

The

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EVERY
WEDNESDAY.



**BAGGY, THE
BOWLER,
MAKES A
"HIT"!**

*(See the grand school
story—inside.)*

THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF LAUGHS IN THIS SCHOOL STORY—

TRIMBLE'S

by Martin Clifford

The leopard cannot change his spots or the Ethiopian his skin, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's task of trying to change the character of Baggy Trimble seems just about as hopeless. But, strange to relate, under the influence of the swell of the Fourth, Baggy really seems to turn over a new leaf. This story of how Trimble's amazing reformation comes about, and how it dies a sudden death, you will vote to be one of Martin Clifford's best.



CHAPTER 1. Borrowed Plumes!

"**B** Ai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his celebrated monocle in his eye, and fixed it on a figure which was just descending the School House steps. At the same time, an expression of considerable surprise appeared on his noble countenance.

The chums of Study No. 6, and Tom Merry & Co., who were with the swell of the Fourth, glanced over in the same direction. Then they, too, looked surprised.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Blake.

"M-m-my hat!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Trimble!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Trimble as a tailor's dummy! Trimble out—Brummelling Beau Brummell! Who said the giddy age of miracles was past?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Well, this takes the biscuit!" chuckled Tom Merry.

And the rest nodded agreement.

It was Baggy Trimble, of the Fourth, who had attracted D'Arcy's attention. Certainly, his appearance on that sunny afternoon was sufficiently striking to attract the attention of anybody at St. Jim's.

As a rule, Trimble's appearance was the reverse of striking. The fat junior was usually too much engrossed with urgent economic problems—problems of "raising the wind," and of accruing unto himself supplies of nourishment sufficient to satisfy the demands of the inner man, to pay much attention to dress. His appearance, in fact, on most occasions, might have been termed, without libel, slovenly.

This occasion was an exception.

From the crown of his head to his toes, Baggy Trimble was immaculate. A shiny "topper" rested at a jaunty angle on his podgy head. A spotless Eton jacket, and a waistcoat so tight that it seemed in imminent danger of bursting, adorned the upper part of

his fat person. A beautifully-creased pair of trousers, of an even tighter fit, completed the suit. And the naggiest of natty shoes graced Baggy's feet.

"Just to make the picture look real," as Monty Lowther expressed it, Baggy carried a gold-mounted cane and a brand-new pair of kid gloves.

The cumulative effect of his "get-up" was most impressive. If not exactly a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, Baggy certainly looked elegant. And Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. were surprised.

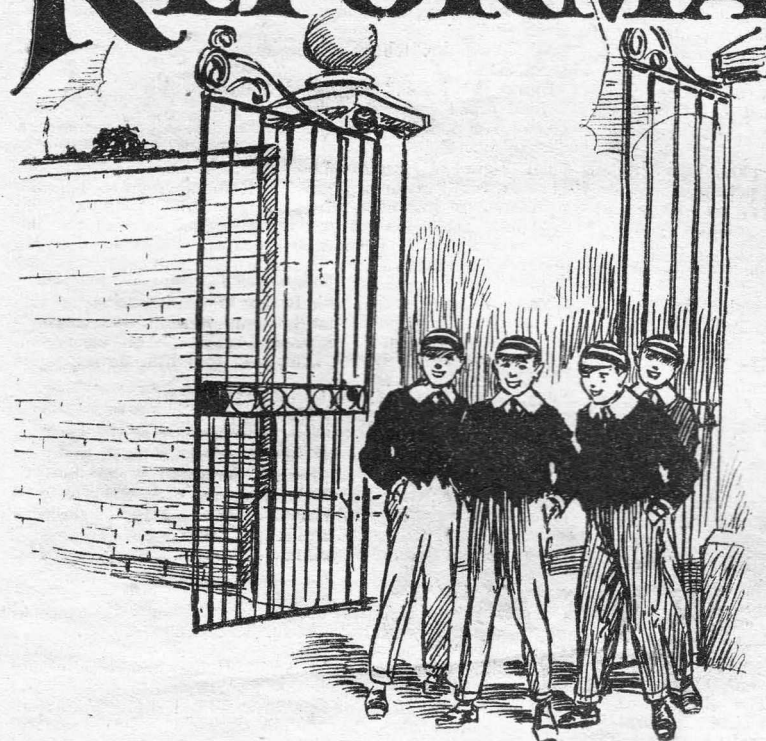
"Bai Jove! This is vewy wemarkable, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Remarkable doesn't describe it. It's miraculous!" grinned Tom Merry. "We all know what Baggy's like."

"The grubbiest bounder in the School House!" nodded Jack Blake. "Yet now he comes out, without a word of warning, dressed to kill!"

—FEATURING TOM MERRY & CO., THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S!

REFORMATION!



"Something's afoot!" grinned Lowther. "Mysterious things are indicated, I think, my infants!"

"Perhaps Baggy's setting out to win the heart of the lady behind the counter of the bun-shop—with free feeds thrown in!" suggested Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I vote we investigate, anyway," said Digby. "We can't have our Baggy running about loose in this state. He might be arrested as a suspected person!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway wait a moment, deah boys—" began Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the juniors began to move off.

"What's up, Gussy?"

"Nothin', deah boy! I was only thinkin'—"

"What with?" inquired Jack Blake, humorously.

"I was only thinkin'," said Arthur Augustus, bestowing a freezing glare on his leader, "that pewwaps it would hardly be the thing for us to chip Baggy about bein' decently dressed for once."

"No harm in it, is there?"

"Not a lot, pewwaps," admitted Gussy. "But a chap's clobbah is hardly a fit subject for widicule. Personally, I am vovy pleased to see Baggy lookin' well-groomed for once, and I should be sowwy to discourvage him in any—"

"Rats!" said Blake cheerfully. "Just give that chin of yours a little rest, and follow us, Gus!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Coming?"

"I stwongly pwotest—"

Gussy's strong protestations fell on deaf ears. The juniors were already hurrying across the quad towards Trimble. And Gussy, with a very severe look on his face, followed them.

Baggy Trimble had descended the School House steps, and was rolling off in the direction of the gates by the time the grinning juniors came up to him. He looked rather alarmed, and increased his speed as he caught sight of them. But Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three increased their speed, too, and before Trimble had proceeded many paces he found himself surrounded.

"Hail!" said Monty Lowther solemnly.

"All hail!" said Digby, with a sweeping bow.

Trimble grinned a somewhat sickly grin.

"I say, you fellows, no larks, you know!" he said. "As a matter of fact, I'm in a bit of a hurry."

"Oh, don't say that!" gasped Lowther, in accents that sounded almost tragic.

Baggy stared.

"Why not, you ass?"

"Can't you stay for a little while?" pleaded Monty.

"Why the dickens should I?"

"Just long enough to stroll round the school with us—that's all we ask!" begged Monty.

"But why?" hooted Baggy.

"We want to be seen with you, of course!" explained the Shell humorist gravely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rats!" grunted Baggy. "Look here, you chaps, lemme pass! I've got an appointment in Wayland—"

"Aha! Hence this thushness, I suppose!" said Jack Blake. "Cherchez la femme!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Just before you go—" said Monty Lowther.

"Well?"

"Do us all a favour. We're longing to know. Tell us the name of your tailor!"

"Weally, Lowthah! I pwotest!"

"Ring off, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to wing off, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus, advancing to the centre of the group with an air of great determination. "I considah—"

"Don't interrupt! We want to know the name of Trimble's tailor!"

"And his hatter!"

"And his shoemaker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to allow this wag to pwoceed," said Gussy, very firmly. "I twust that I have as keen a sense of humour as any of you, but I fail to see the humour of chippin' a fellow simplay because he is well-dwessed!"

"You would!" said Blake.

"Wats! As you are awah, I feel no particular fwriendliness for Twimble—"

"Oh, really, Gussy—"

"And I must confess that I am just as surprised as the west of you to see him in such nobby clobbah," continued the swell of the Fourth, unheeding. "That, howevah, is no weason for indulgin' in unseemly waggin', and I wefuse to allow such waggin' to pwoceed."

"Good old Gus!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you grinning rotters, Gussy's right!" said Baggy Trimble. "No harm in a chap putting on his best duds now and again, is there? I know that I'm not usually a dressy man—"

"Dressy"! Ye gods!" murmured Tom Merry.

"But I make a bit of a splash now and again," said Baggy modestly. "And when I do I don't expect to be ragged by a lot of grinning idiots like you chaps! I expect, if the truth's told, you're jealous!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Anyway, I'm in a hurry," grunted Trimble, trying to edge his podgy person past the juniors. "Lemme get out."

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus. "Pway allow Twimble to pass, Tom Mewwy. I should be sowwy to have to give you a fearful thwashin'—"

"You probably would be if you tried it on," agreed the leader of the Shell.

"Anyway, I insist on Twimble bein' weleased immedi-

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ately," said Gussy severely. "I considah you are all dis-playin' feahfully bad form in chippin' a fellow for takin' a pvide in his appeawance, and unless you desist, I shall have to thwash the lot of you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quite right, Gussy!" said Trimble. "Look here, old chap, you set about the rotters! I'll hold your coat for you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"All right; Baggy can go, then," grinned Tom Merry. "We've had a good look at him, and that was all we wanted."

"Vewy well, deah boy. Under the circs, of course, I shall no longah considah it necessawy to thwash you!"

"Thanks very much!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors parted to allow Trimble to pass, and the fat junior, with a grunt, went his way in peace.

"Befoah you go, Twimble," said D'Arcy, as Baggy started off, "I must weally congwatulate you on your clobber!"

"Oh! Glad you like it!" said Trimble, with a fat smirk.

"The suit is pewwaps—hem!—a little tight in the fittin'," said Gussy critically. "Nevahtheless, Twimble, the effect is pleasin'. I congwatulate you!"

"Oh crumbs! Thanks very much, Gussy! He, he, he!"

Trimble, for some reason, seemed to be amused, rather than pleased, to receive the congratulations of the swell of the Fourth. The juniors looked at him rather hard for a moment. When Trimble was amused it was usually a sign that someone else was going to feel very much the reverse. Trimble, however, caught their look and hurriedly changed his expression, and before they had time to inquire the reason for his amusement, the fat junior was scuttling down to the gates.

"So much for Trimble!" remarked Jack Blake. "And now what about changing for cricket?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Just about time!" agreed Tom Merry, consulting his watch. "We'll trot in and change."

There being no fixture that afternoon, Tom Merry had arranged a scratch match between two elevens, chosen at random from the Shell and the Fourth. The match was timed to begin at two-thirty, and as it was now several minutes past two, the juniors had just sufficient time to change up in the dormitories, and get down to the playing fields.

They entered the House, and went upstairs, the Terrible Three going to the Shell dormitory, and Jack Blake & Co. to the Fourth Form sleeping quarters.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wore a look of serene satisfaction as he trotted up the stairs.

"Bai Jove, deah boys, I'm wathah glad I put my foot down just now, you know," he remarked, as they entered the dormitory. "I'm suah, on considewation, that you chaps will be gwateful to me for intercedin' on behalf of Twimble!"

"Ass!" grunted Jack Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Dummy!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Pity we didn't carry on, and get to the bottom of it," opined Digby. "I didn't quite like that grin on Trimble's face when he buzzed off. Fishy, I thought it."

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus expressively. "As you are awah, Dig, Twimble is no fwien'd of mine; but, for all that, I uttably wewuse to believe that there is anythin' fishay about him, just because he twots out in decent clobber. Personally, I feel vewy pleased—"

Arthur Augustus broke off suddenly. He had just reached the locker at the side of his bed, where a part of his extensive wardrobe was kept. One glance at that locker was quite sufficient to stop Gussy's flow of eloquence.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed, adjusting his monocle, and regarding the locker in astonishment. "What wottah—"

"What's up, Gus?" asked Jack Blake, looking over. "Oh, my giddy aunt! Look!"

The others crowded round and looked.

A scene of wild disorder met their eyes. The locker was open, and its contents were scattered far and wide. Gussy's latest fancy waistcoat, a beautiful creation, was flung carelessly over a chair; an assortment of his most artistic ties had been thrown in a confused bundle over the bedrail, and trousers and jackets were lying in a mangled heap on the floor. It was a scene to break the heart of any humble follower of the great Beau Brummell.

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"Oh, gwreat pip!" breathed Arthur Augustus, in utter dismay. "What feahful wottah has been doin' this? Oh deah!"

"Is it a rag?" asked Jack Blake.

"Looks like it. But who the thump—"

"I know!" yelled Digby, before Herries could finish his question. "It's— Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

The other three regarded Digby in astonishment.

"What's the joke?" demanded Blake.

"Bai Jove, Dig, I wathah think this is hardly a laughin' mattah—"

"No, but I do!" chuckled Digby. "It's— Oh crumbs! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bump the idiot!" suggested Herries.

"Good idea!" agreed Blake.

Digby stopped laughing as Blake and Herries made a rush at him.

"All right! Hands off! I'll tell you!" he gasped. "This is really funny, chaps! Remember how Trimble was togged up just now, when we met him? Well, did you notice how tight his clobber was? And how much like Gussy's it looked? Here we've got the explanation! No wonder Gus congratulated Trimble on his get-up!"

"Oh crikey!"

"You mean—" said Jack Blake, beginning to grin.

"I mean that Trimble has been up here raiding Gussy's clobber to go out in!" chortled Digby. "And Gussy—oh dear!—Gussy stood up for him, and told him how nice he looked! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake and Herries.

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, in dismay.

Obviously Digby was right. Gussy remembered now, how closely the clothes that Trimble was wearing had resembled his own. The topper, and the gold-mounted stick, too! In his mind's eye, Gussy saw them again, very vividly, and seemed to recognise them as his own. His classic face became a study in dismay and indignation.

"No wonder Trimble grinned!" roared Digby. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wottahs!" said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard you all as a heartless lot of wottahs! As for Twimble—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Twimble is a wuffianly and uttably weckless young wogue!" said the swell of the Fourth wrathfully. "Bai Jove! He shall suffah for this outwage! I shall administrah a feahful thwashin'!"

Pink with indignation, Gussy put on a topper and sailed majestically out of the dormitory.

"Where are you going?" called out Jack Blake, controlling his mirth for a moment.

"Aftah Twimble!"

"What about the cricket?"

"Blow the ewicket!"

Arthur Augustus disappeared, leaving the chums of the Fourth yelling.

CHAPTER 2.

A Shock for Gussy!

"THE wottah!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy repeated that uncomplimentary appellation at frequent intervals, on his journey out of the House.

The swell of the Fourth was angry, and, like the prophet of old, he felt that he did well to be angry.

His neckties—his pride and glory—had been crumpled, and flung over the bedrail like so many rags. His fancy waistcoats—those striking garments which resembled the coat of Joseph in their multiplicity of colours—had been trodden on by vandal feet. His trouse's, which had been pressed and folded with mathematical precision, had been heaped on the floor. Arthur Augustus felt, as he descended the stairs, that he was experiencing tragedy in the fullest sense of the word.

With monocle gleaming portentously in his eye, and two bright pink spots on his cheeks as a kind of outward and visible sign of his inward and invisible wrath, D'Arcy strode out of the House and made his way to the bicycle-shed. To the outrage which Trimble had committed in the dorm there could be only one answer—immediate and drastic vengeance. Gussy meant to execute that vengeance, as soon as he could catch his fat quarry. And his bicycle struck him as the speediest and most convenient medium for getting on Trimble's track.

Cardew and Levison and Clive, in flannels, were passing the bike-shed as Arthur Augustus wheeled his machine out. They looked rather surprised at the sight of the swell of the Fourth.

"Thought you were playing this afternoon, Gussy?" remarked Levison.

Baggy Trimble smirked fatuously as he was surrounded by Tom Merry & Co. "Hail!" said Monty Lowther solemnly. "All hail!" said Digby, bowing low. "I say, you fellows, no larks, you know!" said Trimble. (See Chapter 1.)



"So I was, deah boy. I'm afwaid, howevah, that it's impossi just now."

"Goin' for a spin through the jolly old smilin' countryside instead," said Cardew, with a nod. "You always were the vigorous lad of the family, Gussy!"

"I'm afwaid this is hardly a pleasuah twip," said Arthur Augustus. "Have any of you chaps seen Twimble lately, by any chance?"

"Just passed him in the lane, walking towards Rylcombe," answered Clive. "We couldn't very well miss him."

"The fat bounder was dressed to kill!" grinned Levison. "He simply glittered in the sun, didn't he, chaps? What's he been doing, then?"

"The young wuffian has been waidin' my clobbah, and cweatin' uttah havoc in my lockah. I'm just goin' to give the wottah a feahful thwashin'!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"No wonder dear old Baggy glittered!" smiled Cardew. "Have mercy on him, Gus! Don't spoil the rural amenities of the district by strewin' Rylcombe Lane with his bones, there's a good chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats!" snorted Arthur Augustus.

He mounted his bike and pedalled away, leaving the three Fourth-Formers chuckling.

As soon as he was out of the school gates, the swell of the Fourth put on speed. He was exceedingly anxious to catch up with Trimble before the fat junior reached the village. Once in Rylcombe, Trimble might disappear for the rest of the afternoon. Arthur Augustus naturally had no idea what were Trimble's intentions, or where he was going.

Unfortunately, much valuable time had been wasted. While D'Arcy had been meandering up to the dormitory and returning to the bike-shed, Trimble had been putting a good deal of space between himself and St. Jim's. And Trimble's pursuer cycled on and on, without seeing a sign of his quarry.

Just before he reached Rylcombe he spotted Kerruish and Hammond, walking in the direction of the village.

"I say, deah boys, have you seen that wottah 'Twimble?" he asked, slackening speed for a moment.

"I should just think we have!" grinned Kerruish. "Looking like Solomon in all his glory, he was!"

"Where was he, deah boy?"

"Walking down to the village—or sprinting, rather. He said he had to catch the two-thirty to Wayland."

"Oh ewikey! I must huwvy, then!" said D'Arcy, starting off again.

"Anything wrong, D'Arcy?" called out Julian curiously.

"Yaas, wathah! The feahful wottah has pinched my clobbah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus sniffed as he spurred off. The lack of concern shown by other fellows on hearing of his dire misfortune was rather annoying.

He pedalled the remainder of the journey as though he was riding for a wager, and simply flew through the village street to the station.

Too late! Just as he leaped off the machine and dived into the station, the guard's whistle blew, and he saw with dismay that the local train was moving off. To complete his chagrin, he spotted Trimble looking out of the window of one of the compartments, chewing a chunk of toffee, in blissful ignorance of the fact that a wrathful avenger was thirsting for his gore on the other side of the station barrier.

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, mopping his heated brow. "What a feahful pitay! I must inquiah how soon the next twain goes."

He looked a little more cheerful on making the inquiry at the barrier. Yes, there was another train from Westwood to Wayland, which stopped at Rylcombe in a quarter of an hour's time. D'Arcy weighed up the pros and cons of the matter, and decided to catch it. From his knowledge of Trimble, he deduced that whatever were the fat junior's plans for the afternoon, the chances were that on arriving at Wayland he would make a beeline for the nearest tuckshop and halt there for refreshment. Such a halt might easily give D'Arcy time to catch him up.

Still burning with indignation, the swell of the Fourth handed over his bicycle to the care of the booking-clerk, who also acted as luggage-clerk and a good many other things at Rylcombe Station. After that he took a ticket to Wayland and went on the platform.

The train from Westwood, for a wonder, came in prompt to time. Gussy boarded it, and it started off on its journey to Wayland.

The journey to Wayland was short, and it was soon over.

To Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, however, the time passed slowly, and the journey seemed interminable. What exactly was going to happen when he did find Trimble, D'Arcy had not quite decided. He could not very well administer a fearful thrashing in the Wayland High Street, or in one of the local tuckshops, and he had a vague idea of leading Trimble off to a quiet corner, somewhere or other, where suitable punishment might be meted out without causing undue excitement among the populace. But of one thing Arthur Augustus was certain—wherever and however the meeting took place, he badly wanted to see Trimble!

He was the first passenger off the train, and the first through the barrier, when Wayland was reached. Every moment was valuable when his quarry might be even then entering the picture-palace or some other local centre where nobody could find him.

Gussy quitted the station and made straight for the tuckshop that stood outside it.

His face dropped as he saw that the shop was empty. He had had a strong idea that Trimble would be found sitting up at the counter of that tuckshop.

"Lookin' for somebody, sir?" asked the proprietor from within, seeing him staring into the shop.

"Yaas, wathah! Pewwaps you have seen him? A short, podgy young boundah—"

"The very one! He's just left this very shop, sir! Went down the High Street towards the post office, he did!"

"Bai Jove! Thanks vevy much, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, hurriedly departing in the direction indicated.

He rushed down the Wayland High Street at top speed, abandoning all pretence to that repose which is alleged to stamp the caste of Vere de Vere.

It was just outside the Palm Cafe that he at last ran Trimble to earth.

The fat Fourth-Former, in all the glory of his borrowed plumes, was standing at the foot of the steps leading into the cafe. The pavement was rather crowded at that point, otherwise D'Arcy would probably have noticed that Trimble was not alone. As it was, however, that fact escaped D'Arcy's observation altogether.

With gleaming eyes Arthur Augustus advanced through the crowd towards his prey. At last the way was clear before him. Then he fairly pounced on Trimble.

"Got you, you wottah!" he exclaimed triumphantly, seizing Baggy by the scruff of the neck.

Trimble jumped and let out a yelp.

"Wow! Grooooooh! Dragimoff! Help, Phyl!"

It was D'Arcy's turn to jump then. He suddenly realised that somebody was standing beside Trimble—somebody with dainty feet and bobbed hair and clear, hazel eyes that were looking at him with amazement.

Trimble had been standing talking to a young lady.

"Oh, gwcat Scott!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

CHAPTER 3.

Trimble's Cousin!

THE swell of the Fourth was, in the usual way, by no means an untalkative individual. Indeed, in the Fourth the opinion had often been expressed that he had far too much to say for himself.

There were occasions, however, when even Arthur Augustus D'Arcy found himself at a loss for words.

This was one of them.

The last thing on earth that D'Arcy had anticipated was the possibility that Baggy Trimble would be accompanied by a young lady. In the excitement of the chase he had not seen her; but even if he had he would not have associated her with Baggy.

Undoubtedly, however, she was with Baggy. The fact that Baggy had called her by the name "Phyl," and that her first look of amazement was rapidly changing to one of concern and indignation, made that quite clear.

Still dazedly holding Trimble by the scruff of the neck, Gussy blinked at her. She was an attractive-looking girl of fifteen or sixteen, and from the fact that she wore a simple regulation school costume, the swell of the Fourth judged that she was a schoolgirl.

A sudden dig in the ribs reminded him forcibly that Trimble was still in his grasp.

"Ow!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

He released his podgy captive, and the spell was broken.

"Grooooooh!" choked Trimble, tugging his collar straight and glaring balefully at his aggressor. "Oh, so it's you, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!" stammered D'Arcy, in a state of great confusion. "I just spotted you, you know, and—and—"

"And you thought you'd come up and say 'How-do-you-do?' I suppose," said Trimble, a fat grin beginning to appear on his face as he saw the swell of the Fourth's embarrassment and dismay.

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D'Arcy nodded with considerable relief.

"Yaas, wathah! That's just it! How do you do, Baggy?"

"Oh, so-so!" grinned Trimble. "Let me introduce you, Gus! Phyllis, this is my old pal D'Arcy from St. Jim's. Gus, this is my cousin, Phyllis Trimble."

Arthur Augustus raised his topper, and bowed with elaborate politeness.

"Vevy happy to meet you, I'm suah, Miss Twimble!" he remarked.

Miss Phyllis Trimble smiled and nodded rather doubtfully.

"You gave me quite a shock when you came up," she confessed. "I didn't think for a moment you were a friend of Bagley's; in fact, I thought you were going to attack him."

"What, Gussy attack me?" grinned Trimble, in a manner that suggested that such a thing was remote from all possibility. "Not likely! Gussy's my best pal at the school, ain't you, Gus?"

"Oh cwumbs! Yaas, wathah!" gasped D'Arcy, very much surprised to hear that piece of information.

"But—but didn't you jump at Bagley before you knew I was with him?" asked Miss Phyllis Trimble.

"Oh, that's nothing!" said Trimble, with a fat chuckle. "Gus and I understand one another, don't we, Gus? We always give each other a hearty greeting, don't we, Gus?"

"Bai Jove! Of course we do!" agreed Arthur Augustus, very eager to impress Baggy's cousin that everything in the garden was lovely, so to speak. "We're all fwightfully wigowous in gwceetin' each othah up at St. Jim's, you know, Miss Twimble!"

"So I should imagine!" remarked Miss Trimble, still rather astonished. "And do you always use such strange expressions on meeting? Let me see, it was 'Got you, you rotter!' wasn't it?"

"Oh deah! That was a—a kind of joke!" explained Gussy, sincerely wishing that the earth would open and swallow him up.

"I see! So when you wish to show another boy at St. Jim's how friendly you feel, you pounce on him and shout, 'Got you, you rotter'? Is that it?" asked Miss Trimble, with a thoughtful pucker in her feminine brow.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, with a feeble grin. "That's just it!"

Miss Trimble regarded the uncomfortable swell of the Fourth with serious eyes for a moment. Then she burst into a ripple of laughter.

"Well, I must say you have some funny customs at St. Jim's!" she remarked. "Perhaps they're not really so strange as you're making out. But I do hope, all the same, that you and Bagley are really and truly good friends."

"Bai Jove! Well, weally—" stammered Gussy.

"Stick together like—like glue, don't we, Gus?" grinned Baggy cheerfully. "Still, we don't want to stick here gassing all day. Who says a cup of tea and some grub?"

"I'm in favour of the tea, anyway," smiled Miss Trimble. "And will your friend come with us, Bagley?"

"Of course he will!" said Baggy. "Come on, Gus! Let's try the Palm Cafe. It's a tinpot show, of course, but it's the best place in this third-rate hole, and it'll have to do! Come on!"

"Wight-ho, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus, feeling quite a variety of conflicting emotions, followed Baggy and his cousin up the steps and into the Palm Cafe.

Baggy led the way to a table in the cafe, and rubbed his hands cheerfully as they sat down. Less than two hours had elapsed since Baggy had consumed an enormous dinner, and since that time he had had a snack in the tuckshop outside Wayland Station. But little trifles like that hardly affected the appetite of the porker of the Fourth. He was quite ready for another meal—more especially in view of the fact that he had with him an unexpected companion plentifully supplied with that desirable commodity—cash.

"This is going to be my treat this afternoon!" announced Trimble, as he sat down. "Order what you like, both of you. Don't consider the question of expense. I'm not mean!"

"Bai Jove! I'm afwaid I haven't much appetite for gwub just now," said Arthur Augustus. "A cup of weak tea, and a small piece of cake will do for me, thank you, deah boy!"

"So it will for me!" added Miss Trimble.

"Please yourselves," said Trimble, with a wave of his fat palm. "I'm feeling famished, so I'd better have something more substantial. Didn't have time for much dinner to-day, you know!"

"Gwcat Scott!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, remembering the enormous quantity of food which had vanished into the fat junior's capacious mouth at dinner-time that day.

"What did you say?" asked Trimble.

"Oh, nothin'!" said the swell of the Fourth hastily. "I just wemembered somethin', that's all, deah boy!"

When, shortly after their arrival, a waitress came up to

attend to them, Trimble ordered lavishly. The order consisted mainly of items for his own consumption, for Trimble's cousin and D'Arcy declined to eat more than a piece of cake with their tea. In spite of the lack of support, however, Trimble contrived to make it a big order.

Then the fat junior got busy. A plate of ham and eggs and a round of buttered toast were demolished in an amazingly short space of time. A small mountain of bread-and-butter, with plenty of honey, followed suit. Currant cake, mixed fruit cake, and iced cake followed in quick succession; then came doughnuts, custard tarts, jam tarts, cream puffs, and assorted biscuits.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Miss Trimble looked on, almost mesmerised. D'Arcy had witnessed similar exhibitions on Baggy's part more than once, and Baggy's cousin, as a member of the Trimble family, had probably seen the same sort of thing at Trimble Hall, or wherever else the fat junior resided during the holidays, even more frequently. But Trimble's eating operations, however frequently encountered, were a never-ending source of wonder to those who beheld them. The novelty never really wore off.

While Baggy's fat jaws worked away with the precision and rhythm of a machine, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy talked to Miss Phyllis Trimble, and soon began to feel at ease with her. Within five minutes of entering the Palm Cafe the swell of the Fourth had almost forgotten the unfortunate and embarrassing nature of their meeting outside. And in the same period he had discovered that although she was Baggy's cousin, Miss Trimble was a very charming young lady.

It appeared that she was at St. Hilda's School, a big girls' school on the other side of Wayland. Her meeting with Baggy was apparently the result of the solicitude of Miss Trimble's mother for her nephew's well-being. Mrs. Trimble, it seemed, was afraid that continual contact with rough boys at a big public school might tend to coarsen Baggy. A little feminine society, on the other hand, might neutralise the evil influences, and preserve his natural refinement. Miss Phyllis Trimble, though she did not seem very sure of Baggy's natural refinement herself, had good-naturedly agreed to allow Baggy the refining benefits of her company for the afternoon. Hence the meeting. Hence also, thought D'Arcy sadly, the cheerful confiscation of his wearing apparel by Baggy.

"Well, that's that!" remarked the fat junior at last, sitting back with a sigh of contentment. "I must say I feel a bit better now!"

"Bai Jove! I should hardly have anticipated that that would have been the result!" remarked Arthur Augustus dryly.

"Now, what about moving off?" suggested Trimble. "Don't want to stick about in this hole, do we? What about hiring a car and having a jaunt down to the coast, or somewhere?"

"Dear me! Wouldn't that be rather expensive?" asked Miss Phyllis, with a rather surprised look at her cousin.

"Pooh! Nothing much! A few quid, perhaps!" said Baggy airily. "I get plenty of tips, you know, from my titled relations."

"Titled relations?" echoed Baggy's cousin, in astonishment.

"I—I mean— Oh crumbs!"

Trimble had forgotten for a moment that he was in the presence of one of his relations, to whom the yarns related by him at St. Jim's could not very well be told.

"I mean that was just one of my little jokes!" he ended lamely. "He, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Vewy funnay, deah boy!" laughed Arthur Augustus.

Trimble grunted.

"Anyway, I vote we shift. What are your plans, Gussy?"

"I intend to return to St. Jim's."

"Right-ho! We'll come with you, then," said Trimble promptly.

"Perhaps D'Arcy doesn't want us with him?" put in Miss Phyllis gently.

"Bai Jove! I assuah you I shall be delighted, deah gal!"

said Gussy gallantly. "It will be a ware and charmin' pwivilege to show you wound the school, Miss Twimble!"

That decided it. They went.

As Baggy had so generously agreed to foot the bill, Arthur Augustus allowed the waitress to give it to the fat junior. Trimble looked rather alarmed for a moment when he glanced at it. But he grinned cheerfully as they rose to depart, and D'Arcy began to wonder as to the identity of the benevolent individual who had enabled the most impecunious member of the Fourth to meet such a bill with cheerfulness.

He soon found out.

Just before they reached the pay-desk, Baggy grabbed him by the arm and drew him away from Miss Phyllis.

"I say, Gussy, lend me a quid or two, will you?" he said, with the utmost nonchalance. "Awfully careless of me! I left my notecase in my other suit!"

The swell of the Fourth looked at him for a moment in silence. His feelings were too deep for words. Then, like one in a dream, he handed over two pound notes.

Trimble then settled the bill, which, judging by his cheery expression as he received the change, was for a considerably less sum than two pounds.

CHAPTER 4. Noblesse Oblige!

"HERE he comes!"
"With Trimble, too!"
"And a lady! Wouder who she is?"

Jack Blake & Co., watching the progress of the game from outside the cricket pavilion, looked rather wonderingly at the trio that had just strolled up from the direction of the School House.

"Well, Trimble's still alive, anyway," grinned Blake.

"Very much alive, too! Never seen him look so chirpy!" remarked Digby. "What's the meaning of it all, you men?"

"Give it up!"

"I think I can guess," chuckled Herries. "Ponder over the expression on Gussy's noble dial, and you'll soon get it! My opinion is that the lady in the case has something to do with it."

"How could she have?"

"Perhaps she was with Baggy, when Gussy rushed up like a giddy lion, seeking whom he might devour," said Herries. "She'd soon bring Gussy to heel. We all know what a lady's man he is!"

"Rather!"

"And, of course, that would explain why Baggy went out dressed up to the nines," grinned Blake. "You remember at the time I said it was a case of 'cherchez la femme'!"

"Stunning girl, anyway!" commented Digby. "Must be something wrong with her, though, if she knows Baggy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Blake & Co. rose from their deck-chairs and politely "capped" the newcomers as they strolled up.

Trimble, with a podgy grin, introduced them to his charming cousin, and Jack Blake & Co., inwardly marvelling that such a fair creature could be related in any way to the porker of the Fourth, made themselves amiable to her for a few minutes.

After that, Arthur Augustus produced three deck-chairs from the pavilion, and, installing Miss Phyllis in one of them, with himself and Trimble in the places of honour at either side, proceeded to air his knowledge of cricket.

At least, that was what the swell of the Fourth had intended. Unfortunately, Trimble, for once in his life in a position where he could pass disparaging remarks without endangering his personal safety, also felt like airing his knowledge, such as it was, of the great summer game.

"Bai Jove! Well hit, sir!" cried D'Arcy, as Tom Merry sent the ball away to the boundary. "That is what is called a boundary, Miss Twimble!"

"A pretty flukey one, too!" sniffed Baggy Trimble. "Personally, I don't think much of Tom Merry as a bat! Too much of a wild slogger, if you ask me!"

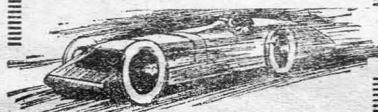
Arthur Augustus gave Baggy an expressive look through his monocle, while Monty Lowther, who was standing by, snorted. Trimble, however, rattled on cheerfully:

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"Look at the way he holds his bat! Like a blessed navy with a sledgehammer! And the way Clive's bowling, too! Rotten! I'm afraid you won't learn much about cricket here, Phyl!"

"Oh!" said Miss Phyllis, with a rather uncomfortable look at her cousin.

"There he goes again! Another wild slog!" said Trimble contemptuously. "Levison's trying to catch it. Ten to one he misses it! Yah, butter-fingers!"

"Bai Jove! That wemark is hardly appropwiate, Twimble! It was an extremely difficult catch!"

"Not a bit of it! Easy as winking!" grinned Trimble. "I tell you, Phyl, none of those chaps can play cricket for toffee! I've always said— Yaroooooop!"

Trimble didn't really mean that that was what he had always said. His wild yell was caused by the fact that the deck-chair had suddenly collapsed, precipitating him with a terrific concussion on to the ground.

"Ow-wow-wow! Help! Murder!" yelled Baggy Trimble, struggling furiously to disentangle himself from the chair.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Even Baggy's cousin, startled as she was, couldn't help joining in the merriment.

"Let me help you!" said Monty Lowther, and he obligingly seized the fat junior by the scruff of the neck and jerked him to his feet with remarkable suddenness—so suddenly, in fact, that Baggy unwittingly levered up the chair with his feet and gave himself quite a nasty blow on his snub nose.

"Whoooooop!" shrieked Baggy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now you're all right!" grinned Lowther. "Don't thank me, Baggy! It's a pleasure!"

"Groooooogh! You did that on purpose!" groaned Trimble, rubbing his injured nose tenderly.

"Of course I did! Aren't you grateful?" asked Monty innocently.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! I'm injured all over!" moaned Trimble. "That blessed chair must have collapsed!"

"Now I wonder how that could have happened?" said Monty thoughtfully.

"I believe you did it!" said Trimble, with a suspicious glare at the humorist of the Shell.

"How did you guess—I mean, how can you think such a thing?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baggy put the chair to rights again, and sat down in it gingerly, and the neighbourhood of the cricket pavilion was blessedly free from criticism from his fatuous lips for the rest of the afternoon.

After watching the play for an hour, Miss Phyllis announced that the time had come for her departure from St. Jim's.

"What, without having tea?" asked Trimble, in horrified accents.

"I'm afraid I must. I have to get back in time for prep, at St. Hilda's. And, anyhow, I've had one tea."

"Oh, my hat! That wasn't a tea!" gasped Trimble. "I was just going to suggest popping over to the tuckshop. Surely you've got time for a snack there?"

"I really don't know that I want a snack," laughed Miss Trimble. "No, I must go, really."

"Well, I suppose I'd better see you as far as Rylcombe," said Trimble, not altogether graciously. "Personally, I feel rather like a snack before we start out. What do you say, Gussy?"

"I would suggest, Baggy," answered Arthur Augustus firmly, "that in a mattah of this kind, the lady decides. Howevah, if it is impewative that you visit the tuck-shop, I shall be vevy happy to escort Miss Twimble as far as the station."

Trimble brightened up at that suggestion.

"I say, Gussy, it's jolly good of you to offer," he said. "Of course, I can't allow it, though. Look here, Phyl, I'll tell you what. I'll dodge over to the tuckshop and have a snack—just a bottle of ginger-pop, and a meat-pie, or something—while you and Gussy are strolling down to the gates. Then I'll catch you up."

A shade of annoyance crossed Phyllis Trimble's face. Possibly it was beginning to occur to her that Baggy, as a host, left a lot to be desired. But she nodded.

"Very well, Bagley."

"Shan't be long," said Trimble, turning away in the direction of the tuckshop. And with that, he rolled off, leaving the swell of the Fourth to act as host in his stead.

D'Arcy compressed his lips. As quite a lot of change out of the two pound notes still reposed in Baggy's pockets, the chances were that the fat junior's visit to the tuckshop would last longer than he had anticipated. It was quite possible, in fact, that his promise to catch them up would never

materialise. Arthur Augustus had no objection to accompanying Miss Trimble to Rylcombe—quite the reverse, in fact—but he strongly objected to the manner in which he was being used by Baggy. His object in seeking Trimble's company that afternoon had been to administer a fearful thrashing, not to act as moneylender and general assistant to the fat junior. He mentally vowed that when the fearful thrashing was administered, it should be sufficiently fearful to cover the events of the rest of the afternoon, in addition to Baggy's earlier and most glaring misdeed.

"How do you get on with Bagley?" asked Miss Trimble, as she strolled down to the gates with D'Arcy.

"Oh, vevy well, Miss Twimble—quite well, I assuah you," he said hastily. "Of course—"

"Of course, he's trying at times, I expect," finished Phyllis Trimble. "I dare say he is. His manners are quite horrid sometimes, I think."

"Weally—"

"Oh, yes, they are!" insisted Miss Trimble. "But still, he's quite a nice boy, really. A little spoilt, I'm afraid, but that's all."

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus, though as a matter of fact, the possibility that Baggy's sins were the result of his being spoilt, had not previously occurred to him.

"But I'm really and truly glad that he has a friend like you," said Miss Trimble, with a winning smile at her noble companion.

"Oh!" murmured Gussy.

"You see, mother is Bagley's godmother, and naturally she takes an interest in him. It was at her request, as you heard in the cafe at Wayland, that we met this afternoon. She will be so pleased to hear that he has such a nice friend."

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Will she weally, deah gal?"

Miss Trimble nodded brightly.

"She'll be more glad than I can tell you. And I'm glad, too! I think you're just the kind of friend Bagley needs!"

"Oh!"

"You can be a real influence for good in my cousin's life," said Miss Trimble quite enthusiastically. "I do hope you and he will continue to be good friends."

"I twust so, I'm suah!" said Arthur Augustus, feeling by no means comfortable under the steady gaze of Miss Trimble's hazel eyes.

"That's splendid! I wonder if you'd promise me something?"

"Anythin' you like, Miss Twimble!" said Gussy obligingly.

"I want you to promise that you'll stand by Bagley, and bring him up to scratch, and help him to overcome his little weaknesses," said Phyllis Trimble.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

He had hardly expected that tall order.

"Will you?" asked Baggy's cousin, with a pleading glance that was quite irresistible.

Gussy hesitated for a moment.

"I—I—"

"Oh, do say you'll promise!" murmured Miss Trimble.

"Oh cwumbs! Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I pwomise you, Miss Twimble, I will do my vevy best!"

And that was how it came about that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had thrust upon him the unenviable task of reforming Trimble!

CHAPTER 5.

The Troubles of Trimble!

TRIMBLE did not catch up Miss Phyllis and Arthur Augustus. He didn't even try. Dame Taggles' tuckshop was cool and inviting on that warm May evening. Baggy decidedly preferred it to the heat and dust of the lane leading to Rylcombe. So he stayed on.

All good things, however, must come to an end. Baggy had had a very pleasant afternoon in D'Arcy's immaculate clothes, and at D'Arcy's unwilling expense. But as he strolled out of the tuckshop, replete to the point of discomfort, there was a slightly uneasy expression on his podgy face which seemed to indicate that the mind of Bagley Trimble was not altogether serene and untroubled.

The fat junior was beginning to realise that after the feast comes the reckoning. He had had the feast. Already it was receding into the limbo of the lost, like a dream at break of day. But the reckoning was yet to come. It was that important and unfortunate fact which disturbed Trimble.

He rolled across to the School House, keeping a sharp eye out for Arthur Augustus. At the first sign of that distinctly ill-used aristocrat, he was prepared to fly for dear life.

But Arthur Augustus had not yet returned from Rylcombe,

and Trimble, with quite a feeling of relief, reached the House without seeing a sign of the swell of the Fourth.

The junior cricket game had ended, and Trimble ran into quite a crowd of the players, going up the steps. They grinned as they spotted him.

"Whither bound, old fat man?" drawled Ralph Reckness Cardew. "Goin' to sign your will? Better be quick about it, you know!"

"He, he, he!" sniggered Trimble mirthlessly. "I say, you fellows, have you seen Gussy just lately?"

"No; but he won't be long," said Jack Blake consolingly. "And unless I'm greatly mistaken you'll meet him as soon as he comes in."

"And then you'll be for it, fatty," grinned Herries.

"Oh dear!" murmured Trimble. "I—I think I'll go upstairs. Look here, you chaps, if Gussy asks for me when he comes in, you might tell him I'm ill, will you?"

"No trouble at all!" grinned the leader of Study No. 6, seizing the fat Fourth-Former by the shoulders. "I'll soon cure you!"

"Leggo, you ass!" roared Trimble. "Gerraway, you idiot! Ow-wow-wow! Yarooooop! Gug-gug-gug-groooooogh!"

"You'll soon feel better!" panted Blake, shaking the invalid with tremendous vigour.

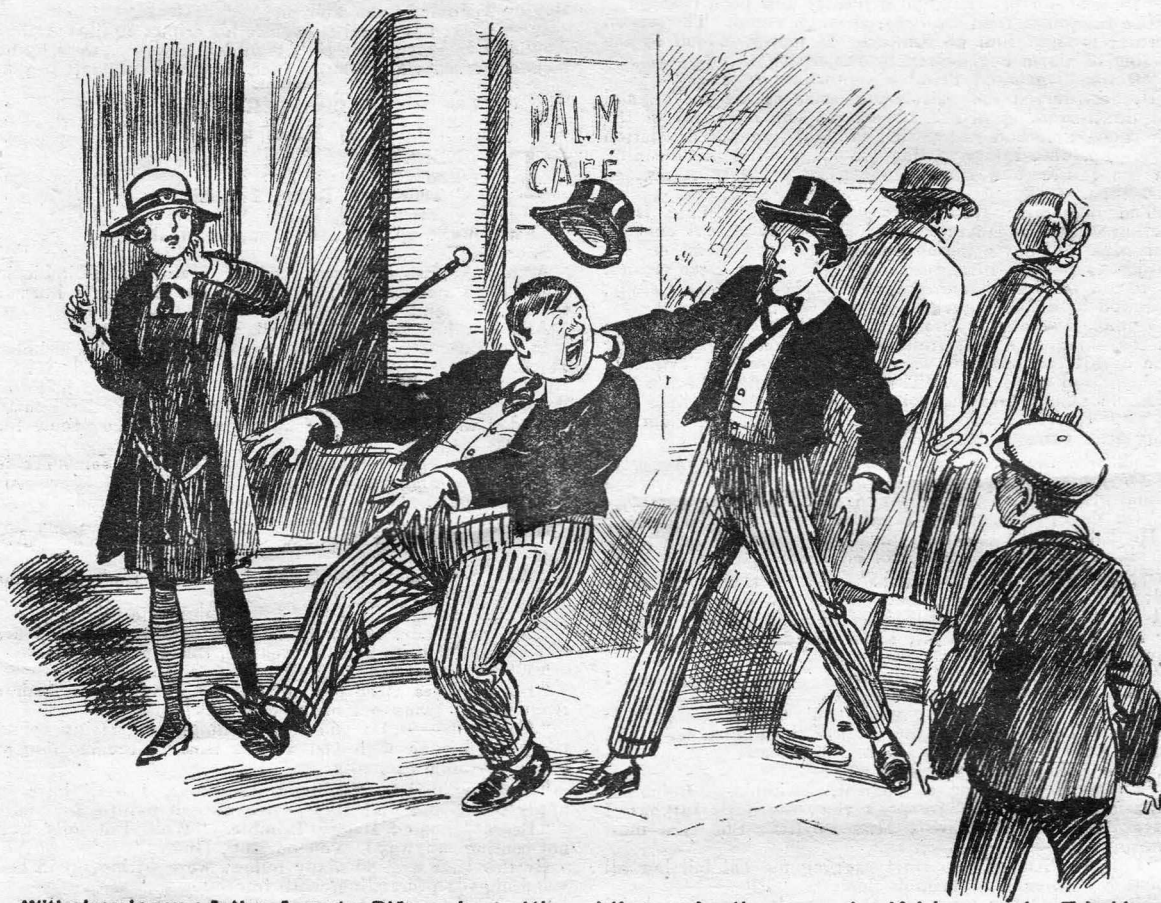
"Yarooooop! Whooooop! Lemme go!" shrieked Trimble, struggling wildly.

"Not until you feel better!" gasped the skipper of the Fourth, between his vigorous shakes. "Better now?"

"No, you ass! Ow-wow-wow!"

"Still feeling ill?"

"Whooooop! Yes! Oh crikey! I mean, no! I'm better!"



With gleaming eyes Arthur Augustus D'Arcy advanced through the crowd on the pavement and fairly pounced on Trimble, dragging him back by the collar. "Got you, you wottah!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "Wow!" yelled Trimble. "Groooogh! Dragimoff!" (See Chapter 2.)

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" grunted the fat junior. "It's a fact, Blake! I've come over queer in the last five minutes. Feel all funny, you know!"

"Not so funny as you're going to feel when Gussy gets hold of you!" chuckled Blake heartlessly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, but this is serious," groaned Trimble. "I've got a shocking ache down the spine, you know, and awful stabbing pains in the chest!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Do you see spots floating about in front of you?" asked Jack Blake.

"Oh, rather! Millions of 'em!" said Trimble eagerly.

"And do you feel giddy and sick every now and again?"

"I should jolly well think I do!"

"Then you're suffering from a disordered liver," said Blake sagely. "All you want is something to stimulate the liver. A ten-mile run would cure you!"

"But I can't run ten miles while I'm in agony," said Baggy pathetically.

"Well, a good shaking is very helpful," said Blake. "I'll give you one if you like!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here——" began Baggy, in alarm.

"Good! Told you I'd soon cure you!" said Blake, panting from his exertions as he released his patient.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groooooogh! You fearful idiot!" roared Trimble, glaring at the humorous skipper of the Fourth with a glare that was almost homicidal. "I'd mop up the floor with you, only I feel so ill!"

"What, not better yet? You'd better have another dose!"

"Yarooooop! Keep him off!" shrieked Baggy, as Blake reached out again. "I mean I really am quite all right now, you rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!"

Trimble rolled off, leaving the unsympathetic juniors yelling.

The fat junior's feelings were not improved by a letter which was awaiting him in his study in the Fourth Form passage. Trimble glanced at it indifferently as he entered. From the fact that it was unstamped he could tell that it had been delivered by hand from somebody in the immediate locality, and that the prospects of its containing a remittance were, therefore, extremely remote.

He opened it and groaned aloud as he read the contents.

"Rylcombe.
"Wednesday.

"Dear Master Trimble,—As you have not settled your long-outstanding account of £3 8 0, nor answered my previous letters, I must ask you to regard this as my final demand. Unless you pay the amount owing within seven days I shall feel compelled to call on your headmaster and ask him to see that I obtain an early settlement.—Yours truly,
"ELIZA MURPHY."

"Beast!" murmured Trimble feebly, referring in that disrespectful manner to Mrs. Murphy, the proprietress of the bunshop at Rylcombe.

Baggy's account with Mrs. Murphy had stood at three pounds eight shillings for a very considerable time. Mrs. Murphy had been patient—remarkably patient, in fact, but the limit of her patience had evidently now been reached.

The fat junior read the letter through again. The second perusal brought him no comfort. It merely added to the feeling of alarm engendered by the first.

"Rotten!" grunted Trimble lugubriously.

He transferred the unwelcome letter to his pocket, and sat down moodily in the armchair. The pleasures of the afternoon that had just passed brought him no consolation now. For once in a way Baggy's podgy mind was dwelling on the future—and a decidedly gloomy future it seemed just then.

The immediate trouble was, of course, coming from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. That alone was serious enough, but Mrs. Murphy's threat to approach the Head on the subject of Baggy's little unsettled bill was even more serious. It meant an uncomfortable interview in the Head's study, followed by a flogging and probably detention as well.

Trimble was not philosophical enough to take consolation in the old dictum that troubles never come singly. Either one of his two troubles was sufficient to occupy Trimble's podgy mind quite fully. The combined weight of the two of them almost overwhelmed him, and it was perhaps just as well, therefore, that he was relieved of one of them not long after entering his study.

Suddenly the door swung open, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, his monocle gleaming in his eye, and a cricket-stump grasped firmly in his hand, stood in the doorway.

"Oh dear!" murmured Trimble.

He had intended locking the door. Mrs. Murphy's disturbing letter had put it out of his head.

"Now, you young wuffian!" said Arthur Augustus, advancing into the study and closing the door after him. "I twust you are weady to weceive your gwuel! Weady or not, Twimble, I am just about to administah a feahful thwashin'!"

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Trimble. "Look here, Gussy, I haven't hurt your rotten togs—"

"Kindly wefwain fwom wefewwin' to my clobbah as 'wotten,' Twimble!" said the swell of the Fourth icily. "I do not wish to argue ovah the mattah at all!"

"Look here, Gussy, you keep off—"

"Pway be silent for a moment, Twimble. Befoah I thwash you I am goin' to speak vewy sewiously to you. I have just left your cousin, Miss Phyllis. She is a most charmin' gal—"

"I know. And if you start ragging me I'll tell her all about it!" threatened Trimble fiercely. "I'll—"

"Pway hold your tongue! As a result of your claimin' me as a fwient this aftahnoon, Miss Phyllis has been left with the impression that we are on fwiently terms. Natuwallly, I hardly liked to disillusioh her on that point, so the impressioh will wemain. Now, owin' to her weceivin' that false impressioh, Miss Phyllis, displayin' a sollicitude for you which you certainly do not mewit, has asked me to keep an eye on you, and bwing you up to the scwatch."

"What, me?" asked Trimble, temporarily forgetting his alarm, in his surprise at that information. "Oh, great pip! He, he, he!"

Trimble's podgy face broke into a grin, and he chuckled. "I assuah you, Twimble, I do not wegard it as a laughin' mattah!" said Arthur Augustus grimly. "As Miss Phyllis has requested me to look aftah you, I shall certainly do so! Kindlay undahstand, therefoah, that fwom this moment you are in my charge!"

"Oh, erikey!"

"In the cires," continued Gussy, "I shall make it my first aim to thoroughly weform you. At pwesent, I'm wathah afwaid you are a gwubbay, lazy, gweeday, unpwincipled boundah—"

"Here, cheese it!" said Trimble indignantly.

"Without any sense of honah or decency," concluded Arthur Augustus, unheeding. "I shall see to it, howevah, that things are immediately changed."

"Beast!" snorted Trimble ungratefully.

"Undah my care, I shall expect to see you become honouvable, industwious, and gentlemarly, in a vewy short space
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of time, Twimble," said D'Arcy, displaying remarkable optimism. "I personally shall twain you to wise carlay, to work hard, to speak twuthfully, and to become a great sportsman."

"M-m-my hat!" murmured Trimble dazedly.

"The pwocess of weform will begin to-morrow mornin'," said Gussy. "In the meantime, Twimble, I wposo to give you the feahful thwashin' you so wichly deserve! Pway come here!"

Trimble didn't come there. He dodged, and made a rush for the door.

But Gussy was there before him. And the fat Fourth-Former found that all his struggles were unavailing when once he was in the hands of the slim, but decidedly muscular, swell of the Fourth.

The cricket-stump rose and fell. And there was a weeping and a wailing and a gnashing of teeth in the study of Bagley Trimble of the Fourth.

In this way did Trimble expiate his crimes against Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Trimble's troubles, however, were by no means over. As a matter of fact, they had only just begun.

CHAPTER 6.

Gussy Makes a Start!

"T WIMBLE!"

Snore!

"Twimble! Baggy Twimble!"

Snore!

"Pway wake up, you lazy young boundah!"

Snore!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy eyed the somnolent Twimble in doubt for a moment. Then he seized the fat Fourth-Former by his hair, and wrenched.

And Twimble, with a wild yell, woke up.

It was the morning after the visit of Miss Phyllis Trimble at St. Jim's. Rising-bell had not yet gone, and Arthur Augustus was the only one awake in the Fourth Form dormitory. Evidently, however, the swell of the Fourth intended that that state of affairs should not continue for long.

Baggy Trimble blinked up in a state of considerable astonishment and rage.

"Groooooogh! What the thump—" he stuttered.

"Pway get up, Twimble!"

"Get up?" hooted Trimble. "Before rising-bell? Are you potty?"

"What's the idea, Gus?" called out Jack Blake from his bed.

"'Tain't rising-bell, is it?" asked Digby sleepily.

"No, deah boy. I am goin' to take a twot wound the quad with Twimble befoah bwekkah, that's all."

"Wh-a-a-at!" howled Baggy.

"I'm goin' to twot you wound the quad," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway get up at once, Twimble!"

"You—you— Do you think I'm going trotting round the blessed quad with you at this time in the morning?" roared Trimble excitedly.

"Yaas, wathah! Othahwise, of course, I shall have to apply force, and that may pwove wathah painful for you."

"Beast!" hooted Baggy Trimble. "Well, I'm jolly well not coming, anyway! You buzz off, Gussy!"

By this time a good many fellows were sitting up in bed watching the proceedings with interest.

"Gone off your rocker, Gussy?" inquired Hammond.

The swell of the Fourth glared.

"If that wemark is meant to be humowous, Hammond—"

"Not at all. I mean it," said Hammond, quite seriously. "If you're not off your rocker, why the thump should you want to trot round the quad with Trimble?"

"Echo answers 'why?'" grinned Levison. "Has the Head appointed you physical instructor to Baggy, by any chance, D'Arcy?"

"No, deah boy," answered Arthur Augustus innocently.

"The fact of the mattah is I'm startin' a campaign to weform Twimble."

"A whatter?"

"A campaign to weform Twimble," repeated Gussy firmly. "Hitherto, Baggy has been a fwightfully slack, gwubbay young waseal. Fwom to-day all that is goin' to cease. Undah my care, Twimble will wapidly become a thoughw sportsman, and will abandon all his formah wotten ways, I twust."

"Great pip!"

"He will, will he?"

"What does Twimble say about it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was no need to ask that question. Judging by the expression on Trimble's face, his views on the subject of his approaching reform did not justify D'Arcy's optimism at all—quite the reverse, in fact.

"As a first step in the pwocess of the weform," explained

D'Arcy, "I pwopose to get Baggay into the habit of early wisin', and a good healthy spwint wouud the quad befoah bwekkah ewevy mornin'. That is why I have awakened him to-day."

"Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fourth roared. Arthur Augustus himself looked very earnest and sincere as he explained matters. But the Fourth refused to take the matter seriously. They roared.

"Well, Baggay," said Gussy, turning to Trimble again. "If you are weady—"

"I'm not, and I'm not going to be!" hooted Trimble, tucking himself more securely under the bedclothes. "You lemme alone, you rotter! Gerraway, you brute!"

"Vewy well, then. I have no alternative but to use force!"

Arthur Augustus advanced very firmly on the recumbent Trimble, and proceeded to use force.

In the use of that force he was not altogether successful.

As he bent over the bed Baggy Trimble's fat knees shot up with a suddenness that gave the swell of the Fourth no possible chance. They met Gussy's jaw—and the concussion proved more painful to Gussy's jaw than to Baggy's knees.

Crack!

"Yawoooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus temporarily abandoned the business of reforming Trimble in favour of the business of nursing his jaw.

"Gwooooooogh! Oh ewikey! I weally believe my jaw is fwactured! Gwoooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I fail to see any weason for laughtah!" gasped Arthur Augustus, rubbing the injured jaw tenderly. "Oh deah! Gwoooooogh!"

"Now p'raps you'll let me alone!" growled Trimble.

"I wefuse to let you alone! I insist on your wisin' immediately!"

"Rats!"

"Wade in, Gussy!" chuckled Jack Blake. "It's the first time we've seen a real live reformer at work! It's quite entertaining, isn't it, chaps?"

"Oh, rather!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't be widic, Blake! This is a sewious mattah! For the last time, Twimble, are you goin' to get up?"

"No!" roared Trimble.

"Vewy well! In the cirms, I shall thwow this jug of watah ovah you!"

"How to be a Reformer. Part Two!" grinned Herries.

"Oh, lor! Keep off, you idiot!" shrieked Trimble, as the swell of the Fourth returned to the attack, with a jug of water poised in the air.

"Now, Twimble, unless you wise befoah I have counted thwee, I shall thwow this watah wight ovah your bed! One—two—"

In the ordinary way Trimble of the Fourth was slow to think, and slower still to act. But emergencies will reveal in most people latent and unsuspected qualities. And this emergency revealed in Trimble the latent qualities of quickness of thought and action.

As the swell of the Fourth, holding his jugful of water menacingly on high, pronounced the word "two" something happened to Trimble.

The fat junior leaped up in his bed like a podgy jack-in-a-box, and flung out his hands to the menacing jug.

Arthur Augustus was just about to pronounce the third and fatal number. That number remained unpronounced.

For Trimble had seized the bottom of the jug with his fat hands, and, with a movement like lightning, had inverted the jug over Gussy's noble head. And, instead of pronouncing an English numeral, the swell of the Fourth pronounced a series of syllables belonging to no known language.

Swooooooh!

"Whooop! Gug-gug-gug-gwooooooh! Ooooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gwoooooogh! Poooff! Gwoooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With water running down his face and over his shoulders in miniature cascades, and water oozing out of his shirt and

trousers, Arthur Augustus presented a truly pitiful object at that moment.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he gasped. "Twimble, you—you— Oh ewikey! Oh deah! I'm wet!"

"I thought I noticed a splash on you!" grinned Hammond.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gasping like a newly-landed fish and oozing water as he went, Arthur Augustus staggered towards his locker and began to divest himself of his saturated garments.

Meantime, Baggy Trimble, with a fat smirk, got back into bed. The Fourth simply yelled.

"Is that all this morning, Gus?" asked Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have you finished reforming Trimble now?" gurgled Digby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh deah! I wegard you all as a howwid lot of boundahs!" said D'Arcy. "This is not a laughin' mattah—"

"Sorry! We thought it was?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Natuwally, I cannot pwoceed with the wun now!" gasped Gussy, beginning to dry himself with a rough towel. "Allow me to inform you, Twimble, howevah, that I haven't finished with you yet. Far fwom it!"

"Well, let's know when the next performance begins, won't you?" pleaded Kerruish. "We'll all turn up and watch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats!"

And with that monosyllabic retort D'Arcy closed the conversation. For the time being he did not feel like any further discussion on the subject of Trimble's reform.


CHAPTER 7.

Gussy Persists!

D'ARCY'S first attempt at reforming Trimble had proved singularly unfortunate. But the swell of the Fourth was not the sort to be discouraged at any task by a set-back at the beginning. By the time breakfast was over, he had almost forgotten his painful and humiliating failure in the dormitory. And he was full of plans for Trimble's future.

"About Twimble—" he began, as he quitted the dining-hall with the chums of Study No. 6 after breakfast. "Flow Trimble!" said Blake. "We were talking cricket."

(Continued on next page.)



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"Weally, Blake, I should have thought cwicket could have remained ovah for a few minutes—"

"Trimble can remain over for a few weeks!" grunted Blake.

"Or years!" said Digby.

"Or centuries!" added Herries recklessly.

"Wats! I insist on discussin' Twimble now. As you are awah, I have taken that scwubbay young wascal in hand—"

"It looked as if he'd taken you in hand up in the dorm!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"What's your idea, anyway, Gussy?" asked Digby curiously. "Is this reform bizney the result of Miss Trimble's visit? She looked as if she was talking to you like a Dutch uncle—"

"Well, pewwaps I did pwomise Miss Twimble that I'd keep an eye on Baggay—"

"So that's it, is it?" growled Blake. "Just like you to promise anything to a blessed girl!"

"Wats! Pwomise or no pwomise, I'm determined to bwing Twimble up to the scwath. I weally believe the youngstah has some good points—"

"Dashed if I've ever noticed 'em!"

"I think pwobably Baggay has been wathah spoiled—"

"I doubt whether there was anything to spoil, in the first place!" grinned Herries.

"Anyway, deah boys, I insist on twyin' to make a man of Twimble, so it is useless to argue ovah that," said Arthur Augustus. "Now, the point that awises is—how to do it?"

"Is that a conundrum?"

"Pway don't wot! Duwin' bwekkah I've been thinkin' it out, and I have come to the conclusion that, in the first place, I must get Baggay away fwom the wagtag and bob-tail of the Form with whom he associates at present, and give him the advantage of decent society. I theretofah pwopose to allow him to come about with us fwom now on."

"Oh!"

"I shall invite him to tea in the studay this aftahnoon, and pewwaps get him to stay with us for pwep," said D'Arcy thoughtfully.

"You will, will you?"

"Yaas, wathah! Possibly while I am w'itin' out my impot for Lathom you chaps will be able to help Baggay with his pwep. Aftah that we may go ovah to the gym and give him a little instwuction in boxin' and so on."

"I see!"

"In bwief," said Arthur Augustus, "I think that the weform of Twimble will be most easily accomplished by you fellows backin' me up and makin' a weal fwien of him. Now, what do you think?"

Jack Blake stopped and looked at Herries and Digby.

"You hear what Gussy proposes?" he said. "I suppose you think the same as I do about it?"

Herries and Digby grinned and nodded.

"Bwavo! I'm feahfully glad you're unanimous, deah boys," said Gussy, beaming.

"Don't be too glad!" grunted Blake. "As we all think the same, we may as well give you our answer together. Ready, chaps?"

"Rather!"

Jack Blake & Co. gave their answer together; and D'Arcy's beaming smile underwent a rapid transformation as they gave it. For their answer, much to Gussy's surprise and indignation, consisted in their falling on him and depositing him on the floor.

"Yooooop!"

"That's our answer!" grinned Blake. "Now think it over!"

And with that Gussy's three chums strolled cheerfully

away, leaving their noble colleague in a state of great surprise and indignation.

After that little incident the swell of the Fourth did not broach the subject of making Baggay Trimble a member of the Co. again. Instead, he resigned himself to having to effect the reform of Trimble alone and unaided.

All that day, to the delight of the Fourth, and the exasperation of Trimble, he followed the fat junior about, giving him words of counsel and solemn admonitions in a never-ending stream. Although he had entered on his task with reluctance, Arthur Augustus rather fancied himself in the role of reformer. He began to look forward to the time when Trimble, as a result of his efforts, should be a paragon of virtue.

Certainly, if Trimble had observed all the precepts that his newly-appointed guide, philosopher, and friend uttered in the course of the day, he would have become a model citizen.

But he didn't. On the contrary, he seemed greatly to resent Gussy's efforts to reform him. Baggay's own opinion was that if anybody needed reforming, it was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. As for Baggay himself, he was firmly convinced that his code of morals and behaviour was at least equal to that of any other junior at St. Jim's.

The morning and the afternoon passed, therefore, leaving Trimble still unregenerate.

At tea-time Trimble discovered the first advantage of having someone to look after his welfare. Being once more in his customary state of impecuniosity, and seeing no prospect of tuck falling like manna from Heaven on to his study table, the fat junior had been contemplating having tea in Hall.

Tea in Hall at St. Jim's was not exactly a banquet. It usually consisted of weak tea, and what was popularly known as "bread-and-scrape." For that frugal combination Trimble had very little use; he fell back on it only as a very last resource. But on this particular day it seemed that he would have no choice in the matter.

Then Arthur Augustus stepped in. And Trimble realised that there was something to be said in favour of possessing a guardian angel, after all.

They went to the school tuckshop for the meal, Gussy deeming it prudent, in view of the attitude of his chums, not to take Trimble to Study No. 6. And, although his noble benefactor would not allow him to have all that he wanted, Trimble enjoyed considerably more in both quantity and variety than he could have enjoyed in Hall.

"Thanks, Gussy!" said Trimble quite graciously, as they quitted Dame Taggles' little shop together. "Rather decent of you, I must say! So-long!"

"Pway don't mench, deah boy! Don't wun away! We are goin' ovah to the gym now."

"Are we?" said Trimble, in surprise.

"Yaas, wathah! While I am lookin' aftah you, Baggay, I intend to see that you get plenty of healthy exercise. Now that you have had some gwub, a few wounds with me with the gloves on will impwove your digestion, you know."

"W-will it?" stuttered Trimble.

"Yaas, wathah! Come along, deah boy."

Baggy Trimble came along. He had to! Gussy's right arm, linked in his left in an iron grip, gave him no alternative in the matter.

But he didn't want to. His remarks made that quite clear.

Arthur Augustus, however, like the celebrated gladiator, heard, but heeded not. He continued to pursue a straight track for the gymnasium, with Trimble in tow. And at the gym, in due course, they arrived.

On the way they collected quite a crowd of interested followers.

The Terrible Three were strolling across the quad as Gussy and his new protege, locked in fond embrace, proceeded on their way. They stopped and looked and brought up in the rear. Kerruish and Julian and Hammond joined them immediately afterwards, full of eager interest. Wilkins and Gunn came over from the School House steps to inquire what was on, and grinned and fell in with the rest when they learned that an exhibition of Trimble-reforming was anticipated.

"Here we are, deah boy!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, as they entered the gym, followed by the grinning crowd.

"Look here, I'm not doing any blessed boxing to please you or anybody else!" said Trimble, in a state of great alarm.

"I'm afwaid you will have to, Baggay," said Gussy, releasing his hold on Trimble at last. "Pway take off your jacket and waistcoat, and put on a pair of boxin'-gloves! Tom Mewwy, will you please oblige by helpin' Twimble on with the gloves?"

"Certainly, old chap!" grinned Tom Merry.

"I tell you I don't want to do any blessed boxing!" hooted Trimble. "Lemme get out, Tom Merry!"

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"Not just yet, my pippin!" said the junior captain cheerfully. "Keep an eye on him while I dig out some gloves, will you, Monty?"

"What-ho!"

While the swell of the Fourth discarded his jacket and waistcoat and donned a pair of gloves Tom Merry prepared the reluctant Trimble for the fray.

Baggy begged and prayed and threatened alternately in his anxiety to avoid the little spar. He could hardly have made more fuss if he had been in the process of preparing for the execution block. But all his pleadings and threatenings fell on Tom Merry's ears like water on a duck's back. And Baggy, willy-nilly, was forced to put on the boxing-gloves.

At last, he was ready. The grinning spectators formed a ring, and Baggy stepped into it.

"Go it, ye cripples!" sang out Monty Lowther. "Show him what boxing really means, Trimble!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It would have been difficult to imagine anyone less capable of showing Gussy what boxing really meant, at that moment. Trimble, as a matter of fact, in spite of his knowing that it was only intended to be a light sparring match, was in a state of blue funk.

"Pway wade in, Baggay!" said Arthur Augustus encouragingly, as he entered the ring. "First of all, adopt a good posish—so! Now hit out with your left—so!"

For the purpose of illustration, the swell of the Fourth gave Trimble a slight flick on the jaw. It was the merest tap, hardly sufficient to have disturbed a fly; but it was quite sufficient to disturb Trimble.

"Yaroooooop!" he howled.

Then he sat down on the floor, and began to take off his boxing-gloves, groaning as if in mortal agony.

"Bai Jove! Whatever are you doin', Baggay?" asked Arthur Augustus, fixing his monocle in his eye, and regarding the recumbent Trimble in astonishment.

"Grooooooh! I'm finished! You've knocked me out!" answered Baggy Trimble.

"Oh, great pip!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The spectators fairly yelled at the expression that appeared on D'Arcy's countenance when Trimble made the surprising announcement that he had been knocked out.

"I know when I've had enough," said Trimble. "No good carrying on till I'm absolutely exhausted, is it?"

"B-bai Jove!" stuttered Gussy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going now!" said Trimble, getting on his feet again.

"But I haven't touched you!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

"Haven't you?" said Trimble argumentatively. "You jolly nearly killed me, I think! Another blow like that might put the finishing touch to it. Anyway, I'm not risking it! Ta-ta!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh deah!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

He didn't attempt to stop Trimble, this time. Baggy seemed temporarily to have deprived him of the power to do anything.

"Cheer up, Gussy!" chuckled Kerruish. "This reforming business is giving us the entertainment of our lives! For goodness' sake don't forget to let us know when the next act takes place!"

"Oh, rather!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway, don't be widic, deah boys! This is by no means a laughin' mattah!"

But for the second time that day the juniors seemed to disagree with the swell of the Fourth on that point. At any rate, the gym echoed to the sound of their laughter for quite a long time after.

CHAPTER 8.

Trimble Thinks It Over!

DURING the extremely short period which he devoted to prep. that evening, Baggy Trimble wore a thoughtful frown upon his podgy brow.

The frown continued to exist after he had, with a sigh of relief, closed his school books for the night, and installed himself in the arm-chair with a paper-bag containing toffee.

Undoubtedly, there was every reason for the appearance of such an expression on the fat junior's countenance. Mrs. Murphy's bill for three pounds eight shillings hung over Baggy's head like the sword of Damocles. And although, in the ordinary way, Baggy did not let trifles like bills worry him, he couldn't help worrying over this one.

For with this one was associated a threat on the part of the creditor—a threat that sent an unpleasant shiver down Trimble's spine every time he thought of it.

Unless that bill was settled by the coming Wednesday,

the matter would be brought to the notice of Dr. Holmes. And that, as Trimble had to admit to himself, would mean Trouble, with a capital T. Hence Trimble's frown.

While he wrestled—more or less—with French irregular verbs, and English History, the spectres of Mrs. Murphy, holding her bill, and Dr. Holmes, holding a birchrod, kept haunting the fat Fourth-Former. Later, when prep was over, those same spectres marred the full enjoyment of the toffee.

How to raise the sum of three pounds eight shillings Trimble had no idea. His pocket money for the remainder of the term would not amount to anything approaching that sum, and his credit in the Lower School was, unhappily, not good enough to give him any hope that he could borrow to such an extent.

He would cheerfully have sold some of his personal possessions to have escaped the anticipated flogging, but for the fact that most of his personal possessions had long since disappeared in exchange for hard cash, and that the residue was practically unsaleable.

In the hour of his need, it might have been supposed that Trimble would have written to Trimble Hall, which he had often assured St. Jim's, was a land flowing with milk and honey. But he didn't write to Trimble Hall. Possibly the milk and honey had ceased to flow at that palatial residence.

Trimble felt very glum, as he meditated on his misfortunes, and racked his brains to think of a way out of the fix in which he found himself. The probabilities were that Mrs. Murphy had also been feeling glum during the long months in which she had waited for Trimble to settle up. But the creditor's side of the question did not trouble the fat debtor. It didn't even occur to him that there was a creditor's side, in fact!

While he was meditating, there came a tap on the study door, and Arthur Augustus looked in.

The swell of the Fourth nodded a little coldly. He still felt a little aggrieved over the incident in the gym., which incident had somewhat dampened his ardour for reforming Trimble. Only the strong sense of duty from which Arthur Augustus perpetually suffered had brought him along as a matter of fact.

"Good-evenin', Trimble!" said Arthur Augustus politely.

"Oh crumbs! You again!" groaned Trimble. "Aren't you going to give me any peace, you silly idiot?"

"No, Twimble, I am not!" answered the swell of the Fourth decisively. "I fully intend to wowwy you out of the feahfully slack habits into which you have fallen, if I do nothin' else."

"Oh dear! Look here, Gussy, do buzz off!" pleaded Trimble. "I'm busy thinking."

"I wefuse to buzz off, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "To tell you the twuth, Twimble, I twotted in to see whethah you'd like to come down to the Common-room, and have a game of chess!"

"Chess! Great pip! Do you think I'm going to footle away my time playing chess?" asked Trimble, with a pitying look at the swell of the Fourth.

"Chess is a jollay fine game, Baggay!" said D'Arcy warmly.

"Rats! It's an idiotic waste of time, if you ask my opinion!"

"Vewy well, then! Undah the*airs, I can pewwaps hardly expect you to play, deah boy!"

"Good!" said Trimble, with relief.

"I take it, howevah, that you are comin' down to the Common-room, Baggay?"

Trimble shook his head.

"Not to-night! I'm feeling rather groggy, as a matter of fact. That beast—"

Baggy stopped short. He had intended making a reference to Mrs. Murphy and her bill. But it had occurred to him at the last moment that Arthur Augustus, who was somewhat particular about the treatment of the fair sex, might object to his use of the term "beast" in connection with Mrs. Murphy, and that it would be more judicious, therefore, to refrain from mentioning the matter at all.

"Pway go on, Baggay!" encouraged Arthur Augustus, regarding his fat charge through his monocle.

"I—I'm blessed if I haven't forgotten what I was going to say!" said Baggy, with a feeble grin. "Clean gone out of my head, you know! Funny, ain't it?"

"Extwairdinawy!" agreed Gussy.

"Still, it doesn't matter! Look here—"

Trimble's little eyes dwelt on Arthur Augustus for a moment or two with an expression that was not altogether nice. Cunning and greed seemed to dominate Bagley Trimble just then.

"Well?" said the swell of the Fourth.

"I say, Gussy, you're a jolly good sort, you know, really!" remarked Trimble.

"Bai Jove! It's wathah nice of you to say that, Baggay!" said Arthur Augustus, in surprise.

"But I mean it!" said the fat junior warmly. "You're one of the best! I've always said it! Only this morning I said to Mellish: 'Blood will tell. There's no mistake about it. For a real all-round sport, give me my old pal Gussy!' That's what I told Mellish!"

"Did you, weally? You flattah me, deah boy!" said D'Arcy modestly.

"Not a bit of it! That's just what you are!" insisted Trimble. "You can always tell a genuine aristocrat, you know! They're different from the rest! You never find any meanness or stinginess about 'em!"

"Oh!" said Arthur Augustus.

"It's a fact, though!" went on Baggy Trimble. "There's something open-handed and generous and—and big about the real aristocrat!"

Arthur Augustus nodded rather dubiously. He had begun to detect a peculiar flavour in Trimble's eulogistic references to the aristocracy.

Having reached his top note, so to speak, Trimble was silent for a few seconds. Then he leaned forward, with a very confidential look on his podgy face.

"I say, Gussy, could you manage to lend me a fiver for a few days?" he asked.

And Arthur Augustus understood.

"It'll only be for a few days, of course, old chap," explained Trimble. "I'll square up out of my first remittance from home."

"Gweat Scott!" said the swell of the Fourth.

"No need to tell you, of course, that your money's safe—safe as in the Bank of England!" said Trimble. "You know me, anyway, don't you, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove! I thought I did, deah boy!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Have you got a fiver on you?" asked Trimble anxiously.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, good! Well, thanks very much, then, old chap!" said Trimble gratefully, extending a fat paw to receive the anticipated banknote.

To have provided a fitting conclusion to the graceful conversation, D'Arcy should, of course, have immediately produced a five-pound note and handed it over to his podgy protege.

Unfortunately, D'Arcy did nothing of the kind.

Instead, he fixed his monocle in his eye and bestowed on Baggy a look that should have shrivelled that junior up.

"So this is the weason for your flattowin' wemarks!" he remarked icily. "I must confess that I had felt wathah suspish about them, Twimble!"

"Oh, really, Gussy—"

"I weally begin to think that you are incowwivable!" said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head seriously. "Were it not for the fact that I have given my pwomise, I should give you up as a bad job!"

"Look here—" said Trimble wrathfully.

"Howevah," continued Gussy, unheeding, "I intend, in spite of your discouwagin' lack of pwogwess, to cawwy on, and vewy soon, I twust, the impwovement will begin to show. In the meantime, I uttably refuse to lend you a fivah, or anythin' like it!"

"Beast!" grunted Baggy Trimble.

"To-mowwow mornin' I shall insist on your comin' for a wun wound the quad first thing, and I pwomise you, Baggay, that I intend to give you no west all day!"

"Bully!" yelled the fat Fourth-Former furiously.

"And now, as you apparently do not wish to play chess, I will leave you!" finished Arthur Augustus. "Cheewio, deah boy!"

"Rats!"

And, with that uncomplimentary valediction, Trimble sat back in his chair again, and did not trouble to regard the going of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Having drawn a blank so far as D'Arcy was concerned, Trimble felt that his last faint hope had gone. Nobody else in the Form was in the least likely to advance him five shillings, let alone five pounds.

Baggy sighed as he thought of the crisp notes that reposed in D'Arcy's pocket. D'Arcy was generous and open-handed enough, he knew. If Jack Blake or Tom Merry or any other of D'Arcy's friends had asked for a loan of five, or even ten pounds, they would have had it immediately. But Baggy Trimble came into rather a different category; he was outside the select circle. D'Arcy's fivers were his chums' for the asking, but the chances that he would ever "chum" with Trimble were remote indeed.

Suddenly Baggy started. Were those chances so remote, after all? Supposing he behaved just as the swell of the Fourth wanted him to behave! Supposing he gave Gussy just the results that optimistic reformer had hoped for! Would he then become persona grata in a financial sense, so far as Gussy was concerned?

Baggy's little eyes began to gleam again.

For some time after that he sat quite still in the arm-

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chair, his cunning, if podgy, brain turning the matter over and over.

The more he thought over things, the more struck he became by the advantages offered by friendship with D'Arcy.

If he got to work quickly he might well impress the swell of the Fourth sufficiently to raise the amount of Mrs. Murphy's bill in time to avert the calamity.

Furthermore—and at this stage in his thoughts Baggy's mouth watered—his reform would bring other desirable results in addition to the clearing up of Mrs. Murphy's bill. It would perhaps lead to his being asked to such feeds and picnics as Arthur Augustus "stood." Invitations to Eastwood House, the residence of D'Arcy's noble father, might also be expected in the natural course of events. A rosy future somehow seemed to open out before Baggy Trimble as he pondered on these matters.

The drawback, of course, was that it involved a certain



"None of these chaps can play cricket for toffee!" said Trimble to his cousin Phyllie. "I've always said—Yaroooop!" Trimble gave a wild yell as his deck-chair suddenly collapsed and he landed with terrific concussion on the ground. "Ow-wow-wow! Help! Murder!"

(See Chapter 4.)

amount of inconvenience to himself. It involved his getting up early for sprinting purposes, and observing certain standards of behaviour which Baggy did not find it easy to observe. But, weighing up the advantages to be gained against the inconveniences caused, the conclusion began to force itself on the fat junior that the advantages would be worth the little trouble involved.

As he went up to bed that night Baggy Trimble wore a fat grin on his face.

He had made his decision, and he fully intended that on the morrow he was really going to astonish the natives.

CHAPTER 9.

The Reform of Trimble!

"Gussy!"

No answer.

"Gussy! D'Arcy!"

Still no answer.

"Gussy! D'Arcy!"

Still no answer.

"Wake up, Gus! It's me! Trimble, you know!"

At the third time of asking Arthur Augustus D'Arcy woke up.

He sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes.

At the side of his bed was standing a podgy junior who was already nearly dressed. The podgy junior was smiling a somewhat sleepy smile of greeting.

"Oh, gweat pip!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Twimble!"

"How do you do, Gussy?" remarked Trimble. "Thought you were never going to wake up!"

"Bai Jove! What's the time, Baggay?"

"Half-past six, old chap!"

"H-half-past six?" stuttered the swell of the Fourth in astonishment.

"I thought I'd see if I couldn't be the first one out this morning, you know," said Baggay. "Now, what about it, Gus? Ready for a sprint, eh, what?"



Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Did I hear you awright, deah boy?" he stammered. "I undahstood you to ask—"

"Whether you were ready for a sprint. That's right!" nodded Trimble. "Well, are you?"

"Bai Jove!"

"If you're not, of course, say so, and have done with it!" said Trimble. "I'm going for a trot round, anyway!"

"A twot wound?" repeated D'Arcy, almost in stupefaction.

"Rather! Nothing like an early-morning sprint for keeping a fellow in trim!"

"In twim?"

"You bet! I'm afraid I've been getting a bit slack lately, but a few mornings at this bizney will soon make me as right as a trivet!"

"Twivet?" said D'Arcy mechanically.

"Well, are you coming or not? I shan't wait long, you know!"

"M-m-my hat!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "I—I—Do you weally mean this, Twimble, or is it some stwange jape on your part?"

"Jape! Of course it's not a jape!" said Trimble, quite indignantly. "You yourself suggested a sprint last night. Well, here I am ready for it! Blessed if I know why you should think I'm japing!"

"But——"

Arthur Augustus paused and scratched his noble forehead in perplexity. He couldn't believe the evidence of his senses yet.

"Well, what do you say, old chap? Coming or not?" asked Trimble.

"Yaas, wathah!" said the swell of the Fourth, slowly becoming convinced that Baggay Trimble meant it. "I'm comin', deah boy! I'm fwightfully sowwy if I appeahed to be surprisid, but, you see——"

"Don't mench, old chap!" said Trimble, with an airy wave of his fat palm. "I know I've been a slacker in the past. But all that's going to change now. I've been thinking seriously over all you've been telling me lately——"

"Bai Jove! I am vevy gwatified to heah it, Baggay!"

"And now I'm going to turn over a new leaf!" said Trimble.

He made that remarkable announcement as loudly as possible, seeing that some of the fellows were beginning to sit up and take notice. And the effect which he desired it to create was immediately created.

"What's that?" yelled Jack Blake, almost jumping out of bed.

"You're going to what?" howled Herries incredulously.

"I was just telling my pal Gussy that I'm going to turn over a new leaf!"

"T-turn over a new leaf?"

"Oh crikey!"

"Never!"

There was a yell of incredulity from all sides. The whole dormitory was awake now.

"What's the catch, Baggay?"

"Say it again! We can't believe it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All right, you chaps, you can cackle!" said Trimble. "You'll soon see that I mean it, anyway. My old pal Gussy has been pointing out one or two things to me lately, and I'm going to profit by his advice!"

"Oh, my giddy aunt!"

"I'm rather afraid that in the past I've not been everything that could have been desired——"

"Great pip! I should think not!"

"Not by a long, long chalk!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I don't think anyone will be able to point the finger of scorn at me again," said Baggay, rather dramatically, disdainfully ignoring his ribald interrupters. "Gussy, like the good old pal he is, has set me on the right road. And, as I say, I'm going to turn over a new leaf now!"

"M-m-my hat!"

"Draw it mild!"

The Fourth apparently refused to believe in Trimble's sudden and astonishing reform.

"Is this one of your little wheezes, Gussy?" asked Jack Blake. "Have you bribed him to dish us up this yarn?"

"Weally, Blake, if you insinuate that I have been engagin' in bwibewy and cowwupation I shall give you a feahful thwashin'!" said Arthur Augustus, pausing in his dressing operations to glare at his irreverent leader.

"Well, someone has, that's a sure thing!" remarked Blake.

"Hear, hear! Who is it?"

"Own up, Baggay!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys, I must wequest you to give moah cweedit to Twimble!" said D'Arcy severely. "I must confess I was a little surprisid myself when Baggay woke me up and revealed his change of ideahs. But now that the first feelin' of surprisid is ovah, I am beginnin' to wealise that, aftah all, there is nothin' to wondah at."

"Oh!"

"You see, deah boys, there is a feahful amount of bad in the best of us, and a fwightful amount of good in the worst of us!"

"Go hon!"

"Doubtless, although it was not vevy appawnt to the superficial observah, there has always been a gweat deal of latent good in our fwriend Baggay. It only wanted someone to come along—someone with a discernin' eye, and a certain amount of tact and judgment—for the good to be bwrought out."

"H'm!"

"Well, deah boys, someone has come along now," explained Gussy simply. "All day yesterday I twied to bwing out the good in Baggay. And now my work has borne fwuit!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"I am pwoud and happy to have achieved such a satisfawtory result," said Arthur Augustus, "and I twust that I shall heah no moah wibald wemarks on the subject. Now, Baggay, I am weady!"

And with that the swell of the Fourth linked arms with Baggay Trimble and quitted the dormitory.

The Fourth were left in a state of complete bewilderment. Such strange happenings at such an early hour in the morning seemed beyond reasonable explanation altogether. Most of the juniors turned over and went to sleep again, leaving the solution of the conundrum till later in the day.

The incident in the dormitory was but the first of a series of shocks which the Fourth received that day. Trimble had set himself out to impress his Form-fellows, and in the next few hours he certainly succeeded in doing so.

At breakfast-time he was cheerful and smiling. This state of affairs, in itself, was rather surprising. Trimble was usually a rather ungracious individual, particularly in the early morning, when he was still full of resentment at having to abandon the comfort of bed. But on this occasion a bright and cheery expression filled his ample countenance, as with his usual ravenous appetite, he waded into the provender which the authorities of St. Jim's had provided for his consumption. And the Fourth marvelled.

But it was not until later on, during morning lessons, that the Fourth began to appreciate what a remarkable change had come over Baggy.

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, had been asking his Form one or two questions to test their knowledge of the previous night's prep, and by chance he had picked on Trimble.

Trimble's answers were unsatisfactory. That was nothing unusual. They usually were. But this time they were particularly unsatisfactory, and a frown of disapproval began to appear on Mr. Lathom's face.

"Trimble," he exclaimed, "you have been neglecting your preparation!"

Trimble was silent. The Fourth had expected him to protest with his customary fervour that he had fairly slaved at his prep. But Trimble, for once, was silent.

"How long, may I ask," pursued Mr. Lathom, "did you spend over preparation last evening?"

And then came the bombshell. On every single occasion when this kind of thing had happened before, Trimble had vowed solemn and vehement vows that he had toiled at his prep with terrific zeal for the entire evening.

But this time, for the first time in history, Trimble staggered the Form by telling the truth.

"Half an hour, sir!" he replied.

There was a gasp from the Fourth.

Mr. Lathom started violently.

Baggy Trimble, with a slightly uneasy look in his face, continued to look straight ahead.

Mr. Lathom looked at Trimble in astonishment. He, like everyone else, had expected the old, old story from his podgy pupil. He was surprised, but not altogether displeased, to hear Trimble's frank admission. The truth, from Baggy Trimble, seemed very refreshing.

"Indeed!" he remarked. "And pray what was your reason for neglecting preparation in such a manner?"

"I'm afraid I was lazy, sir," said Trimble.

"Oh, great pip!" muttered Jack Blake.

"What's the matter with Baggy?" murmured Digby quite faintly. "He's actually telling the truth!"

The Form-room was in quite a buzz over Baggy's unexpected development.

"You—you were lazy?" stuttered Mr. Lathom, almost unable to believe his ears.

Trimble nodded.

"I'm afraid so, sir. I'm sorry now, of course. And I'll work like a nigger to-night to make up for it, sir. But last night, I must admit, I neglected prep, and it was only because I was lazy."

"Trimble!" gasped Mr. Lathom, in perplexity.

"Oh, it's true enough, sir!" said Baggy seriously. "Some fellows, of course, would try to hoodwink you, and tell a lot of lies about it. But I'm not like that. I'm truthful about it, you see, sir!"

"Well, your story has the ring of truth in it, I must say," said Mr. Lathom, with a faint smile. "It is, perhaps, rather gratifying to know that you frankly admit your fault, without trying to deceive me, Trimble. I am—hem!—pleased to observe it."

"Thank you, sir!" said Trimble humbly.

"In the circumstances, I shall overlook the matter on this occasion."

"Oh, thank you very much, sir!" grinned Trimble.

"But, naturally, you will understand that your frankness will not—hem!—excuse you on any other occasion," said Mr. Lathom rather hurriedly. "You may resume your seat, Trimble!"

The Fourth gasped at that happy ending to Trimble's surprising exhibition.

Trimble sat down.

He jumped up immediately afterwards with a loud yell.

The humorous hand of Herries had placed a drawing-pin on Trimble's seat while he had been on his feet. And the full weight of Bagley Trimble descended on that pin.

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"Yaroooooop!" yelled Trimble.

Mr. Lathom swung round with a startled exclamation. The master of the Fourth was receiving more shocks than were good for his nerves that morning.

"Trimble!" he gasped, a look of suspicion coming into his eyes as they rested on the fat junior. "Trimble, how dare you!"

"Yow-ow-ow! I couldn't help it!" groaned Trimble.

"Silence, sir!" roared Mr. Lathom angrily. "How dare you make such wild noises in class, Trimble! Perhaps you interpret my leniency just now as a sign of weakness. If so, I will soon demonstrate how mistaken you are! Come out, sir!"

"Oh!" gasped Trimble.

He rolled out to the front of the class.

And then the Fourth received another shock—the greatest of the series to which they had been subjected that morning.

Everybody knew that Herries had placed the drawing-pin on Trimble's seat. Herries was the only one in the room near enough to do it. And everybody knew that Trimble also would very quickly realise who was the guilty party.

Consequently, everybody confidently anticipated that Trimble would sneak, and give Herries away as soon as he got out to Mr. Lathom's desk.

To the overwhelming amazement of everybody Trimble did nothing of the kind.

Instead of sneaking, he assumed an expression of resolute martyrdom, and remained silent.

The Fourth didn't recognise the expression as one of resolute martyrdom. To their eyes, all that happened was Baggy's snub nose seemed to ascend a little higher in the air, and his lips became slightly more curled than usual.

But they knew that he made no effort to shift the blame on to Herries. They knew that he held out his hand to be caned without a word of protest. And the realisation made them blink.

Herries jumped up in sudden alarm.

"Half a minute, sir!" he gasped. "It wasn't Trimble's fault at all! It was mine, really!"

"Indeed!" remarked Mr. Lathom, lowering his cane. "Pray explain your meaning, Herries!"

Herries explained his meaning. The explanation cost him two on each hand, but that did not worry Herries much. Nothing seemed of any importance now, in comparison with the utterly astounding event, the genuineness of which the Fourth had at last been brought to believe in. All else paled into insignificance.

Baggy Trimble had reformed!

CHAPTER 10.

Amazing!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY, needless to say, was delighted at Trimble's sudden transformation. His noble face simply beamed, as the Fourth crowded out of their Form-room after being dismissed that morning.

"Well, deah boys, I wathah think you owe me an apology, what?" he chirruped, as he joined Blake & Co. in the passage outside the Form-room.

"H'm!" said Jack Blake dubiously.

"Pewwaps you will admit that, affah all, there are possibilities in Twimble when a fellow with a little tact and judgment gets on the job?" said Arthur Augustus, with a slightly condescending smile.

"H'm!" remarked Digby.

"Well, I must say Trimble seemed sporty enough over that pin I put on his seat," admitted Herries grudgingly. "Must give the devil his due, I suppose! But, you know, I can't understand it!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Nor can I!" said Jack Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"And I'm jolly sure I can't!" finished Digby, shaking his head.

"Weally, deah boys, I'm surprisid at you!" said the swell of the Fourth, eyeing them indignantly through his monocle. "I am awah that none of you have evah been keen on Baggay, but that is no weason for failin' to wecognise the changes I have effected in him."

"Changes, rats!" said Blake. "I half believe he's spoofing you for some reason or other, and that this reform bizney is all part of a shady scheme."

"Oh, really, Blake!" exclaimed Trimble giving the skipper of the Fourth a reproachful look as he came on the scene. "Look here, don't you believe him, Gus, will you? 'Honi soit, qui—qui—' Well, you know what I mean, don't you, old chap?"

"I pwesume you mean 'Honi soit qui mal y pense'—'Evil to him that evil thinks,' deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus gently. "Just so, Baggay! I twust you will

ignore Blake's remarks. I assure you, Blake has no evil intention, however. He is simply a bit too suspicious, and peppery lacks the qualities of discernment and judgment."

"Well, I'll forgive him, then!" said Trimble magnanimously.

"You'll what?" asked Jack Blake, with a glare.

"I'll forgive you!" said Baggy cheerfully. "I must say it's rotten to have such a suspicious nature, though. Come on, Gus! Let's get out and have a bit of fresh air!"

And, somewhat hurriedly, Trimble grabbed Gussy by the arm and rolled off, leaving Blake staring, and a crowd of Fourth-Formers grinning.

The news of Trimble's reformation spread like wildfire through the Lower School during the dinner interval, and rapidly became the principal topic of conversation. Tom Merry & Co., of the Shell, heard all about it from Jack Blake, and, marvelling, told the rest of the Shell. Wally D'Arcy picked it up from Mellish, and excitedly informed an arcy crowd of fags that the age of miracles, in spite of all rumours to the contrary, was not yet past. Trimble's reform began to cause quite a lot of excitement at St. Jim's.

A good many were sceptical about it. But the Fourth, astonished as they were, mostly inclined to the belief that some strange kink in the podgy brain of Bagley Trimble had indeed brought about a genuine change in him—that he really had turned over a new leaf.

As a matter of fact, that was the only reasonable explanation there could be of the happenings in the Form-room. Trimble's apparent willingness to be caned rather than sneak was absolutely without precedent. He had never been known to act in such a way before. What else, then, could explain his behaviour but a complete change of heart?

Everybody, of course, had heard by this time of the efforts of Arthur Augustus to reform the fat junior. Nobody had imagined that he would succeed—above all, that he would succeed in so short a space of time. But it certainly seemed as though he had.

Trimble did not rest content with the sensation he had already succeeded in creating in the morning. After tea that day he arrayed himself in flannels, and went down to the cricket practice-nets, where a number of the Shell and Fourth had already gathered.

They greeted Trimble, open-mouthed. The only occasions when Trimble had been known to attend games-practice previously had been occasions when practice was compulsory. This was not one of those occasions, however, and the fat junior was therefore at liberty to snooze in his study, prow the House for tuck, or do anything else that his own sweet will suggested to him. Yet he had come to net-practice. And the juniors could only stare, and wonder still more.

"Come down for practice, Baggy?" asked Tom Merry.

"Rather! Must keep my hand in, you know!" said Trimble cheerfully. "Where's Gussy?"

"Blessed if I know! But look here, Trimble, do you really mean you've come down to practise cricket?"

"Of course I have!"

"You're quite all right, I suppose?" asked Tom Merry, quite anxiously.

"Of course I am!" snorted Trimble.

"You feel quite sane, I suppose? And you're not walking in your sleep?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ass!" grunted Trimble. "Look here, Tom Merry, you're junior captain. What about putting me on to bowl for a bit? I'm rather a dab at bowling, you know!"

"Anything for a quiet life!" agreed Tom Merry good-naturedly. "We don't often get the opportunity to see you play, anyway. Come over and have a try against Lowther!"

Trimble nodded, and accompanied the leader of the Shell across to the net, where Monty Lowther was holding his wicket against all comers.

"Make way for Trimble, you men!" called out Tom Merry. "Baggy's going to show you the game as it should be played!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"Right-ho, Tommy!"

The bowlers stood aside to make way for Trimble. Monty Lowther, with a grin on his face, carelessly held his bat ready to defend his wicket, should defence prove necessary. And Trimble got ready for a preliminary run.

Like the rest of Trimble's little "stunts," this one attracted quite a lot of attention. Fellows at the neighbouring nets ceased play, to watch the unusual spectacle. Little groups of passers-by assembled to look on. Juniors came running up on the scene from all parts of the playing-field. Trimble's attempts at bowling began to assume an importance comparable only with the deciding ball in a Test Match.

"Play!" yelled Baggy Trimble.

Then, his little legs working like clockwork, he bore down

on the stump that marked the bowlers' crease, and left fly.

The ball flew from his hand like a shot from a gun.

If it had come into contact with the wicket, undoubtedly the wicket would have been "spreadeagled" in a most satisfactory manner.

Unfortunately, it didn't.

It didn't even enter the area enclosed by the nets. By some extraordinary means the ball travelled behind the fat junior instead of in front of him.

But it did hit something. That "something," as it happened, was a human being, and no less exalted a personage than George Alfred Grundy, of the Shell, at that.

"Yoooooooooop!" shrieked Grundy, as he felt something solid and swift come into painful contact with his ear.

"Yaroooooooooh! Whooooooooop!"

"M-my hat!" stuttered Trimble. "D-didn't I hit the wicket?"

"Depends on what the wicket was!" grinned Manners.

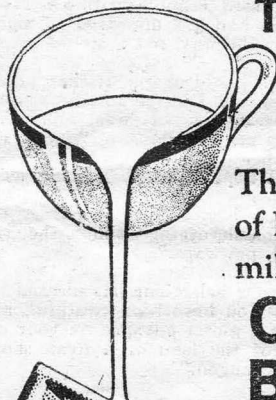
"Was it Grundy? If so, you scored a bull right enough!"

"Oh dear! Did I hit Grundy, then?" gasped Baggy, in dismay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

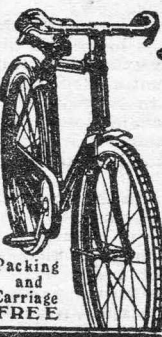
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"Oh, for! I say, you chaps, I think I'd better buzz off. I've just remembered I promised to meet a fellow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Baggy Trimble hurriedly quitted the cricket-field, leaving the players almost helpless with laughter. Fortunately for the safety of his podgy person, George Alfred Grundy was also helpless for a time—not, however, from the same cause!

In that inglorious manner ended Trimble's attempt at cricket. In spite of his lack of success as a bowler, however, Trimble had added to the favourable impression he had already created—and he felt satisfied.

As he rolled up the steps of the School House, Trimble met Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The swell of the Fourth gave him a very friendly nod, and stopped for a moment.

"Bai Jove! Been down to the nets, deah boy?" he inquired genially.

"Yes. Just been down to put in a bit of practice, you know," said Trimble, in a manner that seemed to imply that cricket practice was an everyday occurrence with him.

"I am vewy pleased to heah it, Baggay!" said Arthur Augustus approvingly. "I must wemark, deah boy, that you have changed to quite an astonishin' degwee since last night."

"Well, I made up my mind to do it, and I'm doing it—that's all," said Baggy simply. "Somehow or other, Gussy, you brought it home to me last night. Something you said must have struck a chord in me, somewhere or other! At any rate, I made up my mind to follow your good advice, and I'm doing it."

"Well, that's all wight, then," said Arthur Augustus. He looked at Trimble a little sharply as he spoke. Somehow, in spite of the commendable honesty of its tone, Trimble's little speech was not altogether convincing.

"I think I'll push on now," said Trimble, with a nervous glance back to see if Grundy had yet appeared in sight. "Sorry I can't stop, Gus! By the way, old chap—"

"Well, Baggay?"
"Hope you won't be offended, old chap. Rather unfortunate, and all that, you know, but I haven't had my usual remittance from Trimble Hall yet. I was wondering whether you'd like to advance me a fiver?"

"Oh!" said Gussy.
"Not offended, old chap, I hope?" asked Trimble, with great solicitude.

"No; hardly offended, deah boy. That is hardly the word," said the swell of the Fourth, eyeing Trimble thoughtfully. "A little disappointed, pewwaps."

"Oh, really, Gussy—"
"Wight through the day your behaviour has pleased me no end," explained Gussy. "You have been twuthful, and fwank, and sportay, which is a great advance on your old fabits. But your wrequest for the loan of a fivah shows that you have not altogethah changed."

"Oh, really, Gussy—"
"Had you changed completely, you would have wemembahed that you still owe me quite a considerwable sum on old loans which you have nevah wepaid. And that wecollection would suahly have pwevented you askin' for more."

"Oh!"
"And now I'm afwaid I must go, as I have to see Tom Mewwy. See you latah, deah boy. Cheewio!"
Trimble, with a somewhat sickly smile, nodded farewell, and Arthur Augustus departed.

The swell of the Fourth would have been still more disappointed had he been able to hear the word that Trimble uttered as the fat Fourth-Former gazed after him.

It was only a monosyllabic word, but it conveyed words of meaning. It was:
"Beast!"

CHAPTER 11.

Baggy's Wheeze!

AFTER leaving Arthur Augustus, Trimble went up to the Fourth Form passage and locked himself in his study. He was very careful to lock the door this time. George Alfred Grundy was not a particularly vengeful individual, and was not likely to remember his painful encounter with Trimble's cricket-ball for long. But his hand was heavy when it did descend, and it was just as well to take precautions, in case he should still be thirsting for Baggy's gore.

Having locked the door, Baggy flopped into the armchair with a sigh of relief, and rested. He felt tired.

Trimble frequently felt tired. Before sleepy sickness had attained the eminent position of one of the great modern diseases, Baggy had suffered from it. But to-day he felt more tired than ever. He was positively exhausted, in fact.

For the best part of a day Baggy had abstained from all the petty meannesses which he habitually practised, and had behaved, according to the schoolboy code, in an irreproach-

able manner. And that unaccustomed mode of living had been extremely trying to Baggy Trimble.

He had been up with the lark; he had resolutely resisted temptations to apply his inquisitive eyes and ears to key-holes; he had sternly kept his hands from the picking and stealing of other people's tuck; he had bravely endeavoured to stick to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; he had risked a caning, in the cause of honour. Never, in the entire course of his podgy career, had Trimble spent such a virtuous day.

Apart from the mental fatigue that all those remarkable achievements had produced, he had made himself physically tired by the unusual exercises of running round the quad and practising cricket. Those two feats alone would have been sufficient, in the ordinary way, to knock him up for a week.

All things considered, therefore, it was not surprising that Trimble was exhausted.

But he was more than that. Besides being exhausted, he was disappointed, and began to experience a feeling of alarm and misgiving.

Supposing he had made a mistake—that even in the event of his becoming the apple of Gussy's eye, he would still be unable to obtain the badly needed cash from him? In that case, all Baggy's trouble would have been in vain—all his carefully and ostentatiously practised virtue would have achieved nothing! Trimble shuddered at that dreadful thought.

Surely there was a way out! Surely, now that he had succeeded in creating the universal impression that Gussy had reformed him, there was a way of inducing the swell of the Fourth to transfer some of his spare cash to Trimble's pockets!

Trimble applied his podgy brain to the question. In the course of time that podgy brain began to clear, and an idea began to form itself.

Trimble's little eyes began to lose their tiredness, and to gleam again. He sat up in the armchair, and a lurking grin appeared on his face.

"Got it!" he muttered gleefully at last.
The idea had come!

After that, Trimble's behaviour was peculiar. He drew his chair up to the study table, produced pen, ink, and note-paper, and took down a dictionary from the bookshelf.

Then he started writing a letter.
That letter was evidently going to be something unusual in the way of letters, judging by the pains Trimble took with it.

The fat Fourth-Former tore up sheet after sheet, evidently for the reason that they did not reach the required standard.

It was not like Trimble to trouble about a standard of any kind in letter-writing. In the usual way, a letter from Trimble resembled, more than anything else, a sheet of paper over which an ink-drenched spider had crawled. But some deep reason in Baggy's podgy brain urged him to do better on this occasion. And better he did.

With the aid of the dictionary and a carefully-controlled right hand, Trimble eventually succeeded in producing a letter, the make-up and general appearance of which would have pleasantly surprised Mr. Lathom. It was neatly written, and the paper was unsullied by so much as a single grimy thumbmark. It was an achievement of which Trimble might well have been proud.

Strangely enough, however, Trimble didn't seem to be proud of it. For the name he had signed at the foot of the letter was not his own—or, at least, it was his own to the extent of the surname only.

He had signed the letter "Phyllis Trimble."
The motives that had induced him to act in that mysterious manner were evidently of a pleasing nature, for as Baggy surveyed his handiwork a fat and cheerful grin illuminated his face.

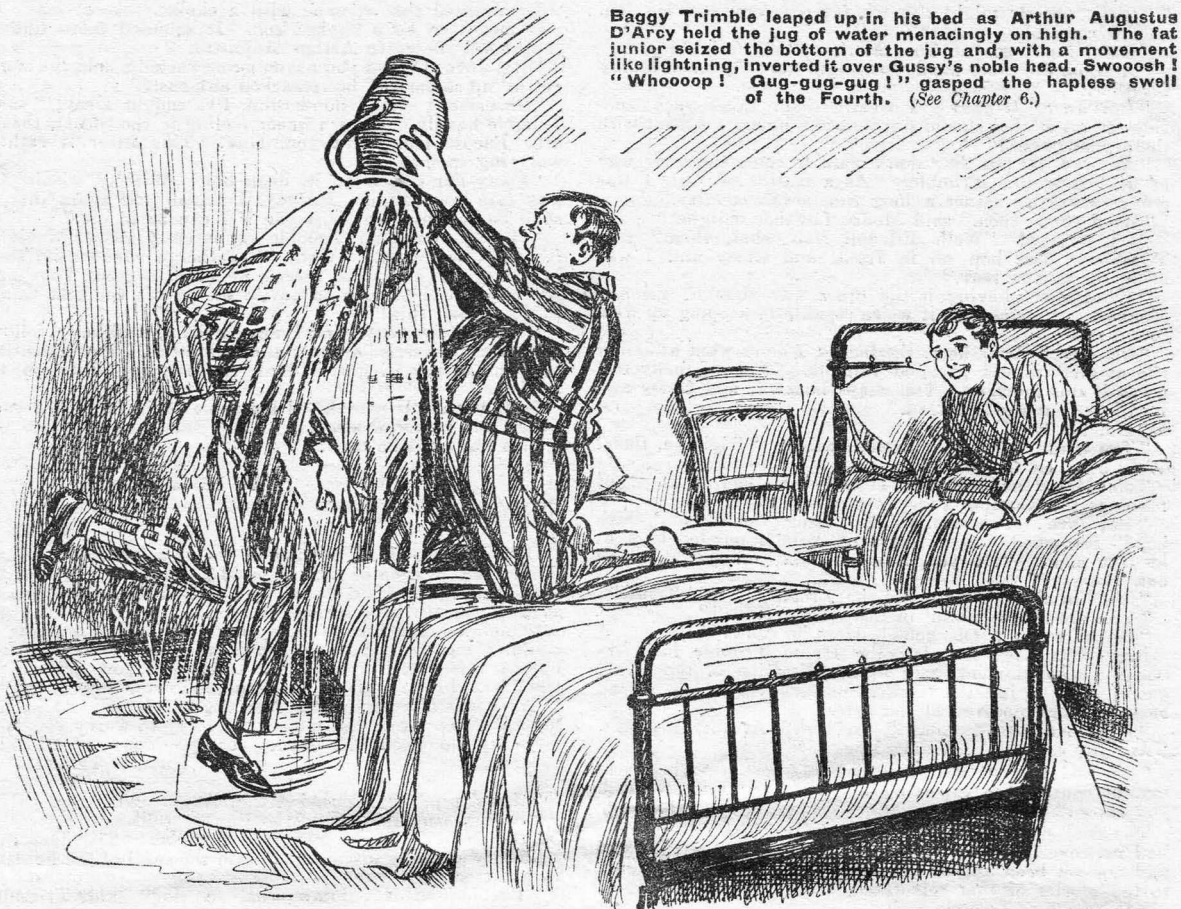
"That'll fetch him all right!" he muttered.
His next move was even more peculiar than the moves which had preceded it.

Still exercising the same meticulous care, he folded up the letter and addressed an envelope to no other person than:

"Bagley Trimble, Esq.,
St. James' College,
Rylcombe, Sussex."

Having done that he sealed up the letter, stuck on a somewhat grimy stamp, which he discovered in a waistcoat pocket, and went downstairs to the post-box.

And for the remainder of the evening an air of cheerful anticipation seemed to surround the Fourth-Former. Trimble's strange tactics evidently gave him reason for feeling very satisfied. Whether that feeling was going to be justified by events was a question which only the future could decide.



Baggy Trimble leaped up in his bed as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy held the jug of water menacingly on high. The fat junior seized the bottom of the jug and, with a movement like lightning, inverted it over Gussy's noble head. Swoosh! "Whoooop! Gug-gug-gug!" gasped the hapless swell of the Fourth. (See Chapter 6.)

CHAPTER 12.

A Letter for Trimble!

"READY, Gussy?"

"Shan't be long, deah boy!"

For the second morning in succession, Trimble had been the first out of bed in the Fourth Form dormitory, and had once again had the previously undreamt-of experience of waking up Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Trimble had quickly dressed, and was now waiting for his noble patron, who was rather more leisurely in the business of donning his garments.

"Hallo, Fatty! The joke's still on, then?" called out Jack Blake, from his bed.

"Oh, really, Blake—"

"What, are they at it again?" asked Herries, jerking a tousled head up from his pillow and blinking at Trimble in surprise.

"No stopping Baggy, once he gets going, is there?" grinned Levison.

"Not much!"

"Weally, deah boys, I see no weason at all for all this vibalwdwy!" remarked Arthur Augustus severely. "Undah my care Baggy has already become quite a new man, and, as I see it, he is no longah a fit subject for widicule. Pway dwp it, deah boys!"

The "deah boys" grinned, and dropped it, and Arthur Augustus, still looking very serious and severe, finished dressing and quitted the dormitory with his podgy protegee.

"Well, deah boy, feelin' fit, and weady for anythin'?" asked D'Arcy, as they travelled down the stairs.

"Oh, rather!" said Trimble, though it must be confessed that his tones were not very enthusiastic.

"Wight-ho, then! We'll do the complete wound of the school buildings this mornin'," said the swell of the Fourth brightly.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Trimble. "I—I don't think I do feel so very fit, on second thoughts, old chap!"

"Oh!" said Arthur Augustus, not quite so brightly.

"Nothing very serious, of course!" Trimble hastened to explain. "Slight touch of the flu, or—or appendicitis, or something, you know. Just enough to make me feel I don't want too much running."

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy, rather surprised. "In

that case, Baggy, I wondah you were keen enough to wake me so earlay."

"Oh, well, of course, you see, I was thinking of the letter," explained Trimble thoughtlessly. "I—I mean—"

"The lettah?" repeated Arthur Augustus, with a stare.

"Oh, crumbs! I mean, I wasn't thinking of the letter at all! The last thought in my mind was the letter, really, you know!"

"But what lettah?"

"There isn't one," said Trimble, quite feverishly. "What I really meant to say was that I woke up early, because I wasn't thinking about the blessed letter."

"The lettah that doesn't exist?" asked Gussy in astonishment.

"That's it!"

"Oh!"

Arthur Augustus lapsed into silence after that, and once or twice glanced at Trimble rather dubiously. Inwardly, he was wondering whether there was anything wrong with the fat junior's brain that morning. Meanwhile, Trimble was mopping his heated brow and thanking his lucky stars that his unintentional blurting out of the principal subject of his thoughts had not betrayed him too far.

As they passed through the hall Trimble's little eyes roved eagerly in the direction of the letter-rack. At that early hour, however, the morning post had not arrived, and only one or two stray letters left over from the previous night could be seen. The moment for which Trimble was waiting had, therefore, not arrived.

The two Fourth-Formers ran into Tom Merry, and Manners, and Lowther as they quitted the House. The Terrible Three also had chosen that morning for a sprint.

"Top of the morning, Gussy!" called out Lowther cheerily. "Still running down the jolly old fat, Baggy?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, replying for Trimble. "Goin' for a twot wound, deah boys?"

"Right first time, Gus!" answered Tom Merry. "Coming along with us?"

"With pleasuah, deah boy!"

"Half a mo'!" interrupted Trimble, looking by no means pleased at the suggestion of joining forces with the Terrible Three. "Look here, Gussy, we don't want to drag these chaps in with us, do we?"

"Why not, deah boy?"

"Well, we—we might run too fast for 'em, and fag 'em out, or something, mightn't we?"

"Great pip!" gasped Tom Merry. "You might!"

"And, on the other hand, you might not!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Bai Jove, Baggay! I weally don't think such considewations as that should pwevent our havin' a spwint with these youngstahs!"

"Anyway, p'raps they don't want to come the same way as us," suggested Trimble. "As a matter of fact, I was going to suggest rather a long run, across country."

"We'll come, then," said Monty Lowther obligingly.

"Oh, crikey! Well, I'll tell you what, then," said Trimble. "You hop on in front, and Gussy and I will bring up in the rear."

"What about having it the other way about?" grinned Manners. "We can see if we're capable of keeping up with you, then!"

"Oh, dear! Look here, the fact is, I don't want a blessed run at all!" almost groaned Trimble. "I don't really feel up to it this morning. You chaps buzz off, and Gussy and I will have a stroll instead."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The truth at last!" grinned Lowther. "Right-ho, then! We'll buzz, eh, Tommy?"

Tom Merry nodded, and Trimble breathed a sigh of relief as the Terrible Three, chuckling, moved off.

"Bai Jove! You seem a little swange this mornin', deah boy!" remarked Arthur Augustus, with a puzzled look at his fat pupil. "Do you considah that you are fit to be out, Baggay?"

"Oh, I'm all right now, old chap, thanks!" said Trimble.

"You are not wamblin' in the head, I twust?"

"Of course not! Oh, good! Here he comes!"

Ever since they had left the House Trimble had frequently been glancing over in the direction of the school gates. Now at last the familiar uniform for which he had been waiting appeared at the gates.

"Bai Jove, the postman!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Are you expectin' a lettah, Baggay?"

"Oh, no! Not at all," said Trimble hastily—"that is to say, of course, I'm expecting a letter from Trimble Hall, you know!"

The swell of the Fourth smiled faintly. Much as Trimble had improved in the direction of adhering to the truth, he had not yet been able to eliminate an occasional reference to the glories of that celebrated, though somewhat vague, abode known as Trimble Hall.

"Vewy well. We will stop him, and inquiah if there is anythin' for us," said Arthur Augustus.

Trimble nodded eagerly, and the two walked over towards the carriage-drive up which the old postman was trudging with his load of letters.

"Mornin', young gents!" said the postman amiably, as they drew near him.

"Good-mornin', deah boy! Any lettahs for eithah of us?"

"Lemme see, now! Master D'Arcy and Master Trimble! I think I've got one for each of you."

And, true to his word, the postman produced two letters.

"Thanks, deah boy! Bai Jove, a lettah fwom home!"

The postman, with a nod, moved off again in the direction of the House, leaving Arthur Augustus contemplating, with a very cheerful countenance, the two crisp five-pound notes which were tucked inside his registered letter.

Meanwhile, Trimble had opened his letter and was reading it.

As he did so he assumed an expression of sudden concern and dismay.

While Arthur Augustus was engaged in reading the short note which his noble father, Lord Eastwood, had sent with his handsome remittance, he did not, of course, notice Baggy's expression. As Baggy considerably retained it for his special benefit, however, that didn't matter much.

"Oh, good heavens!" murmured Baggy dramatically.

D'Arcy looked up.

"Anythin' w'ong, deah boy?" he inquired.

"Oh, nothing much!" replied the fat Fourth-Former, continuing to look as if something was very wrong indeed.

"I twust you have not received bad news fwom home?" said Arthur Augustus, looking rather concerned himself as he observed Baggy's woe-begone countenance.

"No. Nothing from home, old chap!" answered Trimble in dolorous tones.

"No sewious illness in the family or anythin' like that?"

"No. Nothing like that."

"Bai Jove! Pway do not look so downhearted, then, Baggay!" said Arthur Augustus. "If there is any way in which I can help, deah boy, I assuah you I shall be vewy pleased to do so!"

"You're very good, old chap! But it's my trouble, not yours!" moaned Trimble.

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He finished that remark with a choked sob—at least, it was meant to be a choked sob. It sounded more like a suppressed sneeze to Arthur Augustus.

"Bai Jove, I twust you haven't contwacted a cold thwough gettin' up so early?" he remarked anxiously.

"Oh crikey! No, I don't think I've caught a cold!" said Trimble hastily. "Just a queer feeling in the throat, that's all. Excuse me, won't you, Gus? This letter is rather worrying to me!"

"Pway don't mention it, deah boy! Without wishin' to pwy into your affairs, Baggay, I assuah you again that I shall be delighted to assist you if I can be of use."

"H'm!" remarked Trimble, apparently rather dubious for the time being. "Well, it's rather a confidential sort of thing, but I suppose there's no harm in your knowing. Perhaps you'll be able to advise me what's the best thing to do. Read this!"

Looking very grave and sympathetic, as befitted a fellow called in to exercise his tact and judgment in a confidential matter, Arthur Augustus took the letter and began to read it.

As the contents penetrated his noble brain he looked surprised and rather shocked.

This was what he read:

"St. Hilda's School,

Wayland.

Friday.

Dear Bagley,—I am writing to you as a last hope. I am desperately in need of £5. Unless I get hold of this amount very soon I am afraid I shall be expelled from St. Hilda's, so you can see how serious it is. I have no time to go into details, but I have been silly in running up bills I couldn't meet. If you can possibly raise £5 to help me out of this dreadful fix, I can't tell you how grateful I shall be. I will wait in for you to-morrow afternoon, so in the event of your cycling over you will be sure of seeing me. Do help me if you can. I am sorry to worry you, but I really do need the money badly.—Your affectionate cousin,
PHYLLIS TRIMBLE."

"Gweat pip!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Rotten, isn't it?" said Miss Phyllis' cousin.

"Bai Jove, I should jolly well think so! The deah gal sounds fwightfully distwessed!" said the swell of the Fourth, in great concern.

"I'm blessed if I know what to do!" said Trimble, scratching his head in perplexity. "I'd help her if I could, but my remittance hasn't arrived again! Can't make out what's happened! And how the thump I'm to raise a fiver by this afternoon, I'm dashed if I know!"

"Bai Jove, how extwemely lucky!" exclaimed D'Arcy suddenly.

"Lucky?"

"Yaas, wathah! This is weally vewy fortunate. My patah has just sent me a tennah."

"Oh!"

"Listen, Baggay!" said Arthur Augustus. "I'm weally fwightfully sowwy that Miss Phyllis should be so wowwied ovah such a small mattah, and I shall considah it a pwivilege if you will allow me to come to the wescue with a fivah!"

"By Jove, I hadn't thought of that!" said Trimble. "I say, that's awfully good of you, old chap!"

"I assuah you it will be a weal pleasuah, deah boy! I make only one stipulation."

"What's that?" asked Trimble, rather anxiously.

"That my name shall not entah into the mattah at all. It is a somewhat delicate twansaction, and Miss Phyllis might feel a little embawwassed if she knew the fivah emanated fwom me."

"Oh, I see!" said Trimble, in great relief. "Well, you can rely on me, old scout! I'll keep it dark all right."

"Vewy well. On that condition, you may have the fivah, Baggay. Pway take gweat care of it, deah boy! I wely on your honah, of course, not to touch it yourself."

"What—me? I'd scorn to do such a thing!" said Baggy.

"Perish the thought, old chap!"

"Vewy well, deah boy! Two days ago I'm afwaid I should have hesitated. But I am beginnin' to twust you now, Baggay!"

"I hope you always will, old chap!" said Trimble, with feeling, as he pocketed the five-pound note.

"Pewwaps we had bettah weturn to the House now," remarked Arthur Augustus. "I assume you will cycle ovah to St. Hilda's this aftahnoon so as to weliwe Miss Phyllis' mind as earlay as poss?"

"Rather! I'll cycle over, don't you worry!"

"And pway take care that you make no mention of my name in the mattah!" warned the swell of the Fourth again.

"I promise you that Phyl shan't hear anything about it!" said Trimble.

And he really meant it!

CHAPTER 13.

Gussy is Surprised!

SOON after dinner that day Baggy Trimble set out on his journey to St. Hilda's. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy accompanied him to the bike-shed and lent him his own handsome machine, Baggy's antediluvian model being, as usual, unfit to take to the road.

"Cheewio, deah boy!" called out the swell of the Fourth, as Baggy pedalled off. "Pway give my kindest regards to Miss Phyllis, without, of course, lettin' her know anythin'!"

"I will, old chap!" grinned Trimble. "Toodle-oo!"

And with that he vanished through the school gates. D'Arcy then returned to the School House.

Six cheery juniors were waiting for him on the School House steps—Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell, and D'Arcy's study-mates of the Fourth. To celebrate the receipt of his remittance—half of which now reposed in Trimble's pocket—Gussy had promised them tea in the Palm Cafe at Wayland. As Tom Merry and Blake had, in any case, intended going to Wayland on a shopping ex-

The dear boys trotted along as requested and made a beeline for the celebrated rendezvous where Arthur Augustus, and Trimble and his cousin had "tea-ed" three days before.

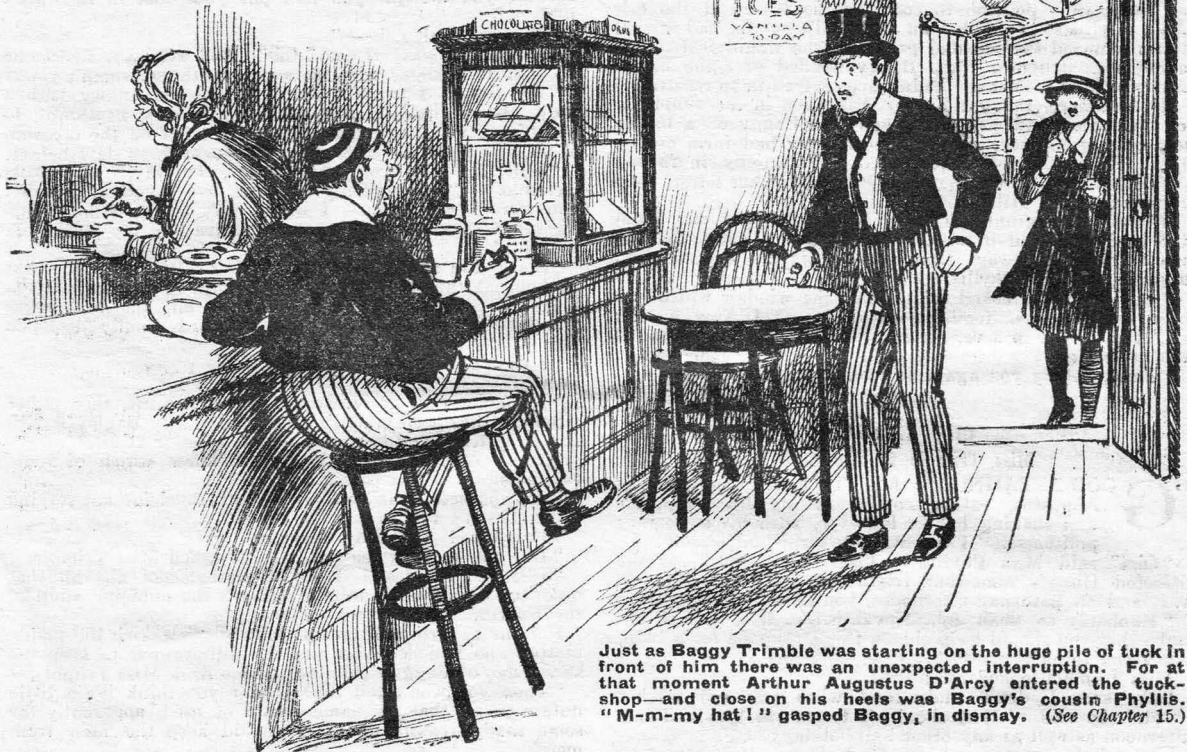
"Here we are!" said Jack Blake. "Lead the way in, Gussy!"

"Wight-ho, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus took the first step up the flight leading into the main entrance to the cafe.

But he didn't go any farther.

As he turned in from the pavement his eye fell on the neat figure of a schoolgirl looking at a milliner's shop window some little way down the street.



Just as Baggy Trimble was starting on the huge pile of tuck in front of him there was an unexpected interruption. For at that moment Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered the tuck-shop—and close on his heels was Baggy's cousin Phyllis. "M-m-my hat!" gasped Baggy, in dismay. (See Chapter 15.)

pedition, the arrangement had suited them very well, and the rest, having nothing particular to do, the invitation had been accepted with acclamation.

"Weady, deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Waiting for you, Gussy!"

In a cheery crowd the juniors made their way to Rylcombe. The train was already in the little station, and while the captain of the Shell got the tickets the rest commandeered a first-class carriage.

"Business first and pleasure after!" said Tom Merry, when they alighted at Wayland. "I've got to buy a cricket-bat."

"And I want a new sweater," added Jack Blake.

"Wight-ho, deah boys! We'll all twot along with you, and aftah that you must all wegard yourselves as my guests for tea."

"What-ho!"

The juniors marched out into the Wayland High Street, crowded at that hour with busy shoppers, and went along to the sports outfitter's.

The matter of selecting a new bat was a subject of great importance and engrossing interest to St. Jim's men, and the entire contingent accompanied Tom Merry into the shop and helped him in the purchase, the transaction in consequence occupying quite a considerable time.

After that Jack Blake bought his new sweater, and the juniors trooped out again.

"And now for the jolly old Palm Cafe, and tea at Gussy's expense!" said Herries.

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, watah! Twot along, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus started and stopped dead.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed.

"Lead on, Macduff!"

"What's the idea, Gussy?"

D'Arcy's guests were impatient.

"Bai Jove!" repeated the swell of the Fourth. "This is vewy extwaordinawy!"

"What is?"

"I must weally investigate this at once, deah boys! I thought she was at St. Hilda's this aftahnoon!"

"Who was at St. Hilda's, dummy?" asked Jack Blake, getting quite exasperated. "What the thump are you getting at?"

"I'm afwaid there's no time to explain at pwsent, deah boy! I'm sowwy to say that I must leave you now for a little while. I twust I shall not be long, howevah!"

"Collar him!" said Herries excitedly. "He's getting away without standing us a spread!"

"Oh crikey! Gussy bilking! Grab him, Dig!"

The juniors swooped on their host.

But the swell of the Fourth was too quick for them. With one bound he was in the middle of the pavement again, and within a few seconds he had doffed his "topper" with a sweeping bow, and was shaking hands with the young lady outside the milliner's shop.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Of all the prize idiots!" said Jack Blake in disgust.

"He asks us out to tea—"

"And leaves us standing on the steps like a lot of fat-heads!"

"All because of a blessed girl, too!"

The juniors were wrathful at their noble chum's desertion at the crucial moment.

"Well, I'm dashed if I feel like paying Palm Cafe prices, for one," said Dig. "I vote we go over to the bunshop instead. The dummy will stand there gassing for the rest of the day now I expect."

To the bunshop, therefore, the juniors elected to go, and Arthur Augustus continued to "gas" to his feminine acquaintance, who was none other than Baggy's cousin, Miss Phyllis Trimble.

The swell of the Fourth could hardly believe the evidence of his eyes for a moment. After reading her letter to Baggy, in which she had stated so explicitly that she would remain at St. Hilda's all the afternoon, D'Arcy had, of course, imagined that she would be the last person he was likely to run into in the Wayland High Street.

But there she was—as large as life, and twice as natural, as Monty Lowther would have expressed it, and Gussy felt nonplussed.

He also felt a little annoyed. Miss Trimble's letter to her podgy cousin had touched the tender and gallant heart of the swell of the Fourth. He had felt very pleased indeed at being in a position to come to the rescue of the fair Miss Phyllis so promptly. In his mind's eye he had several times pictured the joy and gratitude she would feel to her anonymous deliverer when Baggy handed over the badly-needed "five." Yet she hadn't even stayed in to receive it!

Furthermore, thought Arthur Augustus, in the simplicity of his noble mind, her letter had sent Baggy on a totally unnecessary journey, which was distinctly bad form on her part. Even if she had succeeded unexpectedly in raising the money she wanted, she might, in view of her letter, have remained at St. Hilda's.

Altogether, Arthur Augustus felt rather put out about the business. And it was in this frame of mind that he made a dash away from his indignant guests and approached Miss Phyllis.

Baggy's cousin looked round from the window which had been engaging her feminine attention, as D'Arcy walked up. She smiled in a very friendly fashion as she recognised the newcomer.

"Fancy seeing you again so soon!" she exclaimed.

CHAPTER 14.

Miss Trimble is annoyed!

"GOOD-AFTAHNOON, Miss Twimble!" said Arthur Augustus, rather coldly, raising his "topper" and shaking hands, however, with his customary politeness. "I am wathah surprised myself!"

"Oh!" said Miss Phyllis, a little taken aback, as she detected Gussy's somewhat frigid tone. "I am often in Wayland on Saturday afternoons, you know."

"Pwobably so, deah gal. Nevahttheless, it is wathah unforch that you should have chosen this aftahnoon for a twip, don't you think?"

Miss Trimble looked astonished.

"I'm sure I don't understand what you are talking about," she said. "Why shouldn't I come to Wayland this afternoon as well as any other half-holiday?"

"There's no weason, watevah, deah gal, if it comes to that! I suppose it's not my bizney, anyway. But Baggy told me you had w'ritten, askin' him ovah this aftahnoon, so I natuwallly concluded—"

Arthur Augustus stopped suddenly. At his mention of a letter to Cousin Bagley, Miss Trimble's eyes had opened wide with surprise. Even the swell of the Fourth, simple as he was, could not misunderstand that expression. Like a flash, the realisation came to him that Miss Phyllis knew nothing whatever about the letter. And he stopped talking.

With a realisation that something was wrong, came the revelation of the truth. If Phyllis Trimble had not written the letter which he had seen that morning, then somebody else had. And who else could that somebody be but Baggy himself? The whole thing suddenly became as clear as daylight.

"Oh! Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Oh deah!"

"What is the matter?" asked Miss Trimble.

"Oh, gweat pip! Nothin' deah gal! Nothin' at all, I assuah you! Bai Jove, Miss Twimble, what fine weathah we've been havin' lately, haven't we?"

And Arthur Augustus, desperately anxious, now that his eyes were opened, to cover up the faux pas he had committed, plunged wildly into an enthusiastic monologue on the subject of the weather.

But the keen hazel eyes of Miss Phyllis were regarding Gussy in a way that showed quite clearly that no subject, however fascinating, was likely to sidetrack her just then.

"Please!" she exclaimed, interrupting D'Arcy's discourse.

The swell of the Fourth halted.

"Now finish what you were saying about the letter,"

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Baggy's cousin said. "I am ever so interested, really, and I want to know all about it."

"Bai Jove! Weally, there's nothin' to tell, Miss Twimble. The mattah is hardly worth wefewwin' to, in fact. You see, I was undah the impreshion that Baggy had weceived a lettah fwom you; but, on weflection, I wealise that it was a mistake on my part. I was thinkin' of a lettah he weceived fwom somebody else."

The explanation was really a masterpiece of equivocation. So far as it went, it was perfectly correct. On reflection, D'Arcy certainly had changed his opinion as to the identity of the writer of Baggy's letter. At the same time, it was calculated to give Miss Trimble a somewhat false impression of the matter.

But Miss Trimble was apparently not so easily misled. She shook her head in a very dissatisfied manner.

"I'm afraid you're not telling me everything you know," she said. "I don't doubt your word, of course—"

"Bai Jove! I twust not, deah gal!"

"But I'm sure there's something wrong somewhere. When you switched on to the weather just now, it was because you thought you had put your foot in it, wasn't it?"

"Weally, deah gal—"

"Oh, yes, it was! I could tell! And when you first came up, you were angry with me over something, weren't you?"

"Bai Jove! I twust I should nevah feel angwy with a lady, Miss Twimble!" said Arthur Augustus, beginning to feel almost as uncomfortable as he had felt on the occasion of his first encounter with Baggy's cousin three days before.

"Still, I think you were angry, anyway," said Miss Trimble. "And, putting two and two together, I think you were angry because I didn't stay at St. Hilda's this afternoon to meet Bagley, as I promised in my letter. Is that it?"

"Yaas, I'm afwaid I was pewwaps a little watty for that weason," Arthur Augustus had to admit. For a moment he began to think that perhaps, after all, the letter was genuine. But Miss Trimble's next words finally dispelled any doubts on that matter.

"I didn't write the letter," she said.

"Oh!"

"If Bagley says he received a letter from me, then either somebody has been practising forgery, or else Bagley is telling an untruth and has not received a letter at all."

Arthur Augustus was silent. He knew which of those two possibilities was correct.

"So, you see, I can't very well be blamed for not staying at St. Hilda's this afternoon, can I?"

"Bai Jove! Certainly not, deah gal!"

"Did you actually see the letter?" asked Miss Trimble.

"I—I— Oh deah! I would wathah not answah that question, if you don't mind!" gasped the unhappy swell of the Fourth.

Furious as Arthur Augustus inwardly felt with the podgy plotter who had deceived him, he still wanted to keep the knowledge of Baggy's cunning scheme from Miss Trimble.

"Then you won't tell me? Don't you think it's a little unfair on me that my name should be used, apparently for some shady reason, and you should keep the facts from me?"

"Oh cwumbs! Pway don't look on it in that light, Miss Twimble!"

"But I can't look on it in any other, unless you tell me everything you know!" said Miss Trimble.

D'Arcy began to comprehend that Miss Trimble, charming as she undoubtedly was, could also be very determined; also that this was an occasion when, in her eyes, determination was called for.

Arthur Augustus himself was a determined kind of person. But he was as clay in the hands of a determined person of the opposite sex. And when Miss Trimble set herself out to extract the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the result was a fore-gone conclusion.

Within five minutes she knew the contents of the letter that her fat cousin had received that morning; she knew that Gussy had handed over a five-pound note to that same cousin; and finally she knew what it all meant.

"Oh!" she breathed. "The scheming little cad! The dreadful rogue! And he used my name to rob you!"

"Weally, deah gal—" protested Arthur Augustus rather weakly.

"I'm thoroughly ashamed to own that he is my cousin!" continued Miss Trimble almost tearfully. "Just to think that but for my accidentally running into you this afternoon you might have remained all your life under the impression that I owed you five pounds!"

"Bai Jove! I entweat you not to distwess yourself, deah gal!" said Arthur Augustus, in a state of panic at the thought of Miss Trimble dissolving into tears in the Wayland High Street. "Pway calm yourself, Miss Twimble!"

"Oh, it's all right! I'm not going to cry!" said Baggy's

cousin, to Gussy's great relief. "But I feel I must clear this up to-day. Will it be troubling you very much if I ask you to take me to St. Jim's now?"

"Oh cwumbs! Can't you leave me to deal with Baggay?"

Miss Trimble shook her head.

"No. I must see him, whether you come with me or not. But I would rather you came, too."

"Bai Jove! In that case, I will certainly return with you, deah gal," said Arthur Augustus.

To Wayland Station, accordingly, they went.

CHAPTER 15.

Tragedy in a Tuckshop!

"THIS is something like!"

Thus Baggy Trimble.

The Falstaff of the Fourth was sitting up at the counter of Dame Taggles' little tuckshop at St. Jim's. Before him was an array of tuck extensive enough in both quantity and variety to make his little eyes shine with satisfaction.

Baggy felt hungry. That, of course, was nothing unusual. He had never been known to be otherwise. But this time he was even more hungry than usual. And, for once, there was an excuse for his condition; for Baggy had been indulging in the unwonted luxury of a little exercise—cycling, to wit.

After leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy outside the bike-shed, Trimble had not, as his noble benefactor had fondly imagined, proceeded to St. Hilda's School. Trimble had no intention of going anywhere near that place.

Instead, he had been for a spin through the country lanes around St. Jim's, carefully avoiding the Rylcombe Lane, down which he knew that Arthur Augustus would at some time be walking, en route for Wayland.

Trimble had enjoyed that spin. The winding roads and leafy lanes of Sussex were pleasant enough on that warm sunny day to give enjoyment even to one usually blind to rural beauties. But Baggy Trimble, anyway, was in a mood to appreciate anything.

A crisp Bank of England note for five pounds reposed in Trimble's pocket—a sufficient sum of money to pay Mrs. Murphy's bill and leave a substantial balance. That was mainly the reason for Trimble's happiness.

The fact that he had obtained that five-pound note by a trick which was, to put it mildly, very shady did not trouble Baggy in the least. Trimble had his own peculiar code of morals in matters of meum and tuum, and that code was sufficiently elastic to permit him to retain D'Arcy's "fiver" for his own purposes without suffering the slightest twinge of conscience.

Far from suffering twinges of conscience, in fact, he gained additional pleasure from the contemplation of his astuteness in securing the money so easily. Trimble felt that he had been clever. And that feeling was very gratifying to Trimble.

After he had been away from St. Jim's for a couple of hours he decided that the time had come when it was safe to return. D'Arcy was fairly certain to have left by that time, and, the coast being clear, he would be able to put away the "jigger" in the bike-shed and spend the remainder of the afternoon in the tuckshop.

Trimble had, therefore, returned. And he was now surveying with affectionate eyes the plate of cakes and pastries which he had ordered as a first instalment of the feed he had promised himself.

"This is something like!" repeated Trimble.

And with that he waded in.

A jam-puff containing, like all Dame Taggles' jam-puffs, a liberal amount of jam, disappeared into his mouth. A cream-bun followed suit. Macaroons, chocolate eclairs, and cake shared the same fate. Baggy Trimble neatly began to enjoy himself.

As he demolished the good things before him his mind dwelt happily on the events of the day, and the possibilities of the future.

But Nemesis was already at hand, preparing to shatter Trimble's fond day-dreams for good and all.

Before the fat Fourth-Former had had time to consume more than a small fraction of the tuck an interruption came—an interruption which was as unwelcome as it was unexpected.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked into the tuckshop—and close on his heels came Baggy's Cousin Phyllis!

Simultaneously, the rosy future on which Baggy's thoughts had been dwelling so fondly faded quickly away, and Baggy came back to earth with a bump.

"M-m-m-my hat!" he gasped.

"Bai Jove! Heah he is, Miss Twimble!" remarked Arthur Augustus, with satisfaction.

"Oh crikey! F-f-fancy meeting you!" stammered Trimble,

with a ghastly attempt at a smile. "W-w-what a surprise! How are you, Phyl?"

Miss Phyllis disdainfully ignored the podgy palm which Trimble extended, and bestowed on him a look that made him fairly quail.

"How dare you!" she breathed in a concentrated voice. "How dare you attempt to shake hands with me after what has happened!"

"Oh, lor'! I dunno what you're talking about, Phyl!" gasped the unhappy Trimble.

"So you are going to brazen it out?"

"Oh crumbs! Nothing of the kind! That is to say, there's nothing to brazen out!" said Trimble, beginning to flounder. "Look here, if you two think I wrote that blessed letter to myself, all I can say is you're jolly well mistaken!"

"Bai Jove! Miss Twimble didn't even mention a lettah, deah boy."

"Oh dear! Didn't she?"

"So it wathah looks as if you're convicted out of your own mouth, Baggay!" said Arthur Augustus, regarding the Falstaff of the Fourth with great disfavour. "As a mattah of fact, it is a lettah which bwings us heah. I wifer to the lettah you weceived by this mornin's post, purportin' to emanate fwm your cousin, Miss Phyllis. You wemembah I handed you a fivah, on the stwength of that lettah. I now discovah fwm Miss Phyllis herself that she did not wite it, and knows nothin' about it. What have you to say to that, you fat young wascal?"

"He, he, he!"

"What?" roared Arthur Augustus.

"He, he, he!" sniggered Trimble, in a last desperate effort to save his face. "Then, in that case, somebody has been pulling our legs, I suppose. He, he, he!"

"Bai Jove!"

Baggy Trimble's unmusical cachinnation did not continue for long. Miss Phyllis took a hand in the game just then, and quickly gave her cousin the coup de grace, so to speak.

"Bagley!" she said, fixing the sniggering Falstaff of the Fourth with her keen, steady eyes.

"Oh crikey! Yes, Phyl?"

"Do you dare to deny that you yourself wrote that wicked letter you showed D'Arcy this morning?"

"I—I—I—"

"Yes, or no!" snapped Miss Phyllis.

"I—I— Oh, lor'! Look here, Phyl, it was only a jape! N-nothing in it at all, really, you know—"

"That's quite enough!" said Baggy's cousin, her lip curling, as she regarded her unhappy cousin. "You admit it! That's all I wanted to know. Now give D'Arcy back his money at once!"

"Sus-sus-certainly! That was what I intended to do all along!" almost groaned Baggy. "I—I'm afraid I haven't got it all, but I've got four-pounds-seventeen left. That'll have to do for now."

Slowly and reluctantly, the fat junior drew out a handful of notes and coins, and handed them over to the swell of the Fourth, who, with a curt nod, thrust them into his pocket.

"So much for that!" remarked Miss Trimble. "I won't trouble to tell you all I think of you, Bagley. I always knew you to be weak-willed, and not very strict over money matters. But it is a shock to know that you are a thief."

"Look here, Phyl—"

"But words will be wasted on you, I expect, so I won't say more," continued Miss Phyllis scornfully. "I should like you to understand, though, before I go, that I don't wish to speak to you again. That's all!"

Having said that, Miss Trimble ceased to notice the existence of Baggy.

Arthur Augustus, for the second and last time, escorted Baggy's cousin as far as Rylcombe Station.

"Bai Jove, Miss Twimble, I twust you will not take this too seriously," he said, as they walked down the Rylcombe Lane. "I am wathah afraid I am to blame—"

"Please don't say that," interrupted Miss Trimble. "You'll make me feel worse than ever about it, if you do. I'm afraid, really, that it was all my fault."

"Weally, deah gal—"

"I can see now that Bagley's story about he and you being friends was untrue. I ought to have known better than to believe it. Had I known what an awful little cad he was then I shouldn't have asked you to look after him."

"Bai Jove! That was nothin', Miss Twimble!"

"It was too much to ask of you. Anyway, but for my more or less planting him on to you, you would probably never have been friendly enough to lend him five pounds for any reason, urgent or otherwise, and he would never have thought out such a horrid scheme. So, you see, it really was my fault."

"Hem!" said Arthur Augustus. He couldn't very well contradict Baggy's cousin on that point.

"Anyway, it's all over now, and I've learned what my

cousin is really like. After to-day I don't want any more to do with him, and I hope you'll never speak to him, either."

And with that sentence, Phyllis Trimble released Arthur Augustus from all the obligations he felt that he had contracted on the occasion of her first visit to St. Jim's.

On his return to the school, the swell of the Fourth had, for all time, lost the unique and unenvied distinction of being official reformer to the Falstaff of the Fourth!

CHAPTER 16.

The Same Old Baggy!

BACK at St. Jim's Arthur Augustus made it his first task to get in a plentiful supply of eatables from Dame Taggles' shop, and prepare Study No. 6 for the return of the guests he had abandoned on the steps of the Palm Cafe.

D'Arcy's conscience was a little uneasy over his desertion of his chums at such a critical moment as tea-time, and he felt that it was up to him to make amends.

No sooner had he got the cloth laid and the kettle singing on the spirit-stove, than there was a tramp of footsteps in the passage, and the whole crowd entered.

Arthur Augustus smiled a cheerful greeting.

"Back alwedy, deah boys?"

The dear boys glared.

"So you came back here?" snorted Jack Blake.

"After inviting us to the blessed Palm Cafe——"

"And leaving us on the blessed steps——"

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Don't argue with the dummy!" said Herries wrathfully.

"Bump him! That's the only language he understands!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, Hewwies, if you lay hands on me——
Whoooooop! Yawooooooogh!"

Bump!

"Yawoooooop!"

Bump!

"Yooooooop! Leggo, you feahful wottahs——"

Bump!

"Whoooooop!"

"That's enough!" grinned Jack Blake, feeling considerably better for that vigorous little interlude. "Now you can explain, if you want to, Gussy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gwoooogh! You uttah wottahs!" spluttered Arthur Augustus.

"Cheese it, Gussy!" said Jack Blake. "We're the injured parties, anyway. What the thump made you desert us at Wayland?"

"Yes, let's hear all about it, Gussy," urged Tom Merry. "Bai Jove! I weally hardly feel like explainin' aftal such wuffianly tweatment. Howevah, pewwaps I am partly to blame, so I will consent to do so," said the swell of the Fourth magnanimously.

"Thank you, your highness!" murmured Monty Lowther humbly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wats! First of all, pway sit down, and have some tea, all of you. As I was unable to entertain you at Wayland, I decided to do so heah instead."

"Oh! Good egg!"

"Sit down and wade in, chaps!" said Blake hospitably.

"What-ho!"

"Thanks very much!"

The juniors sat down round the study table and waded in as requested.

As they did so Arthur Augustus told them the story of Trimble and the letter and the fiver. And Tom Merry & Co. and Blake & Co. understood the meaning of Trimble's reform at last.

"Oh, great pip!" gasped Jack Blake, as Arthur Augustus finished. "So that was it, was it?"

"That was why Trimble reformed!" grinned Lowther.

"He thought he'd discovered a perpetual source of revenue—in his reformer!"

"My hat!"

"The outsider!"

"The fat criminal!"

The juniors didn't mince matters in expressing their opinion of Trimble just then.

"Well, I must say I thought there was something fishy in it, all along," remarked Tom Merry.

"So did I!"

"Same here!"

"But, of course, dear old Gussy didn't!" grinned Jack Blake. "He thought he'd made a genuine conversion—that Baggy had been made into a good lad by his pi-jaw! You cheerful chump, Gussy!"

(Continued on page 28.)



D'ARCY'S
PERIL!

Down on the Farm!

Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's are always ready to help anyone down on his luck, and when old Farmer Chubb finds himself up against it they step into the breach right manfully. Running a farm in real earnest is a new experience to the chums of St. Jim's, but they tackle their job with a will and fairly make things hum. Plenty of fun, hard work, and some adventures they hadn't bargained for come their way when they become

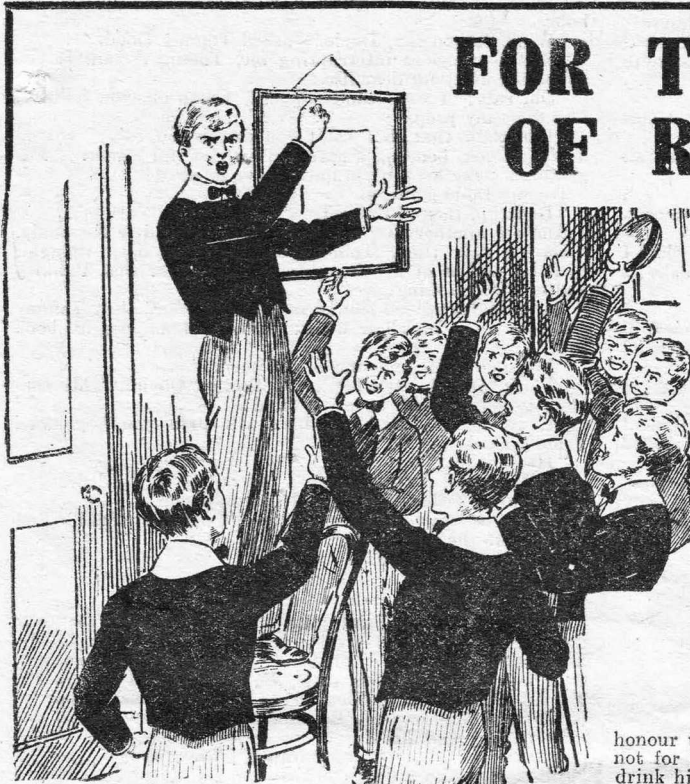
"FARMERS ALL!"

You simply cannot afford to miss next week's grand story by

Martin Clifford.

Order Your Copy of the "GEM" To-day!

A DARK HORSE! On more than one occasion James Montgomery Babbington has proved to his schoolfellows that he's not quite such a duffer as he looks. He certainly comes out strong in times of emergency—and another emergency arises in the affairs of Rookwood School this week!



FOR THE HONOUR OF ROOKWOOD!

A New Story of Schoolboy Fun and Frolic, featuring Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

James Montgomery Babbington, a new boy, and a champion duffer, arrives at Rookwood smothered in coal-dust as a result of his encounter with Pankley & Co., the chums of Bagshot, the rival school. That Babbington isn't quite such a duffer as he looks, however, is proved when he more than holds his own with the bullying Higgs and later controls an excited elephant, thereby saving his Housemaster from possible serious injury. To crown all this, Babbington next succeeds in japing Pankley & Co. to accept a challenge to a footer match—the challengers turning out to be none other than Jimmy Silver & Co. disguised as girls. The "girls" trounce the Bagshot bounders to the tune of nine goals to nil. Later, Jimmy Silver & Co. are getting in a feed to celebrate their success when the unpopular Carthew appears upon the scene and conjures what looks like a promising basket of tuck. Amidst a breathless hush he opens the basket, only to dash away the next moment in sheer fright as a fearsome-looking snake wriggles out of the basket and makes for his direction. Then Jimmy Silver & Co. get on with the feed.
(Now read on.)

The Feast!

"GENTLEMEN!"

"Hear, hear!"

The applause that greeted Jimmy Silver as he rose, holding aloft a tumbler full of foaming ginger-pop, was none the less hearty because it was subdued.

The great victory celebration in the Fourth Form dormitory on the Classical side was in full swing.

The three Tommies, together with a number of other stalwarts from the Modern Fourth, and including, of course, Babbington and his cousin, Clarence Cuffy, had been smuggled in through the window.

Evening dress, as Putty Grace remarked, was compulsory, but on this occasion this consisted of jacket over a suit of pyjamas.

The feed was by way of being a record one in the annals of the Fourth Form. The whip-round had been generously responded to, and Mornington had contributed a whole fiver.

Ham and tongue, tinned fruits, potted meats, jam, and cakes galore, tarts enough even to satisfy Tubby Muffin—all these good things and many more were there. Only Tubby Muffin, whose jaws had never stopped during the whole of the evening, was still going strong when Jimmy Silver rose to make a speech.

So long as a crumb of the Gargantuan feed remained to be eaten it was likely that Tubby Muffin would continue to go strong.

"Gentlemen," said Jimmy Silver, "I have only a few remarks to make!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it, Jimmy!"

"This feed, as you all know, is to celebrate our recent great victory over the Bagshot bounders!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hurrah!"

"In times past," continued Jimmy Silver modestly, "we have perhaps not always come out top in our rags with Pankley & Co.—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But this last time we japed them as they have never been japed before! It was the kybosh for Pankley & Co., and everybody knows it—even Pankley knows it!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now, chaps," went on Jimmy Silver gracefully, "the fellow who originated the great jape is our guest of

honour this evening. I refer to Babbington; and if it was not for the noise you would kick up, I should ask you to drink his health three times three!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Babbington!"

"Faith, and here's to ye, Babbington!" exclaimed Tommy Doyle enthusiastically. "Ye're a broth of a boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The toast was drunk with the greatest enthusiasm, and James Montgomery Babbington rose with a modest blush to reply.

With his round face and large spectacles Babbington did not look particularly like a hero, but the fellows of the Rookwood Fourth had already learned that beneath Babbington's guileless exterior lay an unusual personality.

"Gentlemen of the Fourth," said Babbington, "I thank you very much for drinking my health!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Babbington!"

"I am glad our little stunt against Bagshot was so successful, though I had very little to do towards carrying it out. Now, gentlemen," continued Babbington, blinking round on the cheery throng, "I received a letter by this evening's post, which I should like to read to you. It is from Pankley, of Bagshot, who must have heard of me somehow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And this is what he says:

"Master Babbington, Rookwood School.

"My dear Freak,—The last time your Rookwood chumps came over here, dressed as a lot of blessed girls, they left something behind them. It was a wig—a girl's wig—and if you would like it back you can come and get it. At present it is nailed to the flagstaff in our playground, and we challenge you to fetch it—if you can! We can promise any Rookwood duffers who have the nerve to enter these gates a high old time!

"Yours truly,

"CECIL PANKLEY.

"P.S.—If we had spotted who the Lingfield House team were a bit earlier we'd have given them several sorts of fits!"

"That, gentlemen, is Pankley's letter. What are we going to do about it?"

And James Montgomery Babbington sat down again with a beaming smile on his round face.

Then a low babel of voices broke out.

"Well, of all the blessed cheek!"

"Just like Pankley!"

"The cheeky rotter!"

"It's a trap!"

"Let's go and get the wig!"

Jimmy Silver held up his hand.

"Shush!" he commanded. "You're making too much row, chaps! We'll have the beaks down on us in a minute!"

"Here, we don't want that!" said Tommy Dodd, looking alarmed. "Old Manders will warm us if he finds we're out of the dormitory!"

"Faith, and he will that!"

"Well, chuck it!" said Jimmy Silver. "Now, about this letter?"

"What I say is," broke in Arthur Edward Lovell, "it's all rot!"

"Hear, hear! Good for you, Lovell!"

Jimmy Silver submitted to the interruption patiently. He was used to being interrupted by Lovell.

"It's all a plant," said Lovell excitedly, "that's what I say! Pankley's been dished, and now he's trying to make us run our heads into the lion's mouth!"

"But—" said Jimmy Silver

"Don't start 'butting,' Jimmy! It's quite clear!" snorted Lovell. "We won't have anything to do with it! It will simply be playing Pankley's game!"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's so!"

There was a chorus of assent, and it was pretty evident that Arthur Edward Lovell's view of the matter was shared by the majority of those present.

"Lovell may be right, and all that," cut in Mornington. "He hardly ever is, but still—"

"Look here, Mornington—" bellowed Lovell wrathfully.

Mornington raised his hand.

"Don't get excited, Lovell! I should like to have a cut at this. As to getting that wig back, it would be rather sport."

Lovell snorted.

"Rats! Rot! I tell you it's a plant!"

"What did you say, Jimmy?"

Jimmy Silver hesitated.

"Well, the letter was addressed to Babbington," he said slowly. "If Babbington has an idea—"

"Piffle!" said Lovell. "It's addressed to Babbington, but it's a challenge to the whole Form. I think he ought to write back and tell Pankley to go and eat coke."

Jimmy Silver shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, we'll see what the meeting says. Hands up for Lovell's suggestion!"

Three-quarters of the fellows held up their hands. Lovell, in his enthusiasm, held up both.

"There you are!" cried Lovell triumphantly. "Carried!"

"Good enough!" said Jimmy Silver.

He himself had not voted, and neither had Newcome, Mornington, Putty Grace, or Babbington himself.

"You see what the meeting thinks, Babbington."

"Yes, I see that, Silver," said Babbington mildly.

"Well, that's settled," said Lovell loudly. Arthur Edward Lovell always knew better than anyone else, in his own opinion, and he did not care to hear any more objections. "You Modern chaps should be getting along. It's jolly near eleven o'clock."

"My hat!" said Tommy Dodd, jumping to his feet. "So it is! We must scoot or old Manders will be on the war-path. Come on, you chaps! Come on, Babbington! Bring that ass, Cuffy, along. Nighty-night, everybody!"

"Cheerio, Tommy!"

In a few minutes the party had broken up. Candles were extinguished and all signs of the feast were rapidly obliterated, while many helpers assisted the visiting Moderus out of the window.

In a very short time all the beds in the Classical Fourth dormitory were occupied and most of the juniors were asleep.

Arthur Edward Lovell placed his head on his pillow with great satisfaction. The celebration had been a record one and had gone off swimmingly, and the great question of the evening, i.e. Pankley's letter, had been settled in the only possible way—which was Arthur Edward's way.

There was one person at least, however, who did not regard the matter as settled, and that person was James Montgomery Babbington of the Modern House.

Babbington Replies to the Challenge!

"THANK goodness, that's done!"

Tommy Dodd, of the Modern House, shut his Latin grammar with a resounding bang by way of signalling the fact that he had finished his prep.

It was the evening following the great dormitory feast.

"Done!" he repeated with satisfaction. "What about routing round after some supper, you chaps? Is there anything in the cupboard?"

"Shush!" said Tommy Cook, without looking up from his book.

"What do you say, Doyle?" asked Tommy Dodd.

"Faith, an' ye're interrupting me, Tommy!" said Doyle, scribbling away for dear life.

"Oh, rats! I want some supper! Come on, you fellows! I've done my prep."

"We know that, but can't you see we haven't?" roared Tommy Cook, bending a glare on his cheerful leader. "For goodness' sake keep quiet until we've finished!"

Tommy Dodd grinned.

"Buck up, then!" he said.

And for another five minutes silence reigned in the study.

During this time, Tommy Dodd sat in deep thought, and the subject of his thoughts was the letter that Pankley had sent to Babbington.

The minutes passed slowly in the study, and then Tommy Cook sat up in his chair with a yawn, and snapped his book shut.

"Finished!" he announced. "Cheers!"

"Faith, and so have I!" cried Tommy Doyle. "My construe to-morrow will bate the band!"

"If it doesn't, Dicky Dalton will bate you!" grinned Tommy Cook.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

At this moment there came a tap on the study door.

"Come in, fathead!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

And the spectacled face of James Montgomery Babbington looked into the study.

"Hallo, Babbington!"

"Come right in!"

"Faith, and ye're welcome entirely!"

Babbington stepped into the study and closed the door quietly. Until a few weeks ago, the famous Co. of the Modern Fourth would probably have greeted his appearance with missiles of various sorts, but in the last few weeks Tommy Dodd & Co. had learned to respect the mental powers of James Montgomery Babbington. Combined with his mild nature and his large spectacles, which gave him a particularly innocent appearance, Babbington's mental agility made him a dangerous customer to tackle. It looked the easiest thing in the world to pull Babbington's leg, but in this case, as so often happens, appearances were quite deceptive.

Babbington ambled into the study with a gentle smile.

"I—I—I wanted to see you, Dodd, about Pankley's letter," he began.

Tommy Dodd started.

Here was almost the echo of his own thoughts.

"Well, go ahead!" he said tersely.

Seating himself on the edge of the table, Babbington blinked at the three Tommies.

"Er—Lovell said last night that the letter was a trap and the chaps seemed to agree with him," he said.

"Lovell's an ass!" snorted Tommy Dodd.

"And a chump!" put in Tommy Cook.

"And a Classical fathead!" added Tommy Doyle.

Babbington grinned.

"That's so! I think that letter ought to be answered, don't you?"

"Well," admitted Tommy Dodd, "I was thinking about it myself. I don't like to leave it unanswered, but I'm blessed if I see what we can do."

"I don't see that we can do anything," said Cook.

"Faith, and we can't," agreed Tommy Doyle. "If any gossoon put his head into Bagshot just now Pankley & Co. would scrag him baldheaded."

Babbington said nothing, but continued to smile blandly.

Tommy Dodd looked at him curiously.

"Have you got a wheeze, Babbington?" he asked.

"Well, I might have," admitted Babbington, "in fact I may say that I have."

"Well, out with it!" said Tommy Dodd. "I know you are a nut at wheezes, but I'm blessed if I can see how you can get that wig back from under the noses of all Bagshot!"

Babbington produced a slip of paper from his pocket.

"I thought of sending this to Pankley," he said, in a mild voice. "If you chaps are agreed, that is."

"Read it out then, ye gossoon!" said Doyle.

Babbington cleared his throat.

"Dear Pankley,—I shall come on Saturday next between two and three in the afternoon and fetch away the wig we left at Bagshot, and which you are retaining as a trophy.—

Yours,
JAMES MONTGOMERY BABBINGTON."



Babbington rose to his feet as the applause died down. He held in his hand a letter. "Gentlemen of the Fourth," he said, "I have here a letter from the unfortunate Pankley. In it he challenges me to get back a girl's wig we inadvertently left behind us yesterday. Gentlemen, what are we going to do about it?" (See page 2.)

There was a moment's silence while the three Tommies stared at the bland and almost expressionless features of the cheerful Babbington.

"Well, of all the nerve!" gasped Tommy Dodd admiringly. "You take the bun, Babbington!"

"Do you think that will do?" asked Babbington innocently.

"Do?" ejaculated Tommy Dodd. "There's no doubt it would do all right, but for one thing!"

"Well?"

"How are you going to get the blessed wig, you duffer?"

"Faith, and that's the question, me bhoys!"

Babbington's smile grew broader.

"Well, I'll tell you," he said.

And he leaned forward and spoke in a low voice.

For the next five minutes explosive chuckles from the three Tommies punctuated Babbington's remarks as he unfolded his plan.

There was no doubt about its reception. As Babbington finished, Tommy Dodd slapped him enthusiastically on the back.

"You're a marvel, Babbington!" he chuckled. "It's a real rip-snorter of an idea!"

"An A 1, eight-cylinder, copper-bottomed stunt!" grinned Cook.

"It's a broth of a bhoys ye are, Babbington!" was Doyle's delighted contribution.

"Good! Then I'll send the letter," said Babbington.

And Babbington drifted out of the study with a happy smile on his innocent countenance.

When, two days later, he showed the three Tommies Pankley's reply, those worthies chuckled loud and long in gleeful anticipation, for the reply ran as follows:

"My dear Ass,—Your cheeky letter received. We will look out for you between two and three on Saturday, and can promise you a warm reception. If you or any cheeky Rookwood bounder gets away alive with our trophy I'll eat my hat.—Yours,
CECIL PANKLEY"

"Poor old Pankley!" grinned Tommy Dodd. "He'll get a surprise on Saturday, won't he, Babb?"

"He hasn't had much luck lately," said Tommy Cook.

"Not since Babbington came," added Dodd. "I always said it takes a Modern to put the kybosh on the Bagshot bounders."

"Faith, and ye're right, Tommy!"

And the three Tommies, hugging themselves gleefully,

settled down to wait for Saturday afternoon with the most happy anticipation.

"Well, I'll do it! For you I'll do it, Master Babbington! You 'elped me out of a nasty 'ole with that there helephant, a little time back, so, blow me if I don't do it!"

The rich, fruity tones of Mr Burgess, of Burgess' World Renowned Circus, boomed out over the field where that establishment was encamped, in the neighbourhood of Rookham.

A week or two before, the circus had been at Coombe, where James Montgomery Babbington, displaying an uncanny power of control over the big circus elephant, Rancee, had saved what threatened to be a nasty contretemps, and Mr Burgess felt that he owed a great debt of gratitude to the mild looking Rookwood junior.

Thus it was that he came to agree to the somewhat remarkable proposition which Babbington had just put to him.

The time was just after two o'clock on the Saturday afternoon. Babbington had arrived at Rookham on a bicycle and sought out Mr Burgess.

When he left the circus field, however, ten minutes later, he was no longer riding his bicycle. He was riding Rancee, the big elephant!

Down the road which led towards the village of Coombe—and which, incidentally, passed the gates of Bagshot School—Rancee tramped with stately tread.

The passers-by looked up in astonishment at the spectacled youth in Etons, sitting calmly on the big elephant's head.

Babbington's mild face wore a calm and cheerful expression as he swayed with the motion of the animal and rubbed one of the big ears affectionately.

Babbington did not hurry the elephant.

It took him half an hour to arrive at the gates of Bagshot School.

Babbington grinned as he reached the corner near the gates and saw a couple of Bagshot juniors standing just outside, with their backs to him, looking down the road towards Rookwood.

They were evidently on the look out for an invasion; but they were looking in the wrong direction!

(There's no mistake about it—for nerve Babbington fairly takes the bun! Whatever you do, chums, read next week's thrilling instalment of this powerful serial. You'll enjoy every line of it.)

TRIMBLE'S REFORMATION!

(Continued from page 24.)

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Weally, deah boys—"

"Are you still going on with the good work?" asked Lowther innocently. "Better stick at it, you know! He may pinch a tenner next time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was at that moment that a tap sounded on the door. Nobody noticed it in the noise that was going on. But everybody noticed the sequel to the tap.

Baggy Trimble himself rolled in.

He nodded cheerfully to the company, and a little dubiously to Arthur Augustus, who rose and adjusted his monocle as though he could hardly believe what he saw.

"I say, you chaps, I thought I'd trof in and see what was on," said Trimble, advancing to the table and eyeing the good things which loaded it with a very friendly eye.

"Oh, you did, did you?" growled Blake.

"I suppose you're not going to be huffy over all the bosh my cousin talked, Gussy, are you?" said Trimble. "No good taking any notice of a dashed girl, is it? I'm jolly sure I'm not going to allow her to come between two old pals like us! Thanks, I will!"

In response to an invitation, which nobody else heard, Baggy helped himself to a jam-tart.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, almost mesmerised.

"Of course, I didn't argue with Phyl. No good arguing with a blessed girl, anyway," said Baggy, between mouthfuls of tart. "But you know me better than to believe all she said; don't you, old chap? Thanks, I don't mind if I do stay to tea!"

And Baggy sat down on the coal-scuttle, which was the only available seat.

The juniors regarded him breathlessly for a moment. Then they acted! As one man, they rose, and fell upon the Falstaff of the Fourth.

They plumped him on the study carpet and held him there, while Arthur Augustus grasped a cricket stump and wielded it with all the force of his strong right arm.

"Thwack, thwack, thwack!"

"Yarooooooop! Whoooooop!"

"Thwack, thwack, thwack!"

"Yoooooop! Wow-ow-wow!"

"Thwack, thwack, thwack!"

"Whoooooop! Groooooogh!"

"Bai Jove! Pway welease him now, deah boys!" said Gussy at last, panting from his exertions.

Trimble was duly released, and staggered, yelping, out of the study.

All traces of his recent reform had departed from him now. His podgy face, on which an expression of placid innocence had dwelt for two whole days, was now crimson and convulsed with rage, not only from the effects of his "licking," but also from the feeling of frustrated ambition which that licking had brought on.

All Baggy's scheming and planning had come to naught. And he was now back again in precisely the same position as he had been before his reformation, with the difference that exposure to the Head by Mrs. Murphy, and a consequent flogging, was now absolutely inevitable.

"Yah! Beasts!" was Baggy's farewell to his hosts of Study No. 6, as he rolled feebly away to his own study.

"Are you still reformed, Baggy?" called out Lowther.

"Rats!"

From which it seemed safe to assume that Trimble's reform was definitely at an end!

THE END.

(There will be another ripping long story of Tom Merry & Co. next week, chums, entitled: "FARMERS ALL!" If you miss it, you'll be missing Martin Clifford's best yarn.)

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