spluttered Tom Merry.

"The Head would let off one chap—that stands to reason. You could pitch it to him very strong about what a splendid footballer I am—a budding international, and all that. Pile it on thick, you know. That would see me clear."

The Terrible Three gazed at Trimble.

Evidently that fat and fatuous youth was greatly taken with the idea, and seemed to see no reason why Tom Merry should not play up. Missing the Latin exam was an important point, to Trimble—in fact, it was, from his point of view, the only thing that mattered. All other considerations were insignificant, in comparison.

"So I'm to go to the Head and pitch him a string of lies," said Tom Merry, in a gasping voice. "Then I'm to play Greyfriars with some of my best men left out, and a fat dud in their place, and bag a licking at football. And I'm to do all that to save you from the trouble of putting in a little work!"

"Well, as a pal, you know—"

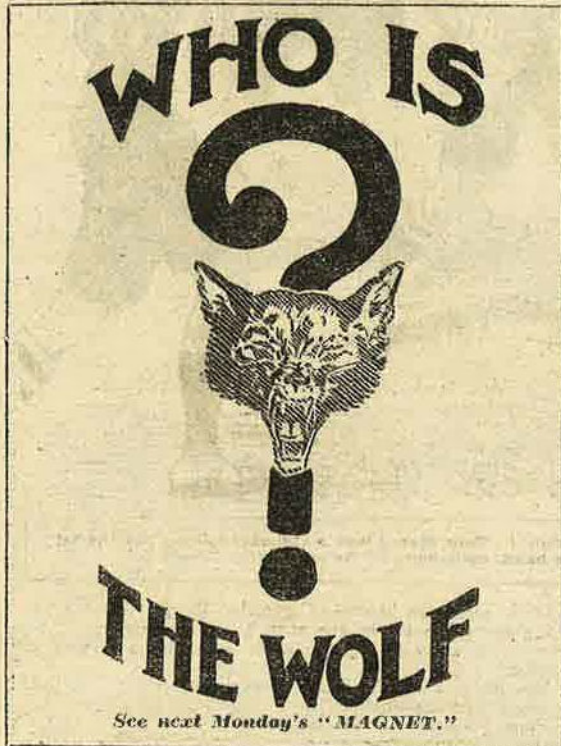
"I can see myself doing it!" gasped Tom.

"You agree?" asked Trimble.

"Oh, my hat! Not quite."

"I don't think you ought to be selfish," said Trimble, blinking at him. "I'm in a scrape—and a football match doesn't matter much, does it? I mean, not in comparison with something really important?"

"Such as helping a fat slacker to dodge work," chuckled Lowther.



old Lathom quiet. That's all that can be expected of a chap. Of course, there's always danger of getting landed—but a fellow has to take some risks. Now I've got landed, through the Head butting in. My own opinion is that the Head would do much better to stick to the Sixth; but, of course, I can't tell him that."

"No. I think I shouldn't," agreed Tom.

"All the fellows have had a scare, and they're taking up swotting all of a sudden, as if they loved it," said Trimble. "Of course, it won't last. I started on the same tack, and I find that I've got an awful lot of leeway to make up. It means grinding every blessed minute all through the week, if I'm not to stick at the bottom of the list on Saturday, and bag a flogging. That's not good enough."

"You could do with a little more knowledge," suggested Lowther. "What you know at present would go into a thimble, and still leave room enough for a finger."

Trimble did not heed that remark. The pursuit of knowledge never had appealed to Baggy.

"I've been thinking," he repeated. "I've got rather more brains than most of the chaps in my Form, you know. They think that the only way to scrape through on Saturday is to grind at Latin, and turn in a good paper. But there's more ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream, you know. I've thought of something better; and that's where I want your help, Tommy. After all, we're pals, aren't we?"

"Aro we?" ejaculated Tom in astonishment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry rose to his feet, and opened the study door. It really was hardly worth while to be angry with a fatuous ass like Baggy Trimble; but Tom had had enough of that fascinating youth.

"Good-bye, Trimble," he said.

"But, I haven't finished yet—"

"You have," said Tom. "Travel."

"Look here, you know—"

Tom Merry took hold of the back of Trimble's chair. Baggy Trimble was deposited on the carpet with a bump.

"Ow!" roared the fat Fourth-Former.

"Line up, you fellows, and all kick together!" said Tom Merry. "When I say three, let him have it!"

"What ho!"

"I—I say—" gasped Trimble.

"One!" counted Tom.

"I—I—I say—look here—"

"Two!"

Baggy Trimble did not wait for "three". He squirmed to the doorway and bolted out of the study like a fat rabbit. Tom Merry chuckled, and banged the study door after him.

Baggy drifted disconsolately back to No. 2. Evidently, that great idea was not going to work; for reasons inexplicable to Baggy. Tom Merry did not intend to rescue him from the scrape into which his laziness had landed him, at the trifling cost of telling a bushel of untruths and throwing away a football match. Baggy Trimble rolled dismally back to his study, and sat down glumly to Latin again. Work was the only way out of the scrape—unless he could think of some more practicable dodge.

But after a little more work, Baggy's thoughts wandered from Latin. If work—steady and unremitting swotting—was the only way to escape a flogging, Baggy was booked for the flogging. Indeed, of the two, it seemed almost preferable to Baggy.

And instead of swotting, as the other fellows in the Fourth were doing, Baggy gave up his attention to the consideration of ways and means for dodging the special exam. That was the only way—at least, it was the only way that appealed to Trimble. So while the rest of the Fourth swotted Latin, Baggy's fat intellect worked at full pressure in quite another direction.

CHAPTER 5.

Baggy, the Footballer!

TOM MERRY arrived on Little Side the following afternoon with a football under his arm and a smile on his face.

He had wondered how many of the Fourth would turn up for games practice that afternoon.

As it was not a compulsory day, any fellow who wanted to cut the practice was at liberty to cut it. But all the footballing fellows were certain to turn up, as a rule. The Greyfriars match came along the following week; and fellows who were to play in that match wanted to keep themselves up to the mark; and fellows who wanted to get a chance of wedging into the eleven were still more likely to show up in games practice and endeavour to impress the junior captain with their quality. So—in normal conditions—Little Side should have been crowded when Tom Merry arrived there with juniors of both Houses.

But the outbreak of "swotting" was evidently still gripping the Fourth. Tom had wondered how many of that Form would turn up—and a glance showed him that five or six made the total. The rest, apparently, were putting in the half-holiday at deep study, getting ready to have their hair combed, as Cardew expressed it, by the Beak on Saturday.

Of all the Fourth, only Levison, Blake, and D'Arcy represented the School House, and Figgins and Kerr the New House at this especial games practice.

Whereat Tom Merry smiled.

There was a swarm of the Shell present, and the few members of the Fourth were almost lost among them.

"Fatty Wynn not coming down?" asked Tom, with a nod to Figgins and Kerr.

Figgins shook his head.

"No; he will be all right to keep goal next week, you know—he's always in great form. If he could spout Latin as well as he keeps goal, he would be all right on Saturday, too."

"You feel all right for Saturday?" grinned Tom.

"Me! Not exactly," said Figgins. "But I'm chancing it rather than cutting games practice. Kerr's all right, anyhow, and he's tootering Fatty and me in the study at odd times. Blessed if I know why the Head dropped on the Fourth instead of the Shell yesterday. I dare say the ignorance of the Shell is appalling, too, if they're taken by surprise."

"Our turn will come," said Tom laughing. "So you're chancing it, too, Blake?"

Jack Blake nodded.

"I think I shall pull through on Saturday," he said. "I had a deep dig into the rubbish yesterday, blow it! Anyhow, I'm not swotting on a half-holiday."

"Wathah not," said Arthur Augustus.

"And you don't need to, Levison," said Tom. "You can play all our heads off at the classics."

Levison of the Fourth grinned.

"Well, I'm fairly well up in the stuff," he said. "I was working yesterday to encourage Cardew. He's promised to stick at it with Clive while I'm down here. Not many of the Fourth out this afternoon."

"Hallo, here comes another!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Bai Jove! Twimble!"

"Trimble—in footer rig!" exclaimed Blake. "'Tain't compulsory to-day! What does Trimble want here?"

"Goodness knows!" said Tom Merry.

The juniors stared at the fat Baggy in surprise. Never, in the memory of the oldest inhabitant, had Baggy Trimble been seen at games practice, excepting on days when it was compulsory—and not always then, for Baggy was full of wonderful dodges and excuses on such occasions. And now—when there was no compulsion to come, and there was a powerful reason for staying away—here was Trimble; in



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football garb; looking as if he were on the point of bursting through his shorts and jersey, as usual when he was garbed for soccer. Evidently Baggy Trimble meant to join in the games practice; why, was a deep mystery to every fellow on the ground.

"Well, here we are, Tom Merry!" puffed Baggy, as he came up. "Not late, I hope! Fine day for footer, what?"

"What do you want here, Baggy?" asked Tom Merry, quite puzzled.

"Eh! Games practice," said Baggy.

"But it's not a compulsory day."

"I know that!"

"Then what do you mean?" demanded Tom.

"I mean what I say—I'm here for games practice, and I'm jolly well not going to stand out, either, I can tell you!" said Baggy defiantly. "I'm awfully keen on football—"

"Since when?" yelled Manners.

"Since the Head told us—I—I mean—I—I've always been keen on footer!" stammered Trimble. "I've been kept out of games by jealousy, and all that. If you want a good man for the Greyfriars match next week, I'm willing to play. You'll see what I can do, to-day, if you give me a chance."

Tom Merry laughed.

"If you're really keen, Trimble, I'm glad to hear it," he said. "But have you forgotten about getting ready for Saturday?"

"Eh? That's what I'm doing!"

"What?" exclaimed Tom. "The Head isn't going to examine you in soccer on Saturday, is he?"

"I—I mean—"

"Well, what do you mean?" demanded Tom, eyeing the fat junior in growing surprise.

"I—I—you see—I mean to say—" Trimble seemed rather confused. "I mean, a game of footer will pull me up, you know, and—and buck me up for—for study. Healthy mind in a healthy body, and all that, you know. See? Anyhow I'm here for footer, and you can put that in your pipe and smoke it."

"Right-ho; it will do you good, anyway," said Tom good-humouredly.

And when the juniors picked up sides, Baggy Trimble took his place in the ranks, evidently meaning business.

Baggy's football was about on a par with his Latin and his other attainments.

His idea of the game was to make blind rushes and kick; and he never seemed to care whom he rushed over, or where his kicks landed. Seldom, if ever, did they land on the ball; but as every bullet has its billet, so Baggy's wild kicks generally found something to land on—a knee, an ankle, or something of the sort. For which reason Trimble sometimes found himself "laid out" at games practice, on the infrequent occasions when he showed up there—fellows did not seem to like Baggy barging into them, and kicking them on any spot that happened to be available.

In a pick-up game Baggy would spend a lot of time on his back, gazing at the heavens, and struggling to get his second wind. Unless a prefect or a master was in charge of the practice, he would crawl off at the earliest possible moment. Now, as usual, he put in a good deal of sprawling and gasping; but for once he showed no disposition to crawl off. For once, if for once only, the fat slacker of the Fourth was determined to shine as a footballer; for some mysterious reason known only to himself.

And so it came about that Baggy charged recklessly, head down like a bull, into a struggling press of players, and disappeared among innumerable legs and feet, yelling.

Three or four fellows stumbled over Baggy, and as they landed on him, they did not take any trouble to land lightly.

"Ow! Wow! Gerroff! Help!"

"Kick that fat idiot off the field!" roared Kangaroo of the Shell indignantly. "He's jolly well lamed me."

"Bai Jove! He has quite cwushed my nose with his sillay elbow, you know," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in tones of anguish.

"Ow! Wow! Yow! Ow!" came faintly from underneath three or four sprawling forms—that seemed in no hurry to leave off sprawling over Trimble.

But they cleared at last, and the fat and gasping Baggy was revealed. He lay and groaned deeply.

"You barging idiot!" said Blake, perhaps by way of expressing sympathy.

Groan!

"Shut up that row, for goodness' sake," said Kangaroo.

Groan!

"Come on!" called out Tom Merry.

The game went on; but Baggy Trimble did not move. Heedless of the other fellows, he lay where he was, groaning.

"Help!" Baggy called out feebly.

"Shut up!" roared Figgins.

"Help! I'm hurt!"

"Crawl off, then, you fat funk!"

"Ow! I can't move! My leg's broken, I think," said Baggy faintly.

"Rats!"

"Bai Jove, the fat duffah may be damaged, you know!" said Arthur Augustus, and he ran up to Trimble.

Baggy gave a deep groan.

"Are you hurt?" asked Gussy.

"Ow! Yes! Fearfully!"

"Where, deah boy?"

"My leg's broken!" groaned Trimble.

"Wats!"

"I—I can't get up! Some of you fellows will have to carry me back to the House!" said Trimble feebly.

The juniors gathered round Trimble. Tom Merry and Manners took him by the arms to help him up.

"Ow! Careful!" gasped Baggy. "My leg's broken!"

"You fat idiot!" roared Tom. "Your silly leg's all right!"

"I—I mean my—my back—"

"What?"

"Dislocated spine, I think—"

"You fooling ass!"

"I—I mean—" Baggy gasped. "I—I mean I'm suffering infernally—I mean internally! That's it—internal injuries." Baggy seemed quite pleased at having got it right at last. "Frightful internal injury—that's what it is. I can't walk. Help me!"

The juniors stared at Baggy. Only too well they knew Baggy, and his disregard for the straight and narrow path of veracity. When it came to prevarication, Trimble could have given George Washington or Ananias fifty in a hundred, and won easily. Had it been a compulsory practice that afternoon, the fellows would have known what to think. Trimble's injury, they would have taken for granted to be simply an excuse for getting off the field early. But as Baggy was there on this occasion of his own free will, and at liberty to depart whenever he chose, they were driven to believe that he really was damaged.

"Well, if you're hurt, I'm sorry," said Tom. "You should really learn not to play footer like a bull in a china shop, Trimble. Here, lean on me, and I'll help you away."

Baggy leaned on the captain of the Shell—his whole weight. Tom Merry was a stalwart fellow; but Baggy Trimble's weight was no joke. He staggered.

"Bear a hand, somebody!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus took Trimble's other arm. Throwing as much weight as he could upon his two kind conductors, Trimble staggered off the field; and the pick-up went on, while Tom and Gussy marched him off towards the School House. Baggy let out an anguished groan at almost every step, doubtless due to his severe internal injuries. Tom Merry and D'Arcy were perspiring by the time they got him to the House. They piloted him in; and would have relinquished him there, but Baggy held on to their arms.

"Take me to the Housemaster," he said feebly.

"What on earth do you want to see Railton for?"

"He will have to send for a doctor."

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom.

"Bai Jove! If Twimble weally is injahed, you know, pewwaps a doctah had bettah see him," said Arthur Augustus, with a puzzled look at the fat junior.

"Look here, Trimble," said Tom Merry quietly. "I don't know what your game is; but you're generally gammoning, and this looks to me like gammon. If it is, you'd better think twice before you try to stuff Mr. Railton."

Groan!

"You're not really hurt," said Tom. "It's only being a funk and a fat foolzer, you know, that makes you make such a song about a bump or two."

Groan!

"Bai Jove! What a feahful wow!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Take me to Railton!" said Trimble faintly. "I—I think I'm dying."

"Fathead!"

"Look here, you know—"

"Well, if you are, you're jolly well not going to die on my hands," said Tom Merry heartlessly. "I'll land you on Railton with pleasure."

And the two juniors helped the tottering Baggy, groaning at every step, to the Housemaster's study.

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CHAPTER 6.

A Very Sudden Recovery

DR. SHORT stroked his chubby chin, and stared at Trimble of the Fourth over his gold-rimmed pince-nez. Trimble, lying on his bed in the Fourth Form dormitory, blinked at him, moaning faintly. Mr. Railton, standing at the foot of the bed, glanced alternately at the fat junior and the little plump medical gentleman, and seemed worried.

Trimble, if he was "gammoning," was playing his part well. The Housemaster really had had no choice but to send for a doctor. A fat slacker like Trimble, always out of condition, might quite possibly have collected up a real injury; and in such a matter the Housemaster could scarcely leave anything to chance.

As Trimble averred, with many groans and moans, that he was feeling an intense pain internally, the result of his misadventure on the football ground, Mr. Railton naturally decided that the medical man had better see to it.

So Baggy had been helped upstairs, laid on his bed, and left to roost there, while the school doctor was telephoned for. Tom Merry and D'Arcy returned to the football ground, rather concerned about Trimble. Spooner as they knew him to be, they hardly supposed him to have the nerve to attempt to spoof the Housemaster and the school doctor; neither did they see any reason why he should do so. So they felt quite sorry for Baggy as they left him groaning, and went back to Little Side.

Baggy, perhaps too lazy to groan when there was no one to hear ceased his sounds of woe when he was left alone. But at the hint of footsteps in the corridor outside, he recommenced, and was groaning dismally when Mr. Railton brought the medical man in. And during his examination by Dr. Short, he groaned and moaned as if for a wagger.

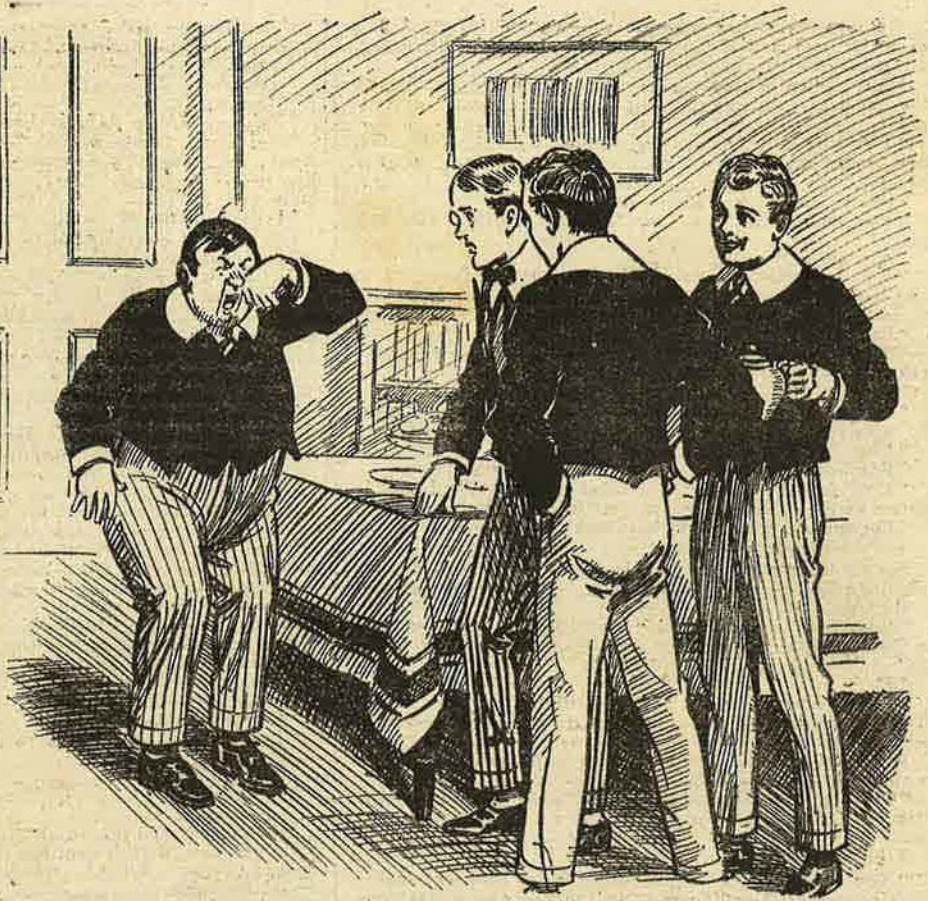
Now the medical man was contemplating him with very keen eyes over his pince-nez. His face was very grave.

Dr. Short, as a school doctor, had a long experience of the younger generation, and knew all sorts and conditions of boys. He was not, therefore, at a loss to estimate Baggy correctly. His belief was that there was nothing at all the matter with the fat junior. He had come across cases of malingering before.

Still, such a thing as an internal injury was not easy to trace and to diagnose. The medical man did not wish to condemn Baggy out of hand as a malingeringer, with the possibility that afterwards it might prove that he really had some hidden damage in some remote recess of his fat person. Being a medical man, Dr. Short was, of course, aware of how little medical men really knew of the mysterious workings of the human organisation.

It would never do for a man in his official position, as doctor to a big school, to make a mistake—apart from the interests of the patient. So the medical gentleman was thinking rather hard as he scanned Baggy's fat face, and listened to his painful moaning.

He drew Mr. Railton aside at last, and they conversed in low tones out of Trimble's hearing. Baggy strained his fat ears to listen; but only a low murmur of voices reached him.



"I—I think this is simply heartless," said Trimble tearfully, "when my poor old pater—I mean my Uncle Thomas—that is my Uncle Montague, is lying—" "If your uncle's anything like his nephew, he's lying," chuckled Blako. "Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I wotuse to listen to your feahful fibbin', Twimble. I am goin' to kick you!" (See Chapter 7.)

"Is the matter serious?" asked Mr. Railton.

"I think not," said Dr. Short. "I think, as a matter of fact, that there is nothing wrong with the boy at all. Probably he eats too much pastry; but I find no trace of such an injury as he complains of. But one cannot be too sure in such matters."

"Quite so. But—"

"If the boy is malingering, he has some reason. Is he, by any chance, under sentence of a flogging?"

"Nothing of the kind, doctor."

"That would account for it," said Dr. Short. "A flogging, of course, could not be administered if the boy is ill, or supposed to be ill. You know of no other reason why he might be pretending to be injured?"

Mr. Railton reflected for a moment. Then he started.

"There is a special examination for all the boys in Trimble's Form this week," he said.

"Aha!" said the medical gentleman. "Is it an examination that Master Trimble can face with confidence?"

"Far from that. He is the least fitted of all his Form to face the examination, and he is far too lazy to prepare for it if he can possibly avoid doing so."

Dr. Short smiled.

"I think we have put our finger on the key to the mystery, Mr. Railton," he said. "I will speak to my patient again. I only wished to discover whether he had a motive for malingering."

Dr. Short returned to the bedside. Baggy Trimble gave a low moan of intense suffering by way of greeting.

"You feel no better?" asked the doctor.

"Worse!" groaned Trimble.

"You still feel that you cannot rise without assistance?"

"I—I can hardly breathe!" groaned Trimble. "I—I couldn't get up, sir if the house was on fire."

"Then you will have to be removed on a stretcher to the sanatorium," said Dr. Short.

A glimmer came into Baggy's round eyes.

The sanatorium was not a place he yearned to visit. But anything was better than the Latin exam on Saturday. It was a case of any port in a storm.

That sudden glimmer in Baggy's eyes did not escape the medical gentleman. But his face remained very grave.

"You will be placed in the sanatorium, on special diet, and under special care," he said. "Do you feel, in your present state, as if you can eat?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Baggy at once.

"You do not feel that your appetite is affected in any way?"

"Not at all."

"You feel that you could digest an ample breakfast in the morning—say, eggs and bacon, with kidneys and tomatoes?"

"Easily, sir."

"Some slight refreshment during the morning—say, a cake, and fruit?" suggested the doctor.

"Oh, yes!"

"For dinner, a chicken, with several vegetables, followed by a substantial pudding."

"Fine," gasped Trimble.

"Poached eggs, with ham for tea, and a cake."

"Yes," said Trimble. "I—I think so, sir." He forgot to groan in the contemplation of that happy prospect.

"For supper, perhaps, a cold meat-pie, and a pudding." Trimble's eyes danced.

Sanny, on those lines, was likely to be a very pleasant abiding-place. Dr. Short, evidently, was a medical man in a thousand!

"Very well," said the doctor cheerfully. "Of course, such a diet would be quite impossible, in the case of an internal injury."

"Eh?"

"I will now draw up a special diet for you, Master Trimble, which the nurse will be instructed to adhere to strictly."

Dr. Short took out his pocket-book and a pencil. Trimble watched him very anxiously.

"Breakfast," murmured the doctor, aloud, as he scribbled. "One glass of lukewarm water and a small piece of dry toast."

Trimble gazed at him in horror.

"Nothing but a glass of lukewarm water between meals—very important. For dinner, a small quantity of vegetables—no meat, or puddings, or pies in any circumstances whatever."

Trimble groaned.

It was not his internal injury that caused him to groan. It was the prospect of that appalling diet.

"For tea, a glass of lukewarm water, and a dry biscuit—not a sweet biscuit. No supper!"

Groan!

"This diet will be strictly adhered to," said Dr. Short, "and I trust, Master Trimble, that I shall find you better on my next visit."

Trimble's jaw dropped.

"Mr. Railton, you will see that the nurse carries out my instructions to the very letter?"

"Undoubtedly!" said Mr. Railton, with a stern glance at Trimble. He was at no loss to understand the changes in the fat junior's face.

"I have every reason to believe," continued the doctor blandly, "that Master Trimble's recovery will be rapid."

Dr. Short left the dormitory with Mr. Railton. Trimble sat up on the bed—able to move now that he was alone—and gazed blankly after them.

"The—the—the awful beast!" gasped Baggy.

Latin exams—Head's floggings—what were they compared with a week on such a diet as that prescribed by Dr. Short? Trifles light as air.

Baggy had succeeded—a little too well. Dr. Short had said that the fat junior's recovery would be rapid.

It was very rapid indeed.

When Mr. Railton came back to the dormitory, five minutes later, Baggy Trimble was no longer extended on the bed. He was on his feet, and ready to go. So far from being the helpless victim of injuries, internal or external, Baggy was only too anxious to convince the Housemaster that he was not injured at all.

Mr. Railton looked at him grimly.

"So you are able to rise now, Trimble?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Baggy. "I—I—I feel much better, sir. I—I—I seemed to feel a—a—a sudden recovery, sir."

"In the case of serious internal pains, such as you described, Trimble, a sudden recovery is impossible."

"I—I—I really feel better, sir," stammered Trimble, quite dismayed at the idea of being transferred to the sanatorium on the diet prescribed by Dr. Short, by an over-anxious Housemaster.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 980.

Mr. Railton's brow grew grimmer and grimmer.

"You feel no more pain, Trimble?"

"No, sir."

"You are quite sure?"

"None at all, sir."

"You are able to walk to the sanatorium?"

"I—I don't think—I don't feel ill enough to go into sanny, sir!" gasped the dismayed Baggy. "I—I shouldn't like to—slack, sir. I—I really feel much better, sir—quite well, in fact."

"I have no doubt of it, Trimble," said Mr. Railton.

"You will not be sent into the sanatorium, Trimble."

"T-t-thank you, sir!"

"You will follow me to my study, Trimble."

"Wha-a-ah for, sir?"

"To be severely caned, Trimble, for attempting to deceive me, and for giving Dr. Short an unnecessary journey to the school," said the Housemaster grimly. "I shall endeavour to impress upon your obtuse mind, Trimble, that such deceptions must not be attempted."

"Oh, lor'!"

"Follow me!" snapped Mr. Railton.

He strode from the dormitory, and Baggy Trimble limped after him, in the lowest of spirits. Baggy dragged his faltering steps into the Housemaster's study, and watched Mr. Railton select his stoutest cane, with a dismal eye. What followed was painful—and though Baggy's internal injuries were fictitious, there was no doubt that he suffered external injuries—rather severely. But whatever might be the extent of his injuries, internal or external, there was obviously nothing the matter with his lungs. His voice could be heard far beyond the Housemaster's study, and it resembled the roar of the celebrated Bull of Bashan of olden time.

"Now, Trimble—" said Mr. Railton, as he laid down the cane, breathing rather hard after his exertions.

"Ow, wow, wow!"

"Let this be a warning to you, Trimble!"

"Ow, wow, yow, wow!"

"You may go!"

"Mummmmm!"

And Trimble went.

When he crawled into Study No. 2 in the Fourth he found Wildrake and Mellish swotting there, getting ready for the Head's exam. Trimble wondered dismally whether he would not have done more wisely to follow their example. Certainly, his own methods of preparing for the special exam had been a ghastly failure, so far.

CHAPTER 7.

Trying It On the Dog!

"G USSY!"

"Wats!"

"Dear old chap!"

"Pway wun away, Twimble!" said Arthur Augustus severely. "I wegard you with utfah contempt!"

It was the following day, and classes had been over some time when Baggy Trimble rolled along to Study No. 6 in the Fourth.

Blake & Co. were getting tea in that celebrated study.

It was only two more days now to the Head's special exam. And as the dreaded date drew near, it might have been expected that swotting would intensify in the St. Jim's Fourth.

But it didn't.

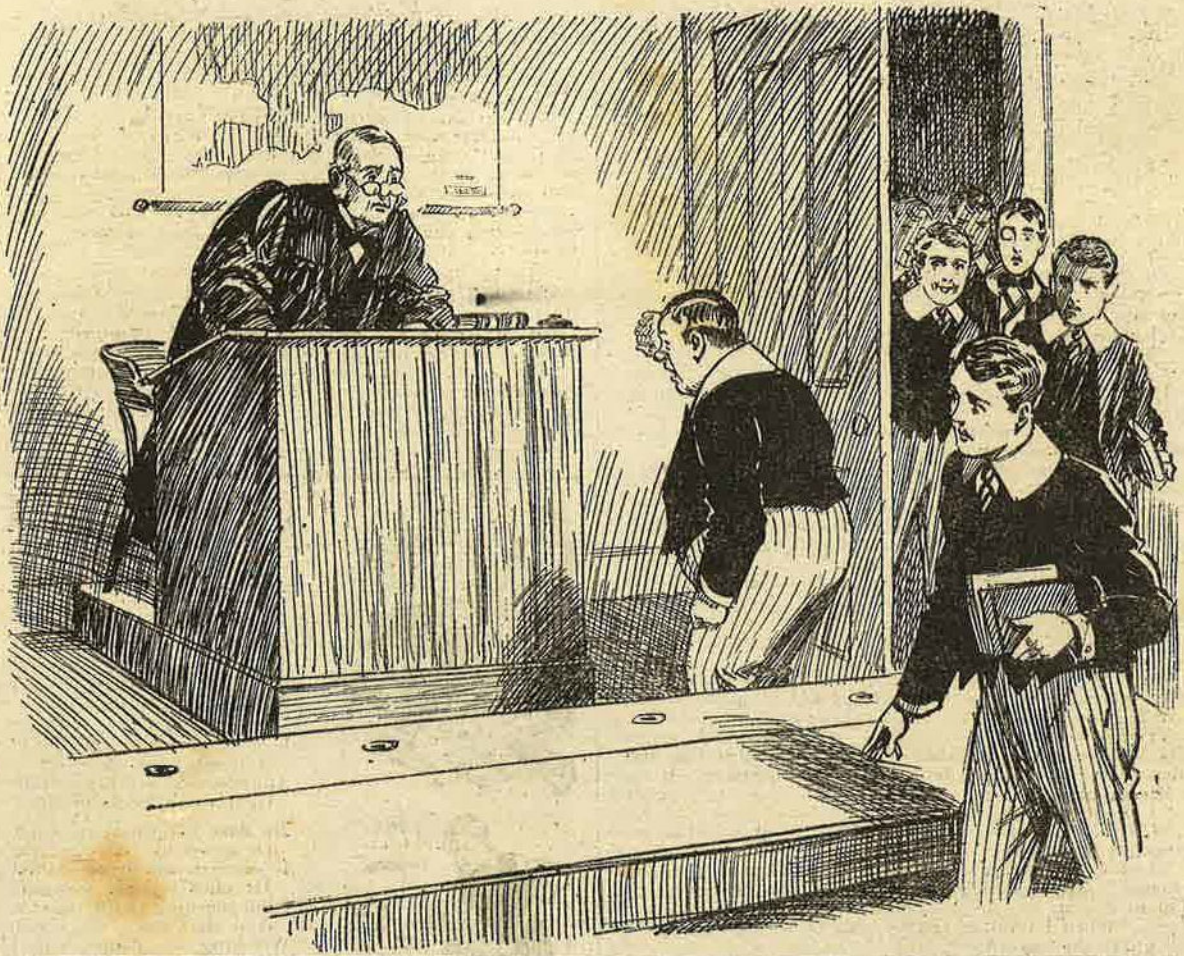
Quite the reverse, in fact. There was a slackening down all through the Form. Undoubtedly, the Fourth Form had had the wind up after the Head's visit to their Form-room. The whole Form had taken to swotting like ducks to water. But as Cardew had sagely observed, it was too fast to last.

By Thursday, many of the fellows felt that they had done enough to see them through. And many of them had come to the conclusion that it was better to risk a Head's flogging than to spend the leisure hours of a whole week mugging up the classics.

Some of the Fourth were still swotting away; but if Tom Merry had walked along the passage that day, looking for fellows to ask to tea, he would have found plenty available. Hardly a study would have turned him empty away, so to speak.

So Study No. 6 were not busy with swotting when Trimble rolled along. They were busy getting tea. But they were not pleased to see Trimble, all the same. Nobody ever was pleased to see Trimble if it came to that.

Arthur Augustus, whom Baggy addressed in affectionate tones, was shocked at him. The story of Dr. Short and Trimble's rapid recovery from his football injuries was known to all the House now, and all the House had chortled over it. The fellows knew now why Trimble had turned up for games practice on a day when it was not compulsory, and why he had barged recklessly into the



"Boo-hoo!" Mr. Lathom looked up with a start as that very uncommon sound echoed through the Form-room. "Bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "Trimble!" "Boo-hoo! Hoo!" sobbed Baggie Trimble, stopping before the Form-master's desk. "What does this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Lathom. "Is it possible that you are crying?" "I—I—can't help it, sir," wailed Baggie. "My p-poor brother—Boo-hoo! He was run over by a motor-car." (See Chapter 10.)

thickest of the fray. It was a dodge for getting clear of the Head's exam—merely that and nothing more.

All the fellows chuckled over it, only Arthur Augustus taking it seriously and feeling shocked at Baggie's duplicity. Monty Lowther had remarked that if a fellow had to be shocked at all Trimble's misdeeds, a fellow would spend his whole time in a series of shocks, as if he were sitting on an electric battery. Nevertheless, the swell of the Fourth was shocked at Trimble. And now that the fat and fatuous Baggie inserted his podgy features into the doorway of Study No. 6, Gussy told him so.

Contempt, according to the Eastern proverb, will pierce the shell of the tortoise. Perhaps Baggie was better protected than a tortoise. At all events, Gussy's lofty contempt had no effect upon him. Baggie could stand a lot of contempt without turning a hair.

"It's rather important, you fellows," said Trimble, blinking into the study. "I want you to lend me—"

"A boot?" asked Blake, looking round.

"No. I want—"

"Well, a boot is all that this study has to lend," said Blake. "You kick him, Herries—you've got the biggest feet!"

"Pleased!" said Herries.

"I want you to lend me a black-edged envelope!" bawled Trimble, just in time.

Herries, in sheer surprise, dropped his foot.

"A—a—a what?" he babbled.

"Bai Jove!"

Baggy Trimble drew his sleeve across his eyes.

Study No. 6 became serious at once. If Baggie had had bad news from home, they were prepared to sympathise. A request for a black-edged envelope hinted at very bad news indeed.

"Bai Jove!" The expression of lofty scorn left Arthur Augustus' noble features, which softened into sympathy at once. "Do you weally mean a black-edged envelope, Trimble?"

"Yes," said Baggie, wiping his eyes with his sleeve.

"Have you had bad news?" asked Dig.

"My—my father—"

"Poor old chap!" said D'Arcy.

"I say, I'm sorry," said Blake. "It's rather sudden, isn't it, Trimble? Didn't you know he was ill, old chap?"

"He was run-down, you know, when I was home last hols," said Baggie tearfully. "And then the rush of things, you know, may have worn him out a lot. We have crowds of people at Trimble Hall in the hols, you know!"

"Oh!"

"But, of course, I never expected it would come to this. It—it—it's awful, you know!" said Trimble.

"Yaas, wathah, poor old chap!"

"When did it happen?" asked Herries.

"Yesterday," moaned Trimble. "I've only just got the—the awful news! Knocked over by a motor-car, you know."

"Eh?"

"Frightful motoring fatality—fearfully sudden!" said Trimble.

Blake stared at him.

"But you said he was run down last hols," he said. "That hadn't anything to do with a motoring accident yesterday, I suppose?"

"I—I—I meant, he was run down by a car!"

"What?"

"Run down by a grey car," said Trimble, adding details, which, no doubt, seemed to him to carry conviction.

"Last hols?" exclaimed Dig.

"No; yesterday."

"But you said last hols."

"D-d-did I? I—I mean, I—I'm so knocked over, I hardly know what I'm saying!" mumbled Trimble. "You see, I've only just got his letter by this afternoon's post, telling me about it."

"His letter?" said Blake dazedly. "Your father's letter?"

"Yes. Boo-hoo!"
 "You've got a letter from your father telling you that he has been killed in a motoring accident?" stammered Blake.

"Yes. I—I mean—" "Well, what do you mean?" roared Blake. "What sort of silly spoof are you handing out now?"

"Weally, Blake—" "Fathead!" said Blake. "It's spoof! Blessed if I know why he's spinning such a yarn; but it's only a yarn!" "Twimble, deah boy, pway pull yourself togethah!" said Arthur Augustus gently. "Of course, you did not get a lettah frowm your fathah?"

"I—I mean, no. He telephoned." "Telephoned? Your fathah did?" "N-no! My—my uncle!" gasped Trimble. "You see, my uncle was called in at once. My Uncle George. He broke the terrible news by telephone!" "Poor old chap!"

"I've got to writo back, of course," said Trimble. "That's why I want a black-edged envelope. If you can lend me one—"

"I am afwaid we haven't any in the studay, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus gently. "I am vewy sowwy!"

Blake eyed the fat junior suspiciously. Perhaps Blake was not quite so sympathetic as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Certainly he was not so unsuspecting.

"And why do you want to write in answer to a telephone call?" he said. "Couldn't you answer your uncle on the phone?"

"You—you see, my Uncle Thomas is rather deaf." "Your Uncle Thomas?" gasped Blake.

"Yes." "Your Uncle Thomas is deaf?"

"Yes, awfully." "And what would it matter if your Uncle Thomas was deaf, when it was your Uncle George who telephoned?"

Trimble started. Trimble no doubt knew that a certain class of persons should have good memories. Trimble belonged to that class of persons, undoubtedly, but he had a bad memory. It was a handicap.

"I—I—I mean—" "Go it!" said Blake sarcastically. "Tell us what you mean, by all means!"

"I—I mean, it was my Uncle George Thomas who telephoned!" stammered Trimble. "That's what I mean! I—I'm so cut up I—I hardly know what I—I'm saying, you know. When I think of—of my poor father, struggling for his life in the waves—"

"What waves?" shrieked Blake. "The raging waves—"

"When he was run down by a motor-car?" "Oh, I—I mean—"

Trimble fairly stuttered.

Even Arthur Augustus was looking suspicious now. Blake and Herries and Dig were more than suspicious—they were certain.

"So this is the latest, is it?" snorted Blake. "Malingering was no good, so you've thought of a death in the family. Funeral on Saturday—what?"

"Yes, exactly!"

"I thought so! You burbling idiot! And what are you going to say, if you get leave for your father's funeral on Saturday, next time the Head gets a letter from your father?"

"Oh!" gasped Trimble.

Obviously, the fatuous Baggy had not thought of that. Really, it was an obvious consideration. But Baggy's fat intellect had its own ways of working. Certainly Trimble would be given a day's leave from the school if he stated that his father's funeral was to take place on Saturday. There was no doubt about that. But the next time the Head heard from Mr. Trimble, it was certain that trouble would transpire. When he received a letter or a visit from Mr. Trimble, the Head was not likely to believe that that gentleman was dead and buried. It would really be putting the headmaster's credulity to too severe a strain.

Baggy stood gasping like a fish out of water. He realised what a narrow escape he had had, and he was glad that he had tested his new story on Study No. 6 before letting Dr. Holmes hear it. He had been, as it were, trying it on the dog, and he had reason to be thankful that he had been so cautious.

"Well," grinned Blake, "my advice to you, Trimble, is to chuck it! Even lying requires a little brains, and you haven't any brains at all, you know!"

"Bai Jove! If you are weally spoofin', you fat boundah—"

"I—I—I— The fact is—"

"Let's hear the fact!" chuckled Blake. "A fact from Trimble will be something new!"

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"It—it was really my—my uncle—" "What was your uncle?" "Who was—was drowned?" "Drowned by a motoring accident?" "I—I mean, knocked over by a motor-car!" gasped Trimble. "My uncle—my Uncle Montague—" "Not George or Thomas?"

"Nunno! My Uncle Montague. He was out in his boat, you know, when it suddenly sprung a leak, and—and—I—I mean, he was walking along a country road when a motor-car suddenly ran into him from behind, and—and before help could reach him he had sunk—I mean, he—he—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

Evidently Trimble had been undecided, in the first place, between a boating accident and a motoring accident. In his confusion he was getting the two stories mixed; and, really, they were like oil and water, and did not mix well.

"Bai Jove! You fwightful fibbah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "You are goin' to spin this idiotic yarn to get off the exam on Satabday! I weward you with feahful contempt, Twimble!"

"If you're going to spring that story on the Head, old

CAMEOS OF S

FAGO

HOW doth the little busy fag Improve each shining minute? Is he as nimble as a stag, Or lively as a linnet?

Is work a burden or a joy? A dream or a disaster? And does he relish his employ, Or hate his lordly master?

He dare not shirk his daily work, Or spend his time in sleeping; In corners, where the cobwebs lurk, He must be ever sweeping.

Each morning he prepares a fire, And sits among the cinders, Watching the flames leap higher and higher, Like little Polly Flinders!

Coal is as scarce as lumps of gold, And yet he must procure it; Fag-masters cannot stand the cold, They never could endure it!

And if they find their study grates Are destitute and coalless, Dire punishment their fag awaits (For the fag-lords are soulless!).

NEXT

TOBACCO

Don't M Boy



fat man, spring one at a time!" chuckled Blake. "Don't tell the Head that your pater sank out of his depth in the raging waves on a country road, or that a motor-car ran him down at sea!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "It isn't a laughing matter!" hooted Trimble.

"It won't be for you when you've told the Head that yarn!" grinned Blake. "Put some exercise-books in your bags before you begin!"

"I—I think this is simply heartless when my poor old pater—I mean, my Uncle Thomas—that is, my Uncle Montague—is lying—"

"If your uncle's anything like his nephew, he's lying!" agreed Blake. "I've no doubt of that part!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Bai Jove! I wewuse to listen to your feahful fibbin', Twimble!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I am goin' to kick you!"

Baggy Trimble backed hastily out of the study. He turned to flee along the passage, and the indignant Gussy roached him as he turned. An elegant boot shot out—and elegant as it was, it seemed rather weighty to Trimble, and there was plenty of force behind it.

"Yaroooh!" Trimble went along the passage like a stone from a catapult.

"Come back and have another, you wascal!" roared Arthur Augustus.

Trimble vanished. Evidently the Ananias of St. Jim's considered that one was enough.

CHAPTER 8.

Alas! My Poor Brother!

"TOM, old fellow!" Tom Merry was about to say "Seat!" when he suddenly stopped. Tom did not like "Tom, old fellow!" from Baggy Trimble. He would have mentioned that fact to Trimble in the plainest of plain

SCHOOL LIFE!

ING!

Further, the little busy fag
Must do his master's shopping;
He must not be a lazy lag,
But brisk and blithe go hopping!
Then he must lay his master's tea,
Make toast, and fry the "sosses";
And if they're burnt to glory—gee,
There's ructions from his bosses!

Woe to the foolish fag who fails
To do his menial duties!
He learns, with many bitter wails,
How hard his master's boot is!
He dare not shirk, he dare not slack,
'Tis seldom he reposes;
The life of any fag, alas,
Is not a bed of roses.

Toiling, rejoicing, sorrowing,
Onward through life he doubles;
Grab for his master borrowing,
Also collecting troubles!
That's how the little busy fag
Improves each shining minute;
His duty is a dreary drag,
But he must needs begin it!

WEEK:

GANING!

Miss It,
ys



English, but, as he looked at the fat junior, he beheld, to his amazement, tears in Baggy's eyes.

So Tom Merry, instead of saying "Seat!" and following it up with other remarks, just stared at Trimble.

He did not look specially sympathetic. Trimble was "blubbing," and blubbing was shocking bad form. Even fags in the Third Form were expected not to blub. A fellow who had "six" from a prefect might yell and howl and groan if he liked, but public opinion in the Lower School required him not to blub.

Trimble, indeed, was prepared to blub, or to do anything else, if it served his turn. If Baggy was blubbing over a caning, Tom Merry had no sympathy to waste on him. Rather he would have felt disposed to give him something extra to blub for. But it was unusual for even Trimble to blub, so Tom wondered whether anything of a serious nature had happened, and patiently gave Baggy a hearing.

Baggy wiped his eyes with the back of his hand.

"Tom, old chap, I—I—I know it's rotten to blub, but—but my poor brother, you know—"

"What about your brother?"

"My poor, poor brother!" said Trimble. "You haven't a brother, have you, Tom Merry?"

"No," said Tom.

"Then you don't know what a fellow feels like when his brother's run over by a traction-engine."

Tom Merry started.

"My dear chap, I'm awfully sorry to hear it!" he exclaimed. "I say, that's awfully rotten!"

"Tom was quite sympathetic now. If a fellow's brother had been run over by a traction-engine, it was up to the fellow to feel pretty bad about it, and tears were quite excusable—indeed, expected of a fellow of proper feeling."

"He—he was such a jolly good chap, you know!" mumbled Trimble.

"Was!" repeated Tom. "Was it a fatal accident, then?"

"Instantaneous!" groaned Trimble.

"Hard lines, old fellow!" said Tom.

It was the first time Tom had ever called Baggy "old fellow," but he really meant it. Tom's tender heart was easily moved by a tale of distress, and certainly this was a very distressful tale indeed.

Baggy took out a grubby handkerchief and dabbed his eyes.

Trimble had caught Tom Merry in the Shell passage when he was coming away from Study No. 10 after prep.

There were two or three other Shell fellows in the passage, and two or three lounging in their doorways. And all eyes were turned upon the pathetic figure of Baggy Trimble.

Some fellows, bereaved as Baggy stated that he was bereaved, would have preferred to yield to their grief in private. Baggy, evidently, was prepared to let all the world see how grieved he was. Reticence had never been one of Baggy's weaknesses.

He rubbed his eyes with the grubby handkerchief, and sobbed a little. Manners and Lowther, following Tom from Study No. 10, stopped to stare at him.

"Hallo! What's this game?" asked Lowther. "If you're blubbing over a licking, Trimble, can't you blub in your own passage?"

"Boo-hoo!"

"Cheese it, old chap!" said Tom hastily. "Trimble had bad news from home."

"Oh!" said Monty. "Sorry!"

"What's the trouble, then?" asked Manners.

"My poor brother!" sobbed Trimble.

"His brother's been run over," said Tom.

"Never knew he had another brother," said Manners, eyeing Trimble.

"Well, it seems that he has," said Tom. "It's rotten news for a fellow to get all of a sudden. I'm really sorry, Trimble!"

"Thank you, old chap!" said Trimble faintly. "It—it's awful, you know. But it's something to get a little sympathy in one's terrible grief."

"Hem!"

"It—it's heartbreaking, you know," said Trimble tearfully, blinking at the Shell fellows with reddened eyes.

"My brother Herbert was such a splendid chap. And now— Boo-hoo!"

"Anything I can do?" asked Tom uncomfortably. He was really sorry for Trimble, but demonstrative grief made him feel uncomfortable. In his own case he would have chosen to indulge his sorrow behind doors.

"Yes, old fellow," said Baggy. "You—you see, the funeral's on Saturday. Boo-hoo!"

"On Saturday?" asked Lowther, with a quick look at Trimble. "When did it happen?"

"Yesterday," sobbed Baggy. "It was frightfully sudden. Arthur was walking along a lane, you know, when the bull—"

"The—the what?"

"The bull suddenly rushed through a hedge, and—and—I—I mean," broke off Trimble, as he noted Tom's astonished face.

"I mean, he had just turned a corner, when the traction-engine ran right over him."

Tom stared at Trimble blankly.

"He gave just one cry, and then it was all over," said Trimble. "Poor—poor old Arthur!"

"Arthur?" said Tom dazedly. "But you said it was your brother Herbert!"

"D-d-did I?" stammered Trimble.

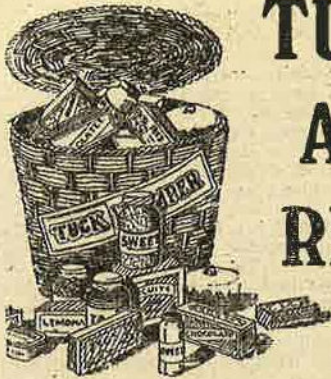
Again it was borne in upon Baggy's fat mind that liars should have good memories.

"You jolly well did!" exclaimed Tom, his sympathy diminishing very considerably now.

"I—I meant—I meant Arthur," stammered Trimble. "Not Herbert. I mean my other brother, Arthur—see?"

"Oh!" said Tom.

SEVEN DELICIOUS TUCK HAMPERS AWARDED TO READERS THIS WEEK!



Each Hamper contains:
An Iced Cake, Chocolates,
Biscuits, Jam, Sardines, Honey,
Sweets, Figs, Lemonade, Etc.

If at first you don't succeed,
Try, try, try, again!

Do you know a good story, chum? Of course you do! Would you like a ripping Tuck Hamper? What-ho! Then send your joke along, as these other chaps have done. All efforts should be addressed: Special "Tuck Hamper Competition" No. 11, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

A "LIGHT" CASE!

A policeman, when going his rounds early in the morning, found a civilian sprawling over the pavement. "Hallo, what are you doing here?" he demanded. "I've lost a ten-shilling note," was the answer. The obliging constable searched all the shady corners with his lamp. "Where did you drop it?" he asked at length. "Up round the corner," came the reply. "And what's the idea of looking here for it?" demanded the constable. "Why, man, there's a far better light here!" replied the civilian.—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to John Burns, 77, East Waterloo Street, Glasgow.

LIKE A HURRICANE!

An elephant fell sick at the Zoo. The vet ordered the attendant to get a tube, place a certain powder in it, open the elephant's mouth, and blow the powder down its throat. The next day the vet called. The elephant was just the same, but the attendant was in bed. "What has happened?" cried the vet. "Didn't you get the powder down?" "No, sir," moaned the attendant; "the elephant blew first!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Desmond Gillespie, 17, Wandsworth Road, Strandtown, Belfast.

Owing to the interest taken by readers all over the world in this Weekly Joke Competition a Delicious Tuck Hamper will be awarded for EVERY joke published on this page. Cut out the coupon below while you are of the mind to win one of these NOVEL PRIZES. Editor.

THEN HE VANISHED!

Gwendoline, the eighteen-year-old daughter of the family, had received a splendid present from her young man—an engagement-ring set with diamonds and rubies. That evening at tea, when the happy pair were present, the conversation, naturally enough, turned to jewellery, and someone remarked that it was funny to think that we got pearls from oysters. Whereupon Gwendoline's horrid little brother edged towards the door and remarked: "Oh, that's not half so funny as getting rings from mugs, is it, Gwen?"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Ernest Brain, 47, Dove Street, Kingsdown, Bristol.

TELL-TALE LOCKS!

The other day two dandy-looking fellows were scanning the pictures in a shop window in Piccadilly. Prominently displayed was a print of a well-known musician with the usual flow of long hair. "I say," drawled one of the knuts, "doesn't long hair make a chap look intelligent?" "Not always," replied the other. "My wife found some long hair on my coat the other night, and it made me look an absolute fool!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Robert Gibbs, 9, St. George's Buildings, College Green, Bristol.

THERE AND BACK!

The other day a man dashed into a railway station with just one minute to catch the eight-twenty train. He arrived at the booking-office breathless. "Quick!" he gasped to the clerk. "Give me a return ticket!" "Where to?" asked the railway servant kindly. "Back here, of course, you fool!" cried the flustered one. "Where d'ye think?"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Miss Rita Finn, 9, Gresham Gardens, Golders Green, N.W. 11.

MUCH TOO DIFFICULT!

Uncle: "And how are you getting along with your new bike, Mary?" Mary: "Not very well, uncle." Uncle: "What! Can't you get going on it?" Mary: "Keep on it while it's going! Why, I can't keep on it while it's standing still yet!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to Clifford Atherton, Topcliffe Hall, Tingley, near Leeds.

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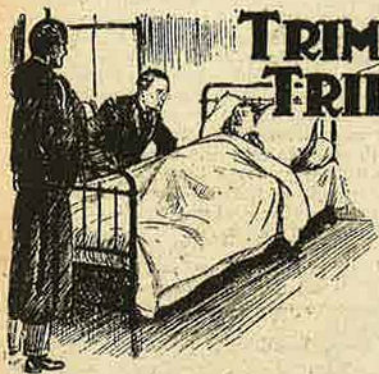
WELL PREPARED!

The plumber had arrived. "Good-morning, ma'am!" he said. "Good-morning! Are you the plumber from Farley's?" "Or am that, ma'am," he answered politely. "Now," the housekeeper said, "I want you to be very careful when you are working, because the floors are highly polished." "Sure now," he answered, with a deprecatory smile, "there's no need to worry about me. I won't slip, ma'am. I've got hobnails in my boots!"—A Tuck Hamper, filled with delicious Tuck, has been awarded to J. Toller, 154, Abington Avenue, Northampton.

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TRIMBLE TRIES IT ON!

(Continued
from
page 15.)

"I—I want you to advise me, Tom, old man," said Trimble. "I shall have to get leave from school to go home to the funeral."

"You're going to the funeral?"

"I—I feel that I must, you know," said Trimble. "I was very fond of poor old Herbert—I mean, Arthur. Of course, he would miss me if I didn't come—"

"Miss you?" gasped Tom.

"I—I mean, of course he wouldn't miss me, in—in the circumstances; but he would expect it, if—if he could expect anything, you know," stammered Baggy. "I must go! I must, really! Do you think the Head will give me leave?"

"Of course," said Tom.

"You really think so?" asked Baggy.

"I'm sure of it," answered Tom Merry. "Of course he will give you leave to go to your brother's funeral if your people want you. You've only got to ask."

"Good!"

Baggy made that remark quite brightly; and then, remembering that he was deep in grief, he sobbed and wiped his eyes again with the grubby handkerchief.

"It's a fearful blow to me, you know!" he said. "We were brought up together, and—and loved one another, you know. We played together side by side in—in childhood's happy days, you know."

"Oh!" said Tom.

"Last hols we were together all the time," said Baggy, "and I little thought when I came back to school that I should never see poor old Albert again! Boo-hoo!"

"Albert?" yelled Tom Merry.

Trimble jumped.

"I mean, Herbert—that is, Arthur. I—I'm a little confused, you know, in this—this fearful grief."

"So you've got a brother Albert, too?" said Monty Lowther, eyeing the fat junior very suspiciously. "That's four in all, isn't it?"

"We're a rather large family, you know," said Trimble. "It was poor Herbert—I mean, Arthur—who was gored to death by the traction-engine—I mean, the bull—that is, I mean to say, who was run over by the traction-engine."

Undoubtedly Trimble was a little confused, whether with grief or not.

Tom Merry eyed him.

It was borne in upon him that Trimble was spoofing once more. His tale really did not hang together very well. But there were actual tears in Trimble's eyes—there was no doubt about that. It seemed impossible for a fellow to pump up real tears in support of a yarn.

Manners sniffed.

It was an emphatic sniff.

"You're going to tell the Head about this tragedy?" asked Manners. "You're going to ask leave on Saturday for the funeral? Good! A few tears will go down on such an occasion. But don't let the Head scent the onion."

"Wha-a-at?"

Trimble jammed his grubby handkerchief hastily into his pocket. Tom Merry gave a jump. Now that Manners mentioned it, he noticed a decided smell of onions.

"Why, you fat villain!" exclaimed Tom. "You've been rubbing your eyes with a slice of onion!"

"I—I—I—" gasped Trimble.

"That's where the giddy tears come from!" chuckled Lowther. "It's not grief for Herbert-Arthur-Albert, who was gored by a traction-engine, or run over by a bull. It's onions."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you know—" gasped Trimble.

"You spoofing rotter!" exclaimed Tom, in disgust. "Then it's all a swindle—a yarn to get off on Saturday? And you're pulling my leg, just to see how the yarn will go down?"

Trimble grinned for a moment.

Evidently he was pursuing his system of "trying it on the dog." It was quite a good system, really. The tip he had received from Blake had been very useful, and he had decided to make the unhappy victim of the accident a brother instead of his father. Now he had received another tip—to be extremely careful about the onion when he prepared to shed tears in the Head's presence.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came sauntering along the passage, and he turned his eyeglass on Trimble in surprise. "What's the mattah, deah boys? What's that fat boundah blubbin' about?"

"His brother Herbert-Arthur-Albert has been gored by a traction-engine," said Monty Lowther sadly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or else run over by a bull. Trimble doesn't seem to have made up his mind which," said Monty.

"Bai Jove! So it's his bwothah now, is it?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "It was his patah when he spwung the yarn on us in Studay No. 6."

"What?" exclaimed the Terrible Three, together.

"Bai Jove! I weally think there is no limit to Trimble's wotten twickewy! I have kicked him once, and I weally considah that I had bettah kick him again. Turn wound, Twimble!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say—" gasped Trimble.

"Bump him!" said Manners.

"Here, leggo!" roared Trimble, as the juniors grasped him. "Leggo! Chuck it! I—I say—yaroooooh!"

Bump!

"Whooooop!"

"Give him anohtah!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

Bump!

"Yow-ow-ow! You awful rotters, when I'm suffering from frightful grief!" gasped Trimble. "I've told you my pater—I mean, my brother—has been run over by a bull—I mean a motor-car, and drowned—I mean smashed, and—yooooooop!"

Bump!

"Now kick him all together!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Baggy Trimble fled for his life.

CHAPTER 9.

To Be or Not to Be?

BAGGY TRIMBLE was the object of a rather unusual interest in the Fourth Form-room the following morning.

It was Friday; eve of the special exam.

Every other fellow in the Fourth Form had been making special preparation for that special exam. Certainly, the outbreak of "swotting" had not lasted—it had been too fast to last. But every fellow had put in extra work—even slackers like Mellish and Mulvaney had bucked up, and felt equal to facing the ordeal. It had been a very industrious week, in the St. Jim's Fourth. With the solitary exception of Baggy Trimble, the Fourth Form felt fairly safe from the Head's wrath.

But Baggy had chosen his own methods—his own very peculiar methods—of getting ready for that exam. Swotting did not appeal to him—nothing in the nature of work ever appealed to Baggy. Why work, if trickery would serve a fellow's turn? That was how the estimable Baggy looked at it.

But undoubtedly, so far as the other fellows could see, swotting was a surer method than trickery. Had Baggy put in as much time and trouble at Latin as in evolving schemes for dodging the exam, he might have faced Saturday with equanimity. Instead of which, he was hopelessly unprepared for the examination; and his trickery, so far, had resulted in precisely nil.

It was too late now to think of swotting—if Baggy had been disposed to think of it.

In a single day he could not possibly have mugged up enough to see him through.

And so—willy-nilly—Baggy Trimble had to depend on his powers of trickery, for what they were worth. The general opinion in the Fourth was that they were worth nothing. But they were all the hapless Baggy had left.

Baggy's fat brow was lined with thought, in the Form-room that morning. He had a problem to solve, and it was not an easy one.

Blake & Co. regarded him with amusement. They wondered whether Baggy was going to rise in the Form-room, and tell Mr. Lathom of his terrible news from home. No doubt, by that time, Baggy had his story in a rather more coherent shape. He had had time to select his materials, as it were, and decide between a boating accident, a motoring accident, and a mad bull; and to settle definitely whether

the victim was his pater, or his brother, and whether his brother's name was Herbert or Arthur or Albert. But the story, at the very best, was a risky business, and certainly few fellows in the Form would have had the nerve to "spring" it on the Form master. And Trimble was not a nervous fellow—he was the reverse; he was, in fact, a good deal of a funk. But the proverb says that fools will rush in where angels fear to tread; and there was no doubt that Baggy was a fool! On that point there was no doubt, no possible, probable shadow of doubt, no probable doubt whatever!

And Trimble had left himself no other resource. By allowing the week to glide by in idleness, he had, in effect, burned his boats behind him. If trickery could not save him, nothing could save him. If he was booked for the special exam, utterly unprepared for it as he was, he was indubitably booked also for a Head's flogging. So Baggy really had little to lose by exercising his powers of deception. Failure could not leave him much worse off than he was. True, there was a moral aspect to the matter. But Trimble was not the fellow to worry about that.

When, in second lesson, Trimble rose to his feet, to speak to Mr. Lathom, Blake closed one eye at his comrades.

"He's going it!" he murmured.

"Bai Jove!"

All eyes turned on Trimble. All the fellows had heard of his latest dodge and chuckled over it; and all wondered if Mr. Lathom was to hear it now.

The Form master glanced at Baggy.

"If you please, sir—"

"You may sit down, Trimble."

"But, sir—" gasped Baggy.

"Well, well, what is it?" asked Mr. Lathom impatiently.

"I—I—I—"

"What?"

"My—my—my—" stammered Trimble.

"Now it's coming!" whispered Levison.

"What do you mean, Trimble?" exclaimed Mr. Lathom, blinking at Baggy, over his glasses, in astonishment.

"My—my—" stammered Trimble.

"Your what?"

"My father, sir—I mean my brother—"

Baggy stuck tight there. It simply would not come out. He had tried it on Study No. 6, and he had tried it on Tom Merry & Co. But trying it on the Form master was a more difficult task, and the fat Baggy's nerve fairly failed him.

He stood blinking at Mr. Lathom, gasping but speechless.

The Form master stared at him.

"I fail to understand you, Trimble," he snapped. "You are wasting time. No doubt it is your object to waste time."

"I—I—I—" burred Trimble.

"Sit down!"

Baggy plumped into his seat.

"You will take a hundred lines, Trimble."

"Oh dear!"

"If you speak again I shall cane you!"

Baggy Trimble did not speak again. He sat overwhelmed with dismay. The whole Form were grinning, and Mr. Lathom looked at them very severely. Baggy sat in dismal silence till the end of the lesson, when he rolled out of the Form-room with the Fourth.

"N.G., what?" chuckled Blake, in the corridor.

Trimble blinked at him dismally.

"I am vewy glad that you did not tell Mr. Lathom a stwing of feahful whoppahs, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus. "I trust that you will think bettah of it."

"You silly owl!" grunted Baggy.

"Weally, Twimble—"

"I've got to get off to-morrow, somehow," groaned Baggy.

"It means a Head's flogging for me if I sit in the exam."

"Vewy likely, deah boy; but you should welfect that you deserve it, you know."

"Eh?"

"That welfection should console you, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus.

"You—silly idiot!" gasped Trimble.

And he rolled away, evidently deriving no consolation whatever from the source suggested by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Baggy rolled out dismally into the quadrangle, feeling very much down on his luck. He was looking very worried when Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther came on him. The Terrible Three smiled.

"Feeling down?" inquired Monty Lowther. "More horrid fatalities in the family?"

Grunt!

"Pater run over by a mad bull, or uncle drowned in a motoring accident?" asked Monty sympathetically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!" snorted Baggy, and he rolled on disdainfully, leaving the chums of the Shell chuckling.

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His fat face was dolorous when he came in to dinner—in contrast to the faces round him, which were mostly grinning. Trimble was getting quite desperate; but his desperate plight evoked no sympathy whatever in the Fourth. The other fellows did not see why Trimble couldn't have swotted Latin, in readiness for the exam, the same as they had done. If a fellow chose to slack, a fellow naturally had to take the consequences. It was all very true; but it was of no use to Trimble. He didn't want to take the consequences.

At dinner, Trimble suddenly gave a deep groan. The fellows looked round, and Mr. Lathom, at the head of the Fourth Form table, quite jumped.

"What—what is that? Did you make that ridiculous noise, Trimble?"

"I—I—" gasped Trimble. "You see, sir, I—I—" Trimble had made up his mind to the plunge at last.

But he had no chance to take the plunge. Mr. Lathom interrupted him severely.

"Have you no manners, Trimble?"

"If you please, sir, I—I—"

"If you cannot behave yourself at table, Trimble, you must leave the table!" exclaimed the Form master. "Go at once!"

"I—I—" stuttered the hapless Baggy.

"Leave the table immediately!"

"Oh dear! I haven't finished my dinner, sir!" gasped Baggy.

"You should have thought of that earlier, Trimble. You must not play foolish tricks at the dinner-table. I command you to leave the table at once! Not a word! Go!"

Trimble did not utter a word. His feelings were too deep for words, as he rose from his chair and limped away. His tale was still untold, and his dinner was unfinished—a still more serious matter. Mr. Lathom's frowning glance followed him as far as the door. Every other face at the table wore a cheery smile. The misadventures of Baggy seemed to provide quite a welcome entertainment to the rest of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 10.

Getting Away With It!

SATURDAY morning dawned upon St. Jim's. Baggy Trimble turned out at the clang of the rising-bell that morning, with a dismal face.

Most of the Fourth were in a serious mood. The special exam was to take place that afternoon. Nobody knew what was to be on the paper yet; but all felt certain that the Head would not make it an easy paper. Even fellows who were fairly confident of passing muster, took the matter seriously. Those who were not so confident, took it more seriously. But no fellow took it quite so seriously as Baggy Trimble.

Baggy was fairly up against it now. Whether the other fellows scraped through the ordeal or not, really did not matter—to Baggy. What was absolutely certain was, that Baggy never would scrape through, if he sat in the exam at all. All through the week he had slacked, as usual—indeed, he had slacked rather more than usual, as he had been giving so much time and attention to his deep dodges for eluding the special exam.

After the exam, at least one flogging was quite certain to be handed out, and the happy recipient thereof would be Baggy Trimble. Baggy realised that he had left himself no retreat. He had to elude the exam—he had to escape that awful Latin paper, which he knew would tie him in a knot. And if he was going to take the plunge, he had to take it now. He had left himself very little time.

When the Fourth went into their Form-room that morning, Baggy took his courage in both hands, as it were. It was neck or nothing now, and Baggy was resolved to go it.

Mr. Lathom was at his desk, looking over some papers, as the juniors filed to their places. Mr. Lathom looked up, with a surprised start, at a sound very uncommon in the Fourth Form-room.

"Boo-hoo!"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Lathom.

"Boo-hoo! Hoo!"

"Trimble!"

"Oh dear! Boo-hoo!"

Baggy Trimble had stopped before the Form-master's desk, and he was rubbing his eyes with his sleeve, looking the picture of woe. It was not really difficult for Baggy to look woe. The thought of the approaching exam, only a few hours distant now, made him feel exceedingly full of woe.

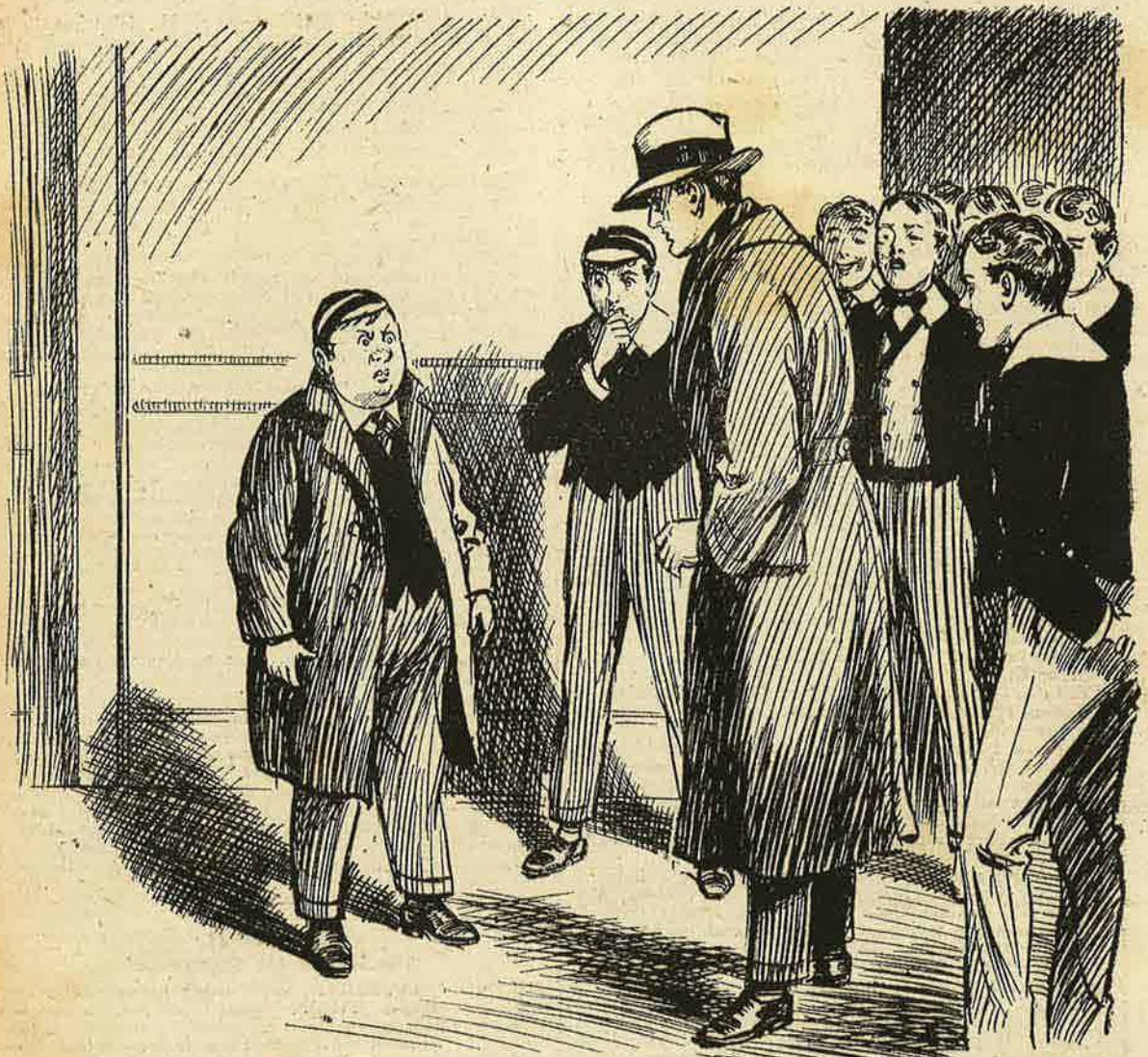
"Trimble, what does this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Lathom.

"Is it possible that you, a Fourth Form boy, are crying? I am surprised at you, Trimble."

"I—I kik-kik-can't help it, sir," sobbed Baggy.

"Nonsense!"

"My—my—my—"



"Trimble, you had better confess while there is yet time," thundered Mr. Railton. "Ow!" gasped Trimble. "The— the fact is, sir, I—I was mistaken. My brother recovered, sir!" "What?" "It was a sudden recovery, sir, at—at the last moment!" stuttered the wretched Baggy. "So—so there won't be any funeral this afternoon, after all, sir!" "Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy, and Tom Merry & Co. chuckled. (See Chapter 11.)

"Cease this absurd exhibition at once, Trimble!" said Mr. Lathom sternly. "Go to your place!"

"Boo-hoo!" roared Baggy. He had made up his fat mind, and he was fairly going it now.

"Trimble!" thundered Mr. Lathom.

"I—I can't help it, sir," sobbed Baggy. "My poor brother, sir—"

"What?"

"My poor brother Herbert, sir," moaned Baggy. "It—it's awful, sir! I'm sorry, sir, but I can't help it. I—I want to go to the funeral, sir."

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Lathom.

He gazed at the fat junior, his face changing very much in expression. All the Fourth gazed at Baggy, too. It was out now. Baggy had taken the plunge. And the Fourth waited in breathless expectation to see what would come of it.

"Trimble," said Mr. Lathom quite gently, "calm yourself, my boy."

"Boo-hoo!"

"You mentioned a funeral," said Mr. Lathom. "Am I to understand that you have lost a relation, Trimble?"

"My brother Herbert, sir," said Baggy. "It's awful, sir! I—I was so fond of him, sir. Run over by a—a motor-car, sir. It was instantaneous, sir. Boo-hoo!"

"I am sorry, deeply sorry, Trimble," said Mr. Lathom. "I feel the deepest sympathy for you, my poor boy."

"Thank you, sir," murmured Baggy. "It's a fearful blow, sir. I—I feel it very deeply, sir. My—my people want me to go to the funeral, sir. I—I suppose I can have leave?"

"Most decidedly," said Mr. Lathom at once. "When does the ceremony take place, Trimble?"

"This afternoon, sir."

"At what time, Trimble?"

"Three o'clock, sir," said Trimble.

The Fourth-Formers looked at one another. Three o'clock was the time fixed for the Form to enter the examination-room. Baggy was making quite sure of missing the exam.

"Very well, Trimble," said Mr. Lathom kindly, "you may leave the school after dinner to-day. That will give you ample time to reach Lexham in time for the ceremony."

"Thank you, sir," mumbled Baggy.

He wiped his eyes and went to his place. He sat down, and took out his handkerchief, and gave his eyes another rub to make them as red as possible. Then—under cover of the handkerchief—he winked at Blake, who was staring blankly at him. Very fortunately for Baggy, Mr. Lathom did not see the wink.

"Well, my only hat!" murmured Blake.

"Bai Jove! It's weally too thick!"

"He's got away with it!" said Cardew, in wonder. "That fat idiot—that blithering dummy—that frabjous, fooling fathead—he's 'got away with it.' Great gad!"

There was no doubt on that point—Baggy had "got away with it," as Cardew expressed it.

Not a single suspicion had crossed Mr. Lathom's kind mind.

Certainly no fellow in the Form had ever thought of spinning such a yarn to his Form master before. No

fellow, if he had thought of it, would have had the nerve; the punishment, in case of discovery, would have been a little too severe. But Baggy had rushed in where the rest of the Form would have feared to tread. He had spun his yarn, and he had got away with it!

Baggy—alone in the Fourth—had leave from school that afternoon—Baggy, of all the Form, would not attend the Head's special exam! No wonder he grinned behind the handkerchief which Mr. Lathom supposed was hiding his grief!

Morning lessons went on; but Baggy did not share in them. Mr. Lathom very kindly left the fat Baggy to himself; a fellow in such a state of grief was in no state for giving attention to lessons. So Trimble simply sat out classes that morning and enjoyed a rest.

After class, Baggy Trimble rolled out into the quad, with a sad and sorrowful face so long as it was possible that Mr. Lathom's eye might fall upon him. After that he grinned, and gave a fat chuckle in sheer exuberance of spirits.

"Enjoying life—what?"

Baggy spun round hastily at the sound of Tom Merry's voice. He hurriedly composed his fat face into seriousness.

"Eh? No! I'm frightfully upset," he said.

"More family losses?" asked Monty Lowther.

"My poor brother Herbert—" said Baggy sadly.

"Brother Herbert still defunct?" inquired Manners sympathetically. "What about Brother Arthur and Brother Albert? I suppose they've come to life again?"

"You can joke about it," said Baggy. "But it's very unfeeling when a chap's going to a funeral."

The Terrible Three regarded him with interest. They did not know yet what had happened in the Fourth Form room that morning. They were not yet aware that Baggy had got away with it.

"Whose funeral?" asked Tom Merry.

"Herbert's."

"You don't mean to say that you've got leave?" exclaimed the captain of the Shell, in astonishment.

Trimble sniffed.

"Of course I have! Think my Form master would refuse leave to a fellow to attend the funeral of a relation—a near relation? I'm catching the train for Lexham after dinner. That will be in time for the—the funeral; it's only a run of twenty miles."

"My only hat!" said Manners. "You've really brought it off!"

"You've got a prize packet of a Form master, Trimble!" said Monty Lowther regretfully. "I don't think Mr. Linton would swallow these things. You fellows think it would be any use trying an uncle's funeral on him next time the circus comes to Abbotsford?"

"No fear!" said Manners. "Linton's too downy."

"I—I say, I—I'm suffering an awful lot, you know!" said Baggy. "Deep grief, and all that, you know. And I'm in a little difficulty, too—the railway fare to Lexham, you know. If you fellows could lend me half-a-quid—to go to my brother's funeral, you know—" Baggy looked hopeful.

"My dear man, I'd lend you a whole quid to go to your own funeral," said Monty; "but that's the best I can offer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat bounder!" said Tom Merry. "You're not going to Lexham at all this afternoon; there's no funeral, and you've nothing to go home for. You're going to mooch about out of gates till the Head's exam is over."

Trimble grinned involuntarily for a second. But his fat

face became serious again at once. He felt that it was judicious, in the circumstances, to look as serious as he could.

"Bai Jove! Heah you are, you fat wottah!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came up, and his eyeglass gloamed scorn at Trimble. "Twimble, I wegard you as an unspeakable, spoofin' wottah—weally, the outside edge. If it were not speakin', I would tell Mr. Lathom how you are pullin' his leg."

"He's really got away with it?" asked Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah, and I wegard it as uttaly shockin'. You know, I trust your conscience will punish you for this deception, Twimble!"

"Yah!" said Trimble.

"Baggy's conscience can stand a lot," grinned Lowther. "It's had a lot to stand, and got a bit tough, I think. But I'm blessed if I ever thought that that fat foolzler would pull it off! Didn't it strike Mr. Lathom as rather a coincidence that Trimble's family choose examination days for their funerals?"

"Appawtently not," said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, Mr. Lathom will have to mention it to Mr. Wailton and the Head, and pewwaps they may smell a wat."

"Oh, rot!" exclaimed Trimble, in alarm. "What rot! The Head might have doubted my word—he's rather suspicious; but when Mr. Lathom mentions it to him, he will think that my people have written—stands to reason he will. He will be satisfied if Lathom is—and I know Lathom is. It's all serene. As for Railton, he's got nothing to do with it. Blow Railton! I'm jolly well going to have a good time this afternoon!"

"At a funeral?" asked Monty.

"Oh! I—I—I mean—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Twimble—"

"Oh, rats!" said Trimble; and he rolled away with his fat little nose in the air.

He had been successful; he had got away with it. The other fellows would not give him away—he had no sneaking to fear; and that was all he cared about. As for what they thought of him and his proceedings, Baggy cared nothing. Perhaps he considered that they could not think much worse of him than they did already! And at dinner that day Baggy found it quite difficult to keep a cheery grin off his fat countenance and to look as serious as a fellow might be expected to look who was going to the funeral of the late lamented—and non-existent—Herbert.

CHAPTER 11.

The Way of the Transgressor!

"CONGRATERS!" said Cardew heartily.

Baggy Trimble blinked at him rather suspiciously.

Most of the Fourth Form fellows—School House and New House—took no trouble to conceal their contempt for Baggy and his wonderful wheeze. Even Mellish, who was not a particular fellow, thought it was rather "thick." Nobody could really admire such a device, and the more serious fellows were shocked at Trimble; D'Arcy was very shocked indeed, and shook his noble head very solemnly over the affair. Only Cardew regarded the matter as amusing; and he offered Baggy his congratulations as the juniors came out after dinner.

"Congraters!" repeated Cardew. "It's really great, old bean! Every other fellow in the Fourth grindin' Latin this afternoon, under the marble eye of the Head—and you ramblin' around with your hands in your pockets doin' nothin' but laughin' in your sleeve!"

"Look here, you know—" mumbled Baggy, with an uneasy glance round. He was very proud of his success, but he did not want to boast of it in the hearing of masters or prefects. "Don't yell, you know!"

Cardew chuckled.

"I wouldn't give you away for worlds," he said. "No end of a jest—if you really get away with it. I wonder if it's too late for my grandfather to have a sudden, serious illness?" went on Cardew meditatively.

Baggy looked alarmed.

"Here, you chuck it!" he exclaimed. "It would look jolly suspicious! Lathom might think— Look here, you know, it's my idea—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Cardew. "All serene, old fat bean—I won't poach. As a matter of fact, I should draw the line at that, personally. But it's no end of a success, and I congratulate you—if you really get away with it. But a goal isn't scored till the ball's in the net, you know!" And Cardew laughed as he walked away with Levison and Clive.

Baggy Trimble grunted, and consulted his watch. There was a train at two o'clock from Rylcombe to Lexham, and



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Baggy was leaving in time for that train. Not that he had any intention of catching the train, and expending his cash on a railway fare for nothing. But it was necessary to keep up appearances. He was going to walk down to Rylcombe in time for the train—on account of appearances. Then he was going to walk farther on to Wayland, and spend a comfortable afternoon at the cinema there—while the rest of the Fourth worried through the special exam.

It was a happy prospect. Only the recollection that he was supposed to be going to a funeral that afternoon kept Baggy from grinning with glee.

"Twimble!" Arthur Augustus came up to him, with a severe expression on his aristocratic countenance.

"Hallo!" said Trimble coolly. "I twust, Twimble, that you will wepent of your wascality befoah it is too late," said Arthur Augustus severely.

"Oh, can it," said Trimble. "I weally considah—" "Rats!" said Baggy cheerfully.

"I think, Twimble—" "You'd better think about Latin grammar, if you can think at all," jeered Trimble. "You're for it this afternoon, you know."

Arthur Augustus breathed hard and deep. "I will not waste any words on you, you uttah wottah," he said. "I wegard you as a wank outsidah, Twimble. However, I have a message for you fwom Mr. Lathom. You are to go to his study."

"Right-ho!" said Baggy. And he rolled away towards Mr. Lathom's study, Arthur Augustus shaking his head very seriously after him.

Baggy tapped cheerily at Mr. Lathom's door. His Form master had been so kind and sympathetic, that Baggy was wondering whether he could venture to "touch" Mr. Lathom for the railway fare to Lexham. What, after all, was the use of kindness and sympathy, if it couldn't be turned to practical account? A little extra cash would come in very useful for refreshments after the pictures at Wayland.

"Come in!" Baggy's fat face was composed into a sorrowful expression as he entered Mr. Lathom's study.

The master of the Fourth gave him a kind look. "Come in, Trimble! I am glad to see, my boy, that you are bearing up under this sudden and terrible blow," said Mr. Lathom.

"I—I'm trying to, sir," said Baggy dolorously. "Of course, sir, I'm awfully cut up. My poor, poor old pater—I mean, my—my poor brother Herbert—"

"I have spoken to Mr. Railton on the subject," said Mr. Lathom.

Baggy felt a momentary twinge of uneasiness. The School House master was, he knew, a much keener gentleman than Mr. Lathom. It was possible that the coincidence had struck him—that the Trimble funeral was fixed for precisely the same time as the Head's special exam.

"Mr. Railton is very sorry to hear of the great loss you have suffered, Trimble."

Baggy breathed again. "It's very kind of him, sir!" he mumbled.

"Mr. Railton is taking his car out this afternoon," pursued Mr. Lathom. "He is leaving the school almost immediately to drive to Bognor."

"Yes, sir," said Baggy, wondering why Mr. Lathom was giving him this information.

"Mr. Railton will, of course, pass through Lexham on his way to Bognor," said Mr. Lathom.

"Eh?" "And he will give you a lift in his car, Trimble."

"What?" Baggy's jaw dropped.

"You will be ready in ten minutes, Trimble," said Mr. Lathom. "Be ready, and bear up, my boy!"

Baggy stared at his Form master, dumb with horror. "That is all," added Mr. Lathom.

"But—" gasped Trimble. "You had better go and get ready now, Trimble."

"B-b-but—" babbled Trimble helplessly. "What is it, my boy?" asked Mr. Lathom, blinking at him over his spectacles in surprise.

"I—I—I—" stuttered Trimble. "Well?" "I—I couldn't give Mr. Railton all—all that trouble, sir!" gasped Baggy. "I—I'll go by train, sir!"

"There is no trouble in the matter, Trimble, as Mr. Railton is driving through Lexham on his way to Bognor," said Mr. Lathom. "It will save your railway fare also, which is a consideration!"

(Continued on page 22.)

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"Oh, no, sir! Not at all, sir! The—the fact is, I—I'd rather go by train, sir!" gasped the hapless schemer.

Mr. Lathom looked at him rather sharply.

"Nonsense, Trimble!" he said. "Mr. Railton has very kindly offered to give you a lift in his car to Lexham, and he will put you down at your own door."

"But—but I'm not going—I mean, I don't want—the—the fact is, sir, I—I—I—"

Baggy's voice trailed off.

It was simply impossible to give a reason for refusing Mr. Railton's kind offer. The only reason Baggy could give was that he wasn't really going to Lexham, that there was no funeral at all, and that he dared not let Mr. Railton see his father, who, of course, would have been astounded to learn that the Housemaster had brought Baggy home for a funeral that was non-existent. Certainly, Mr. Railton would discover the facts of the matter—and Baggy turned quite cold all over at the thought. Baggy stood with his fat knees knocking together, blinking at Mr. Lathom in horror and dismay. He had hoped to be the object of kindness and sympathy. But he was getting altogether too much kindness now.

Mr. Lathom blinked at him, more and more surprised. He could not understand Trimble—though a keener man would have understood him very thoroughly.

"What do you mean, Trimble?" he asked sharply.

"I—I—I mean—"

"Well?"

"You—you see, sir, I—I—I—"

"You are not quite yourself, Trimble," said Mr. Lathom kindly. "You are upset, my boy. Say no more; go now and get ready for the journey."

Baggy Trimble staggered from the study.

A wild idea was in his mind of bolting at once out of gates. Somehow, anyhow, he had to keep out of Mr. Railton's car; he had to keep the Housemaster from calling at the Trimble home in Lexham. Discovery and disaster loomed ahead of Baggy Trimble. He rolled away to the door of the School House. And several juniors who looked at him, and noted the horrified dismay in his fat face, wondered whether there was anything, after all, in his tale of a family loss.

"Trimble!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Trimble.

He had almost run into Mr. Railton.

He stopped, gasping for breath. The Housemaster fixed his eyes on Trimble with a very curious look.

"You have seen Mr. Lathom, Trimble?"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" mumbled Baggy.

"He has told you that I shall take you with me in the car as far as your home at Lexham," said the Housemaster.

"Ow! I—I mean, yes, sir."

"You will get ready at once, Trimble!"

"Oh dear!"

"Bai Jove!" Trimble heard that involuntary ejaculation from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and from somewhere he thought he heard the sound of a chuckle. A good many fellows had heard Mr. Railton's words. And Mr. Railton's words, of course, conveyed to all hearers that Baggy's game was up.

"We start in five minutes, Trimble," said Mr. Railton.

"I—I can go by train, sir," mumbled the wretched Baggy.

"You will go by car, Trimble, and you will get ready at once!"

"I—I—I—"

"Well?"

"I don't want—want to give you a lot of trouble, sir! No—no need to take me as far as my home, sir!" stammered Trimble. "If—if you drop me at Lexham, I—I'll walk home, sir. In—in the circumstances, sir, my—my people will—will be rather upset, sir, by—by a visitor arriving in a car."

"I hardly think so, Trimble," said Mr. Railton. "Most certainly I shall take you to your father's house, and speak to Mr. Trimble before I leave you there."

"Oh, lor!"

Baggy almost collapsed.

He realised now that the Housemaster was, indeed, rather more "wide" than Mr. Lathom. The coincidence of the Trimble funeral, on the same day as the Head's exam, had in fact occurred to Mr. Railton's mind.

Fellows gathered round the Housemaster and the hapless Baggy in breathless interest. Baggy had nearly, very nearly, got away with it. But—evidently—not quite!

"Have you anything more to say, Trimble?" Mr. Railton's voice and look were grim.

"I—I—I—"

"If you have any confession to make, Trimble—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"If there has indeed been a serious occurrence in your family, Trimble, I have only the deepest sympathy for

you," said Mr. Railton. "But if this is another trick—another unconscionable trick—to elude the examination this afternoon, Trimble, you had better confess while there is yet time—as I shall certainly ascertain the facts from your father."

"Ow!"

"For the last time, Trimble—"

Baggy gasped.

"The—the fact is, sir—"

"Well?"

"I—I—I was—was mistaken, sir! There was—was a mistake. My—my brother recovered, sir—"

"What?"

"It—it was a—a—a sudden recovery, sir, at—at the last moment, sir!" stuttered the wretched Baggy. "So—so—so there won't be any funeral this afternoon, after all, sir."

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"If he thinks Railton will swallow that—" murmured Tom Merry to his chums; and Manners and Lowther chuckled.

Mr. Railton did not look like "swallowing" it. His brow grew thunderous.

"Trimble!" His voice was thunderous, too.

Baggy jumped.

"Ow! Yes, sir!"

"You—you dare to tell me such a palpable falsehood!" thundered the Housemaster. "Confess the truth at once, you young rascal. You have invented this story from beginning to end, to obtain leave from school this afternoon, to escape the examination."

"Ow!"

"Answer me!"

"I—I—I—" babbled Baggy.

"Very well; I will take you to the Head, who will question you," said Mr. Railton.

"Oh dear! I don't want to go to the Head!" wailed Baggy. "I—I—I own up, sir! It—it really was a—a—a joke, sir—"

"Upon my word!"

There was a brief silence. Mr. Railton's eyes looked as if they were boring holes in the hapless schemer of the Fourth.

"Trimble!" he said at last.

"Oh dear!"

"You confess that your whole story was false from beginning to end?"

"Oh crikey! Yes, sir!" groaned Baggy.

"Very well. I shall not punish you now, Trimble, as you are to sit in an examination this afternoon. I shall attend to you after the examination. You may go."

Baggy tottered away.

The best-laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley, as the poet has told us. Baggy had been very near to success. But he had not, after all, got away with it. And when the Fourth Form went into the examination-room that afternoon, there was one member of the Form who limped in dismally, looking as if he found life scarcely worth living.

After all his dodges and devices, Baggy was landed in the exam after all, utterly unprepared for it—all his preparations had been for dodging it! He had the dimmest apprehensions of the result of that exam!

Baggy Trimble's apprehensions were well-founded.

All the Fourth scraped through with more or less credit, with the single, solitary exception of Baggy Trimble.

Baggy's paper was absolutely hopeless.

With the rest of the Form, the Head expressed himself more or less content. Only one fellow's paper had been so hopelessly bad that a flogging was to be handed out.

Baggy was the unhappy victim.

He had one consolation, such as it was. As he was booked for a Head's flogging, Mr. Railton said nothing more about punishment for his scheming, doubtless considering that Baggy would get enough from the Head. That was something, as far as it went.

Baggy did indeed get enough from the Head. His own impression was that he got too much—much too much. For a long, long time afterwards, Baggy's groans were deep and dismal; and in all the House there was none to sympathise. The opinion of Tom Merry & Co. was that Baggy had asked for it, and that it was a good thing that he had got it; and doubtless they were right.

THE END.

(Look out for the first story in our special Christmas Holiday series: "THE MAN FROM THE BOOT LEG RANCH!" by Martin Clifford, which will appear in next week's bumper issue of the GEM!)

HUNKS, THE JUDGE! It just depends on the behaviour of Hunks whether his friend White Cat goes free, or swings at the end of a gibbet. And Hunks, dog though he is, plays up accordingly!



WHITE EAGLE!

A Grand Story of a young Britisher's
Adventures with a Tribe of Apache Indians
in New Mexico.

Told By

ARTHUR PATTERSON.

"You lie!" he snarled out. "You red varmint! I was shootin' at that dog!"

He pointed at Hunks, and went on, his loud voice drowning a sharp call of silence from Pim Bolland.

"He nigh upon broke my wrist the night before, and should be hanged upon that gibbet, side by side with your murderin' son."

Again the judge called for silence, and this time he was obeyed, Mander sinking back upon his couch with a groan, for in his excitement he had twisted his bruised ribs. He had done something else, however, for in the silence which followed a deep, challenging growl rumbled from the throat of Hunks which caused a loud laugh, led by Sadie, who delightedly clapped her hands. Black Hawk, for his part, did not appear to hear the retort. His face was without expression, and he sat perfectly still.

The trial now began, and a queerer legal procedure was never witnessed. But there was method in it, and an atmosphere of impartiality which was not unimpressive.

Contrary to all custom, the judge conducted it himself. "Citizens of the United States," he began, "and friends"—he had once been a deacon in a Methodist church—"we are here to see justice done to two men—Michael Mander, who's lyin' on that table, and White Cat, son of Black Hawke, Apache Indian. I have to say clean at the start that there are no lawyers in this thing. The reason bein' we've had no time to hitch up any. But as I swore, being a county judge under law, to be without prejudice, I stands here for both men, and for the same reason, neither—the which means, boys"—here he whipped round and addressed the jury severely—"I ain't had one red cent from either of 'em, and sha'n't make a dollar on the deal!"

He paused here to clear his throat, while members of the audience exchanged glances.

"Now, there ain't no mystery hangin' to this thing," the judge went on in a business-like tone. "You was all there yourselves—you of the jury. A Texan bull romped into the town, pitched around the goods these Apache Indians was sellin' in the streets, and then got pinned by the snout by a dawg—the one a-settin' in my court to-day."

He pointed solemnly at Hunks, who now being a little excited, growled sharply again, to the judge's manifest disgust, while the jury grinned.

"That dawg," Pim continued, frowning down this unseemly mirth, "held that bull. Treated him real cruel to my thinkin'. Anyways, brought him to the flure, and but

The Last Witness!

HOLT now had a surprise, for quite suddenly Sadie entered the courthouse, and, stepping through the crowd of people, calmly passed the line of cowboys, which kept the court clear, as if they did not exist, ran up the steps of the platform, and sat down by her father on a chair vacated smilingly by a ranchman in her favour.

Her appearance was as much a surprise to the colonel as to Tom, and he shook his head and frowned when he saw her. But the imperturbable young lady only smiled sweetly and kissed her hand to him, and then settled herself comfortably in her seat and searched the faces of the crowd.

In a moment she had located Tom and Hunks, and waved joyously to them both. At first Tom felt ridiculously happy, while Hunks, no less pleased, thumped the floor with his heavy tail.

Then Sadie did a more audacious thing still. After a long glance at the prisoner she turned half round and laid an imperious little hand on the knee of Black Hawk himself, and spoke to him.

Tom would have given much to hear what she said. He could see that her action made a stir among the people—by no means a favourable one. But this, of course, had not the smallest influence upon Sadie.

At first the chief did not appear to hear her. But she spoke a second time, and more urgently, upon which he grunted—Tom saw that by the motion of his lips—and then slowly inclined his head, placed his hard red fingers upon the small white one resting on his knee, and pointed with the other hand at Tom himself. Everyone saw this, and by one of those impulses to which crowds are liable, became quiet, and Black Hawk's answer was heard through the hall—as he meant it to be.

"Yes; Tom my friend. White Cat, my son, die for Tom to-day."

There was a murmur at this, and then to the surprise of the women the head of Dick Mander was viciously thrust up from the mattress on the table.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE!

TOM HOLT, a sturdy young Britisher of seventeen, lands in New Mexico—at the invitation of some friends of his father's—to start business on the Doggett Ranch.

He finds the place in a deserted and dilapidated condition, and from a letter, left by a former employee, learns that his two friends have died. Tom's in a quandary, for he knows nothing about ranching, but he buckles to and makes the ranch-house shipshape. In the course of this general clean-up he comes across a dog with whom he makes friends instantly. Hunks, as he names the dog, proves a real pal.

Shortly after his meeting with Hunks, Tom falls in with a wandering tribe of Apache Indians. Their chief is Black Hawk. Unknown to Tom, the chief cherishes the hope of wiping out the "whites" in the country, and to help him to collect the necessary knowledge before a successful raid can be made on the white settlements, he offers to take Tom on the trail, and show him how to become a successful rancher.

Knowing nothing of the sinister motive underlying all this, and keen to learn the ways of the country, Tom accepts the offer. He proves a most efficient pupil, and becomes the fast friend of White Cat, Black Hawk's son. Later, when Tom is in Sereita he falls foul of a bullying desperado named Mick Mander. Tom stands up to the bully, however, and publicly declares his friendship for the Indians amongst whom he has been living. This enrages Mick Mander's cronies, for a Redskin is regarded as dirt. Thus, when Black Hawk's tribe arrives at Sereita, Mander's cowboys drive a "rogue" bull into that section

of the town where the Indians have pitched their market. The infuriated bull does great damage amongst the valuable skins belonging to the Indians before Hunks seizes the animal by the nose and hangs on like grim death. Whilst Tom is trying to get Hunks to release his grip of the stricken bull, Mick Mander draws his revolver and attempts to shoot Tom. At the critical moment, however, White Cat springs forward and buries his knife in the would-be murderer's ribs. Instantly White Cat is surrounded by the infuriated cowboys and marched off to gaol on the charge of attempted murder, and Tom, with a sickening at the heart, realises that his red friend is a doomed man before even he is tried. Billie Punt, who has taken a great liking towards Tom, advises the young Britisher to proceed to Colonel Chapin and lay all the facts before him. Tom, who has met Sadie Chapin, the colonel's daughter, thinks there is a sporting chance of saving White Cat's life and agrees to do as Billie proposes.

Eluding two sheriff's officers who have come to arrest him, Tom makes all speed for Colonel Chapin's house. After hearing Tom's story and offering to do what he can the colonel despatches twenty cowboys to camp round the prison. Then he and Sadie accompany the young Britisher to Sereita for the trial.

The sight of an improvised scaffold outside the courthouse reduces Tom's hopes to ruins, and almost saps his faith in Colonel Chapin. With a heavy heart the young Britisher seats himself opposite the judge, and half-way between the prisoner and Mick Mander.

(Now read on.)

for the boy who owns the dawg, he would have passed in his checks. The boy, however, gets a-holt of his dawg just as Micky Mander there was a-jerkin' out a gun to shoot the animile. Mark the fac's now, jurymen! Put your brains upon it—such as have any. Here was a dawg clutchin' hold of a bull, a-bustin' to pull him down; a young feller tryin' to get him away, and another feller jerkin' out his gun, and all a-waltzin' round. Of a suddint Micky Mander here drops with a hole in his side, and the boys near him finds the prisoner wipin' a knife on his shirt. He don't go for to deny, I understand, that 'twas his knife made the hole, and Doc Silverston will tell ye that if Mick had been on foot 'stead of on his cayuse he'd have been killed. As it was, he were stuck two inches; the blade hit the rib and then turned, and he's here, as you see.

"White Cat, of course, were arrested. When questioned on the pint, he said he struck Mick to save Tom Holt, meanin' that Mick was a-figurin' to murder Tom. Mick denies this, and sticks out he meant to kill that dawg. There's your case, boys. Doc Silverston, I calls you to give evidence."

The man addressed, a dapper little person in broadcloth, separated himself from the crowd and stood at a small table on the left of the judge on which was a large Bible. The oath was administered to him by a puffy individual with a silver star conspicuously displayed on the breast of a blue shirt. Tom felt he must be the sheriff who he identified standing behind him, whose men he had locked into the stable.

Doctor Silverston had little to say except to bear out the judge's statement of the wound inflicted by the knife, which he produced, but he contrived to make the case black enough for White Cat, though not as black as the prisoner now made it for himself when the judge called upon him to ask questions.

"Huh!" he grunted. "He right. I strike to kill, but my knife go wrong. I big fool. But I save Tom's life. Mick want kill him."

Mander raised himself from the couch on his elbow.

"Prave it, ye devil! Prove it!" he hissed.

The judge held up his hand.

"Shut your head! But I guess, boys," he went on in a non-committal tone, "Mick's hit the mark. Young White Cat, give your proof."

White Cat looked bewildered, upon which Tom translated in Indian, an act which caused something like a sensation in the court, and not in the prisoner's favour, especially as White Cat had no proof to give.

It was evident that the case was going dead against him, and Tom's heart beat heavily. Clouds had come over the sky outside, and the great shed grew dark. To Tom it was as if the shadow of that gibbet was shutting out the light. Then he saw Sadie reach over to her father and whisper vehemently, and the colonel shake his head. Yet there was no depression in his face. It was watchful but calm, and as if he knew what Tom was feeling he looked down into the boy's eyes and smiled. That smile was Tom's only hope.

Judge Pim Bolland rose.

"The prisoner 'pears to have nothin' to say," he remarked dryly. "Reckon that's kind of unfortunate for him."

"Then your reckonin' is out, judge," said a voice from the crowd. "I will ask your leave to take a swar' on that."

It was the big cowboy. Tom had been wondering what had become of him. He had searched the jury for his face in vain. Now, with clashing spurs and the rolling gait and swagger of the riding man, he marched up to the table and picked up the Bible as if it were a ball.

"Mornin', sheriff," he said genially to that officer. "Git busy, will ye, kindly!"

There was a deep silence in the crowd, as in a rough but reverent tone, he repeated the words:

"I, Christopher John Brent, do swear that I will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So help me, God."

He kissed the Book, put it down with a slam, thrust his hands in the pockets of his brown leather "chaps" and faced the jury.

"Now, you boys," he began in an easy tone. "You know me and I know you—every last one of you, and I just want to say this from the hip. You're up against it, an' the judge here, too, if you go to hang that little buck for knifin' Mick. Why?" The question came like a pistol shot. "Oh, P'll tell you why. Git back to the saloon little afore last. You was there, an' so was I. That Britisher an' his dawg was settin' quiet as cotton-tails when Mick here went on the wee-gee. You know what he said an' did. But the judge don't, so P'll put it brief. He mis-called Tom when Tom said, in answer to a question, that he was friendly with Redmen. He pulled his gun on him. Hear that, you fellers!" His voice rose to a bellow, and he

swept round upon the audience. "Pulled, I tell you, on a quiet and settin' man. Ordered him to mount a table and dance a buck-trot—or he'd shoot. The boy kep' still. But his dawg jumped for Mick, gripped his pistol hand and held it.

"Mick hopped around bleatin' like a calf under the brandin' iron, and wilted clean! 'Pologised an' sez Apaches was straight goods. That's Mick Mander. That's you," and he glared at the man on the table, who dropped his eyes. "Now—come to the bull. I stood within two yards of Mick. I saw his hand go to his belt, and I watched his eyes. There was murder in 'em! He weren't lookin' at no dawg when he jerked that gun. It was the man he went for to git. Mick is no slouch in shootin'—you all know that. I did, and I thought that boy was a goner! It weren't my business. But it was White Cat's, and he was nearest. So he struck. You know the rest."

The witness pulled up; turned to Pim Bolland, and made a little bow.

"That's my evidence, judge. I've one more word to say. This prisoner here is Red. He's an Apache, too, and speakin' private-like, I hate his crowd as I hate rattlesnakes. But over this he's acted white. There's not a man who saw the thing but knows it. Do your duty, boys; and God help ye if you don't!"

He jerked his face up to the jury and gravely nodded at them; then clumped back slowly to his seat.

The Verdict!

THE court was very still when Kit Brent sat down. The judge made a sign to Mick Mander to ask questions, and when the offer was declined—Mick's rib seemed to trouble him too much just then—he dropped his chin upon his hands in a very thoughtful way. He recovered in a minute.

"Any other witnesses?" he rapped out.

There was no response, at which Tom felt some surprise, for Mick Mander had many friends. Then he remembered that they were on the jury.

"I will sum up, boys," the judge said, his voice sharp and authoritative. "It biles down just to this: The Apache meant business. No doubt on that—bad business. But Kit Brent swears Mick pulled his gun upon Tom Holt to kill. If he did, the buck had a right, bein' Tom's friend, to use the knife; and you can't hang him—not just now. Mick says it were the dawg he tried to get, not the man. Which is the liar? That's what I want to know."

He resumed his seat, and there was a silence which could be felt. Then the jury began to whisper among themselves.

"If you want to retire," the judge said formally, "there's room outside."

They shook their heads. Then one jurymen asked a question of all the rest. They nodded at him, and he rose.

"Please, your honour," he said, "we've took count. We sez, all of us, there's no lyn' either side. Mike drew on the dawg; but Tom, standing where he did, were in the way. The prisoner, therefore—maybe—saved his life. But that were not what he stabbed Mick for. He were out for blood, bein' what he is, an Apache buck. We know the breed. There ain't no love for nothin' in 'em, neither by man nor animile—not even for one another. That bein' so we declare the prisoner guilty, and that he shall hang at noon this day."

He coughed, made what he meant to be a bow, and sat down again, and was warmly patted on the back by his fellow jurors.

Tom was aghast. There was a grim hum of approval from a large number of the people in the court. No protest came from anyone. Only Colonel Chapin bent forward and whispered something in the judge's ear. Pim Bolland rose, a pinched smile on his thin lips.

"The jury, having given their verdict, is discharged. Clear out, you boys!"

They did so with alacrity, and crowded down into the hall, no one being left on the platform but the colonel, Sadie, Black Hawk, and the judge himself.

"It is now my business to pass sentence," the little man remarked slowly. "That is the privilege of a judge, not a jury." He cleared his throat. "Before I do, I want to hear Tom Holt. He weren't called as a witness because he were attendin' to that bull. But havin' camped with Redskins for six months, I reckon he knows about them more than most. Friend Tom, git on your hind feet an' tell us what you think of Apache Indians."

The voice of the judge was patrouising and more than a trifle hard, but Tom saw the colonel nod, and knew his time had come. Upon what he might say or do now depended White Cat's life perhaps. As he walked across the floor and mounted the platform, his mind flew back, half-



Tom, knowing what must happen unless he got there in time to part the infuriated Hunks and his victim, sprang upon the platform and made for the dog at full speed. He was nearly halfway when there was the dull roar of a revolver, and he fell headlong, shot through the back. (See page 26.)

consciously, to that night when Black Hawk made him speak to the party over Hunks. It was the first speech of his life. He had made a mess of that; he would again.

The silence which had been broken by the jury mingling with the crowd, and exchanging chaff and greetings, fell upon the court. Tom clenched his teeth. He had not a notion what he ought to say. There was a laugh. That was at Hunks. He had followed his master as a matter of course, and stood at his side, looking down at the audience with an intelligent cock of his ears and a slowly-waving tail.

"It's the dawg should do the speakin'," a voice cried—the big cowboy's. "An animle knows good men from bad better than a human. I wonder whether one of you jury boys could lay a finger on the prisoner with that Hunks beside him. I'd like to see you try."

At this the laugh became general, for the pup, hearing his name mentioned, barked. He liked that cowboy.

Tom wheeled on the instant. An idea had come to him. "Your honour," he said, "Kit Brent has hit the nail on the head. The jury say an Apache Indian has no love or feeling. I deny that. But they may say I lie, or am just a fool. Now, a dog can't lie; and this dog of mine has hunted with Black Hawk's party for five months. He knows every one of them, and the prisoner best of all.

"With your leave I will make the jury a sporting offer. I will give five hundred dollars down to any member of it who can touch White Cat if Hunks will guard him. I ask you to let the prisoner stand free somewhere in the hall. The member of the jury who takes on the job shall run at White Cat. He must call Hunks to protect him. I promise not to interfere, so if the dog goes it will just be his own idea. The rest will be a struggle between juryman and dog."

Tom paused, and a murmur ran round his audience.

"The juryman must be unarmed, but he is allowed to play any trick he pleases," he continued. "White Cat must not resist. The dog must do all the fighting alone. If the man gets at the prisoner he takes my money with him. The whole of the jury to try, if they wish, one by one. You and Colonel Chapin to act as judges. I have one condition to make. After it's over, whichever way it goes, I ask the jury to meet again and consider whether the foreman's judgment upon the prisoner was fair."

This challenge was received with a shout of applause. The judge consulted Colonel Chapin, then gave his consent. "It's up to you, boys," he said, with his thin smile. "Five hundred greenbacks for the man who'll scrap with this dawg—if the animal will scrap for an Apache—and

can touch the prisoner. Rules to be as Tom says. Me and the colonel to judge. Are you takin' it on?"

The jurymen looked at one another. It was obvious that they felt no eagerness. But rough chaff from their friends, led by Kit Brent, began to fall like hail about their ears, and they presently changed their minds, and after consultation one of them stepped out and nodded to the judge. "Ain't afraid of any dawg," he said. "I'd like a dollar for every one I've killed when I was up North drivin' huskies. I'm ready to kill one more."

He laughed coarsely, and began to turn up the sleeves of a leather coat. He was a stout, broad-shouldered man of middle age, with the arms of a gorilla, a short, thick neck, a hairy face, and bright, cunning black eyes.

Tom felt a hand upon his arm and found Sadie beside him.

"You'll never!" she cried. "He's like a horrid beast. Supposing he does kill Hunks—"

Tom held her hand. "I am not afraid," he said gently. "Though I'd give anything to do the job myself. But that would be no good, and White Cat saved the pup's life once. It's his turn, and the best chance. Ask your father."

Colonel Chapin confirmed Tom's words. "You'd better go, Sadie," he said. "It will be hard fighting. I know that man."

She stamped her foot. "Nothing will make me go," she cried rebelliously. "But oh, my dear—my dear—" And she flung her arms round the dog's neck and kissed him.

In the meantime the judge was busy giving orders. The hall was seething with excitement, and he knew that everyone would want to see the match. So he had the platform cleared; White Cat, to whom the matter was explained by Tom, was placed at the back against the wall. The jurymen, Jan Snyder, stood at the steps ready to make for the prisoner when he got the word. Hunks, the only person unconscious of what was to happen, sat in front of his master, who, with Sadie and Black Hawk, was in the front row beneath the platform. The judges stood not far from White Cat, one in each corner.

Though Hunks knew nothing of what was going to happen, he was on the alert. Ever since he had entered the hall he had wondered why White Cat was standing with four men, why he—Hunks—was not allowed to go near him, and why his friend had his hands tied behind him with steel bracelets on his wrists.

Hunks did not like it a bit, but as his master did not appear to object, he knew it was not his business. He was

rather restless, all the same. Consequently, when he saw those bracelets removed, the four men retire, and White Cat walk up the steps and stand all alone on the platform above him, Hunks sniffed curiously, and, as dogs will, by the medium of his nose tried to find out what it was all about. This investigation resulted in an unpleasant discovery.

Somewhere near was a man with a smell which was perfectly detestable. It was that fellow at the steps, Hunks had not noticed him before, but he became conscious now that he had smelt him on the platform. Phew! There was something beastly about him. It was clear, besides, by the way he stood that he was going to do something. Hunks wondered what, and watched him, growling ever so softly to himself.

It was arranged by the judge that, at a signal from Colonel Chapin, White Cat should call Hunks. As he did so, Jan Snyder should run up the steps and go for him. If he got to White Cat before Hunks—or afterwards—and touched him fairly with one hand, he won his money. The struggle was to end when the judge gave word.

They all took their positions, and the people scarcely breathed. There was great excitement, and bets had been made amounting to hundreds of dollars. The big cowboy had involved himself most deeply of all. If he lost—and he had, of course, bet on Hunks—he would not have a cent left, and must sell his horse. But he was quite cheerful. Equally cheerful, however, was Mick Mander, who had taken most of Kit's bets. Jan Snyder, Mick knew—though he told no one—had been a professional dog-trainer, and was reckoned to be the most courageous and merciless of his class.

The signal came—a wave of the colonel's hand—and White Cat called:

"Hunks! Huh! Come!"

On the instant the black-haired man at the steps leapt to the platform at a bound, and ran towards the Indian. He was a swift runner, being, indeed, a fine athlete, and if Hunks' nose had not already been busy, and brought its owner to a decision as to his character, he might have got in and won his money there and then. But the combination of the dog's own dislike and White Cat's cry prevented that.

As the man leaped, so did the dog, and when Snyder was still some three yards off the prisoner a heavy weight struck him just below the shoulder, and over he went, nearly turning a somersault, alighting on his back at Jim Bolland's feet. The crowd yelled its appreciation at the dog's success, and thought the game was up for Snyder. They expected to see Hunks pin him as he had pinned the bull. But Hunks had no grudge against Snyder. He had merely seen that he was going to attack White Cat. That, of course, was out of the question; but, as he was a man and not an animal, he was to be dealt with leniently.

The pup had no intention of touching him with his teeth. Having disposed of the attack, as he thought, Hunks bounded up to White Cat, and joyously saluted him by licking his face all over, and, incidentally, nearly throwing him also on his back. There was another cheer at this, hushed, however, to tense silence as Snyder, picking himself up with the quickness of an acrobat, began to creep towards the pair. Most of the people thought Hunks would be taken off guard; but White Cat, in replying to his caresses, gave a low hiss of warning, and the dog whirled round just as the man sprang in. They sprang, indeed, together, and this time the man did not go down. He charged like a battering-ram, his head between his shoulders, his face covered by his elbows, his fingers outstretched like claws. As they met he caught the dog's neck with both hands, and, throwing all his weight forward, bore him to the ground with intent to kneel on him, get his fingers on the windpipe, and strangle him.

He nearly succeeded, for Hunks was unprepared. He was still fighting with his body more than with his teeth, and, knowing how much weight he could throw when he leaped, expected to roll the man over as he had done before. But when he felt the power of those clutching hands, and the power behind them, he knew he had made the mistake of his life. Only the quick brain he had inherited from his father saved him. He was held by the throat, and felt his breath going; the bulldog in him would have resisted to the last, but Hunks knew better than that. Yielding to the pressure of the man's arms, he stiffened his limbs and deliberately threw his weight backwards.

The man had not expected this, lost half his hold, and to regain it over-reached and fell too far. Then Hunks with all the strength that was in him twisted his head,

snapped furiously at one of the gripping hands, ripped Snyder's thumb open, and wrenched free. He was upon his feet in an instant, backed a pace, and then began to circle silently round the man.

Snyder might have touched White Cat now, for both antagonists were close to the Indian, and friends in the crowd yelled to him to do so. But Snyder was otherwise engaged. He had dealt with most kinds of dogs—all varieties of huskies (Esquimaux), sheepdogs, and Newfoundland, pure and cross-bred, and wild creatures more than half-wolf. Therefore he knew what a fierce dog was like when it has been thoroughly roused.

What he did not know yet was a bulldog. But he had heard of them, and he had seen Hunks hold the bull. He knew that he was in danger, and must kill or disable this beast if he were to get away from the platform alive. He had no time to attend to anything else now.

As for Hunks, he had tasted blood, and his throat was very sore, but worse than all this was the consciousness that a man—not some wild animal, but a human being—had tried to kill him, and would kill him if he could. It was an entirely new experience, and a very terrible one. All his life so far they had behaved well to him; he had looked upon them as his friends, or, at least, as creatures who should be treated quite differently from other animals. Mick Mander had been an exception, but even he only needed to be held and shaken, and, apart from his hatred for Tom—of which Hunks was well aware—there seemed nothing dangerous about him.

Now all was different. This enemy was as cruel as the bear or the mountain lion, and, being a man, far more dangerous. Hunks was not under any delusions now since he had felt that grip on his throat and had looked into those merciless eyes. He also sensed that there was danger to White Cat, whom he loved only second to Tom.

While he crept round and round Jan Snyder, searching for the place to seize, to hold, to tear and crush, approaching nearer inch by inch, a kind of evil ferocity entered the pup's soul which had never been there before. He was not only ready to fight—he was out to kill.

As prizefighters circle in the ring, so these two watched each other. Then Hunks leapt forward. His intention was to strike the man upon the chest, pin him there, and drag him down until he could get hold upon the throat. As the dog came Snyder crouched and threw out his left arm. He struck Hunks on the neck with the back of his fist; the pup was turned aside, and fell heavily on his shoulder. Before he could recover Snyder had pounced like a bird of prey, seized his hind-legs, and, with an intense exertion of strength, swung the whole of the body into the air and crashed it down upon the ground. Sadie screamed aloud and clung to Tom.

"Stop it!" she cried. "Won't someone shoot him?"

The girl's shrill voice carried far, and more than one cowboy plucked at his belt. But Colonel Chapin and Jim Bolland stepped forward together, and the hands went down.

"Wait, dear—wait!" Tom cried, throwing his arm about her. "You don't know the pup yet! Wait!"

Yet all seemed over. The concussion appeared to paralyse the dog. It lay still, and Snyder, with a hoarse laugh, threw himself on his knees to clutch Hunks by the throat and finish him. But even as he stooped to get his hold, Hunks moved. He was severely hurt, but his bones, like green hickory, were nearly unbreakable. Finding his enemy above him and the grip of his fingers near his neck again roused all his energies, and he turned quickly aside. Snyder missed his hold, and only grabbed a handful of hair on the shoulders, and Hunks, for the second time, tore himself free.

But this time he made his counter attack before the man could rise. He was too stiff to leap, but turned his head like lightning, lunged forward, and buried his teeth in the fleshy part of the man's neck. Hunks' brain was reeling still from the shock to his spine, and he was so giddy that he could barely keep his feet; but his jaws closed like a trap, and no power of man or beast could loosen them.

When the crowd saw what had happened it cheered frantically, for its sympathies were now all with Hunks. But Tom, knowing what must happen unless he got there in time, sprang upon the platform and made for Hunks at full speed. He was hardly half-way when there was the dull roar of a Colt's revolver, and he fell headlong, shot through the back.

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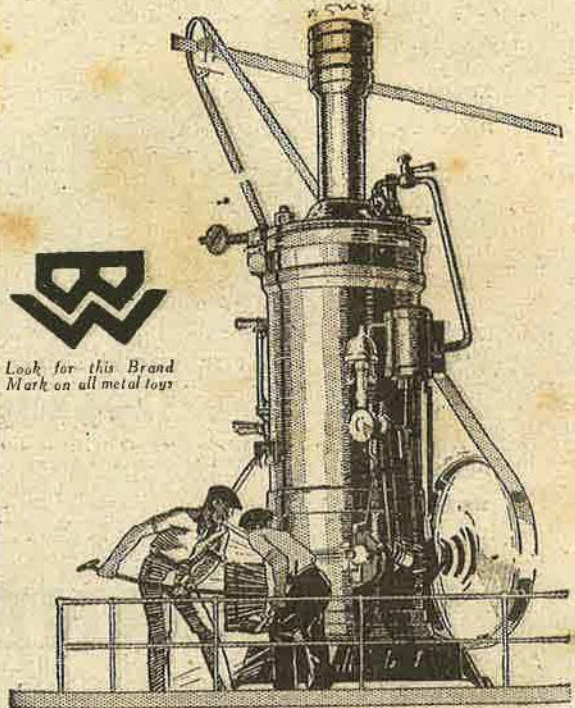
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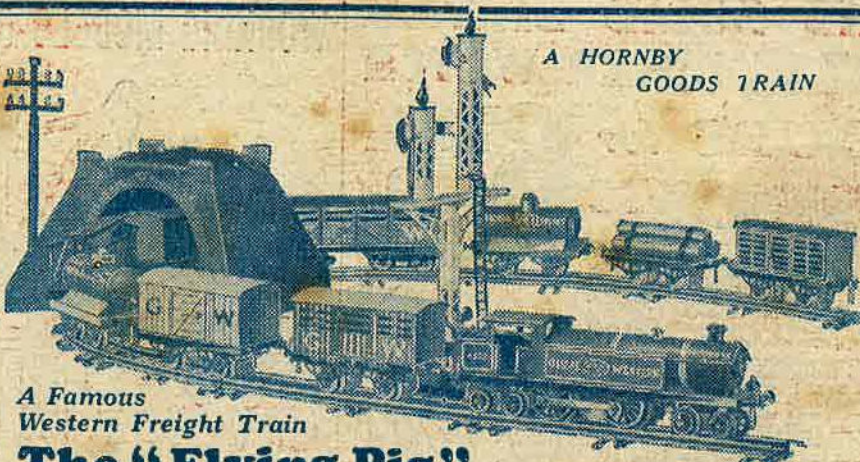
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